

# Party or class?

## THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MINORITY

'The soldiers lagged behind the shop committees. The committees lagged behind the masses...The party lagged behind the revolutionary dynamic - an organisation which had the least right to lag, especially in a time of revolution...The most revolutionary party which history until this time had ever known was nevertheless caught unawares by the events of history. It reconstructed itself in the fires, and straightened out its ranks under the onslaught of events. The masses at the turning point were a hundred times to the left of the extreme left party.'

TROTSKY on the 1917 revolution. (1.)

'We will shoot you down like partridges.'

TROTSKY to the workers and sailors of Kronstadt in 1921. (2.)

The above quotes illustrate perfectly the contradictory nature of Leninism. The Anarchist Workers Group has previously used the term 'substitutionist' to describe the Leninist method. What does this mean in essence?

Leninism says that for a socialist revolution to be successful, all the most class conscious workers can and must be formed into a 'vanguard' party. Only this party can lead the workers towards socialism, and in fact the party represents the historical interests of the working class:

'Marxism teaches that only the political party of the working class, ie., the Communist Party is capable of uniting, training and organising a vanguard of the proletariat and of the whole mass of working people, that alone will be capable of withstanding the inevitable petty-bourgeois vacillations of this mass and the inevitable traditions and relapses of narrow craft unionism, or craft prejudices among the proletariat, and of guiding all the united activities of the whole of the proletariat, ie., of leading it politically, and through it, the whole mass of the working people. Without this the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible.' (3)

A conflict of interests between class and party cannot be envisaged, because the party is simply the most conscious layer of the class, or a specific political current within that class:

'Whoever weakens ever so little the iron discipline of the party

of the proletariat (especially during the time of the dictatorship), actually aids the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.' (4)

However, the proletariat as a whole, is something to be distrusted, and cannot be the agent of its own emancipation without the professional leadership of an intelligensia:

'The workers, we have said, still lacked a Social-Democratic consciousness; it could only come to them from outside. History in all countries attests that, on its own, the working class cannot go beyond the level of trade union consciousness, the realisation that they must combine into trade unions, fight against the employers force the government to pass such laws as benefit the conditions of the workers...As for the socialist doctrine, it was constructed out of the philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated members of the ruling class, by intellectuals. Thus Marx and Engels, the founders of modern scientific socialism, were bourgeois intellectuals. Similarly in Russia the social democratic doctrine sprang up almost independently of the spontaneous development of the working class movement.' (5)

Anarchists on the other hand, deny the right of a single political organisation to monopolise the 'historical interests' of the working class. We recognise of course, the unevenness of consciousness within our class, and we organise around our specific ideas. Yet when the interests of the class are identified with a single (and highly centralised) political organisation, Kronstadt is the inevitable result. (6)

Whilst we reject spontaneity alone as inadequate, we place our trust first and foremost in the creative energy of the class itself. For us, the most essential ingredient of socialism must be workers' democracy. It follows that this can only be the result of the self-activity of the working class, whatever guiding intervention revolutionaries may make. We place the class as a whole above our political organisation, because we recognise ourselves as a part of that class - with specific ideas which we fight for within it.

For Leninists, the organisations of the class are seen as mere transmission belts - from the party leadership, through the members and into the class via unions, factory committees, or soviets:

'It cannot work without a number of 'transmission belts' running

What we say, and what they say.

from the vanguard to the advanced class, and from the latter to the mass of working people.' (7)

When the Russian proletariat first constructed soviets in 1905, the initial reaction of the Bolsheviks was hostile:

'The council of workers' deputies is a political organisation and social democrats must leave it, because its very existence impedes the development of the social democratic movement. The workers councils may exist as a trade union, or not at all... First of all we must try and get the workers' councils to limit itself to its trade union tasks, and secondly, in case this attempt fails, the workers' council must be made to acknowledge the leadership of the Social Democratic Party, and thirdly, this having been done, it must be dissolved as quickly as possible, seeing that its parallel existence with other social democratic organisations serve no purpose.' (8)

'The participation of social democratic organisations in councils composed of delegates and workers' deputies without distinction of party...or the creation of such councils, cannot be countenanced unless we can be sure that the party can benefit and that its interests are fully protected.' (9.)

Lenin however, eventually realised the potential of the Soviets as a basis for political power, not by the class itself, but by the party on behalf of the class:

'In the transition to socialism the dictatorship of the proletariat is inevitable, but it is not exercised by an organisation which takes in all industrial workers...What happens is that the party, shall we say, absorbs the vanguard of the proletariat and this vanguard exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat.' (10.)

And the result?

'The party which holds annual congresses (the most recent on the basis of one delegate per 1000 members) is directed by a Central Committee of 19 elected at the ninth congress, the current work in Moscow has to be carried on by still smaller bodies, known as the organising bureau and the political bureau, which are elected at plenary meetings of the Central Committee, 5 members of the Central

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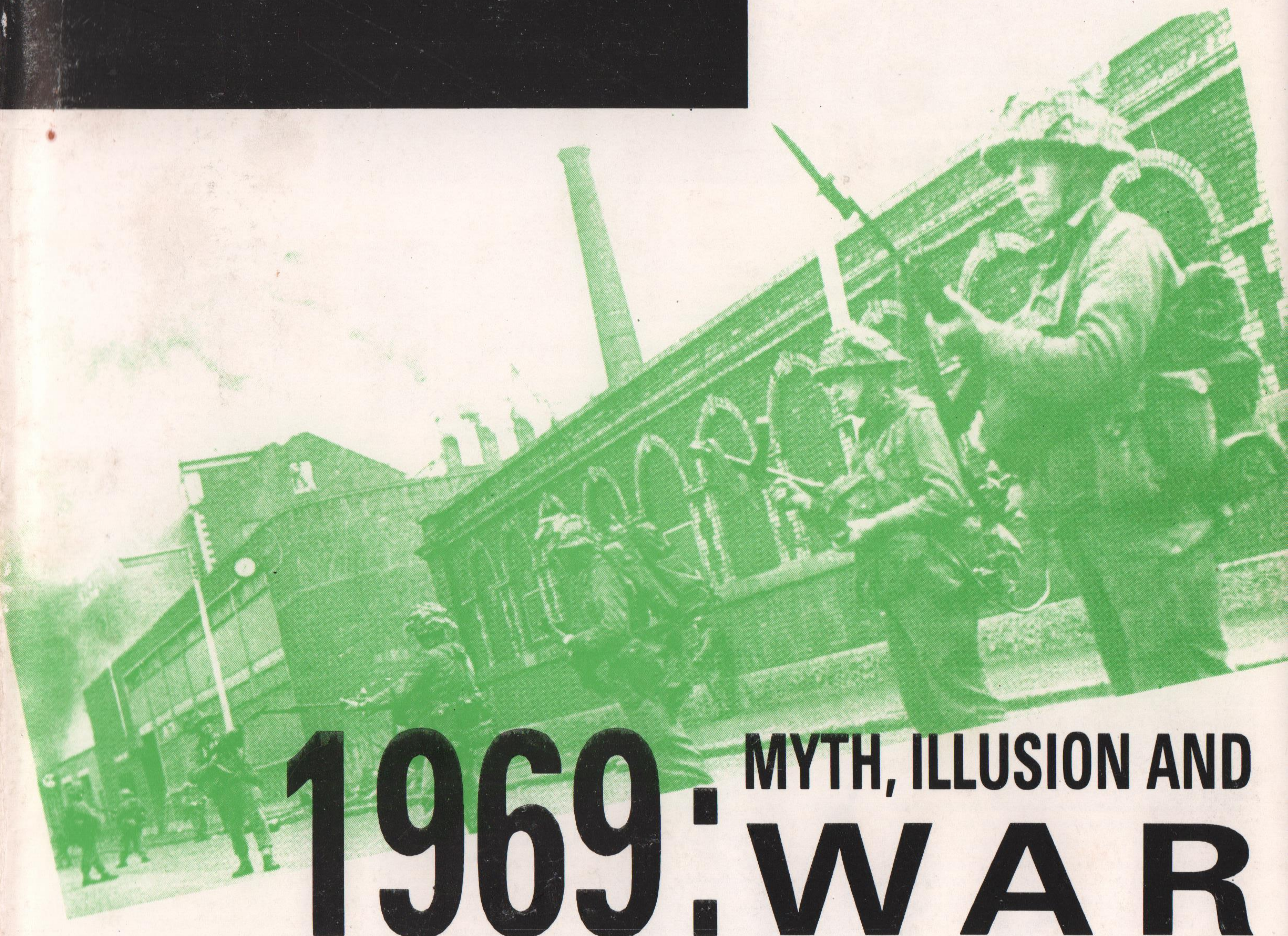
# SOCIALISM

DISCUSSION FORUM OF THE ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP

— from below —

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# 1969: MYTH, ILLUSION AND WAR

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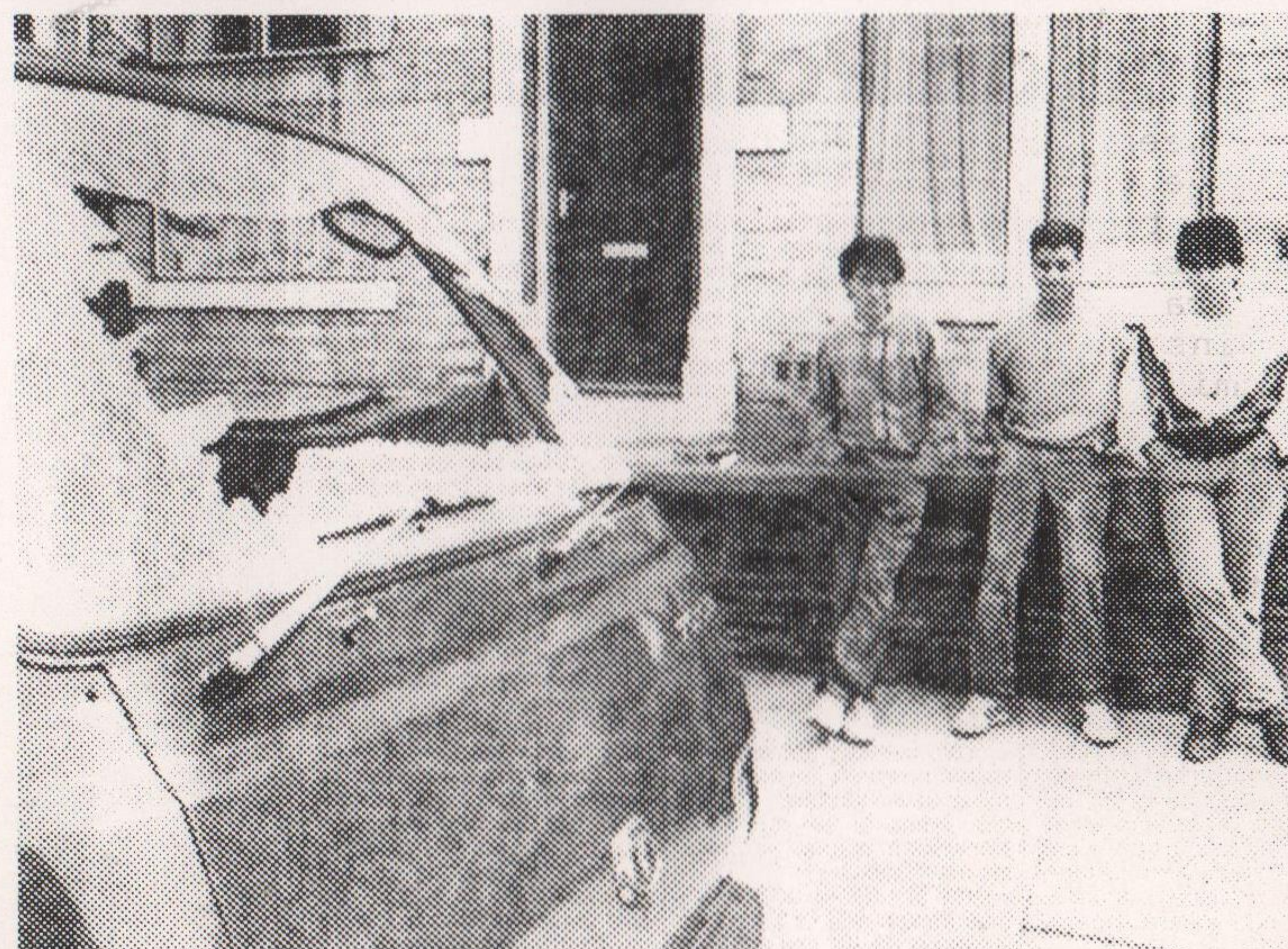
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# Socialism From Below

Welcome to the first edition of **Socialism From Below**, discussion forum of the Anarchist Workers Group. The AWG was formed in June 1988 following a split within the Direct Action Movement, over the issue of building syndicalist unions in Britain. Although we are a young organisation, we have not only grown in our first year of existence, but we have started to re-establish, for anarchism, a reputation as a serious ideological force to contend with. We have begun the task of creating an effective anarchist grouping, with clear and dynamic ideas, which can put anarchism firmly on the political agenda.

What passes for an anarchist movement today, has become divorced from the working class movement. For years anarchists have been content with living outside of society, rather than trying to change it. Anarchism is therefore seen as a 'counter-cultural' rebellion at society's margins, rather than as a dynamic force within our class. The article 'Anarchism in the Thatcher Years' takes a critical view of anarchism in the last decade, and argues for a complete re-think of anarchist strategy. A new approach demands political discussion, and an abandonment of the ghetto mentality. We hope that **Socialism From Below** can begin that discussion.

## A WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

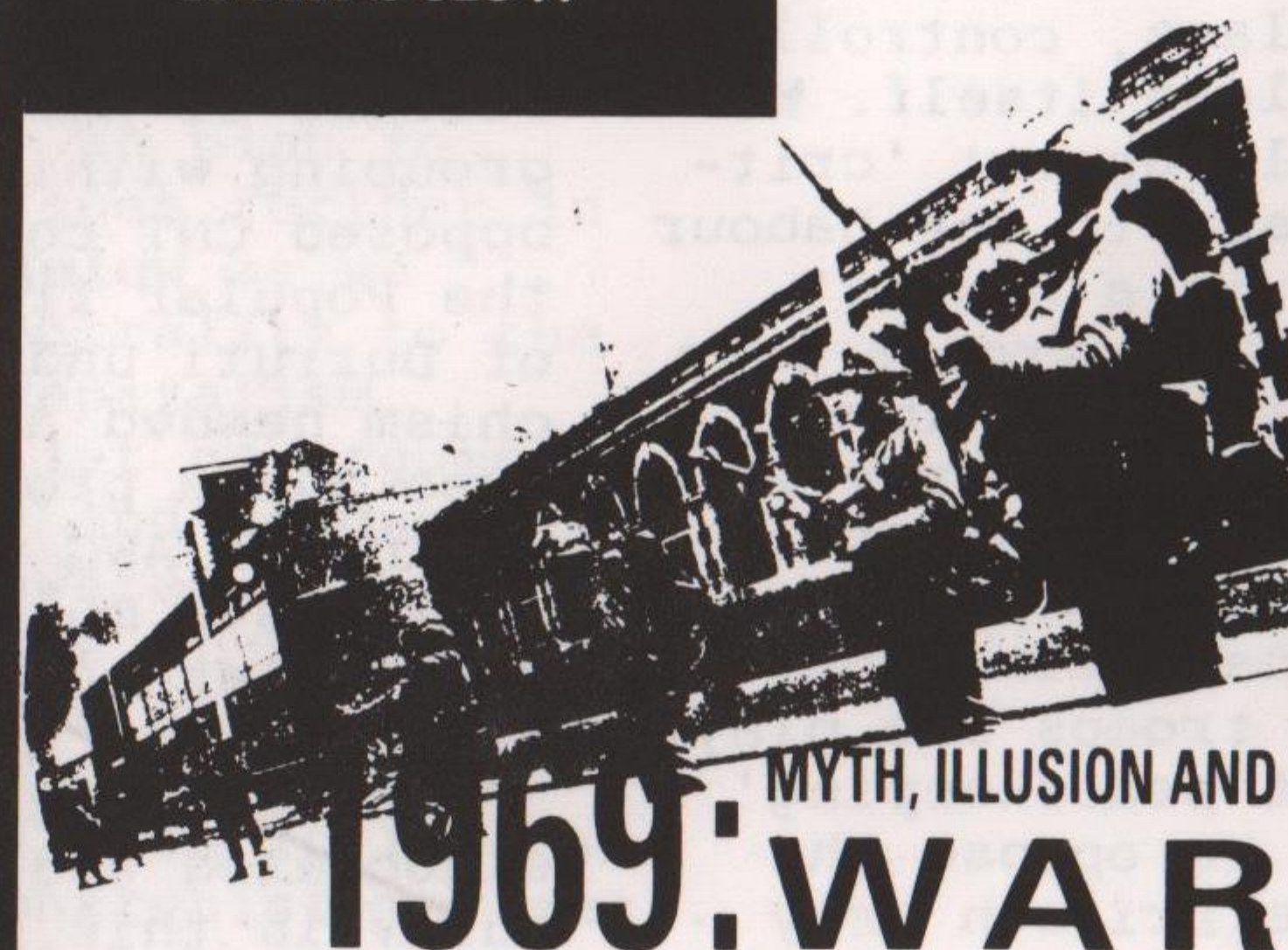
Anarchism first appeared in the wake of the industrial revolution, born out of the first workers struggles. The ideas of Bakunin emerged within the First Socialist International as a school of thought distinct from Utopian Socialism and the Marxian Socialists. The Bakuninists were the only consistent opponents of the state as an agent for affecting social change from above. Anarchists have always understood that the state apparatus, which exists to protect class society, cannot possibly be used as an instrument of workers emancipation. Bakunin warned that the 'ambiguous 'people's state' of Marx, could provide cover for the emergence of a new scientific ruling elite.

