

COUNTER INFORMATION

LATE APRIL/MAY/JUNE 1989



18 March, Glasgow: 15,000 demonstrate for non-payment!

WE'RE NOT PAYING !

'Today thousands of demonstrators marched.....err sorry we're not covering that item' BBC News 18.3.89

The missing news? 15,000 people marched through Glasgow to demonstrate for mass non-payment of the poll tax. Along the route people waved from houses and buses and honked car horns. Lorry drivers put placards in their cabs.

Groups arrived from all over Britain - from as far as Southampton. Community groups predominated but there was solid Trade Union support despite the STUC instruction to affiliated organisations NOT to support the march. (The STUC demo on 1st April saw 20-30,000 marching with a sizeable and noisy non-payment presence.)

INCREASING CONTEMPT

This is the latest attack by the Labour Party/Trade Union leaders on the non-payment movement. However increasing contempt for orders issued by Labour bureaucrats has caused the Tories to doubt if their chief poll tax collectors (Labour controlled local authorities) can deliver the goods. This is despite the fact that Labour authorities have threatened some who refused to register with warrant sales, wage arrestment and seizing of bank accounts.

The Labour leadership debate has centred on the most 'humane' way of collecting fines and surcharges. John Mulvey 'left' leader of Lothian Labour Group supports non-payment but not non-collection and will prosecute those who don't pay for 'ideological reasons' ie anyone not in dire poverty.

Trade Union leaders are struggling to shackle resistance and have begun victimising activists. Edinburgh NUPE No 1 branch has suspended 2 shop stewards for a year after the branch affiliated to the Lothian Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Activists in Midlothian EIS are threatened with disciplinary action. The STUC has told the Shopworkers union USDAW in Edinburgh, not to defend any members sacked by Sainsburys at Cameron Toll for wage arrestment for non-payment. However Prestonfield Community Resistance to the Poll Tax plan to mount pickets of the store and call for a boycott.

RIISING ANGER

These attempts at control are desperate measures confronted by rising grass roots anger. Poll tax activists have already forced John Lewis Stores to withdraw sacking threats against non-paying staff by threatening to picket the store over Christmas. Local CPSA branches and Lothian Claimants Union have produced a joint leaflet for claimants and benefit staff advocating non payment and asking staff not to dock the benefits of non-payers. Lothian Region NALGO have an official policy of not implementing the tax, but the finance and computer workers involved are not yet prepared to take action.

The Scottish Federations of Anti Poll Tax Groups, while firmly committed to collective non-payment, are still dominated by the socialist rearguard, Militant (especially) and the Socialist Workers Party. Militant's tendency to dominate and bag all executive posts alienates and excludes many potential activists. They are soft on the Labour Councils, being unenthusiastic about action to defend people against non-registration penalties. The SWP push the absurd line that the way forward is to pressure Labour and Trade Union leaders in to leading the struggle against the Poll Tax. The real road to victory lies with self-organisation and self-originated direct action where people get a sense of their own power.

Anti poll tax groups have been successful when they have gone on the offensive. Earlier this year members of Aberdeen Against the Poll Tax locked themselves inside Sheriff Officers premises for two hours to protest against their collecting fines for non registration. This was front page news.

Awareness grows that penalties for non-payment are quite mild. You can't be fined or jailed (in Scotland) and opposition is becoming increasingly hard line. The registration process is still incomplete and becoming an embarrassing mess thus boosting confidence among the growing army of non-payers.

SECOND FRONT

Now registration starts in England and Wales and we must pass on our experience. We suggest well advertised public burnings of registration forms or mass collective send backs of blank forms. The disruptive tactics of the 'send back with a question' campaign are effective but this does alert the authorities to your existence.

Harrasment of Poll tax canvassers (SCABS) is vital. Widespread public hostility has resulted in resignations and difficulties in recruitment. Advertising resistance is essential too. In some schemes the numerous anti poll tax posters intimidated canvassers into mailing forms. Give false information. Register fictitious people. Resist with direct action. Picket and occupy Registration offices and government buildings. Above all organise your struggle from below - don't follow self-styled political leaders.

