

FREE NO.22

COUNTER INFORMATION

FEB. / MARCH 1989

PAY NO POLL TAX



The new year ushers in a period when the actual Poll Tax levels will be known, and canvassing by local anti-poll tax unions will start in earnest: those in multi-occupancy households hardest hit, will be joined by those who politically or morally oppose this regressive and authoritarian tax.

Local Authority works in NALGO and DSS staff in the CPSA will be crucial if the imposition of the tax is to be disrupted & resisted. Union leaders and Councils have been trying the scare tactic that their jobs are at risk if they join forces with the anti-poll tax resistance. The Tories have played their usual 'divide and rule' tactic by softening this year's poll tax level to reduce the possibility of such solidarity action. With Regional Elections in 1990 and 'Scottish Homes' intended to break up Council Housing stock it is a certainty that Councils will be forced to greatly increase the tax in 1990 or slash services. Either way they can't win.

They can, however, be stopped in their tracks. Capitulating to the Tories is a recipe for the slashing of services. Local authority workers can help protect services and their own jobs by disrupting collection of the tax. This can be done by industrial action, working to rule and refusing to impose surcharges or initiate wage arrearments. Similarly DSS staff can show united action by refusing to arrest benefits. This in turn would greatly stimulate the involvement of claimants in the anti-poll tax campaign and overturn fatalism and resignation. The greatest challenge remains in the communities, for local campaigns to win the support of their neighbours through open and imaginative agitation. The simultaneous mass non-payment in Scotland combined to resistance to Registration in England from April onwards is the best time to overturn the policies of this Government.

POLAND Federating!
Gdansk
30 October: 70 people from 10 towns attended the 1st Anarchist Conference to be held since the war. The anti-terrorist brigade broke up the meeting and some people were arrested but released later. People regrouped and held the meeting elsewhere.

HAMBURG, Dec. 12th: 2 - 2,500 turned up at a demonstration to support the INTIFADA-uprising in Palestine, which began a year ago. A few hundred broke away from the official demo which was forbidden to go through the city centre. Shop windows were broken and some people smashed and plundered a yuppie-bar!

SICK of Government

France - At the beginning of October 20,000 nurses and health workers from all over France marched through Paris to demand higher wage levels. (Wages had fallen 10% behind other workers).

This demo so caught the anger of the health workers that a similar demo the next week attracted 30,000 and by the end of October over 100,000 public sector workers marched with the health workers in support of their demands, 5 million workers from gas, water, electricity, buses, the metro, schools, hospitals, trains - you name it! - took to the streets.

The action was led by unofficial committees (co-ordinators) which sprang up spontaneously at each hospital (only 4% of nurses are unionised).

With the unions negotiating with the government the strike wave drifted into a limbo - with the government offering the same terms (almost) as before the strike.

However, a more positive situation has arisen because of the militancy of the nurses and health workers - public sector workers in postal services and public transport have taken industrial action - and in December French troops were used to scab on bus drivers (for the first time since 1971), and postal workers have blocked entrances to sorting offices. The future looks rosy!!

OCCUPIED!

Anti poll tax protestors invaded the Lothian Regional Council meeting on 6th December. 25 people occupied the Council Chambers in Parliament Square, Edinburgh for nearly an hour and gave the Labour-controlled Council the message: **Stop implementing the Poll Tax and Stop fining people for not registering.**

The action, organised by the Lothian Federation of the Anti Poll Tax Groups, forced the Council to abandon their meeting till a later date. In Strathclyde a mass lobby of the Council is planned for 25th January. The pressure will be on the Strathclyde Federation to carry out similar direct action.

One of the occupiers writes: "There were over 100 demonstrators. By pushing and arguing 25 of us got past the police, and burst into the Council Chambers.

We denounced the councillors for co-operating with the Tories' plan to rob the poor to pay the rich. They had to stop their meeting. We took over the Council Chambers and hung banners out the windows. The police physically stopped the other demonstrators joining us. But they stayed outside, chanting support.