The experience of the Russian Revolution, where a tyranny calling itself Socialist, grew out of the first workers revolution, proves the validity of

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# Editorial

the anarchist case. Of course we realise the horrendous conditions following the October revolution, with famine and imperialist armies wreaking devastation. However this can never excuse the use of dictatorial methods against the working class itself. Workers democracy and self-management of industry were concepts which the Bolsheviks used and abandoned where they felt it was necessary. The factory committees and Soviets, through which the worker's exercised their power, were systematically usurped by the Party. When the Kronstadt insurgents demanded free elections to the Soviets in 1921, the Red Army was sent in to settle the argument. It was clear that the working class had been robbed of its power by the 'workers state', and a new ruling class, accountable only to itself had emerged.

## AGAINST THE STATE

Anarchists have an entirely different vision of socialism. We see workers democracy and self management of industry as essential components of our socialism. We therefore see socialism as the product of the self-activity of the mass of workers; a socialism from below, rather than a set

of nationalisation decrees imposed 'from above' by parliament, or enforced at gunpoint by a 'vanguard party'. We, unlike much of the left, understand that the working class is capable of achieving its own liberation, and that this fundamentally democratic process necessitates an entirely different form of social organisation from the existing state machine with its civil service, standing army, judiciary and police. We say workers power must be exercised through councils of elected and recallable delegates, accountable to mass assemblies, and the defence of the revolution must be carried on by democratic worker's militias, accountable to the councils. The Marxists have shown in practice that their term the 'workers state' does not necessarily entail a commitment to this democratic aspect of class power.

Most Marxists also advocate the use of the existing capitalist state to bring about progressive social change, whether through electing a left Labour Government, or capturing local authorities. This latter strategy of 'municipal socialism' has backfired in recent years as so called socialists have made council workers redundant, slashed essential services and co-operated with Poll Tax implementation. The article on the poll

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# Editorial

tax re-affirms that relying on the Labour Party to defend living standards is a dead-end. Anarchists are un-compromising on this issue. Workers interests can only be furthered by the mass action of the working class, controlled by the working class itself. We give no political support 'critical' or otherwise, to the Labour Party because it is a bosses' party which has sent troops into break strikes, tightened immigration laws and sent the army into Northern Ireland. The keynote article 'Myth Illusion and War' rejects the dominant view that that the British troops are playing a 'benevolent peacekeeping' role in Ireland. We oppose the argument that the British army should police withdrawal, by disarming Loyalists, just as we oppose longer sentences for rapists. Even when it appears that the state is playing a progressive role, for example in banning pornography or dealing with child abuse- we recognise that any powers conceded to the state will be used against the working class. The Marxist misinterpretation of the state not only leads them to call for a 'workers' state' but also brings forth demands for greater state interference in our lives for example laws to outlaw racism and ban fascists from marching.

## POLITICAL ANARCHISM

To many people anarchism is the opposite of effective political organisation. Anarchists have always understood, however, that workers do not spontaneously become anarchists, but they must be won to our ideas. During the 1920's a group of Russian exiles drew similar vital lessons from their experience of the failed Russian revolution; They sketched out a short but clear outline of the necessity of anarchist political organisation, to prevent a repeat of their tragedy in future revolutions. The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communist detailed a practical strategy that is relevant in Britain today where anarchism finds itself disorganised and unable to wield much influence. The 'Platform' is discussed briefly in our book reviews, and we will be returning to this text in later issues of Socialism From Below.

The events in Spain during the 1930's prove that anarchism can become a reality. the fact that millions of workers joined an anarchist labour union- the CNT, is proof that you do not need a Bolshevik Party to precipitate a revolutionary situation. However because the working class in Spain did not complete the revolution by desroying the old state apparatus and establishing workers power, it allowed the ruling

class to re-organise and erode the gains of dual power (the militia's and the collectives.) Some anarchists in Spain did realise the necessity of establishing class power, the most significant of these being the Friends of Durruti, an anarchist grouping within the CNT, who opposed CNT collaboration with the Popular front. The Friends of Durruti understood that anarchism needed a sound theoretical base and a programme of action. We in the AWG understand that anarchists must be able to think as well as act, argue as well as fight.

Our political ideas will be elaborated and explained more fully in this, and future, issues of Socialism From Below. our immediate aim is to make libertarian communism clearly understandable; ultimately, we want our ideas to take centre stage in the class struggle.

## TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

The failure of the labour movement to successfully stave off the employers offensive in the 1980's has created a political climate that encourages defeat. The highly political nature of the attacks on our class has considerably raised the stakes involved. Every ind-

ustrial dispute faces the full weight of state legislation, media propaganda and the economic threat of unemployment. Reformism has proved itself incapable of rising to meet this challenge, because it equates workers interests with the prosperity of British capitalism. This is the root of 'New Realism'. We, unlike our labour leaders, are not prepared to wait until British capitalism revives before we start to fight. Nor, unlike some of the left, do we believe that the workers are not yet ready for political independence. We are not going to vote Labour and wait until Kinnock starts to break up strikes. Nor do we think that the working class is dead. We believe it is not only necessary but possible for our class to fight today, and win. One of the key failures of the labour movement has been to break from the shackles of the anti-trade union laws, which hamper every economic struggle today. We say that whatever the prevailing economic and political climate, the working class must mount a political challenge to Thatcher's anti-union legislation. It is the task of anarchists to argue for and assist the politicisation of all struggles, and build a movement which is ideologically and organisationally independent from the quango minded bureaucrats who head the

trade union machines. The article 'Servants no More' argues the case for a rank and file movement in one particular sector: the civil service. For anarchists, rank and file control of struggle is vital to pave the way for a social system where the working class is in control.

Part and parcel of the ruling class onslaught in the 1980's, has been a blatantly anti-working class ideological offensive. The role of women as second class citizens and 'nurturers' has been reinforced. The promotion of the family as a 'natural' social unit, and the stigmatisation of homosexual couples as 'pretended family' relationships, have ideologically underpinned the dumping of welfare provision ( through hospital closures, and benefit cuts etc ) onto the backs of working class families and primarily onto women. The Tories champion the family because it reproduces the labour force without pay, and atomises the working class. The 'Return to Victorian Values', has involved a crude

series of moral panics about Aids, football hooligans, lager louts, muggers, illegal immigrants and acid-house parties which all serve to tighten the governments' political control, and legitimise increasing state intervention in all spheres of social activity. We plan to discuss these issues further in Socialism From Below as we realise there centrality to the battle against capitalism.

We intend to let no argument go unchallenged, and no question to go un-answered. We intend to win the 'battle of ideas' through our active involvement in all the vital struggles of our class, as we work to re-build an influential anarchist movement. As we have said, our aim is to make anarchist ideas the leading ideas in a victorious workers revolution. Only in this way can we ensure the creation of a new world, where the wealth we produce is put to the service of humanity, and decision making power becomes the property of all. This is what libertarians mean

when we talk of 'communism'. We want Socialism From Below to become essential reading in the struggle for it's realisation.

SFB Editorial

Committee.

July 1989

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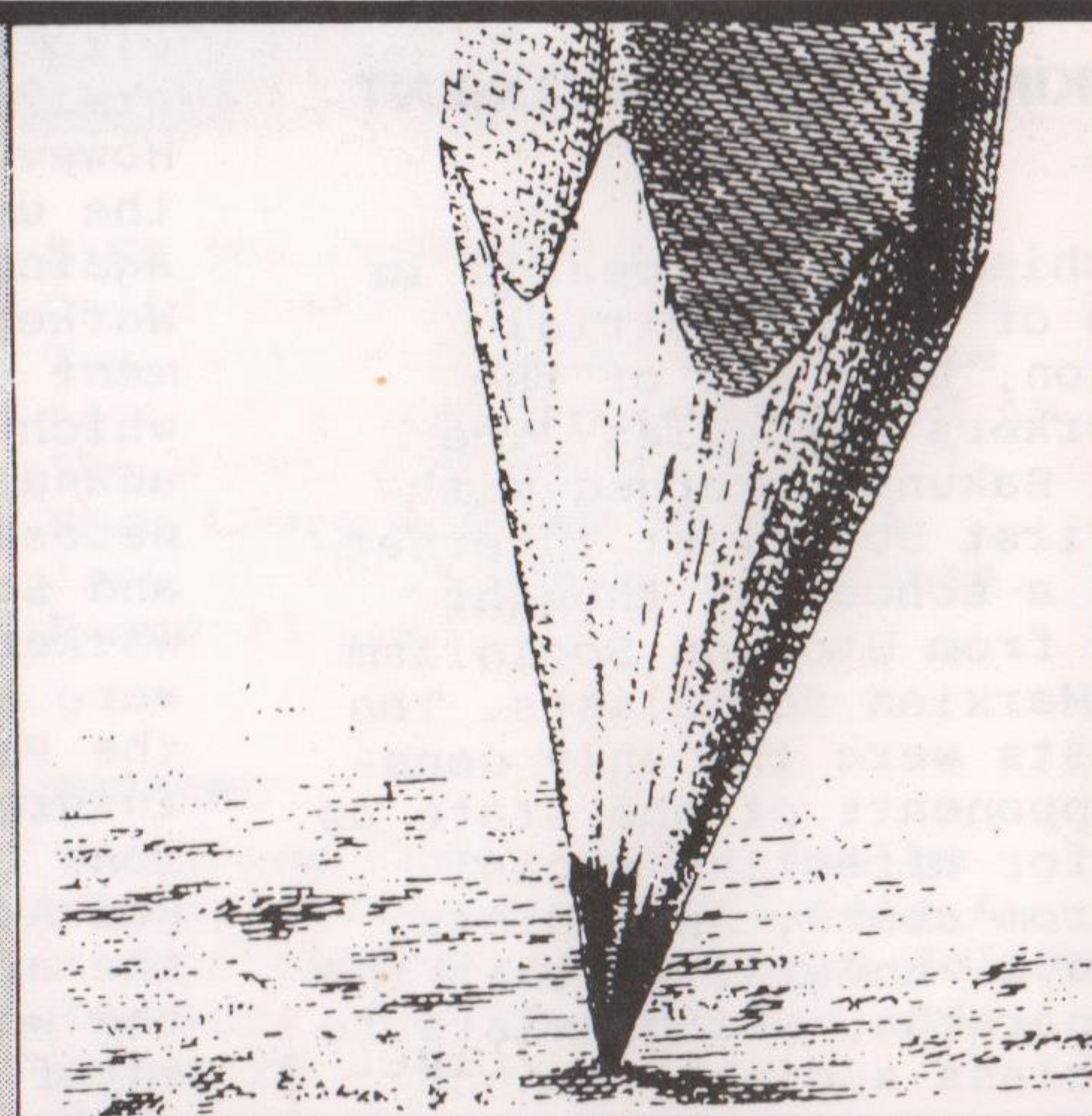
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## Letters.



In future issues of 'Socialism From Below' we will carry a letters page. This will play a role in expanding on the ideas and debate contained in the journal. Send any contributions to:

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## PRESS FUND

If you've spotted the typing errors so far, you'll realise how much we can improve upon the quality.

If you want to see anarchism back on the political map, send us a donation to help in our work.

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Thanks.



# Anarchism in the Thatcher years.

"As the global economic recession has taken its toll we have seen 10 years of a viciously anti-working class government prepared to squeeze working people harder and harder, to protect the interests of its capitalist paymasters. The crisis of capitalism has been reflected by a crisis in the left, with the disintegration of the two major revolutionary forces - the Workers Revolutionary Party and the International Marxist Group - of the 70's and the continued rightward shift of Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. One current that has remained strangely unaffected by all this, and indeed has begun to develop politically and grow in size and influence, is the anarchist movement. Here; SOCIALISM FROM BELOW examines the recent history, the political content and the way forward for anarchism after a decade of Tory rule."

For the first time in years, the start of the decade saw a real increase in the number of people referring to themselves as anarchists. This growing movement of mainly young people was in no small way influenced by the rock group 'Crass' and the imitators they spawned. Their "anarchy and peace" agit-prop was in part inspired by the "do-it-yourself" ethos of the punk-rock explosion, and in part, hankered back to the pacifistic "alternative lifestyle" tradition that had become a major facet of what passed for the British anarchist movement in the previous 20 years.

Anarchism has always had, to varying degrees, its liberal wing. This is partly because terms bandied around by anarchists, such as anti-authoritarian, freedom and justice, are in themselves meaningless and open to a wide range of interpretations when divorced from their specifically anarchist context: the day to day realities of class society, and an understanding of capitalism and why and how it should be smashed. Going right back to the days of the First International, there were those anarchists who in contrast with Bakunin (1)

"Abandoned the field of struggle of the working class in favour of a particular form of radicalised liberalism"

In Britain in the 1980s anarchism was still tightly in the grip of a rot that set in during the heyday of the 1950s peace movement. Many rank and file anti-nuclear activists (7% of the movement during 1958-65(2)), disillusioned with limitations, in terms of politics, leadership and strategy, of the CND adopted anarchism: in part as a reaction to this, and often not fully aware of the political legacy behind their new label, confusing anarchism "with a more militant liberalism" (3). Their confusion was not helped by the sectarianism of the existing - and increasingly isolated - anarchist movement who made little effort to provide a political lead or a class perspective to the new "anarchists."

Living in a state of blissful ignorance of class struggle, they promoted their ideas in "Freedom", "Anarchy Magazine" and "Peace News", taking on board and developing the ideas of pacifism, personal liberation and alternative lifestyle. The "punk anarchy" of Crass and their camp was but a continuation of this: a dressed up version of militant liberalism with electric guitars and a brand new haircut, but the same tired face

But it did catch on, striking a chord with the disaffected, young rebels - without a cause but on the look out for one. The small groupings of class - struggle anarchists "active" in the early 1980s repeated the mistakes of the 1950s by failing to acknowledge - let alone give a lead to - the new generation who were left to their own devices to "reinvent" "anarchy". In this case it meant inventing a loose, anti-statist pacifist "movement" that left the theory question of class conflict to the trots, instead proclaiming that

"Anarchists believe that if each individual can learn to act out of conscience, rather than greed, the machinery of power will collapse" (4)

The small groupings that started to spring up around the country responding to Crass's challenge were soon to be seen on CND demos clustered around their ragged black flags and handing out their leaflets and fanzines, telling the world;

"Don't give in to the authorities, make them give in to you" (5)

but never quite managing to go so far as to suggest a way that this awesome task might be achieved.

In some of the literature of the time, however, the way forward for anarchists was spelled out a bit more clearly. And reading it, you would be forgiven for believing that the anarchist movement was less a political current, more a bizarre religious cult:

"to give back to life what we have taken from it ... understand the seasons, the weather, the soil ... reject the grey filth and shit" (6)

It seems there was quite an obsession with shit. Stripping away the mystical nonsense we are left with naked personal politics: the revolution begins - and ends - within. There are, for those whose imaginations have perhaps been tainted by years of dealing with the "grey filth" some useful practical examples of how this discovery of self can be put into practise. And it's the classic lifestyle romanticism of a small band of worthy converts struggling to build the new society within the shell of the old with:

"housing co-ops or communes ... gardening groups to squat and farm disused land ... and grow medicinal herbs to cure each others headaches" (7)

All very commendable and laudable stuff, but about as revolutionary, and "anarchist" as sharing your last Rolo with someone you love. Of course there is nothing wrong with being nice to your mates and eating a lot of organic garlic, the danger was that this was substituted for the more pressing and difficult task of developing and testing out a coherent and workable revolutionary strategy that could win people over to the struggle against capitalism. Bakunin asserted that:

"the serious realization of liberty, justice and peace will not be possible whilst the majority of the population remains dispossessed" (8)

However, the punk anarchists hadn't cottoned on to this, and busily sought personal solutions to social problems. Therefore, the groups were little more than consciousness-raising rap groups existing in navel gazing isolation from the real world, helping their participants along on the quest for personal purity.