Info packs to genuine anti poll tax groups and those committed to setting up groups from Pigeonhole CR c/o 11 Forth St, Edinburgh. Send a large S.A.E.

FIGHTING RACISM

Since the violent deportation of Viraj Mendis 24 members of his Defence Campaign have been arrested. Pickets of courts and cop shops have forced some charges - against Sonia Hughes and Adrian - to be dropped. Sonia may still go to prison.

VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL

In 1986 Francis Okanlami sent his passport to the Home Office requesting renewal of his leave to stay - he has never seen it since. On 3rd May 1988, police raided his home demanding Francis's passport. Now he must report to the police weekly and his family live in fear of his deportation.

Francis Okanlami Defence Campaign, 1st floor, Elliot House, 3 Jacksons Row, Manchester M2 5NJ Tel.061 834 6564

Babar Hussein of Glasgow is threatened with deportation to Pakistan. He would leave behind his wife Roheela and son Zohaib.

Babar Hussein Defence Committee c/o Scottish Asian Action Committee, 537 Sauchiehall St., Glasgow G37 7Q

Earlier this year 2 Somali students were attacked by white racists in Edinburgh's Cowgate. One died. A protest march is planned for 3rd June. Assemble in the Grassmarket 1pm.

Lothian Black Forum, c/o TURC, 12a Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

A WORLD TO WIN

Seoul [S: Korea] - Underground railway workers opened the system's turnstiles and offered free journeys yesterday to the system's 2.5 million passengers as part of a three-day protest.

7th March '89.

ITALY, LATE JANUARY: Steelworkers forced the government to retreat over EEC-inspired plans to close most of the Bagnoli plant near Naples. This followed a demo where workers dumped 1,000 tonnes of foundry coke in Central Naples!

PARIS 15 JANUARY: 200 homeless and poorly housed people took over a building owned by the government housing body OPHLM. They aim to make the 6 storey building in Rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi their home. This is the latest of many squats, occupations and demos organised by the "Committee of the Badly-Housed".

Contact: Comite des mal-loges, 67 rue des Vignoles, 75020 Paris. Info: Le Monde Libertaire.

NORWAY: As public spending cuts bit country wide, 10,000 of Halden's 26,000 inhabitants struck on 3 November against the closure of the local hospital. 11 days later in Sauda 3,000 of the 5,500 population demonstrated to keep their hospital open.

DALSTON, LONDON: 4,000 people marched through Hackney in early March in opposition to police raids on the local Turkish community. 40-50 alleged "illegal immigrants" were arrested and 10 have already been deported.

BHOPAL, INDIA: Protestors attempted to storm the Union Carbide Chemical plant in December on the 4th anniversary of the disaster which killed 3,000 and crippled 26,000.

FRANCE, FEBRUARY. Organising through daily mass meetings, cleaners on the Paris public transport system took successful strike action. The gains made by the Comatec workers included higher wages, improved conditions and 30 temporary jobs made permanent.

Contact: CNT/RP, 33 Rue de Vignoles, 75020 Paris

SOUTHERN ITALY, SEPT/OCT: The threatened arrival of a chemical waste ship led to a successful mass revolt in Manfredonia. Demos, street blockades, a general strike, and the storming of the Town Hall forced the poison ship to leave the area.

Info: Centro di Documentazione Comunista L. Pinto, Via Mormanno 19, Foggia, Italy

DUTCH SQUATTING - A FINE TRADITION

For years Holland has celebrated National Squatters Week at the end of February. Traditionally squatters increase their activities to emphasise the need for squatting and to show that the growing yuppification of cities cannot be forced down our throats as easily as the state believes.

Actions took place all over Holland and included: squatting houses and a church, occupying the Dept of Justice and offices of the Christian Democrats, an attempted squat of a university building and the circulation of an anti-city newspaper.