Eventually the Council said we could address the meeting. We agreed - as long as the Council called off the police and let the other demonstrators in. The Council refused. Obviously they felt they needed police protection! So the occupation continued.

Later, another Council "offer" - some councillors will discuss with us outside - otherwise the police will forcibly remove us. We marched outside, chanting defiance. No-one was arrested. I think the occupation was a real success, we need more actions like this."

INDEPENDENCE

Afterwards 2 individuals - Militant supporters - issued statements in the name of the Anti Poll Tax Federation denouncing the occupiers! This despite the Federation having voted overwhelmingly FOR an occupation.

Militant's commitment to the capitalist Labour Party led them to oppose the occupation and attack the occupiers in the media. To win, the anti poll tax movement must develop independence from all power-seeking political groups. Mass refusal to pay, organised in the communities and workplaces, is the basis for beating the poll tax. And collective direct action - in the streets and against the local and central government machinery that's implementing the tax - can play an important part.

Polite argument will never persuade the Councils to stop collecting the tax. Nor, realistically, will a few occupations. But WIDESPREAD occupations and other direct actions can help create a social climate of defiance and resistance to the poll tax.

INFORMATION PACKS on poll tax resistance available from COMMUNITY RESISTANCE TO THE POLL TAX, p/hole CR, c/o 11 Forth St., Edinburgh.

Claydside Resistance broadsheet from p/hole 30, 340 W. Princes St., Glasgow (send large S.A.E. or donation).

National Anti-Poll Tax Demonstration, Glasgow March 18th, 11a.m., Glasgow Green (special trains coming from London).

WE WANT JUSTICE

Tuesday 25th October - 70 police officers raided 10 addresses in N. London in one of their biggest operations in Hackney this year. 6 men and 5 women were charged after being held for over 50 hours. The charges are kidnapping, conspiracy to kidnap and administering a noxious substance. These charges come from the allegations of one man, Mark Berry. This man had a consistent history of violence against his 'girlfriend' and raped her on at least two occasions. Berry went to the police claiming he was kidnapped by former friends angry at his attacks on his girlfriend. The police were only too eager to listen to him as some of his former friends are activists in the local community. Two complaints of rape have been made against this man with no action taken by the police. One man's word is enough to charge 11 people with kidnapping - but a woman's word on rape is not enough.

STUFF THE LAW - WE WANT JUSTICE

For more information and leaflets with a description of Mark Berry contact:

The Hackney 11 Defence Campaign, c/o Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU.

STOP PRESS: Court case - 9th February, 2pm. The defence campaign are calling for a picket of Old St. Magistrates Court (Old St. London EC1)

HERE TO STAY

Manchester has a history of fighting against racist immigration laws. Almost all the campaigns in Manchester to save individuals from deportation have been won so far. It is by organising campaigns that pressure can be put on the Home Office to stop a deportation or unite a family. The mobilisation of communities is the best help for people threatened by the immigration laws.

The sanctuary movement as a response to the racist immigration laws of the present government, was initiated by the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign in December 1986, when Viraj entered the Church of the Ascension in Hulme, Manchester. Two years later, Viraj remains in sanctuary with the ever-present threat of deportation to Sri Lanka, where he will face inevitable death. This example has led others to

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1988 was the year in which a *Ripper* game was produced, a mini-series about "The Ripper" was broadcast, and *Ripper walks* in London were organised.

A series of rapes, covered up by Greater Manchester Police, in south Manchester exacerbated women's anger at the level of male violence which continues to terrorise our lives. An emergency meeting was held at Manchester Poly Student's Union to debate women's safety and a motion passed to provide a free women's mini-bus and subsidised rape alarms. The same week, a "reclaim the night" march was held in Manchester on 25th October, important not only for its expression of anger, but also for the empowering effect it had on women. Women realise the need for solidarity and self-help. The police, the courts and no amount of legislation will bring an end to male violence. Women are tired of being portrayed as vulnerable victims. We are angry, vigilant and strong.