The movement in the early eighties displayed the worst kind of elitism - the politics of "if everyone was just like me wouldn't the world be a wonderful place." The concept of working class mass self-activity didn't get a look-in because there was no understanding - or will to understand the class nature of society. In fact the working class were categorized as "grey-nobodies", as people who were:

"in their willingness to bow down to authority ... the real fascist threat" (9)

So count out the working class in terms of having any positive role to play in fighting. The action to be taken - aside from changing your own life - was to be taken by the anarchists on behalf of the class and amounted to little more than adventurism and propaganda by deed:

"jam up the locks of banks and offices with superglue or cut down fences around government installations ... sabotage operations at work" (10)

Aside from that, ever living for kicks, you'd be more likely to find an anarchist on a hunt sab than a picket line,

at a free festival than a march against deportations, advocating shoplifting than fighting cuts in welfare provisions. After all, we're trying to get away from the grey filth and we mustn't forget that:

"boredom is counter-revolutionary ... militants are people for whom boredom is part of the struggle and being miserable and downtrodden is part of the revolution" (11)

This phase of modern day anarchism had its swansong in the "Stop the City" demonstrations in 1983-4. These were mass demonstrations of anarchists, pacifists and other members of the counterculture that took place in the City of London with the aim of closing it down for the day.

Little attempt was made to broaden them beyond the lifestyle ghetto and although they received national media coverage, they were not much more than adventures of the same type as the beloved superglueing expeditions, albeit on a larger scale. They were a spectacle, and a substitute for the hardwork of building and organising the fightback, and there were those in the anarchist movement who were beginning to recognise this:

"If we are to build a meaningful anarchist movement we have to go beyond Stop Business as Usual and be prepared to argue our case in the workplace and the community" (12)

The start of the upheaval that transformed the movement in Britain was the great Miners Strike of 1984-5 where the anarchist movement was forced to test its ideas out against a backdrop of genuine struggle. Those who did, found contemporary anarchism wanting. They started to rediscover the class roots of anarchism and realise how far the movement had strayed from them. From the Miners Strike and through to the end of the printers dispute at Wapping many were forced - in one way or another - to make the break and embrace the class struggle.

Not everyone in the movement chose to make that break. There were some who chose to distance themselves from the struggle of people who, through lack of time, opportunity or inclination, had not reached the same dizzy heights of personal sanctity as they had. Thus we saw so-called anarchists refusing to dirty their hands in the Miners Strike, blithely dismissing them en masse as sexist and racist without making any attempt to get to a picket line let alone have any argument about the need to fight. Another way out was to blame workers for the effects of the industry they worked in: thus the miners were not worthy of support because they exploited the earth, as the 'green' anarchists were want to put it. This mistake was repeated over the Wapping dispute, where an anarchist paper claimed to support the printers but:

"I detest the racist and sexist shit they print ... many have said they are only doing a job like anyone else with no control over what they do. BOLLOCKS" (13)

It gets better. The author goes on to say, talking of the fight for better pay and conditions at work:

"Suddenly all our aims and dreams are thrown aside in the euphoria of class struggle ... playing the capitalist money game" (14)

So the class struggle is reduced to an annoyance, something that gets in the way of the real task of building the anarchist revolution, once again in isolation by the anarcho elite on behalf of everyone else. Again it shows the complete and seemingly wilful ignorance of the anarchist movement about how exciting it is going

to be making the revolution, and failing to realise that workers fighting back against the attacks of the boss class are far more relevant to the struggle than any number of obscure and turgid anarcho-rags.

There was, however, a considerable section of the movement who saw the need to leave all this behind. Unfortunately some of them - seeing the need for political, tactical and organisational coherence - and seeing it to be conspicuous by its absence in the anarchist movement, ended up gravitating towards and in many cases eventually joining the various Leninist parties - notably the SWP - who were active during the Miners Strike and Wapping. The anarchist movement drove away through its own folly - good, active revolutionaries who wanted to fight and for whom the movement had nothing more to offer.

Most of the anarchists who did start to relate in some way to the Miners Strike found a voice in Black Flag. Up until this point the paper had in large been a pot pourri of prisoners news, investigative journalism and articles about various dubious European armed Leninist groups. However, throughout the Miners strike - and then the Wapping dispute - Black Flag was almost entirely given over to the latest news from the frontline of the struggle.

## Garments

THE RELEVANT BACKGROUND AND PRODUCTION OF CLOTHING IN THE ANARCHIST AGE



Throw out your 501's!  
The 'Green Anarchist' guide to post-revolutionary fashion.

However, news was all it was. There was woefully little attempt made to provide any sustained anarchist analysis, still less a political lead or the tactics needed to win. Hence their refusal to criticise the NUM leader, Arthur Scargill, which is particularly pertinent as an anarchist rank and file workplace strategy should always incorporate a critique of the role of the union bureaucracy, especially the left bureaucracy.

In practice, Black Flag, and by implication much of the anarchist movement, as it looked to Black Flag for a lead, ducked the issues and chose to merely tailend the strike: selling a paper that reported but did not analyse; collecting money and joining support groups; and on occasion, joining picket lines to swell numbers. These activities are all necessary and should never be neglected, but for revolutionaries who have an understanding of capitalism, and why and how it should be fought, they are inadequate. What happened was that anarchists got involved in the struggle apolitically, as good activists but terrible revolutionaries. Their anarchism was rendered irrelevant.

The Miners Strike was good news for the existing national organisation operating at the time, the Direct Action Movement. Involvement in the strike, and a growing awareness of the futility of activity in isolation, meant that there were those who had newly developed class politics and did not want to jettison the anarchist movement, who were looking around for an organisation to join. The Direct Action Movement (DAM), founded in 1979 from the remnants of the defunct Syndicalist Workers Federation, was the British section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers Association.

Although without a doubt seeing itself as an anarcho-syndicalist propaganda grouping, the Direct Action Movement (DAM) was not a wholly unified or coherent organisation. This meant it was able to welcome to its ranks a steady influx of new members, formerly liberal anarchists, from the Miners Strike through to Wapping, without fully challenging - and in some cases accommodating the residue of their lifestyle. Although it varied branch by branch, new members were not provided with a great deal of political education by the DAM and were often not challenged beyond a basic agreement with the aims and principles. This led later to some dubious practices such as DAM members advocating self managed health centres in response to NHS cuts - an abdication from the responsibility to fight for decent welfare provision. The central problem with the DAM, though was the lack of any unified industrial strategy until the national conference in 1988. This meant it could not, until this date, argue with workers, as an organisation, what tactics were necessary, in its view, to win struggles - an appalling state of affairs for an anarcho-syndicalist organisation which, by definition, should have its industrial strategy as a central plank in its raison d'être. Therefore during the Miners Strike and Wapping its role was reduced, in common with Black Flag to one of mere "supportism" where good work was done but anarchist politics were not on the agenda. For example, during the Silentnight Strike the DAM called for: (16)



"rebuilding the strike support groups and the various rank and file groups on an open syndicalist basis"

without explaining what a syndicalist basis" actually meant, how this task was to be achieved and what the point was in doing it. Instead it concentrated on calling for people to (17)

"continue to give financial assistance (and) send food parcels"

Of course financial support is crucial, but the blossoming of strike support groups during the Miners Strike showed that the problem was not one of support or the lack of it, but of politics and the strategies needed to win. The DAM never really seriously attempted to provide either.

DAM's final adoption of an industrial strategy at its 1988 National Conference was the classic anarcho-syndicalist idea of building a revolutionary union. It was a sure sign of an organisation seriously out of touch with the realities of class struggle in 80's Britain. This decision was expressed in a change to the organisations Aims and Principles to include an extra clause (18)

"The DAM is resolved to initiate, encourage and whole heartedly support the creation of independent workers unions based on the principles of anarcho-syndicalism"

A union is an organisation built by the working class to defend its interests under capitalism. The aims and actions of the union are determined by whoever is in control be it a bureaucratic caste, or in the case of a syndicalist union, the rank and file. For a syndicalist union to be revolutionary the rank and file would also have to be - it is not enough to merely have an anarchist constitution or structure. A union that accepts members irrespective of their politics is, by definition, not revolutionary. Yet to have a mass base and therefore be effective in day to day struggles it would have to be an open membership policy. To allow membership solely on the grounds of political agreement would be the other alternative, the one chosen by the CNT in France which is a good reason why the CNT only has 500 members and is not strong enough to fulfill its function as a union. It is an ideological faction masquerading as a union. The syndicalist approach is flawed because it attempts to combine the political role of anarchists with the economic form of a union and simultaneously grow into a mass organisation able to determine the course of the class struggle in the here and now. In practice, taking into account the high density of union membership in this country, what would probably happen would be that militant workers who joined the revolutionary union would become divorced from the bulk of the workers who remain within the reformist unions. This would, in turn, lead to an abandonment of the essential task of winning reformist workers to the need to fight.

Anarchists should be seeking to unite, not further divide, the working class and unions, whether organised along trade lines in this country, or ideological lines, as on the continent, are always divisive.

The boss class do a good enough job of dividing us as it is, without anarchists pursuing strategies that will make matters worse. Finally the example of Spain, where in July 1936, Catalan workers had economic power in their hands when they controlled the

streets and factories, showed the failure of the CNT - one of the most militant unions ever - to destroy the capitalist state and establish work-class power. The lesson anarcho-syndicalists have yet to learn, is that a revolutionary union does not guarantee a revolution.

It remains to be seen, whether once the DAM have tested out their strategy in the real world, and observed its tragic short comings, they will cut their losses and jettison classic anarcho-syndicalism. It must be hoped they will, and that the good committed activists in the DAM will be released from the ideological prison of revolutionary unionism in which they have incarcerated themselves.



Meanwhile, back in 1986, with the Miners Strike having exposed many of contemporary anarchism's shortfalls and those young activists who were not of an anarcho-syndicalist bent looking for something more viable than banging their heads against a brick wall, something fresh was astir in the ghetto. January 1986 saw the launch of the Class War Federation. Class War, as a paper, and a London group, had already existed for over a year, and had burst forth seething with scorn and contempt for the pacifists and life-stylists of the anarchist movement and preaching an uncompromising class hatred. "Murdoch you are scum!", "Behold your future executioners", "Rich Bastards Beware," screamed the headlines. So what went wrong? Class War played an important role in helping to turn the ghetto upside down, but no organisation can hope to maintain itself purely on sustained anger without degenerating into self parody. The Class War Federation did not develop viable organisation, coherent politics and clear strategies. A former member complained:

"Unity, coherence and democracy are something that revolutionary anarchist organisations are built upon, not something we are forced to establish." (18)

Class War - in the final analysis a rainbow coalition of disaffected non-pacifists - was an organisation who's predominant ideas were neither revolutionary nor anarchist but populist, never getting very far beyond a generalised anti-rich anti-state rhetoric and betraying a poor understanding of class politics. It was an organisation in the business not of encouraging working class militancy but of glorifying working class violence. Class War has:

"No clear industrial strategy and prefers to encourage street violence and open physical rather than political confrontation with the establishment." (19)

An example of this can be seen in the headline of the article the paper carried about the Silenight strike, "Silenight, violent night, get the scabs and kick 'em to shite" without offering a workable strategy for winning the dispute and without seeming to understand that there is more, unfortunately, to the class struggle than caving a few heads in. In many ways Class War has ended up a mirror image of the pacifist ghetto it so despises - chaotic, disorganised

and lacking politics and strategy firmly stuck in the ghetto of its own making. It has become an organisation in a rut of

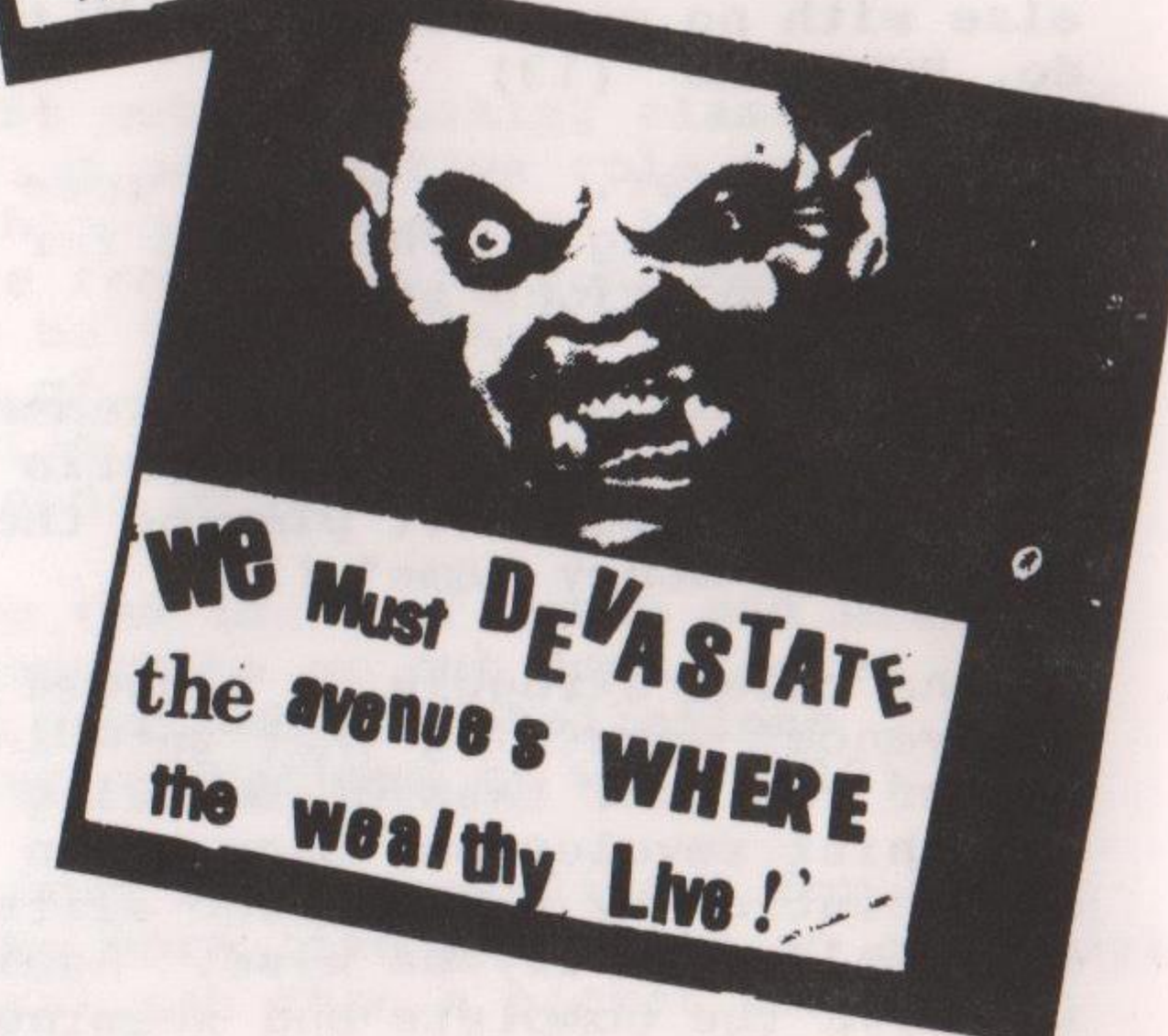
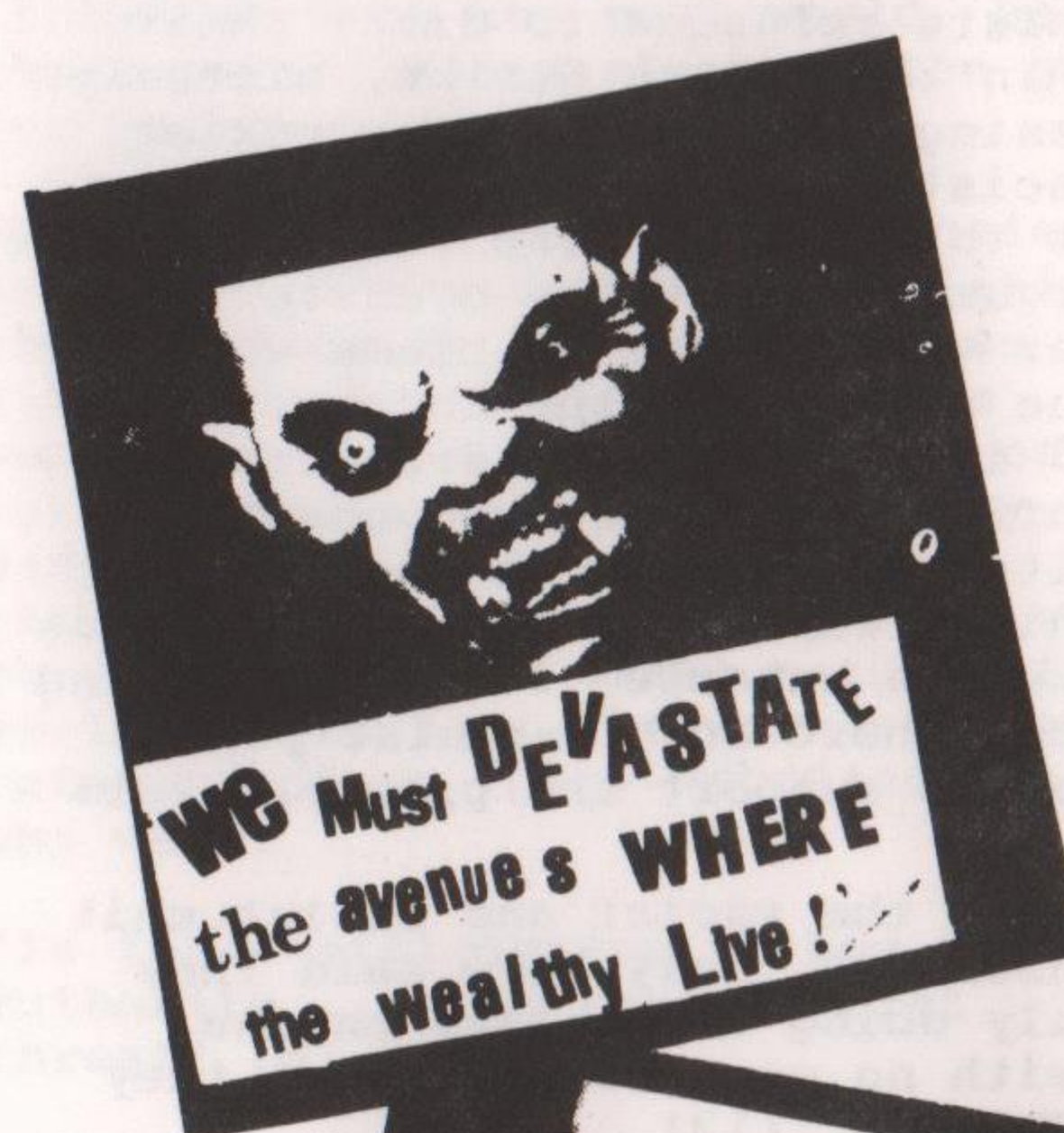
"desperate publicity-seeking stunts (and an) ultra leftist and street-fighting mentality" (20)

The last straw was the decision taken by the London group to stand a candidate in the Kensington by-election, the ultimate example of the tendency within the organisation, that has been there through-out its existence, to turn Class War into a circus intent on performing tricks for the media.