In Amsterdam 200 people took part in a bicycle demo. An alternative sight-seeing tour of squats listed for eviction and yuppified buildings where squatters used to live.

"Yuppie Dreams are Nightmares, Reclaim the City"

During the demo information was given about the picket of Shell offices on 19-21 April. The police took exception to this and drove into some bikes. Earlier they had unsuccessfully tried to arrest someone, but they could not spoil the atmosphere.

SICK OF HOMELESSNESS

Homeless people have taken over an empty hospital in Kennington, South London. Soup Kitchens are being run and there's plenty of room for people to stay.

The hospital had been empty for 4 years and was recently sold to some developer who lives in the Isle of Man. The people occupying the place intend to stay for as long as possible....

Info: Echomedia London.

HOMES FOR ALL

Holyland (Belfast): 2 houses are being squatted at present, housing 20 people. The police evicted a third squat in January on charges of burglary (dropped once the squatters left). However squatters are determined not to be intimidated by police threats of a charge which would not hold up in court. Squatters have set up a Support Group to highlight the problems of homelessness and the need for squatters rights. They are also petitioning for the right to squat in Belfast. Write for petition and info on squatting in N. Ireland to: Squatters Support Group, c/o PO Box 148, Belfast BT Info: Warzone

THE OTHER INTIFADA

While the world's press have been taking notice of the battle of stones and plastic bullets, and of the posturing of the politicians, the eyes of the Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories have been on Bect Sahour, a little town near Bethlehem on the West Bank, for the development there of new tactics of civil disobedience.



It started with "victory gardens" - vegetable patches designed to make the town self-sufficient to counteract the occupying forces attempts to starve rebellious towns into submission. The organisers of the campaign had their phones cut off, were taken in for "questioning" every day and were eventually imprisoned without trial or charges.

The people of Bect Sahour reacted to this intimidation by refusing to pay any taxes to the Israel authorities who, on July 6th, mounted a raid on the town, 'confiscating' cars, furniture and other property. But this only strengthened the resolve of the town, and the next day 1,300 marched on the town hall to hand in their I.D. cards, imposed on them by Israel, without which they are not allowed to travel or carry out any transactions, but also without which the occupying authorities have more difficulty controlling people, and of course they can no longer threaten to take away the cards. The immediate response was a wave of mass arrests and a military siege and curfew.

According to Israeli Defence Minister Rabin on July 20th tax revenues had fallen by 40% since the start of the Intifada in December '87.

SHELL SHOCKED

LETTER FROM AMERIKA

A group calling itself Shell Busters carries out 21 actions against Shell because of its involvement in South Africa and the Lubcion land.

Dec. 17th 1988... Again a group calling itself Shell Busters carry out 6 actions against Shell stations in Vancouver. Locks were glued, windows, doors and petrol pumps painted with slogans like: "Shell fuels Apartheid" and "Shell and Botha = Profit" etc.

WONDERFUL COPENHAGEN

A demo by 100 activists on the 16th January staged a protest outside a prison where 4 anti-apartheid comrades were being held. The angry crowd threw "objects" over the prison walls, and police prudently stayed away. The 4 activists were released the next day. Info: Danish ABC/Black Flag.

BTR

- Tide Turns

Elation for the embattled and courageous workers of Howick, Natal. On March 2nd a Supreme Court ruling in Pietermaritzberg quashed a key Industrial Court ruling which would have buried reinstatement claims by the 1,000 dismissed strikers from the British Tyre and Rubber plant.

Since 1985 the workers in N.U.M.S.A. have stayed solid in the face of attacks and assassination by Inkatha, the Zulu supremacist scab union. 'Long March' tours and persistent pickets at BTR investors have kept their hopes alive. A symbol of resistance and workers solidarity.

[Long March bulletin: by donation from P.O: Box 153, Leicester].

THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Since January 1987 women can no longer legally obtain information on abortion from any clinic or agency in Ireland.