Sisters of The Long March

Nov. '88: Women students uproot dense bushes and march to the directorate's office at Newcastle Poly.

At least two women have already been attacked this term on campus and the 60 strong protest is in response to continued inaction by the Poly Authorities over women's safety.

A petition demanded the removal of a number of dense bushes round the campus as well as better lighting. But, rather than wait for the directorate's response the students decided to take direct action over the bushes.

There is now more confidence among the women to take further action if nothing is done by the Authorities.

follow the tactic of sanctuary.

Rajwinder Singh, a Sikh man, mentally handicapped and epileptic, faced deportation to India and took sanctuary in Bradford in February 1987 at a Sikh Gurawara. He won the right to stay after fighting an intensive public campaign, as did Renukaben and the 13 year old Salema Begum.

Sanctuary may not be an answer to the immigration laws as they stand, but for individuals threatened with deportation it is an increasingly important line of defence. The latest laws remove the rights of appeal and the possibility of intervention by M.P.'s. Sanctuary provides the basis of a deportation campaign as a whole, the more community based, the better.

SANCTUARY VIOLATED

Stop Press:

50 Police invaded the sanctuary of Viraj Mendis at 7.30 a.m. on January 18th and took him into detention. They want to deport him to the 'Killing Fields' of Sri Lanka before any appeal to the European Court of Human Rights is submitted. In December, the House of Lords rejected his appeal. Other deportations are occurring and black people are determined to campaign to resist such racist measures.

PICKETS SPREAD

34 women employees at Chelsea Girl chain store in Belfast have been sacked for refusing to work overtime without pay during the run up to Xmas.

Conditions at all Chelsea Girl branches are appalling with low pay, working overtime without extra pay and the threat of instant dismissal if employees join a Union. Despite this Belfast workers secretly joined USDAW about a year ago. Since the sacking over 4 months ago the strikers have been picketing the store. They call on their supporters to picket Chelsea Girl shops throughout Britain and Ireland. Some groups in Britain have indicated that they are going to picket their local stores and the picketing of the Liverpool shop has already started.

Contact: Chelsea Girl Strikers, c/o USDAW, Leicester House, Royal Avenue, Belfast 1.

ON YER BIKE!

On Wed. 9th November Norman "head-it" Tebbit was due to speak at the Polytechnic of North London. He was met with a demo of 500 students, many of whom were furious at the proposed students loan scheme. Shouts of "Brighton" and "on yer bike" [among others] were politely expressed! Tebbit never got to speak, but eight students were later suspended and one worker forced to resign.

INSIDE INFO

'A Lurking Doubt'

Since CI 21 published the plight of Tom Curtis, events have moved rapidly. Tom, who was wrongly convicted of the murder of a retired banker in 1984, has constantly protested his innocence, an active protest which landed him in the notorious Parkhurst F-Wing. There, he and his wife defeated a ploy to have him transferred to Broadmoor, whereabove is inscribed 'Abandon all hope

Coincidental with the launch of 'A Lurking Doubt', (The Campaign to Free Tom Curtis), he threatened to go on hunger strike unless transferred. He was, immediately - at night, in a taxi - to Long Lartin.

Tom has not only been consistently refused leave to appeal, even in the face of new evidence, but has also been repeatedly denied Legal Aid. Recently his solicitor threatened a Judicial Review of this denial. The prison authorities relented at once. No explanation has been forthcoming for this swift turn-about. Tom attended the hearing, and has been awarded Legal Aid to prosecute three police perjurers.

Tom Curtis NS4982
HMP Long Lartin
S. Littleton Worcs

ATHENS, GREECE: Police fired tear gas and protestors replied with stones and petrol bombs as a 3,000 strong anarchist demonstration clashed with police on 17 November.