Class War should be applauded for giving the anarchist movement the timely shake up it needed, and deserved, so desperately. However, it has now served its purpose, and its continued existence is a waste of time, energy and commitment of the good activists who are still within it. The party was good while it lasted but now its over and its time to go home.

A third national organisation, the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) was launched in March of the same year, 1986. The impetus from this came from the Anarchist Communist Discussion Group, that produced the magazine 'Virus' and could trace its history back to the Anarchists Workers Association of the 1970's. The Anarchist Communist Discussion Group (ACDG) had merged with Medway based Syndicalist Fight Group and developed a network of contacts around the country. The situation was looking healthy. Only a couple of months earlier the Syndicalist Fight had carried an article arguing:

"The anarchist movement...is isolated from even the most militant sections of the working class. Most anarchists lack a clear understanding of theory and understanding of working within the labour movement. These are serious problems and we cannot hope to become an influential movement in this country until we begin to solve them...the key to future success for British anarchism is interventionism. 1986 could be the year our movement begins to grow up"



And in some ways it was. Whilst DAM was searching for syndicalisms lost youth and Class War Federation was remaining strictly prepubescent, the ACF wanted to develop an anarchism that was politically mature. However when the organisation was launched problems began to set in. In fact, the founders of the ACF can be seen as victim to their own enthusiasm for the type of organisation they had hoped to create, and putting cart before horse rashly flung open the doors of the ACF to all new comers. And many responded, bringing with them the same problem that was brought to the DAM - the residual trapings of their all too recent liberalism. The original members wary of alienating the new-comers were slow to challenge this.

The problem with a defacto open door membership policy is that it can lead to one of two consequences. One is that the relationship between the more politically developed members and the rest of the organisation, is militarised. The "cadres" then constitute a formal or informal leadership who "hand down" the politics to everyone else, whose role is to repeat it and digest it parrot fashion. This means that regardless of the political content, the form would cease to be anarchist, and become the worst kind of "democratic" centralism. The other option is that either individually or as a faction the founder members would argue that their particular politics were the best on offer inside (or outside) of the organisation and in effect attempt to win the membership over to the very ideas the organisation was set up with the intention of promulgating. This option was plumped for in the ACF. The crucial mistake was to invite people to join and then try to win them to the politics rather than winning them to the politics and then inviting them to join. In practice, the initial vision of the ACF became clouded, and this political dilution and disunity had the effect of militating against successful intervention in the class struggle. The ACF substituted numerical growth for political development.

The ACF claims - and this is a claim that must be taken seriously, to stand in the tradition of the Platform, the Friends of Durruti and the French Libertarian Communists: that is, the tradition of coherent, political anarchism. Initially, the group discussed "the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists" a document drawn up in 1926 in response to the disorganisation of the anarchist movement in Russia at the time of the revolution, and arguing for a tighter, harder movement. This was a bold move in view of the fact that whilst most of the anarchist movement had never heard of the Platform, those who had were practically unanimous in dismissing it out of hand as "Bolshevised Anarchism". A group of DAM members even went so far as to produce a leaflet entitled "Anarchism or Platformism" roundly condemning it:

"The Platform was rejected by most of the anarchist movement and denounced as an attempt to Bolshevise anarchism" And on the British platformists... "The first critics of the platformists had described them as being just "one step away from Bolshevism", in this case (the ORA) it seems to have been a very short step indeed". (22)

The combination of this external pressure together with internal pressure from the more liberal elements of the membership led to the ACF distancing itself from the Platform, and thus - in common with most of the anarchist movement - distancing itself from one of the most important documents ever written by any anarchists:

"We differ with the Platform on the question of absolute theoretical and tactical unity. An organisation must be allowed the convergence of ideas through a dynamic dialogue between its members. A federation does not smother its membership with doctrine - even if it is adopted democratically." (23)

And this is from the "pro-platform" tendency within the ACF! A false dichotomy has been created here - of course "dynamic dialogue" between members is essential if an organisation is to remain healthy and democratic. However the aim of such dialogue is to force a democratically achieved unity, theoretical and tactical. Talking till your blue in the face is meaningless if everyone then goes off and argues their own thing to the class. It reduces internal discussion to little more than sterile intellectual gameplaying. Democratically adopted positions are not "smothering members with doctrine" they are an essential prerequisite to successful intervention in the class struggle as an organisation. The leadership of ideas means nothing unless you can agree what those ideas are.

Recently the ACF has started to transform its politics. Unfortunately the direction they are taking smacks of ultra-leftism rather than anarchism. On the issue of industrial strategy, the unions are seen as the fifth column of capitalism within the working class. They are:

"part of the array of ideological forces used by the state against workers" (24)

This misses the point that the function of the union is to defend workers interests under capitalism. A contradiction exists between the rank and file, which are objectively anti-capitalist, and the interests of the bureaucracy, which are to maintain a role as permanent mediators between labour and capital. The ACF claim that a steward who is revolutionary cannot last. So anarchists should stay in the unions but abstain from the struggle over who controls them - bureaucracy. So anarchists should stay in the unions but abstain from the struggle over who controls them - the bureaucracy or the rank and file? If rank and file workers have the potential power to take on the capitalist state it is a contradiction to say that they don't have the power to take on their own bureaucracy.

A second example of the creeping ultra-leftism of the ACF is in their attitude to the imperialist struggle. In their revised aims and principles they state:

"We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claim there is some common interest between the native bosses and the working class in the face of foreign domination" (25)

In another article, specifically about the Irish War, the ACF state that they are opposed to:

"the unification of Ireland on any basis other than in the context of international socialism" (26)

In effect, this means abdicating from the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland - unless it is in

the context of international socialism! Thus, by default siding with the British state against those fighting for the re-unification of Ireland. It is not the role of British anarchists to impose pre-conditions on our call for troops out of Ireland. To build the necessary solidarity in Britain, amongst British workers, we must unconditionally support the Irish peoples right to self-determination, backed up by providing political and practical support to those Irish anarchists who are counterposing

Irish anarchists who counterpose the fight for anti-imperialist working class unity, to the bourgeois nationalism of the republican movement.

Despite these political, organisational and tactical mistakes it would be sectarian and churlish to dismiss the ACF and what they stand for out of hand. A group who claims to stand in the best traditions of anarchism is a rare and welcome sight in the British anarchist movement. It is essential that all serious anarchists engage in political dialogue with ACF members as they share our traditions and our aim of building a strong libertarian communist movement capable of winning workers to anarchist ideas and strategies.

It was not just national anarchist organisations that grew and flourished as a result of the miners strike and Wapping. The local groups, many of whom had sprung up during the heady days of Class inspired liberalism - were on the upsurge. The local groups phenomenon was a strange beast - a growing, but not always healthy movement, that engaged in a flurry of activity wherever anything was happening. It did very little else.

Many of the local groups were a classic example of the synthesis where irreconcilable differences - liberal individualism and class struggle anarchism - sat side by side. However, many of those in the local groups who claimed not to be influenced by liberalism had an analysis of class rather than a class analysis. For them, class struggle was narrowly characterised as a single issue amongst a series of single issues that were all mysteriously related. Thus:

"Although we put most of our ideas into class struggle issues we do not by any means regard issues like racism, feminism, and animal rights as secondary" (27)





This route is a classic example of the mistake of seeing the class struggle as, for example, strike support work alone. Fighting for abortion rights, fighting immigration controls or fighting the NHS cuts are seen as separate issues rather than the central and integral part of the class struggle they actually are. This means that such groups could only relate to the class struggle in a limited fashion, unable to proceed far beyond the level of supportism and activism. Hence they were also unable to give a clear political lead because they lacked any coherent view in the context of which strategies and tactics could be worked out. This means the local groups intervened apolitically, not as anarchists but as individual activists. Unfortunately, this cult of movement without direction was held up by many in the local groups as a positive development. The only acceptable criteria to most groups was the extent to which someone was prepared to 'get stuck in'. Anarchist theory was a low priority, which led to a bob-a-job response to struggle: the non-politics of 'let's do something'. Rejecting theory means that political education is also rejected. In the local groups new members had little hope, other than through their own efforts as individuals, of gaining a deeper political understanding, if the supposedly more experienced members were themselves ill-equipped to provide a political lead. A lack of theory and education inevitably led to a lack of unity, and

"Trying to tell people how to conduct their struggle...moving into an issue or cause and trying to make it your own" (29)

In the quote the author is referring to the Revolutionary Communist Party. Yet to reject a tactic simply because it is shared by Leninists is to prove nothing but the absence of any real understanding of why anarchists reject Leninism. We are not at odds with the fact that the Leninists "do it", or even how they "do it". What we reject is the specific political content and basis of their arguments.

The local groups could not break free from their fragmented and apolitical response to struggle, because as already stated, there was no organisational framework around which to operate. And this was a conscious choice. Thus the absence of politics both dictated and was dictated by the absence of structure. It is sobering that Piotr Arshinov's comment on the Russian anarchists in 1917 is as relevant today as it was then:

"Disorganisation is the twin of irresponsibility and together they lead to impoverished ideas and futile practices" (30)

This lack of organisation has manifested itself in an inability to build a national federation of anarchist groups or any lasting regional

begun to spring up around the country. However unless they rid themselves of their antipathy to theory, interventionism, and coherent organisation their longevity and ability to operate meaningfully is open to serious question. They will ultimately have to ask themselves whether they are to remain ineffective and irrelevant, or turn their backs once and for all on the local group mentality that hampers them.

It was in this context, that in the summer of 1988 the ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP was formed, as a recognition of the fact that if the anarchist movement is to have any real impact and lasting influence on the class struggle, it will have to undergo a radical transformation. We saw the need for a political organisation of anarchist workers, firmly rooted in the labour movement and able to intervene decisively in the class struggle. We saw the need for an organisation with a clear political program and coherent strategies that were democratically arrived at by an active, participating membership. This being achieved through a thorough analysis of day to day reality and a re-evaluation of existing revolutionary theory. It needs to be an organisation controlled by the membership with the commitment and self-discipline to consistently take the ideas they develop, the strategies and priorities they adopt to the class. One which would provide its members with a sound political



activity was therefore on an individual rather than collective basis. There existed no agreed and pre-determined political, tactical or organisational framework around which to operate. This was seen by many as healthy, with the subsequent problems dismissed:

"The problem with the anarchist movement is ....Well there a number of them really. There will always be with such a wide based and growing movement." (28)

Disunity, as we have said, militates against successful interventionism. However, with the local groups it was not so much the inability to politically intervene that was the problem, as the very horror at the thought of doing so. This essential role for revolutionaries was repeatedly rejected on the spurious and ill-considered ground that "the trots do it". This ignores the fact that throughout the history of the anarchist movement, "doing it" has been a crucial tactic- and by "doing it" we mean formulating clear positions around key issues and arguing them in a principled way to the class. The 'movement' however does not agree, interventionism is:

federations. This means that even if it wanted to, the anarchist movement is incapable of responding to struggle on a national level, or adopting national policy. In short it is incapable of acting as the movement it claims to be. It lacks aims and principles, democratic decision making structures and any basis of accountability. This means the movement is unable to come to the attention of militant workers, and, even if it were has nothing to offer them. Anarchism stands firmly in a ghetto of its own design, whilst the people it should be having the arguments with remain shackled by reformism or are won over to various Leninist brands of socialism.

There were those within the local groups who sought to make the break from all this. Back in 1986 one group argued for:

"greater co-ordination between the class-conscious and genuinely revolutionary elements within the anarchist movement" (31)

Although they received some positive feedback ultimately nothing emerged from their call. More recently local class-struggle anarchist groups have

education and develop within them the agitational skills needed to win the battle of ideas. Furthermore, an organisation that would constantly encourage and promote working class self-activity, self management of struggles and the confidence to fight but would not shy away from giving a political lead. We looked at the anarchist movement and reluctantly concluded that no such organisation existed. Neither was there, it seemed, a grouping with the will or capacity to build or transform itself into one. The AWG does not pretend to be that organisation, however we want to build just such a libertarian communist organisation that can - for the first time in this country - put it truly where it belongs; centre stage in the arena of class struggle, and, in doing so, play a role in making libertarian communism a reality.

Nigel Fox

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## Yard examines 'bash the rich' anarchist lists

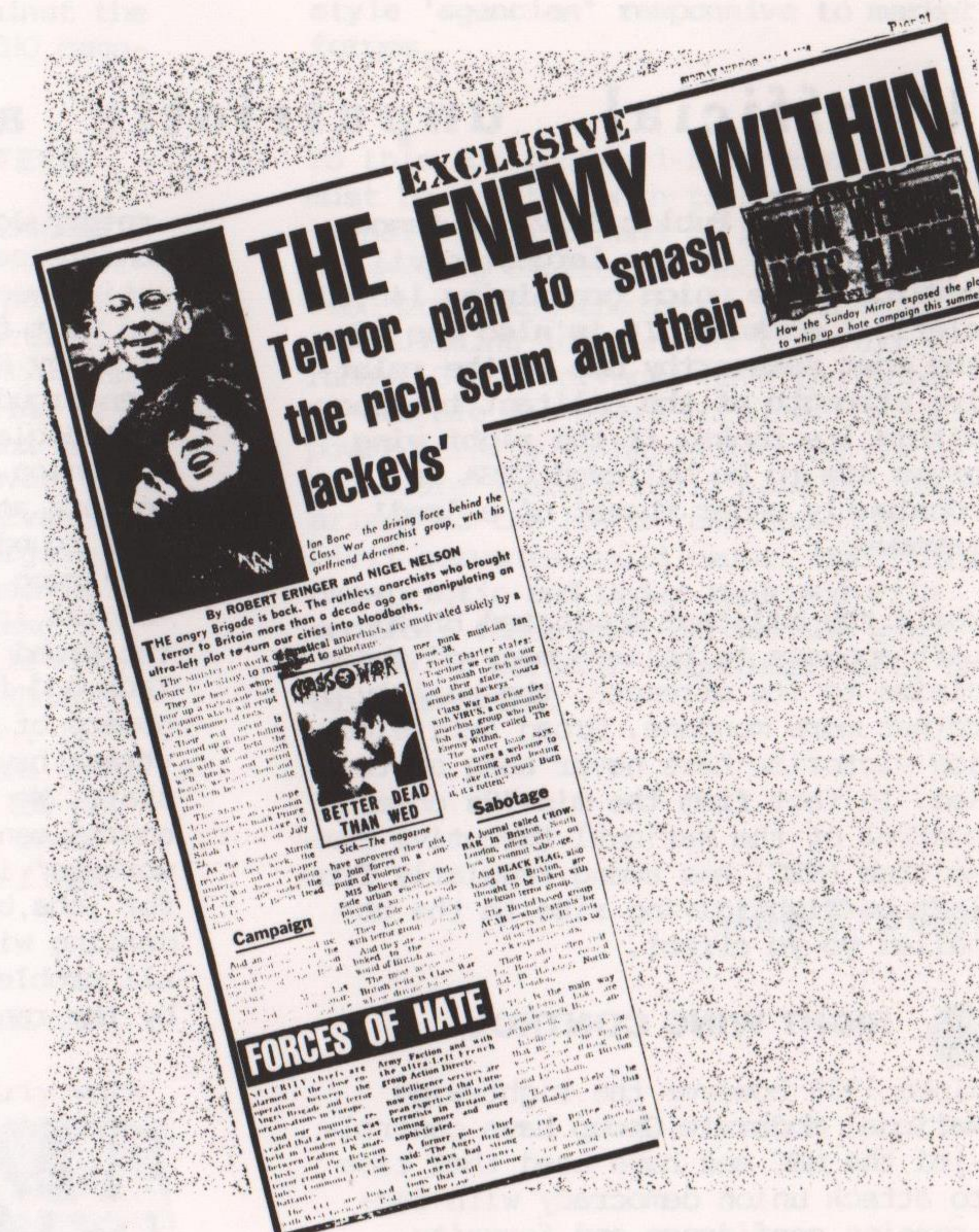
By Gareth Parry

Scotland Yard Special Branch detectives are studying documents, including a list of leading businessmen and bankers, published by punk anarchist groups believed to be involved in attacks on businesses moving into London's former docklands. One group, known as Hurricane, urges its adherents to harass the people whose names and addresses are in a 60-page booklet. Written as a map "using this booklet as a guide" to find offices and homes. The group has also produced a manual, "Without a Trace", how to evade police surveillance at "Bash the Rich" marches organised in wealthy areas of London, including Hampstead.