The Abortion Information Campaign unreservedly condemns this judgement. To deny women access to information suggests that women cannot be trusted with this information. We have the right to choose whether to continue with our pregnancies or not.

Women will not stop travelling to Britain for abortions. Between 10 and 30 women a day now have the further trauma of no practical help, guidance or counselling before they arrive in Britain.

The aim of the Campaign is to oppose the ban and undermine the ruling to make it unworkable by providing information and counselling to women about abortion. This means openly distributing telephone numbers, addresses, etc., and supporting anyone who will give out the information.

*Abortion Info. Campaign,
c/o 6 Crow Street,
Dublin 2.*

GIPSIES UNDER ATTACK

Sterilization of Gypsy women is the latest tactic employed in Czechoslovakia's campaign of genocide against the Romany Gypsy people.

Gypsy women who agree to be sterilized are paid 25,000 crown - more than 5 months average wages. They are encouraged to be sterilized by health and social workers, and are especially pressured on visits to ante and post-natal clinics. The women are often sterilized without their consent. They are asked to sign papers under extreme circumstances - during or immediately after labour - and they may be told they are signing for temporary contraception. Even those women who consent to be sterilized are not told that the operation is irreversible.

Despite a forced re-settlement which destroyed 851 of the 1,155 Gypsy communities in Czechoslovakia, Gypsy women are beginning to organise to stop this campaign of genocide and prevent widespread sterilization. *Spare Rib.*

VENEZUELA ERUPTS

The poor and impoverished shanty dwellers of Caracas and other cities rose in revolt on March 1st against a harsh austerity package imposed by the social democratic Government at the bidding of the I.M.F.

INSIDE INFO

LINDA COUCH

For 14 years Linda Couch was tortured, in all senses, by her husband, who threatened to kill their children if she left him. When Linda attempted suicide he induced vomiting, walked her all night, and then tortured her.

One night in 1984 he produced a pistol. Linda kned him in the balls, and in the ensuing struggle for the gun her husband was shot dead.

After two farcical trials, Linda was sentenced to 45 years in prison. All her letters to her children are returned unopened.

Linda writes: "Violence has got to stop. Women are not punching bags, we are human beings....I need help to fight this injustice. I will not regain my freedom

without help from others who care."

Linda Couch, c/o 1479 Collins Ave., Marysville Ohio 43040-17943 NC, USA. Info:Linda Couch Defence Fund c/o Counter Info.

FLY FREE LEONARD!

Leonard Peltier has been in a US jail for 13 years for the murder of 2 FBI agents. A crime he did not commit. Leonard was nailed for being a member of the American Indian Movement. The FBI committed perjury (the 1986 Appeal Court accepted this) and coerced a main witness. New evidence shows that the gun tested did not match the shell

Write to: LP Canadian Defence Committee, 43 Chandler Drive, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

ORGANISING

Since our last issue, John Perotti, IWW Union organiser in the Ohio Correctional Facility, has been jet-hosed, truncheoned, repeatedly thrown in the slammer, had his elbow dislocated, refused attendance at his grand mother's funeral, and been accused of burning two plexiglass riot shields. Struggle continues.

John Perotti (167-712), POB 45699, Lucasville, Ohio 45699-0001, USA. Perotti Defence Fund / Information / Petitions - c/o C.Info.

MARTIN FORAN

Martin Foran is to be returned to Walton Prison where he was brutally assaulted by screws who are still there. His supporters are trying to stop this transfer.

A comprehensive case document on Martin's fight is available in binder from Box JAG, 52 Call Lane, Leeds L11, for £2 and large SAE and post. Martin Foran(C51 196), HMP Frankland, POB 40, Frankland-Low-Newton, Brasside, Durham DH1 5XF.