John Perotti

In 1984, prison-workers at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility asked the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) if they could join. Membership and full support was given, but the fight to unionise the prison has been long and bloody. The prisoners elected delegate, John Perotti, is at present fighting 40 lawsuits, mostly assaults by screws, 15 of them on himself, including being kicked and truncheoned while handcuffed to a wheelchair on the 42nd day of a hunger strike. John is kept in a Super-Max block, allowed two short walks per week, wears only a white jumpsuit and is strip searched, cuffed and leg-ironed when leaving or entering the block. He recently lost a court case and was ordered to pay costs. If these aren't paid all the other charges against the screws will be written off. The Superintendent has recently confiscated John's Wobbly card, and banned the IWW paper, Industrial Worker, from the prison. This was done before and was stopped by a campaign of protest letters.

This is an important struggle and needs support.

Donations: John Perotti 167-712
Box 45699 SOCF
Lucasville
Ohio 45699-0001
USA



The children of Namibia in defiant mood

BOYCOTT SCHOOL

South African colonialism has been shaken by probably the most far-reaching mass resistance in Namibian history. Based on a significant alliance between workers and students, the mass mobilisation has taken the form of a four month school boycott (March - July '88) by 50,000 students and a national two day strike by one third of the industrial workforce.

The wave of student protest and solidarity action began with student opposition to the location of military bases near to schools.

In March, students at the Ponghosi Secondary School on the border with Angola, boycotted classes, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the military base. Half an hour after a military attack on the base, mortar fire hit the girls' dormitory killing one girl and another died some days later. The students walked out pledging not to return until the base had gone.

By June the boycott had spread, firstly in the north and then southwards and throughout the entire country.

In Katutura all schools went on strike at the beginning of June. Police, hidden in vans, invaded an early morning gathering of pupils planning their protest activities for the day, firing rubber bullets and using tear-

gas and sjamboks. Several students erected barricades by placing burning tyres and rocks on the roads.

ROCKS NAMIBIA

Between 70 and 90% of the National Workforce heeded the strike call; workers at meat factories, beverage factories, the postal service, railways and transport services all took action in solidarity with the students.

South Africa's Administrator General, Louis Pienaar, refused to move the bases, claiming they are there to 'protect the children'. The South African military responded to the boycott with brutal attacks on students and wholesale arrests.

On July 19th a return to classes was called for by parents, teachers and the leadership of NANSO - the student organisation.

SCHOOL BOYCOTT

Ignoring this, pupils at the three schools which provoked the strike - Ponghosi, Ogongo and Ombalantu, have stated that, until the bases are removed, they will continue their boycott.

Students at Rundu Secondary School are demanding the dismissal of four white teachers who beat up pupils who participated in the boycott, before they return to the classroom.

Struggles continue Info: Shocking Pink.

13 Sept: At least 6,600 prisoners from all over France refused food answering a call from Parisian prisoners. This action was the latest in a series which started 2 years ago and intensified over the summer. The prisoners demand: the abolition of solitary confinement, punishment cells, prison courts and the separation of political prisoners. They demand conjugal visits and a minimum wage for working prisoners (same as workers

outside). They are also struggling to improve prison conditions and these differ according to the prison. They include protests against poor medical care, over population and for better reception facilities for their visitors. This movement cannot be stopped by isolating and separating the main activists - the State's response to date. The day of action is a warning of other struggles to come.

BANKER'S FLEE

Last September, Berlin hosted the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The following is an eyewitness account of the demonstrations which took place.

"The conference lasted 3 days. We arrived at Berlin Airport to see banners inscribed with 'Bankers of the World - Welcome to Berlin'. Outside the airport we saw loads of riot police, some of the 10,000 gathered from all over Germany.

The organisers of the anti IMF campaign had set up a 24 hour legal service, their own medical team, food kitchens, information points and published a daily newspaper. It was very well organised.

For 4 days there was non-stop activity against the IMF with literally thousands of people involved. The first demo we went to was attended by around 80,000. There was street theatre which went down really well - one thing that didn't go down well with the bankers was the attacks on them, their cars and hotels. Bankers were caught up in 'kessles' (riot cops holding back demonstrators in a circle). These were broken many times. We saw police cars turned over, bankers' cars wrecked - some bankers were beaten up.