The manual boasts that it will "even the balance between us and the police" and gives details of how to evade police, including forensic traces, incriminating forensic traces, such as fragments of material and broken glass which could be used with an attack. It also gives a nearly complete list of Metropolitan Police radio call signs and districts. These could be used for hoax calls, but might also explain how anarchist groups have been able to quickly arrive at

various street disturbances over the past year. The booklet and manual, printed on the continent, and sold at several leftwing bookshops are the most recent manifestation of the Hurricane punk anarchist group's activities. It is understood to be linked with other anarchist groups, including the Animal Liberation Front, which has admitted responsibility for attacks on factories and stores dealing in animal furs.

According to the Research Foundation, a non-political terrorism, which studies and disseminates information on industrial terrorism, the Animal Liberation Front is a violent democratic movement in the News International during at Wapping. Other anarchist organisations are believed to have been involved in meeting attacks on the Department of Trade Inspectorate seeking out pirate radio stations.



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# SERVANTS NO MORE!

Unofficial, unpatriotic and under rank and file control.

The Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) is the largest civil service trade union organising 140,000 clerical workers. It is also one of the most newsworthy due to the relative strength of the Militant tendency within its ranks. If the right wing press are to be believed CPSA is constantly under threat of a 'red' takeover.

While the Militant dominated Broad Left appears to believe many of these claims to its strength, the reality is rather more mundane. Broad Left election victories have never been sustained. In fact from the mid-70s onwards control of the National Executive Committee (NEC) has swung regularly from left to right giving rise to the so-called yo-yo effect.

## RIGHT WING CONTROL

Since 1988 however the right-wing National Moderate Group have controlled the NEC and have used that time to attack union democracy with increasing confidence and ferocity. Newcastle Central Office, the largest branch in the union with 4,300 members has been suspended since June 1988 on trumped-up charges of financial irregularities. The leadership have also imposed postal ballots for NEC elections; violated conference policies on pay and YTS, allowed Gareth Morris the final CPSA member at GCHQ to be sacked in March '89 without a fight; entered into secret merger talks with the GMB; and axed over 230 motions from the 1989 conference agenda. In similar fashion the 'Kinnockite' BL84 group which heads DHSS section not only forced through a New Technology deal which includes 20,000 job losses but has threatened dozens of branches with disciplinary action for refusing executive speakers.

## BROAD LEFT WEAKNESS

After a year of autocratic right-wing rule the Broad Left were pinning all their hopes on a protest vote in the 1989 elections. The results however were disastrous. "Militants routed in elections for Whitehall union leadership" declared the Guardian (11.5.89) as the yo-yo appeared to be stuck. Despite the sell-outs the right were returned decisively. In fact the signs of Broad Left's weakness were already evident. Members had voted 65,853 to 16,926 (4 to 1) to accept a divisive long term pay deal. Newcastle Central Office ratified the right-wing's new branch constitution 1,708 to 187. DSS members voted, albeit narrowly to accept the massive job-losses from computerisation. It has been evident for quite some time that the left has failed to win the arguments where they matter most: In the workplace.

## NO FAITH IN THE MEMBERS

The Broad Left's response to these defeats has been dangerously complacent. "Don't attack the Broad Left leadership" said Deputy General Sec-

retary John Macreadie at Broad Left's conference rally. Macreadie's alternative was to build the Broad Left and wait for the 1990 elections: a strategy Kinnock himself would have been proud of. More alarmingly Militant declared their intention to take the union to court if any of their members at Newcastle Central Office were found guilty by the Tribunal enquiring into the allegations of financial irregularity. This typifies the Broad Left's lack of faith in the rank-and-file and indeed in their own powers of argument. Anarchists by contrast have no such illusions in the state. We say that the capitalist courts can never be used to defend workers' interests. Whether fighting for jobs, better pay, union democracy or dealing with fascists in the workplace all problems can and must be resolved by the rank and file themselves

through their own collective strength, not by recourse to the courts, by reliance on the collaborative Whitley system or by the election of a left executive.

## ELECTORALISM

The Broad Left's electoral strategy of trying to affect change 'from above' by capturing the union leadership has failed time and again. Low attendance at branch meetings makes it easy for left wing activists to dominate branch committees. Broad Left model resolutions therefore abound in the conference agenda papers but this greatly exaggerates the depth of support for socialist ideas. Indeed the right-wing's recent attacks on union democracy have been achieved largely through by-passing the branch activists and selling their deals direct-



HITHER GREEN DHSS STRIKERS, OUT AGAINST A KNOWN FASCIST WORKING IN THEIR BRANCH.

ly to the members by secret ballot. The Broad Left electoral machine has proved ill-equipped to respond despite being one of the largest left groupings in any union. Even when in power Broad Left has been unable to 'reform' the union or achieve its election promises. In the 1970's Broad Left stood for the election of all full-time officials and union withdrawal from Whitley. Successive Broad Left spells of power have achieved neither and today Broad Left no longer voice any opposition to Whitley. In 1987 the Broad Left DHSS exec. failed to implement conference policy of non-cooperation with the Fowler Reviews because Militant-supporters twice voted with the right to remain within the law. The electoral equation that votes plus resolutions equals socialism today stands discredited.

## AGAINST THE STATE

The problem for revolutionaries in the civil service is that the arguments must be won amongst the rank-and-file not simply on branch committees. Furthermore, these arguments must address the central political contradiction which confronts civil servants - that they are state employees and are therefore required to implement anti-working class policies (benefit, fraud, restart and availability tests, passport checks etc.,) Broad Left support has always been built instead on the 'bread and butter' economic issues of pay and conditions. The more difficult 'political' issues which define the total political outlook of workers, have never had a high profile on Broad Left election addresses. When the Tor-

ries banned union rights at GCHQ, union leaders immediately declared their patriotism, and offered a no-strike deal to prove their members loyalty to the Crown. Not once did the Broad Left raise a murmur of protest against the rampant nationalism of the GCHQ campaign.

## RANK AND FILE COMMITTEES

The refusal of the current leadership to fight over pay, staff-cuts, relocation of work or the poll tax points to the necessity of unofficial action. The Broad Left have predictably failed to meet this challenge confining itself to the ritual wailing and gnashing of teeth in response to every sell out. By contrast **AWG civil servants** call for the building of an organisation which can rally the thousands of workers who are prepared to take action. A genuine rank-and-file movement must be constructed on independent thought as well as action. It must make a stand on all issues which effect workers from fighting low pay to siding with the oppressed. Today civil service workers need to fight on many fronts:

\*Non-implementation of the poll tax.

\*Refusal to do the State's dirty work of benefit policing and race-checks on claimants.

\*Stopping the introduction of ET and YTS in the civil service.

\*Defending every job threatened by relocation of work or computerisation.

\*Fighting for a living wage based on workers own assessment of their needs.

\*Fighting the plans to turn civil service departments into business-style 'agencies' responsive to market forces.

To this end rank-and-file committees must be created both to combat sectional divisions and to become the organising centres of unofficial action, producing their own literature and building independent fighting funds. Civil servants have the power to cripple the state machine. If this power were to be harnessed the media's red-scare stories would pale by comparison to the havoc rank-and-file civil servants could cause. **Unofficial Unpatriotic and Under rank-and-file control;** these must become the watch-words of workers' organisation in the civil service.

Joe Presley

## In Place of Compromise

### WHY WE NEED A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

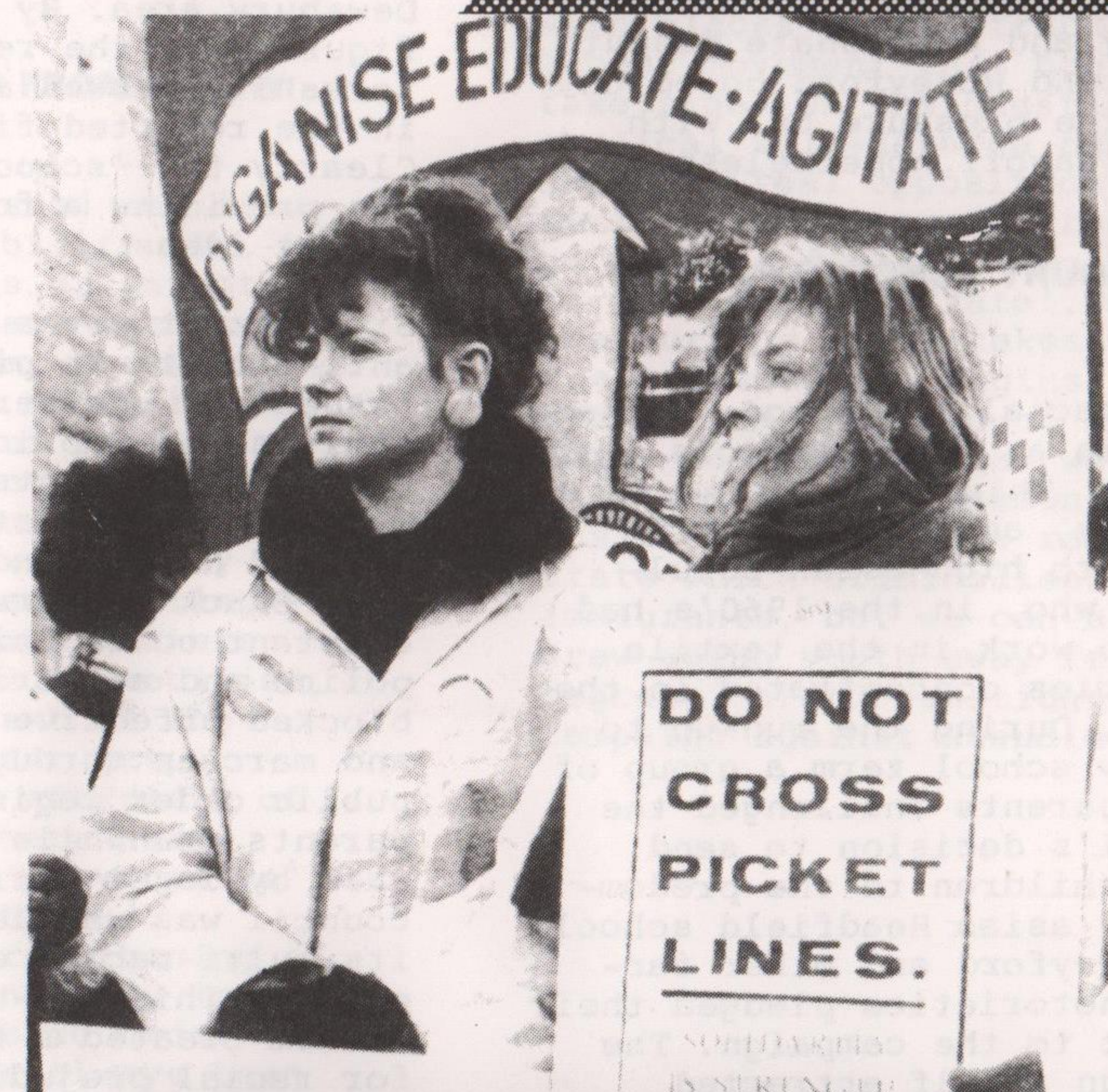
British Labour Movement history is rich in examples of rank and file activity from below. From the Shop Stewards Movement to the Workers' committees, this pamphlet takes a look at those workers pulling against the grain of Union compromise.

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With or without uniform.....

# Racism on the rise.

Events in Yorkshire this summer have painted a vivid and alarming picture of the escalation of racist activity and police brutality. It would be wrong though, to see this as a recent phenomenon. Yorkshire has been the scene of a number of significant events over the last few years. If there is a marked shift towards open racist activity then it is merely an eruption that has been fostered and strengthened by recent incidents. It is worth briefly looking at these to set the scene.

Ray Honeyford's attack on multi-racial education in the right wing 'Salisbury Review' in 1985 led to an angry response from Asian parents at the Bradford school where he was headmaster. Pickets were mounted on the school gates and a campaign set in motion to remove Honeyford from the school. Honeyford warned of the 'swamping' of 'British culture' by the high numbers of Asian pupils at schools in certain areas. Along with a string of derogatory references to Asian culture, this sparked off a lengthy and passionate dispute. In the end Honeyford bowed out under the pressure but with a cash payoff nonetheless.

## DEWSBURY SCHOOLS DISPUTE

Multi-racial education cropped up again as a contentious issue in 1987. This time the scene was Dewsbury, another Yorkshire town with high Asian populations who, in the 1960's had come to work in the textile industries concentrated in the region. During the run-up to the new school term a group of white parents challenged the council's decision to send their children to the predominantly Asian Headfield school. Ray Honeyford and other far-right notoriety figures pledged their support to the campaign. The campaign itself attracted intense media coverage, as the parents set up a makeshift school until they gained access to a school of their choice. The parents constantly claimed that the issue was the quality of education. In fact there was no evidence that the standards were lower at Headfield, which had similar results to other

schools in the area. What was apparent though was a general deterioration across the board, as a result of the rundown of resources to education and Baker's reforms. Kenneth Baker's Education Act meant drastic cuts in the number of teachers and staff, and of funding. Blacks faced the brunt of the response to these cuts, as white parents reached racist conclusions that this was somehow the result of high Asian numbers in schools.

## RISING FIGURES

In October '87, official figures showed a 40% rise in the number of reported racial 'incidents' in the Dewsbury area. By comparison, figures for the rest of West Yorkshire showed a decrease in the reported figures. Clearly the 'schools dispute' was providing a foothold for racist ideas.

Significant moves were made by anti-racists to pick up the issues and uncover the real motives and implications behind the parents' campaign. Workers from, most notably the NUT and NALGO, and the Kirklees Black Workers Group found constant obstruction from the police and authorities, who blocked effective mobilisations and marches through the use of public order legislation. The parents meanwhile won their case by legal action, and the council was unable to defend its multi-racial education policy. This set-back for anti-racism created a fertile ground for racial prejudice and violence in the area. What was needed was a constant and visible anti-racist presence. After being hampered for over a year the Kirklees Black Workers Group called a demonstration in Dewsbury to counter a rally by the fascist British National Party. The BNP and other fascists were

attempting to tap into the shifting climate, and took as the theme of their rally, the questions of 'multi-racial education and freedom of choice'.

## POLICE DEFEND RACISTS

The rallies were surrounded by media hysteria and a colossal police presence, including helicopters and riot squads. The anti-racist rally took place in a militant and determined mood with hundreds of Asian youth present. After the rally organisers, couldn't contain the anger of the crowd, who moved into the town centre to confront the racists. After a series of scuffles the crowd was penned in by police and rows of vans on a piece of ground across from where the fascists were to meet. Constant jeers were directed by white youth towards the gathering. Following the end of the BNP rally a group of a few hundred youths and fascists swarmed towards the Asians and anti-racists chanting 'Salman Rushdie' amongst other provocations. The police responded by wading into the anti-racist crowd, beating them back, and driving everyone into the Saville town area of Dewsbury. Dozens of mounted police, squads in full riot gear and a convoy of vans were used, as scores of people were attacked and battered by the police. The racists meanwhile, gained a virtual free hand in the town centre.