DUBLIN DOLE ACTION

The James Connolly Unemployed Action Group write from Dublin:

In our local dole office there was a surge of cut offs and daily signings so we picketed the office, sent press statements and received a hearty response from claimants. The Special Branch arrived to intimidate us and it worked to our advantage - when claimants coming out saw the filth - they joined us! The picket was successful and the daily signings stopped.

PHILIPPINES

MANILA

Eye Witness Account: People belonging to F.I.N.D. (*families of victims of involuntary disappearances*) staged a protest as disappearances continue to get worse.

The group declared December 4th "A National Day Of The Disappeared".

The protest attracted a large number of people, and one speaker blamed the military and elements in the government. The speaker also wanted immediate action and justice for their loved ones. The protest, which was staged beside McDonalds, also highlighted the role the multinationals have for the poverty most people lived in.

300 were reported dead in the bitter street fighting and a military clampdown imposed throughout the country.

ET GOES HOME

The workers without jobs aren't the doing the jobs without wages. By March according to government figures only 157,000 of the planned 300,000 Employment Training Scheme places had been taken up - allowing for trainees awaiting placement and leaving this could be 40,000 - 50,000.

February 14-28th saw country-wide actions against major ET agent NACRO. In Oxford 10 protestors occupied the NACRO office for over 4 hours on 21 February. In January a Henry Boots Building site ground to a halt as ET and YTS workers swarmed round leafletters from the Glasgow Campaign Against Social Security Cuts. June 15th is the date for a national strike and day of action against cheap Labour Schemes.

CONTACT: For info on regular FIGHTING WORKFARE bulletin and conferences: Phil Griffin, TGWU, 1 Crescent, Salford M5 4PR, Tel 061 736 1407 x34; For national claimants news-sheet HASSLE: Claimants Union, 14 St Ann Lane, Norwich, Tel Norwich 661241

HELL IN HACKNEY

Police in London have sank even deeper into the gutter. On 15 January Mr. and Mrs Burke (aged 76 and 70) were dragged from their home in Hackney and physically forced into a police van, where the 70 year old woman was pinned to the van floor by police who stood on her ankles and wrists.

At the police station Mr Burke was released without charge - but Mrs Burke had to undergo a strip-search. She was released at 12.15am on 16 January, and the charge was dropped the following day. Mr and Mrs Burke are now making a civil action against the police.

PUT THE TORIES IN THE DOCKS

The government have launched an attack on dockers' job security and conditions by abolishing the Dock Labour Scheme. To win, a national dock strike will need active international solidarity to stop all UK ships and all cargoes in and out of the UK.

LONDON, February: 350 NUPE workers in Camden Council voted to occupy the Director of Finance's office to win overdue backpay. More than 200 marched round the Town Hall looking for him. Eventually they cornered the Director and some Councillors - they agreed to cough up!

VICTORY!

All charges have been dropped against 11 people arrested in October and charged with kidnapping Mark Berry. Berry had a consistent history of violence against his girlfriend. He had gone to the police claiming he had been kidnapped by former friends angry at his attacks on his girlfriend.

W.GERMANY: a growing number of health workers are organising independently of the Trade Unions, who they accuse of collaboration with the ruling class. More wages, more healthcare jobs, and shorter working hours are their demands. International links are being forged, and a European demo is planned for 25 May in Paris.

Info: Vertriebsgruppe "wir wollen alles" c/o Besetztes Haus, Buntentorsteinweg 374, 2800 Bremen 1

FLATTEN THAT H.A.T.!

This slogan is echoing round the country as tenants resist the government's plans for Housing Action Trusts (HATS) and other forms of housing privatisation. What's the uproar all about?

The government has 2 main aims in its housing policy (as in other fields). Firstly, to make the whole working class pay more for housing. And secondly, to create as many divisions in the working class as possible - divisions based both on different material circumstances and also on different attitudes.

These objectives are closely inter-related, since to impose massive increases in housing costs it is necessary to divide and weaken any potential opposition.