Demonstrators hired cars, drove them to certain places and set them alight. People used their own vehicles to block roads and slow down traffic. One big store (like Harrods) had its windows boarded up and thousands of pounds of damage was made to banks and stores. Thousands of leaflets were distributed, exposing the IMF's ties with apartheid, 3rd World exploitation, destruction of rain forests and tribal people's environments. It made a nice change to see those directly responsible for a lot of the world's misery and poverty having the tables turned on them".

FREE THE 3!

On 12th December 350 people demonstrated at Wormwood Scrubs prison to demand the release of all the convicted prisoners of the '85 Tottenham Uprising, and particularly the 3 'Life' prisoners whose final leave to appeal was the next day.

STOP PRESS: Injustice continues - the 3 were refused leave to appeal.

A WORLD TO WIN

ALGERIAN INTIFADA

After the Algerian government announced price increases in essential foods. Young Algerians from the poverty stricken Bab el-Oned district of the capital fought a four day battle with the security forces who were trying to stop youths ransacking shops for food. On October 9th the trouble spread to Oran where demonstrators were met with live ammunition.

After this the government flooded the shops with essential goods, but to date [January] trouble is still flaring up because of high prices.

SCUPPERED

8 million Spanish workers joined in a 1 day general strike on December 14th. The action was against the imposition of a 'cheap labour' youth training scheme, and in opposition to the Socialist Party government policy of keeping wages and public spending down while profits rise. Shaken by the massive protest, the government has now withdrawn the youth training scheme.

ANGRY

Turkey: For years the local councils and army garrisons had dumped refuse in a street right in the midst of a large working class settlement.

On 3rd August, women and children tired of living in a health hazard, armed with axes and pickaxe handles, blocked a main road for ten hours and demanded a stop to the rubbish dumping.

The army and terrified local authorities agreed to all their demands on the spot. Info: Outwrite

COP THIS!

1,000 Papuan miners barricaded an airstrip in Tabubil, New Guinea in October when O.K. Tedi Ltd. refused to negotiate over wages and conditions. A pitched battle with tear gas throwing cops and soldiers followed. Strikers kept their spirits up by free shopping in bars and shops.

December: The giant Bougainville copper mine ground to a halt when Papuans sabotaged power supplies.

In Montreal disabled activists disrupted the annual convention of the American Public Transit Association held at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Demonstrators blocked a main road. Others chained their wheelchairs to the hotel doors.

In Peru 70,000 miners recently negotiated rises after a bitter 56 day stoppage. The imposition of

austerity, coupled with a crippling terror war with Sendero [maoist] guerillas, is leading to heightened tensions in implementing the impoverishment of workers and peasants.

FRANKFURT. Oct. 15th: The fascist National Democratic Party planned a big demonstration to mark the start of their campaign for the European election in 1989, but they had to cancel it because of a big coalition of anti-fascists, who announced a huge counterdemonstration and bloody noses!

NURSES ANGRY AT REGRADING SWINDLE

Angry nurses and midwives have been taking action against the government's regrading exercise. A "work-to grade" protest spread country-wide in November and December.

Defying management and Union bureaucrats, nurses took all-out indefinite strike action (with emergency cover) at Leavesden in Herts and at Prestwich and Springfield Hospitals in Manchester. Catering and ancillary staff struck together with nurses for 15 days in November at West Cumberland Hospital.

The Springfield strikers stated: "The only thing the Tories listen to is strike action. We call on other nurses to join the strike and other workers to come down to the picket line....."

C-action

"There is a lot of discontent that the unions accepted the deal in the first place" writes a West Yorks health worker. "It has only really benefited nurses in more managerial positions. Nurses feel that this is a last opportunity to get something from the current government, passivity now will lead to the solidification of the regrading with vast swathes of nurses frozen in low paid, low status jobs.

BIGOTS BLASTED

Gay men and lesbians protested for three days this May in Sacramento, California against the Governor's veto of three bills which would have banned job and housing discrimination based on sexual orientation, increased AIDS education and funded more AIDS research. On May 9, 41 activists were arrested for a sit in at the Governor's office. They mocked police who wore gloves as a protection against AIDS by wearing rubber gloves to ward of 'swine flu'. One woman was injured when police stormed the peaceful protest.