Parallel events took place in the week before the Dewsbury rally, when a Muslim march against the 'Satanic Verses' came under attack from a group of white youths. When Asian youths repelled this attack, they faced a brutal reaction from the police. Dozens of arrests followed, only a hand-

ful of whom were the racists attacking the march. They found solidarity from their allies in uniform in the form of early releases from custody, and food and drink in the station; while the Asians were refused even water. In the weeks following this flashpoint groups of whites targetted the Asian communities of Bradford for a systematic campaign of destruction and violence. During these attacks two Asians were stabbed and another received a fractured skull. The culmination was an attack by 30 white youth in the West Bowling area of Bradford on the 9th July. Shops were smashed-up and Asian children were beaten up. This mob was confronted by 130 Asians, ready to kick out the racists who had been making orchestrated attacks for the previous three weeks. As usual the police proved unable and unwilling to intervene in these events. Their only response was to berate the community for defending itself. Local police chief Charles Mawson poured equal condemnation on both sides when he spoke of 'the hooligan element of both the white and Asian communities'. While the police were content to refer to an abstract 'hooligan element' and 'youths causing mischief', local residents were in no doubt as to the nature of the racist campaign. White resident Michael Dean spelt it out; 'Since the Rushdie thing, white youths have come up here looking for trouble'. After the Dewsbury events the local Labour MP, Ann Tayler, blamed the trouble on 'outsiders and provocateurs', blind to the fact that the real threat comes from racist policing and a latent racist undercurrent in British society which finds its expression in the context of the recent racial disputes.

## RUSHDIE OR RACISM?

The campaign against the 'Satanic Verses' has sharpened the mounting tensions which are the result of years of poverty and violence suffered by the black communities in Britain. It has acted as a catalyst for Asian youth to direct anger at the state, and in particular the police. As the rallies in London and Bradford have displayed, the issue goes much further than Rushdie. Young Asians are reacting to years of repression meted out to their communities, and as such the Rushdie protests symbolise the fight back against their oppression. This doesn't mean that we should ignore the campaign against Rushdie is the magnet attracting mobilisation. Genuine anti-racists should have a clear position in defence of Rushdie and against censorship. Our priority, however,



Kirklees Black Workers Group rally, June 1989.

must be to create an alternative focus on the greater problem, a problem which actually confronts Asians in Britain today: the racist state. The state has proved that any intervention it makes will hit anti-racists harder than racists and reactionaries. The blasphemy laws have not been extended but immigration laws and police powers have been flexed against Asians in Britain, legitimising the wave of racist attacks. The local authorities, under Labour control, have similarly proved incapable of dealing with the state of siege that exists in the black communities.

## ANTI-RACISM FROM BELOW

It is time to shed any illusions in the ability of labour councils or any other part of the state machinery to fight racism. The Dewsbury rally was dominated by the demands that the BNP rally and all other racist gatherings should be banned. Yet this followed nearly two years of constant infringement of the Black Workers Group's efforts to mobilise, under the pretext of the 1986 Public Order Act. Indeed, in the aftermath of the clashes, there were calls for all 'provocative' rallies to be banned. Clearly any strengthening of the state's hand only invites repression. Public Order legislation has always been used against striking workers, anti-racists, Irish-solidarity campaigners etc. The only practical way forward is to act independently, to make the struggle against racism our affair, dealt with by our own methods of mobilisation and direct action.

## SUPPORT BLACK SELF DEFENCE!

The months ahead will be a vital time to counter the threat that racism poses in the area. This, however, is not just applicable to Yorkshire, but to other regions where blacks are under attack. It will require a vigilant and independent anti-racist presence. Genuine anti-racism must support and assist the physical self-defence of black communities. This is the only force that can be relied on to repel the racist forays into black areas. We must also draw the labour movement into a more active role, to take sides with blacks under attack. A labour movement that begins to take sides on the question of physical self-defence can also organise real opposition to immigration controls, racist policing and ethnic monitoring in the 'Welfare State'. Only when the working class takes up these issues and begins to break from the grip of nationalism and racism, can we not only take an independent position against the racist state which criminalises immigrants, but we can also draw Asian youth away from the regressive and reactionary campaign against Rushdie.

Colin Crompton



# 1969

## MYTH • ILLUSION • AND WAR •

By the 1960's the IRA had almost disappeared following the failure of the 1956-62 border campaign. Republicanism was regarded by most working class Catholics as a thing of the past. Something else was stirring. The Catholic middle class had given up waiting for a united Ireland and had instead begun to look for equality of opportunity within the six county apparatus. Increased access to university education had raised aspirations and had made them less willing to accept a second class citizenship. Equally the Catholic working class was more concerned with concrete improvements in the day to day reality of life than with the often mystically expressed dream of unity with the South.

### WHY CIVIL RIGHTS ?

Discrimination was the issue. Of the 319 Administrative posts at Stormont only 23 were held by Catholics. In the technical and professional grades there were 196 Protestants but only 13 Catholics. In Fermanagh, a county with a Catholic majority, the county council employed 338 Protestants and just 32 Catholics. Unionist control was guaranteed: Firstly by the artificial Protestant majority that Partition itself maintained and secondly through a sophisticated system of electoral fraud known as **gerrymandering**; a system that maintained unionist control of Stormont and local authorities. This was accomplished by concentrating Catholic votes in huge wards returning a tiny number of candidates, a multiple vote for businessmen (usually Unionist), and a property disqualification that discriminated against Catholics. Local councils in areas with overwhelming Catholic majorities returned Unionist politicians. The effect of this was to make one Protestant vote worth 2.5 Catholic ones. This was particularly striking in Derry where Protestants with 37% of the electorate returned 67% of the councillors. The exclusion of Catholics from the political set-up was the basis of wider social and economic discrimination in the allocation of housing, social services and jobs. An example of what this meant in practice hit the headlines in 1968 when civil rights activists occupied a council house in Caledon, County Tyrone. It had been allocated to a single 18 year old Protestant over the heads of a long waiting list of Catholics some of whom had as many as 12 children and were forced to live in overcrowded houses with relatives or in damp caravans.

### UNIONIST TERROR

The sectarian statelet carried with it a barrage of repressive legislation. Laws such as the **Special Powers Act** were envied by regimes such as South Africa and imitated by states worldwide. The Special Powers Act, passed in April 1922 was quite

specific in its intention:

"The civil authority shall have power...to take all such steps and issue all such orders as maybe necessary for preserving the peace and maintaining order....if any person does any act of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to...(the above) he shall be guilty of an offence."(1)

The Act was made permanent in 1933 and in practice meant the outlawing of anti-unionist organisations, the power to detain or intern indefinitely without trial, exclusion orders, the power to search, evacuate and destroy houses and buildings and the banning of meetings, marches and publications. The single most oppressive part of the act was **internment**, enabling the Government to jail indefinitely anyone who might pose any sort of threat. It was also the most lavishly used: 1922-24, 1938-46, 1956-61 and finally 1971-75. Such legislation was designed to totally eliminate political opposition and preserve Unionist hegemony.

### THE FORCES OF LAW & ORDER

To implement the law and to guarantee Unionist power stood the RUC and the B-Specials. The regular police, the RUC, were a paramilitary force armed and trained with rifles, sub-machine guns and armoured cars. Catholics were unlikely to join a force that as early as 1922 created a special RUC Orange Lodge; a force that raided their houses, interned them and banned anti-unionist meetings and publications. In 1969 the **Hunt Committee** found that only 11% of the force was Catholic.

The B-Specials were effectively the state-funded part-time militia of the Unionist Party. Renowned for bigotry and brutality. They were armed and in the 50's and 60's had access to weaponry such as Bren guns and Shortland armoured cars. With their weapons kept at home they represented a constant threat of sectarian attack to the Catholic population.

### N.I.C.R.A.

To combat these myriad and blatant inequalities the **Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association** was formed in 1967. Many of its early members were drawn from the earlier Campaign For Social Justice, along with some members of the Republican movement and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland. Its demands were simple: one man-one vote; allocation of housing on a points system; the re-drawing of gerrymandered electoral boundaries; repeal of the Special Powers Act; the abolition of the B-Specials and laws against discrimination in local government. Hardly radical demands, they were considered the minimum required for any country that even pretended to be democratic. The border issue went unchallenged by middle class Catholics who were willing to work within the six county apparatus, and were not too impressed by the clerically influenced 'Gombeen' society that they saw south of the border. Indeed acceptance of partition was their starting point. They argued that as British citizens they should enjoy (sic) the same conditions and protections as all other UK residents. They turned history on its head when Betty Sinclair, chair of NICRA, Communist Party member and secretary of Belfast Trades Council declared that:

"They (the unionists) are the.... opponents of real freedom...Britain and the British people." (2)

This pathetic hope for a 'British Ulster' was coupled with a naive belief in the six county apparatus as an instrument for reform. As J.McAnerney, secretary of NICRA put it:

"the power that resides in Unionism to proclaim justice and rights for all citizens irrespective of their political or religious creed. The intelligent use of that power is the only hope of change."(3) [our emphasis]

Quite how the apparatus of unionist discrimination and terror was to become a 'power' for 'justice' and 'right' was not explained. Their ahistorical, almost mystical, belief in the progressive nature of the British State was common to much of the left, and as we shall see later led to calls for British intervention. Their total rejection of even the most recent history led them to make a distinction between Unionism and British Imperialism.

### CIVIL RIGHTS

In August 1968 NICRA took to the streets for the first time with a 2,500 strong march from Coalisland to Dungannon; a protest against local housing discrimination. Despite threats from Paisley's Ulster Protestant volunteers who had occupied Dungannon market square, the demonstration passed without incident. The loyalist presence that day was a warning of the backlash to come. The 'orange card' was to be played with unionist bigots doing their utmost to stir up sectarian hatred. Typical were claims by the **Protestant Telegraph** that the civil rights campaign was no more than a Sinn Fein front whose intention was to drive the Protestants 'into the sea' and;

"the destruction of all Protestants and the advancement of the Priesthood and the Catholic faith until the Pope is the complete ruler of the world." (4)

It was in this atmosphere that a second march was announced for the 5th October in Derry. It was immediately banned by Stormont Home Affairs Minister William Craig. When left wing activists and the Derry Labour Party said they would march regardless, the NICRA leadership was forced to agree.

On 5th October 2,000 marchers set off and almost immediately their path was blocked, forwards and backwards, by RUC men. A short meeting was held ending in a NICRA call for a

peaceful dispersal. When this was attempted, the police charged batoning, kicking and punching. Water cannon were used, indiscriminately spraying marchers, shoppers and residents alike. 88 people were injured and 36 arrested. Stormont had given notice that they were not prepared to let people demonstrate for even nominal equality. In the Six Counties even the most moderate of demands was 'dangerous' and 'subversive'. However times had changed. Television broadcasts showing blood bespattered marchers widened the appeal of the civil rights movement.

In Belfast 800 students, both Catholic and Protestant, marched in protest and organised themselves into **Peoples Democracy (PD)**, an organisation that whilst being loose was more radical than NICRA emphasising 'bread and butter' issues such as unemployment and bad housing. The moderate NICRA leaders who would have been happy with a few gains for professionals and Catholic politicians were powerless, knowing that to divert the campaign from the streets would cut them off from their base of support. Meanwhile the Catholic working class of Derry, furious at the RUC attack put 15,000 demonstrators onto the streets. Outnumbered 50 to 1 the RUC were helpless.

On November 22nd, under pressure from the British Labour Government, Prime Minister Terence O'Neill announced a package of reforms designed to take the heat out of the situation and to avert a political crisis. Council housing was to be allocated on a points system, the multiple vote was to be abolished, there was to be a review of the Special Powers Act and an ombudsman would be appointed to hear complaints and discrimination. Whilst moderates such as NICRA were satisfied, initially at least, these purely superficial reforms did not quiet more radical groupings like PD. In the Unionist Party hardliners attacked 'moderates' accusing O'Neill of kowtowing to republicans and other 'disloyal elements'. Rather than patching up the crisis, the promised reforms created a greater degree of



Self defence in West Belfast, 1969.



polarisation. The 'middle ground', if it had ever existed, was shrinking fast.

## BURNTOLLET

PD held that the limited reforms were not guaranteed and did little to tackle the wider issue of discrimination. The promised scrapping of a handful of Unionism's worst excesses was hardly a victory after 47 years of discrimination and terror. The earlier marches had shown that direct action could win gains, now was the time, they argued, to step up the pressure. PD decided to organise a march across the north, from Belfast to Derry, setting out on New Years Day 1969. the 100 or so marchers were met by RUC barricades, forced down country lanes and across fields, and when they reached Burntollet Bridge, just 8 miles from Derry, they were attacked by 350 loyalists throwing stones and using clubs spiked with nails. Several marchers were seriously injured and some were very nearly killed. Many of the attackers were off-duty B-Specials. The RUC refused to provide protection and stood idly by. Terence O'Neill, speaking afterwards on television said:

**"We have heard sufficient of civil rights. Let us hear a little about civic responsibility."**(5)

The Unionists had put their cards on the table, protest would not be tolerated. Splits and the ascendancy of hardliners within the Unionist Party meant that reform was impossible. The sectarian statelet could not grant the demands of the Catholic minority. To have done so would have meant the effective abolition of the sectarian state itself. The Six County apparatus and Partition were irreformable. A major contradiction had emerged, one that was to be pushed to crisis with the announcement that the Derry Apprentice Boys would march as usual.

August 12th was the day of the Apprentice Boys parade, when thousands of orangemen from all over the north would swarm to Derry, parading through the city and around its walls that overlooked the Catholic Bogside. It was a naked celebration of 'Protestant Might' and served as a constant reminder to the city's Catholic majority as to who was master in their town. After a year of banned civil rights marches and demonstrators driven off the streets, the Catholic population were in no mood to be reminded of their inferiority. If the march went ahead there was bound to be a riot. If there was a riot it was bound to be followed by an RUC invasion of the Bogside. The scene was set for a confrontation; a crisis that would shake the sectarian set-up to its core.

## CRISIS

As we have seen, many in the civil rights movement had illusions in the 'neutrality' of the British State in being able to provide a solution. This was illustrated when Bernadette Devlin, PD member and independent MP for Mid-Ulster sent a telegram to Harold Wilson on the eve of the Derry march calling for:

**"the Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs and control of the police to be taken over by the British Government"** (6)

Clearly a demand for Direct Rule! Austin Currie, an Irish Nationalist MP demanded that:

**"B-Specials should not be used and if there are insufficient police the use**



Captain Terence O'Neill.

of troops should be considered."(7)

Others on the British left tried prayer:

**"Please God and Harold Wilson do something."**(8)

That failing, it was decided to pander to the British Labour Party's 'better instincts':

**"Wilson...has set up a race relations board to look after the interests of immigrant aliens...He does nothing about hundreds of people born within the UK, who are denied many rights that immigrant aliens enjoy."**(9) [our emphasis]

The Communist Party, whilst highlighting violence against Protestants (sic) called on Irish workers in London to:

**"take action if Britain didn't intervene in Ireland."**(10) [our emphasis]

Furthermore they argued that the British Government had:

**"a responsibility to end the situation."**(11)

Others such as Militant decried the Unionist Party for having **"no real will to govern."**(12) and lamenting that;

**"the people of Northern Ireland have had to pay with blood and bitterness for the way in which the Unionists' have handled their responsibility so lightly and their failure to solve any problems."**(13)

The answer as far as Militant were concerned was to call on the Labour Movement to demand the resignation of the Unionists on the grounds that they were obviously not doing a good enough job of maintaining law and order.

## BATTLE OF THE BOGSIDE

On August 12th 1969 the Derry Apprentice Boys marched. At the fringe of the Bogside the march was stoned. The RUC baton-charged and the siege was on. The mainly Catholic working class of the Bogside and Creggan expelled the RUC, organised their own 500-strong defence force and built barricades. The police unleashed a vicious attack, firing canisters of teargas over the barricades. The area was defended with bricks and petrol bombs. The 'Battle of the Bogside' triggered similar riots in other towns in order to stretch the RUC and take pressure off the Bogside. By August 14th the North was on the brink of war.

## THE ARMY ARRIVES BACK

At 5.00pm on Thursday 15th August 1969, 400 soldiers of the Prince Of Wales' Own Yorkshire Regiment took up positions around the city of Derry. British troops were back on the streets of Ireland.

As the troops arrived it was Belfast that exploded. Loyalist vigilantes stormed the Falls Road. Within a day and a half over 200 houses, nearly all of them occupied by Catholics had been burnt out. RUC landrovers sped up and down the Falls Road firing their Browning machine guns. 10 people were killed and about 100 injured. The dead included a 9 year old boy shot as he lay in bed and the first British soldier to die - a Catholic man home on leave who was shot by the RUC.