BREAK-UP

Through the Housing Act and the the Local Government Bill the Government is seeking to break up Council housing. Firstly it wants to expand the number of owner-occupiers, each isolated from one another and at the mercy of a thousand different building societies, banks and loan companies. This is to be supplemented by a myriad of different landlords - various housing associations, housing trusts, private companies, tenants co-ops etc. All are to operate under the much more direct influence of the market - backed up where necessary by central government restraints.

In future rents for all types of tenancies will increase substantially.

RIP-OFF

Council house revenues from rents and sales will be the main source of financing repairs and improvements and housing benefit for Council tenants, forcing rents up. Extension of 'right to buy' provisions will deter Councils from building new houses.

Housing Associations will get extra money for taking over Council houses, but this won't match the money taken off the Councils. The gap will have to be made up by private finance, which will want a market return. Thus some associations have already increased rents on new lettings by 50%.

To make housing investment more profitable, 'fair rents' and 'security of tenure' have been abolished for all new lets. Private landlords will be able to let on new short 'assured' tenancies for only 6 months.

Ominously, the government won't guarantee that housing benefit will match the new higher market rents.

CON-TRICK

The Tory government has previously promoted owner-occupation, to con workers into thinking they have a stake in the 'nation'. Even so, it has not increased mortgage tax relief in line with house price inflation, and it has hiked up interest

rates to the highest level ever. This has led to a huge increase in the number of mortgage repossessions. There is now a growing lobby in the Tory party for drastic cuts in tax relief, leading up to its abolition.

In future all workers will be expected to pay more for their housing.

To achieve the large-scale transfer of Council housing stock the government is not only restricting council spending still further, but is encouraging private landlords to make bids for whatever they want at knockdown prices. Since repeated bids can be made for the same properties only the most determined tenants will be able to resist this. What's more the government can declare Housing Action Trusts (HATS) to directly control the handing over of certain estates.

Future Council housing is likely to consist of a few relatively well-run high rent estates alongside a lot of low rent slums.

FIGHT-BACK

The prospect is indeed grim unless we can build up an effective, radical mass movement of opposition. Fortunately there are hopeful signs.

Attempts to impose HATS have sparked a spirited resistance from tenants, involving meetings hundreds-strong, noisy pickets of government ministers and harassing of consultants. More tenants are getting organised as these examples show:

- * Hulme tenants in Manchester have fought off an attempt to impose a H.A.T.
- * Tenants in Rochester, Portsmouth and Torbay have forced Councils to withdraw plans to sell off their houses.
- * 40 tenants fighting plans for a H.A.T. in Sandwell occupied the Birmingham office of Price Waterhouse (consultants for the sell-off).
- * Tenants in Rochford, Essex and Arun, Sussex won votes against Council house sell-offs.
- * Gloucester tenants have picketed the Council, occupied the housing office and made links with local Council workers and with tenants groups in NE England.
- * A meeting in October attracted 3,000 tenants and Council workers from 6 HATed areas.
- * Tenants' resistance has forced the government to drop compulsory HATS and agree that tenants can vote on each proposed HAT.

But this resistance needs to go much further. This can't be done through the Labour Council, Labour Party or trade union leaderships. Rather, local activists need to link up right across the country to exchange experiences and provide initial support. And connections need to be made with local authority and housing association workers who have the power to stop, or at least slow down, many of the proposals. The sheer width of the government's attack, including Social Security cuts, the Poll Tax, NHS cuts, privatisation of Council and Government services, etc is creating many potential allies.

And beating privatisation is only a first stage. Next, local and central government must be forced to put more resources into housing. And this is only a small step in the long battle to rid ourselves of ALL landlords and bosses and assert direct community control of housing and all resources.

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, to encourage 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.

COUNTER INFORMATION, PIGEONHOLE CI, C/O 11 FORTH ST, EDINBURGH, UK. For contact with CI in the north of England write: Red and Black, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester. This issue went to press 8 April 1989

Once more funds are low. Each issue costs £400. Please send what you can. Write for info on standing orders. Thanks!