NON-SPENDING SPREE

Gangs of youths went free shopping in Leith's Kirkgate Centre in the week-ends leading up to Xmas. Several groups marched through shops shouting and distracting security guards. During the confusion others helped themselves from shelves and disappeared before the police arrived.

In Yorkshire, about 95% of nursing assistants and auxiliaries have been regraded on the lowest grade. Enrolled nurses usually find themselves on C - the lowest they could expect.

The threat that regrading represents affects everyone who works on a ward. There is a clear managerial strategy to separate off the nurses who take responsibility from those who work underneath them.

All hands

This strategy aims for the creation of a 'temporary' nursing workforce; that is because the pay is poor for an 'on hands' nurse, few will stick it. As posts develop a high turn-over agency nurse will become more attractive for management. This backdoor privatisation is part of the 'professionalisation' of nurses. The government ideal is to have nurses' contracts drawn up on an individual rather than collective basis.

Lesbians and gays in Wolverhampton now have speaking rights on the Council's equal opportunities committee. This token gesture was enough to outrage the Tories who threatened to fight this decision under Section 28. Stink bombs were let off during the Tory speech by activists in the public gallery which the Mayor threatened to clear. One of the gay activists commented on the Council's generosity, 'Whilst they refuse to oppose Section 28 and the threat of legal action from the Tories continues, we cannot recognise the legitimacy of this Council's claim to serve and represent us We refuse to be silenced by worthless paper promises and equal opportunism. We demand action'.

Info: Capital Gay & Pink Paper



In West Yorks there is quite widespread working to grade, collectively organised in some hospitals, but often without the unions knowing, simply individual nurses taking the initiative and refusing to work beyond the job description management has drawn up. I've heard of no actual disciplinaries here as a result of working to grade, but management threats and intimidation abound.

Lou grade

The problem is that individual working to grade tends to get absorbed by other nurses. To be done properly the tactic requires the support of all the nurses in a particular unit.

Where the tactic seems to be working is at Stanley Royds Psychiatric Hospital, Wakefield, where the work to grade has resulted in the hospital being taken out of the hands of management and care implemented on the initiative of the actual nurses. What is happening is that management has been hearing one thing from the nurses in charge of the wards (e.g. that no-one has had a bath due to the regrading dispute) while a different kind

of reality actually takes place on the ward. This has been backed up by strikes (e.g. on Dec. 12th) where management have tried to impose authority through disciplinaries.

Solidarity

Apart from individual cases there have been no examples of West Yorks management giving way to a collective work to grade, unlike Trent where some collective victories have been scored. Management are clearly hoping that a 'Xmas Truce' (suggested by some idiot in COHSE's Sheffield office) could extend into a New Year's defeat of the work-force."

We say - don't let this happen! To win, struggles must be spread. A Leicester Health Worker says: "The NHS dispute, and all other disputes are not isolated and different; they are all RICH versus POOR. We must not let politicians and trade unions pull wool over our eyes...again. If we act now in solidarity then we will win."

Prestwich NUPE Nurses Strike Committee. Tel: 061 773 9121.

Fed up of being ordered about and exploited? Sick of living in poverty while the profit system benefits a powerful few? Angry about men oppressing women? Disgusted at the many other injustices in today's society?

You're not alone. Lots of people round the globe are not only fed up, they're fighting back. In Counter Information we report this often-censored resistance, in the hope of encouraging more such activity.

We stress the importance of people directly controlling their struggles, outside the control of political parties, trade unions or any leaders. Replacing one set of rulers with another - as has happened in the 'Communist' Party - ruled regimes, and as left-wing parties and national liberation movements want - is no solution. We encourage today's resistance to aim for the complete overthrow of all relationships whereby some people oppress others. The world's resources should be owned and controlled by all, and used to satisfy human needs.

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

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