## "MORE TROOPS IN NOW!"

Many on the British left saw the logic of their demands realised; the British State had directly intervened. Some saw this in itself as being a solution as long as the military back up was there;

**"General Freeland has only 6,000 troops in Ireland: they must be heavily reinforced..."**(14)

Yes, it was Britain's patriotic duty to smash unionism! Tribune, on 17th October even gave a blacklist of unionist 'troublemakers', complete with photographs, urging the army to take action. No action was too tough. Their position reached self-parody when Arthur Young, ex-Metropolitan Police Officer, was appointed new head of the RUC:

**"He will remould it into a civilian force that will be accepted by people on both sides...uniforms will be changed from the present green/black military type to a soft sober blue."**(15)

How touching! An end to the sectarian strife through new uniforms. What

## SOCIALISM FROM BELOW • 18

about partition? What about discrimination? What mattered to Tribune was that Labour were in power:

**"Protestants welcomed him (Jim Callaghan visited Belfast in August '69) as the representative of the British Government, a symbol of their membership of the United Kingdom.**

The Catholics hoped he would listen to their complaints..."(16)

## "BUILD A LABOUR PARTY NOW!"

For Militant the answer was simple:

**"...latent energy which is presently diverted into religious channels can be harnessed behind the banner of the Labour Movement."**(17)



At Burntollet

Unfortunately Militant had missed the whole point. The crisis in Ireland could not be reduced to a religious conflict, to do so ignores the material reality of sectarianism. It denies the unpleasant truth of discrimination and led them to claim that Catholic workers were now fighting a class war.

**"This anger against the capitalist system erupted in insurrection."**(18)

This is incorrect. Catholic workers had been drawn into conflict with the state, not explicitly as workers but as members of an oppressed 'minority'. They were not directly challenging capital but fighting sectarianism and state terror. Such a struggle was logically anti-imperialist, but of that we see no mention. This then led to an absurd demand for:

**"A united workers defence force"**(19)

A hopelessly abstract demand in a context where the Catholic working class in Belfast and Derry had already created organs of defence to counter RUC and B-Special attacks. Such a position is reactionary in practice because it sidesteps the

issue of sectarianism completely and equates the material positions of Catholic and Protestant workers;

**"Protestant workers acquiesce to loyalism through...the failure of the Labour movement leadership to give a lead."**(20)

And where was this defence force to spring from?

**"The basis for this already exists in the 500,000 members of the All Ireland TUC..."**(21)

Militant thereby showed their virtually utopian faith in the 'Labour Movement', a magical panacea for every crisis, to be slavishly incanted at all difficult moments.

Unity within the trade union movement, both north and south, was built around not tackling the

for servicemen then the rank and file soldier would be won to support the struggle for workers power both in Ireland and Britain..."(23)

Insanity? No, left reformism! This overall position shows Militant's idealised belief in Labourism which even led them to appeal to the quasi-unionist Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) to take a lead. The NILP frequently stood candidates on a British Ulster platform and had declared:

**"The NILP will maintain unbroken the connection between Great Britain and Northern Ireland as part of the Commonwealth..."**(24)

Militant's total rejection of a materialist analysis of the Six Counties, coupled with their fetish of labourism, brought them to a reformist and statist conclusion. This dovetailed nicely with their parliamentary socialism and left them looking to a 'Labour Stormont' which would abolish 'religious strife' and could herald socialism through the nationalisation of the top monopolies.

## "TROOPS OUT, BUT NOT NOW!"

**"The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops...are inviting a pogrom which will hit hardest and first at socialists."**(25)

**"the arrival of British troops gave them (the Catholics) a breathing space from the threatened pogroms of Paisleyite armed mobs."**(26) [quotes from Socialist Worker]

The implication here of course is that if the troops had not gone in then socialists would have called them in.

**"the demand for withdrawal in the present situation...can only mean the conscious advocacy of a massacre now."**(27)

This position was really no better than that of the bourgeois press presenting the British State as neutral arbitrator keeping the warring tribes of 'green and orange wogs' apart. It did not address the issue of why the troops went in, but blandly stated:

**"Both the Paisleyites and the army are opposed to the interests of the Catholic workers. But the Paisleyites are for attacking them now when they are defenceless."**(28)

Presumably, then, it's alright for the army to attack them when they aren't defenceless! Like many on the left Socialist Worker spuriously counterposed bad Unionism to better (for the meantime at least) British Imperialism. Let us examine this 'breathing space'.

The British Troops occupied Ulster to secure law and order. To do that it was necessary to curb the excesses of loyalist mobs, to stabilise the crisis, and to patch-up partition. The breathing space was in reality a period of consolidation for imperialism. It acted as a brake on struggle, giving ground to the clergy and middle class moderates, who were busy building illusions in the British state, urging fraternisation with imperialist troops and arguing for the dissolution of workers' own self-defence organisations. Socialists should have been smashing these illusions, not pandering to them. As the situation stabilised the barricades went down and within 3 months the same old sectarian RUC were patrolling the streets of Derry and Belfast once more. The 'breathing

## SOCIALISM FROM BELOW • 19



space' was indeed 'short but vital': vital to the needs of British Imperialism and long enough for them to tighten their grip on the situation. So when was it 'time to go'?

"when the catholics are armed they can tell the troops to go."(29)

Would it really be that simple? And where were the arms to come from in the first place?

"the opening of the Free State arsenals to supply arms to the catholics in the north for self-defence."(30)

This was tantamount to a demand for Southern armed intervention, which in fact would never have come:

"I accept the guarantees of the British Government...my Government is the second guarantor."(31)

The troops were there to preserve partition. It was only a matter of time before Catholics were forced into confrontation with the troops. Sectarianism was intact, strengthened, and the barricades were down. The moment of apparent calm was a prelude to war.

## TROOPS OUT: AN END TO PARTITION

To understand what was happening it was necessary to examine partition itself, its historic roots and the role of the British state in Ireland.

Ireland was partitioned in 1921 by British and Unionist bosses with the collaboration of bourgeois Irish nationalists. Partition was not for reasons of religious conflict or to protect a beleaguered Protestant minority, nor was it designed to accommodate a "fascist Orange Police state"(32). It was done to accommodate the needs of British capitalism. Its fundamental basis lay in the uneven development of capitalism in Ireland, the incorporation of the north-eastern (Ulster) economy into British capitalism and the backward nature of the predominantly agrarian and service economy in the rest of Ireland. Historically this uneven development was itself directly due to the distorting and debilitating effects of British imperialism.

Dating back to the time of the pre-capitalist plantations (33) Protestant tenant farmers gained land at a far lower cost than their Catholic counterparts. They were more readily able to accumulate capital which resulted in the concentration of capital in the Belfast region. In the 19th century the Ulster linen industry, being so close to British markets, boomed. Engineering and ship-building developed initially to service the linen trade but eventually became the dominant industries in the region, creating a pre-dominantly capitalist class tied to British capitalism. In order to maintain their power as a class it was necessary to divide workers along religious lines. Thus the needs of the northern ruling class came to be politically expressed as 'unionism': but while the form may be orange, the content has always been capitalist and as British as the Queen Mother. By contrast to the economic growth in the north, the southern economy was plundered by the rapacious need of British capitalism for foodstuffs and as a result remained under-developed.

Britain partitioned Ireland to preserve its political and economic interests. In doing so it created a six county Northern Ireland, with an artificial Protestant majority, its boundaries and its sovereignty guaranteed by Britain. With partition came the formation of a sectarian apparatus that maintained a divided

working class by granting marginal but material privileges to Protestant workers in areas such as housing, allocation of social services and importantly in a country of high unemployment: institutionalised job discrimination.

"Registers of unemployed loyalists should be kept...and employers invited to pick employees from them...the loyalists have the first choice of jobs."(34)

It also meant the scapegoating of Catholics as backward 'taigs' with the use of anti-papist bigotry and playing on historical protestant fears of being swamped by a displaced Catholic peasantry. As shown earlier this had a profound effect on the Northern Irish labour movement. Thus the sectarian nature of the six counties was not a 'freak', alien occurrence or 'fascist aberration', rather it represented a manifestation of British Imperialism in Ireland. To present a stark choice between a form of 'nazi' dictatorship or the 'democratic' British state is to totally reject history, and results in such absurd statements as: "They (the unionists) are...the anti British force in Ireland."(35)

When the civil rights movement mobilised thousands of Catholics around even a minimum programme of democratic rights it inevitably came into conflict with the sectarian nature of Northern Ireland. The glaring contradiction between the basic civil rights that Catholic workers needed and the sectarianism that underpinned partition itself threw the six counties into crisis. As the crisis deepened Britain as primary guarantor of partition, and thus of unionism, was forced to intervene, not to bring democracy to Catholic workers, but to resolve the crisis and defend partition. Implicit or explicit, short-term or long-term, support for the British state was disastrous and in practise pro-imperialist. It took as its starting point a tacit acceptance of partition and a denial of the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

The contradiction between civil rights and partition was always irreconcilable. The confrontation between the Catholic population and the British army was inevitable. A challenge to partition was a challenge to the legitimacy of the British state in Ireland. As history shows Britain has only one solution: War!

## IT'S ALWAYS BEEN TIME TO GO

It is 20 years since British troops first arrived on the streets of Ireland. 20 years of war against entire Catholic communities that have seen themselves criminalised by the British state. 20 years of imprisonment, censorship, and murder. Far from bringing a solution, British intervention has left sectarianism intact, branding those who resist as 'gangsters' and 'terrorists'.

Yet there are still those on the left, such as the promoters of 'Time to Go' who argue:

"the British presence is unquestionably part of the problem."(36) [our emphasis]

If Britain is only 'part' of the problem, who figures in the rest of the equation? Perhaps the 'men of violence', the 'gangster' and 'evil killers' who make life "an endless cycle of pain and misery."(37) for the ordinary, decent majority?

'Time To Go' imply that part of the blame must lie with the Catholic population who precipitated the crisis in the first place with their

demands for civil rights, demands that challenged the legitimacy of the British state; communities that incurred the full weight of state terror for the crime of self-defence, for giving birth to a republican movement that dared to fight. It is their fault. For this intractable problem we are told "...there is no military solution.."(38) and we are also told why this is so:

"There is also the drain on resources...wasted on a military strategy which even the Generals admit cannot succeed."(39)

What a principled stand for socialists to take! To call for troops out on the grounds that 'it doesn't work' and wastes 'our resources' is totally chauvinistic, echoing the mistakes of twenty years ago. It is the British presence in Ireland that is the whole problem, the briefest examination of history shows us that this has always been so.

## ANARCHIST WORKERS AND IRELAND

As anarchist workers we understand the need for a materialist analysis enabling revolutionaries to cut through the decades of lies and illusions and to draw the correct conclusions. We support the right of Catholics to fight back seeing that it is the British presence that has always meant murder, imprisonment censorship and war. Anarchist workers are for an independent working class movement north and south; a movement based on workers unity against the border and against capitalism (whether it be run by orange, green or red-white-and-blue bosses). We lend our practical and political support to those Irish anarchists who see that the working class is the only force for real change in Ireland. The working class has no stake in a system that pits Protestant against Catholic in competition for jobs and homes.

In Britain we see the need to build an anti-imperialist movement rooted in the working class movement; a movement that seeks to break British workers from their allegiance to British nationalism by exposing the role of the British State in Ireland, past and present; a movement that demands troops out now and an end to partition, not a phased withdrawal policed by Britain.

"The working class has no country. British workers have no common interests with their bosses. As internationalists we side with all oppressed peoples fighting imperialism whilst promoting the primacy of working class interests in all such struggles."(40)

Instead of looking to the British state to provide solutions anarchists recognise that the State can never act for the oppressed. We take the working class as our starting point. As the last 20 years have shown Britain can provide no solutions; only the mass action of the working class in the north, in the south, and on the mainland can remove terror from the streets of Ulster.

Eugene Perry

Footnotes can be found on pg. 30.

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## Interview

# Workers Solidarity in Ireland.

Earlier this year SOCIALISM FROM BELOW visited Ireland and spoke to the comrades of the WORKERS SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT, a small anarchist grouping who produce the magazine 'Workers Solidarity'. The interview published here presents the Irish Question from the perspective of revolutionaries in Ireland. We hope it will serve as an internationalist corrective to those on the British left who see the struggle purely in terms of romanticising the IRA or denouncing them as 'green' fascists.

SFB: Is there a role for revolutionaries in Ireland? What is it?

WSM: Of course there is. In each and every country there will always be a role for anarchists, until such time as we have seen the complete overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a free, classless, socialist society.

Our situation in Ireland is one of having no real native tradition of anarchism. The first anarchist paper only appeared ten years ago. So we have to begin by explaining the meaning of anarchism- and showing it's worth by linking it to the day-to-day struggles of our class.

As a new movement, the WSM is less than 5 years in existence, and one that is few in numbers, we are not capable of engaging in as much activity as we would wish. But we have not been inactive either. We have been working within our unions, in unemployed groups, in the campaign against the constitutional ban on divorce, in strike support committees, in the campaign against the 'Programme for National Recovery' (a 3 year deal between the unions, bosses and the government that holds down wages and endorses cuts in job levels and services.) That is not all that we have done but should give an idea of the sort of activity we have got stuck into. We have also produced a regular paper/magazine, published pamphlets and held public meetings. Regarding our views and activity in relation to the anti-imperialist struggle, that will inevitably come up later in the interview and we will deal with it then.

SFB: Right, what is the nature of the Republican movement?

WSM: The first thing we have to say is that the republicans are not the cause of war, nor do they share equal blame for it. When the civil rights marchers took to the streets in 1968 their demands had, as they saw it, nothing to do with partition or imperialism. The issue was not even mentioned. The response of the Stormont government and the unionist leaders was to turn loose loyalist mobs against people who were only looking for the

statelet are the problems, the Provo's are a response to that injustice.

The guerrilla war of the IRA is a response to the division of our country and the working class, in particular it is a response to the oppression suffered by the catholics in the North. Because of this we defend their right to take up arms against the repressive arms of the state. The responsibility lies squarely with the British and Irish ruling classes. We will not line up with those who scapegoat the republicans.

However we do not accept that their armed struggle is the correct way to fight back. By its nature it is an attempt to substitute the heroism of a few for the mass action that is necessary. We need mass working class activity, not the passive cheering of IRA volunteers or the casting of votes in support of them.

On a specific point we are totally opposed to the so-called economic war which involves bombing factories and shops. Whatever the intention of the IRA the result is the loss of jobs and the inevitable civilian casualties.

SFB: Is there a different role for anarchists in the north?

WSM: No. Different conditions mean we need different tactics but our role as anarchists remains the same. It entails explaining and popularising anarchist ideas, opposing the bosses, striving for workers' unity arguing against wrong concepts of socialism within the workers movement such as nationalism, social democracy and Leninism. The major difference would be that because republicanism enjoys far greater influence in the north, anarchists will have to devote more time and energy to taking on their ideas and methods.

SFB: What is the nature of the Protestant working class?

WSM: There is a lot of rubbish talked about this both in Ireland and abroad. Various nationalist and Trotskyist groupings have used up acres of newsprint telling us about 'settlers', 'aristocrats of labour' and even 'Fascists'. Loyalism is a completely reactionary and bigoted set of ideas. However it is not Fascist, and to use this term is silly and devalues the suffering of Hitler's and Mussolini's victims.

neither are they 'labour arising' SOCIALISM FROM BELOW • 21



police came out on strike. In 1919 when the mainly Protestant engineering and shipbuilding workforce struck for a reduction of hours, they elected a mainly Catholic strike committee. In 1932 the unemployed of the Falls and Shankhill fought side by side against the police. In 1984 we saw a very united wage struggle in the health service. Recently Protestant DHSS staff have struck when their Catholic fellow workers were threatened by the UDA.

To recognise the importance of these events does not mean that we blind ourselves to the reality of sectarianism. Each time the unity was shattered and sometimes followed by Orange pogroms. But it does show beyond any doubt that there is no 'iron law' preventing workers coming together on class issues.

SFB: What is the role of British anarchists?

We would also like to see more education within the anarchist movement about the struggle over here. We are sick of hearing supposed revolutionaries coming out with drivel about the struggle being unimportant because it is not some sort of pure struggle for anarchism. Or the line that getting the troops out would not be a gain because they would be moved to England and that would be just as bad. Or indeed the sad fact that some anarchists have put aside their own politics and become cheerleaders for the IRA,

SFB: What are the prospects for the class struggle in Ireland?

In the short term it's not so good. We are in a very deep downturn. Ireland is now being called a "20,30,50 society". 20% unemployed, 30% below the official poverty line and 50% of our young people have to emigrate in search of work. Naturally all this affects the level of confidence in our class. Struggle is at a low level and almost always of a defensive nature.

## Fighting the Poll Tax

# SINK THE FLAGSHIP!

The Poll Tax is the single most vicious attack on the working class since the Tories came to power in 1979. It has been described as the 'flagship' of Thatchers latest term in office and forms a cornerstone of the Tory onslaught against working class living standards. Alongside the anti-union laws, employment and local government legislation the poll tax forms an integral part of the British ruling class strategy of rejuvenating British capitalism at the expense of the working class.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE POLL TAX

Under the rating system local authorities cannot raise the funds to meet the demand for their services. Just over 40% is currently raised through rates (domestic and business), the remaining 50% plus is provided by Central Government grants. The Tories believe that by squeezing more money out of the working class to pay for local authority services, they will be able to make further cuts in Central Government grants. Whatever money they save by this will no doubt find its way into the pockets of the rich through yet more tax cuts.

The Poll Tax requires an up to date register of everyone over 18 years old and liable for payment. It is an obvious danger that such a register could be used for 'snooping' on women suspected of cohabitation by the DSS or for immigration control. It is widely speculated that the Poll Tax could open the door for some kind of ID card system. It is therefore necessary that we recognise the threat to civil liberties that the Poll Tax represents.

## GUINEA PIGS

Right from the start of the registration process in April 1988 the liberal press was full of reports of whole streets in working class areas where people refused to answer their doors when the registration officers knocked.

In December 1988 a MORI opinion poll showed 40% support for non-payment. The same poll showed that 67% of 18-24 year-olds said they would support a mass non-payment campaign. The anger is clearly there, as shown by turnouts in excess of 10,000 on non-payment marches organised by the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation. The federation claims to represent 250,000 Scots. Most of this is passive support and there is the danger that this anger could turn to apathy and demoralisation if the final demands for payment are not met with an effective mass response. The Scottish campaign has been severely hampered by the lack of a unified campaign and fighting strategy which can mobilise the **"potential non-payment army of 1.5 million"** which the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation says exists in their pamphlet **'This Far and No Further'**. It is vital that the anti-poll tax campaign in England and Wales avoids the pitfalls which have affected the Scottish campaign.

## LESSONS OF SCOTLAND

The level of opposition to the poll tax in Scotland has led to the

## STOP IT!

It comes as no surprise that this **"Stop It"** campaign was dubbed **"Pay It"** by many anti-Poll Tax activists as the Labour Party resolutely refused to advocate breaking the law through non-payment or non-collection. Instead, being irreversibly tied to the capitalist Parliament and electoral politics, the Labour Party's only answer was **'Vote Labour next time and we'll repeal the Poll Tax'**.

But we literally cannot afford to "Wait for the next Labour Government". And besides, there is no guarantee that there will actually be one!

## COMMITTEES OF ONE HUNDRED

Following the example of the first 'Committee of One Hundred' launched by Scottish Labour Action, groups of a hundred prominent individuals from all sections of the community have sprung up, with each individual pledging not to pay their Poll Tax.

Like the "Stop It" campaign, these 'committees' start from the position that the Poll Tax is "immoral", or "unfair" as it will hit "the poor" hard. They are Stalinist, Communist Party inspired popular fronts of everyone from vicars to workers.

Lacking a class analysis of the Poll Tax, and concentrating on mobilizing 'public opinion' against the Tories, they relegate working class activity to a passive, supporting role, favouring instead a cross-class 'broad democratic alliance' and moralistic appeals to "justice".

## WILL 'LEFT' LABOUR COUNCILS FIGHT?

Many on the left have argued that a campaign must be built to win Labour controlled local councils to a policy of non-implementation. They recognise that the Labour Party leadership will never sanction breaking the law, but still put faith in 'left wing' Labour Party branches

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and Labour councillors taking the lead in fighting the Poll Tax.

This 'strategy' says more about the illusions which much of the left have in the Labour Party as a 'party of the working class' than it does about how to fight the Poll Tax. While some left wing councillors might pay lip-service to non-payment, in the absence of an effective mass campaign against the Poll Tax, Labour councils will not lay themselves open to victimization, disqualification from office or surcharge by the courts by refusing to implement the tax. In fact, Labour councillors have argued that unless they implement the Poll Tax, council services will be hit.

It is a possibility that, in the event of an effective mass campaign of non-payment and non-collection, some councils may adopt a radical posture and make token gestures of non-implementation, but this will be due to the success of the mass campaign. Labour councils will not voluntarily take a stand against the Poll Tax, and it is counter-productive to sow illusions in them by arguing that they should take the lead in fighting, especially on the grounds that the mass campaign is not yet strong enough to fight effectively.

**"Local councils must be pressurised to refuse to co-operate with the registration or collection of the tax. This means socialists and activists arguing for mass lobbies of council meetings.....And it means arguing against any [their emphasis] attempt to try to shift the responsibility for opposing the tax onto the community." (Socialist Worker 23.4.88)**

In the struggle against 'rate-capping' 42 Labour councils originally pledged to defy the law. When the deadline for setting a rate approached in April 1985, this number had shrunk to 16. And then there were two: Lambeth and Liverpool. Both these were surcharged, then Lambeth gave in and set a rate. Throughout the struggle there was mass support from trade unionists, but it was never mobilised effectively, and in the end the Militant dominated Liverpool council fell to the 'witch-hunt'. All over the country 'defying the law' was replaced by 'creative accounting' and attempts to lessen the impact of the Tory cuts.

A year after the start of the registration process, all Labour councils in Scotland are implementing the Poll Tax. The SNP-controlled Argyll council, despite the non-payment gusto of the SNP at Govan, are doing the same.

## THE STUC

As with the Labour Party, to rely on the Scottish trade union leadership to build the fight against the Poll Tax is to kiss goodbye to effective action. With the trade union 'leaders' cowering from the prospect of sequestration under the anti-union laws, Campbell Christie and the rest of the union bureaucracy have been actively undermining all calls for non-payment and non-collection.

Instead, they have set up yet another cross-class 'public opinion' campaign, concentrating on prominent figures and media personalities and calling on the Tories to voluntarily ditch the Poll Tax.

The STUC's most militant action so far is the call for a token eleven-minute protest one Tuesday morning, September 13th 1988, which they laughably labelled a 'General Strike'. The response of many militants was predictable:

**"...the STUC fell foul to the attitude of many workers that protesting for eleven minutes was no serious protest and not really worth embarking on." (1)**

The trade union leadership will not even begin to build a campaign that can win. Fighting the Poll Tax effectively must involve defying the law through non-payment and non-collection. The Trade Union leaders will oppose any moves to build a campaign on this basis. Shackled by the anti-union laws, and tied to the Labour Party's electoralism, their policy is: **"Vote Labour next time..."** Trade union militants who want to fight the Poll tax must recognise this and must build opposition to the tax at rank and file level.

## ANTI-POLL TAX UNIONS AND COMMUNITY RESISTANCE GROUPS

By far the most militant initiatives in Scotland have been the local anti-Poll Tax organisations.

Originally set up by small caucuses of left wing activists (the Workers Party of Scotland in the case of the first Anti-Poll Tax Union (APTU); and members of the Direct Action Movement along with other anarchists in the case of Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax) these groups grew rapidly to become genuinely broad-based, with a high profile in their respective communities. After a rapid increase in the number of local anti-Poll Tax groups a single Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation was set up, bringing together regional federations from Lothians, Central, Tayside, Fife, Borders, Grampian and Strathclyde. The current number of affiliates is in the hundreds.

From the start these groups were organised around a policy of defying the law through mass non-payment, and set about creating a collective spirit of resistance out of individual opposition to the Poll Tax.

For example, rather than leave it up to isolated individuals to delay the registration process through sending forms back querying some point on them, these groups organised collective 'Bring and Burn' demonstrations or returned blank registration forms to the council en masse. They were under no illusions that non-registration alone could beat the tax, but were conscious of the need to build strong collective organisation immediately so that, come the first bills, people would have the confidence and organisation needed to take the fight forward to non-payment.

But the weakness of many of these groups is a belief that mass non-payment can by itself beat the Poll Tax, and consequently an over-reliance on community organisation. While many activists have argued that links must be made with council workers and civil servants in order to argue for non-implementation and non-collection, this is often seen as secondary to non-payment rather than a crucial part of a strategy which can win.

The Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation is the umbrella organisation which groups together the forces of non-payment, and is politically dominated by supporters of Militant. The federation is however extremely weak on union or workplace affiliations. In May 1989 there were only two NALGO and four CPSA affiliations which is an extremely low representation from workers directly responsible for implementation. The sectarian approach of Militant has also created problems. Militant supporters have set up anti-poll tax unions which exist on paper only, allowing their 'delegates' to pack anti-poll tax conferences and wider federation meetings. Equally where Militant have not taken control in local groups they have simply set up their own rival anti-poll tax unions. This divisive activity has been reported in the Lothians, Hulme, Lewisham and Lambeth groups and only shows up Militant's fear of what they cannot dominate.

## ANARCHISTS RESPOND

Whilst anarchists have been amongst the most militant activists in the local anti-Poll Tax groups, they have too often, because of romantic notions about 'the community', over-rated community-based non-payment and failed to advocate moving the fight beyond this to build for non-collection and non-implementation amongst organised workers.

The Anarchist Communist Federation pamphlet **'The Poll Tax and How To Fight It'** illustrates this fault clearly when it states that non-collection and non-implementation by council workers:



THE POLL TAX - A BURNING ISSUE ! REGISTRATION FORMS ALIGHT IN LONDON.

**"...could have a major impact on the introduction of the Poll Tax. But the crucial battleground on which the fight against the Poll Tax will be won or lost, is going to be outside the workplace: the collective community campaign of non-payment."(2)**

There has also been a tendency by some to stress the 'autonomy' of the local groups and neglect the task of building a solid, united movement. Anarchists must recognise that there is no contradiction between the existence of active local organisations and the need for a strong movement linking these around a common political strategy. In fact, it will be impossible to beat the Poll Tax without either of these.

## A CAMPAIGN THAT CAN WIN

Tragically, much of the left in England and Wales seem intent on repeating the mistakes of the Scottish campaign.

There has been a dramatic growth of local APTUs in England and Wales, reflecting the level of anger at the Poll Tax and involving a new layer of activists freshly politicised by the campaigns. Activists have to argue in these groups against false, misleading or ineffectual strategies, and for a coherent programme of action based on a clear political analysis.

## A PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVE

Much of the left argues that the Poll Tax is 'too costly to run' and must be replaced by a 'fairer' system.

The present rating system is not 'fair'. It is 'better' in that it costs the working class less than the Poll Tax would, but the rich still benefit as they pay a smaller proportion of their income than working class people. Some argue for a more 'Progressive Rates' system to decrease this inequality, though it would not abolish it.

**"Why shouldn't councils be able to charge more rates per pound of property value on bigger, more costly buildings than on small, cheap buildings?...Why shouldn't councils be able to claim a sort of 'poll tax' from the employers of workers who live in their area....Central Government needs to be much more subject to the law."(3)**

The idea that local authorities, the local arms of the capitalist state can be as neutral and progressive as to be capable of implementing a "wealth tax" is pure left-wing fantasy. We as anarchists have to adopt a thoroughly independent working class standpoint. We oppose the poll tax because we are opposed to any attacks on workers' living standards and any deterioration of the 'social wage', the public services which working class people need. Raising local authority finance is the bosses' problem. Our concern is that our class is not made to suffer.

Ultimately, if we are to abolish injustice and inequality, we need to get rid of the whole capitalist system entirely, and not seek to patch it up as the left do.

## LEGAL OBSTRUCTION

The labour left argue against non-registration, and in favour of 'legal obstruction' of the registration process: sending back the forms and asking questions about 'responsible persons' etc., as a delaying tactic. The AWG opposes legal obstruction as it relies on individual opposition rather than collective, and, whilst it may make the work of registration officers harder, it will not develop the fight against the poll tax. As a tactic it leads nowhere.

The experience in Scotland has been that people opting for legal obstruction have merely identified themselves to the authorities as anti-poll tax activists and laid themselves open to prosecution. In addition to this, the registration officers have got wise to this activity. In many areas poll tax registration forms are now accompanied by leaflets explaining the questions on the form in detail, and so rendering it impossible to pretend not to understand any aspect of it. In this context, attempting 'legal obstruction' would leave activists vulnerable to victimisation.

## NON-REGISTRATION

Sections of the left, including the Socialist Workers Party have opposed non-registration as a tactic on the grounds that registration officers will find out what they need to know from other sources such as Inland Revenue, library, or DSS records



Photo : Col Crompton

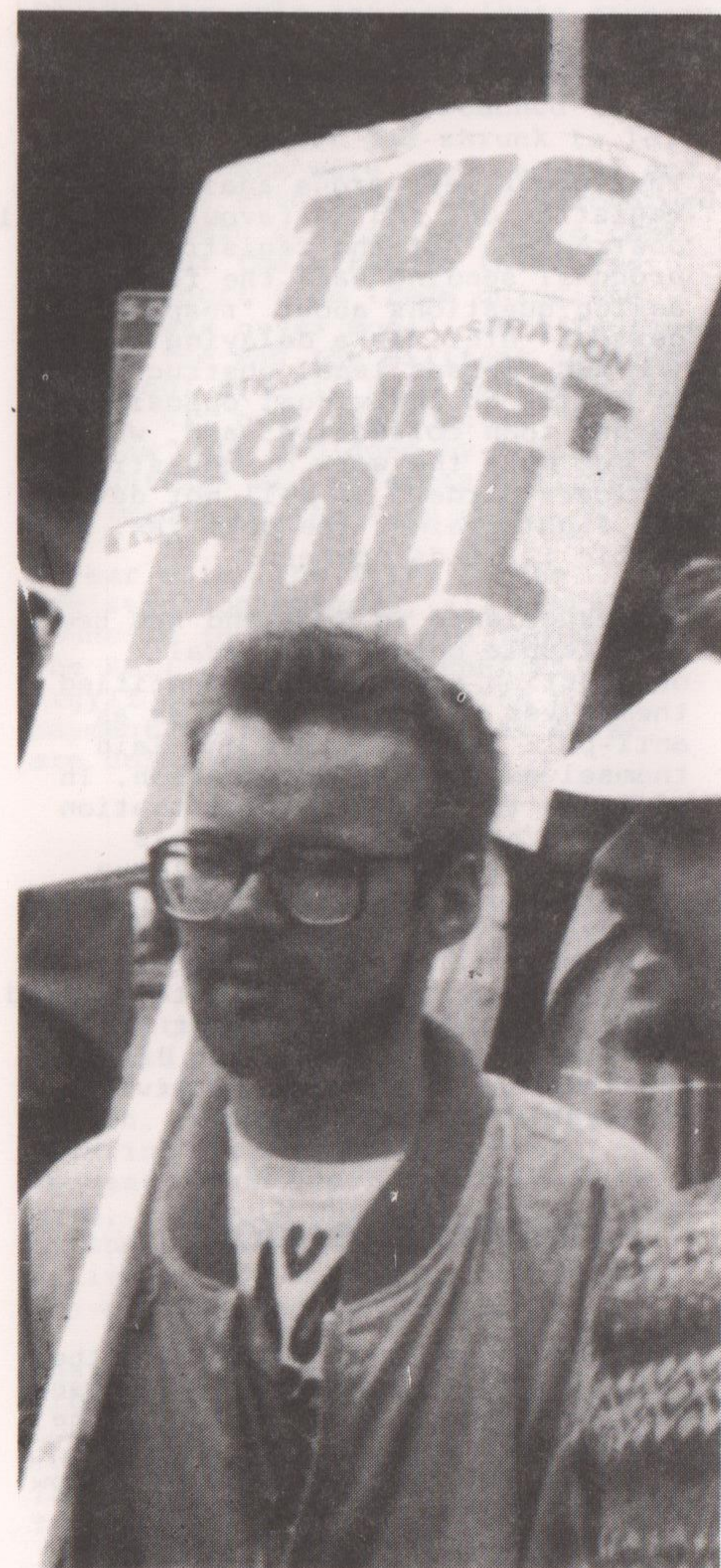


anyway. So, for them, refusing to fill in the forms is futile.

Another argument used against non-registration is that it too relies on individual martyrs to defy the law who will end up being fined and prosecuted. Whilst the AWG recognises that non-registration will not in itself defeat the poll tax we have argued that if organised on a mass collective basis, it could be used as a tactic to build support for mass non-payment. If organised properly then no-one could be prosecuted for not returning their registration forms as the courts have not been able to prove that a person has received one, except if the expensive method of registered post had been used. At least 100,000 Scots had refused to register by April '89 thus proving that the potential existed for such a campaign, but the political will was lacking.

In addition, non-registration immediately raises the question of defying the law, and so it can be used to prepare the ground for a future non-payment/non-collection campaign by winning the argument amongst activists as early as possible. If the argument about the law is postponed then we play into the hands of those who want to keep opposition within the law.

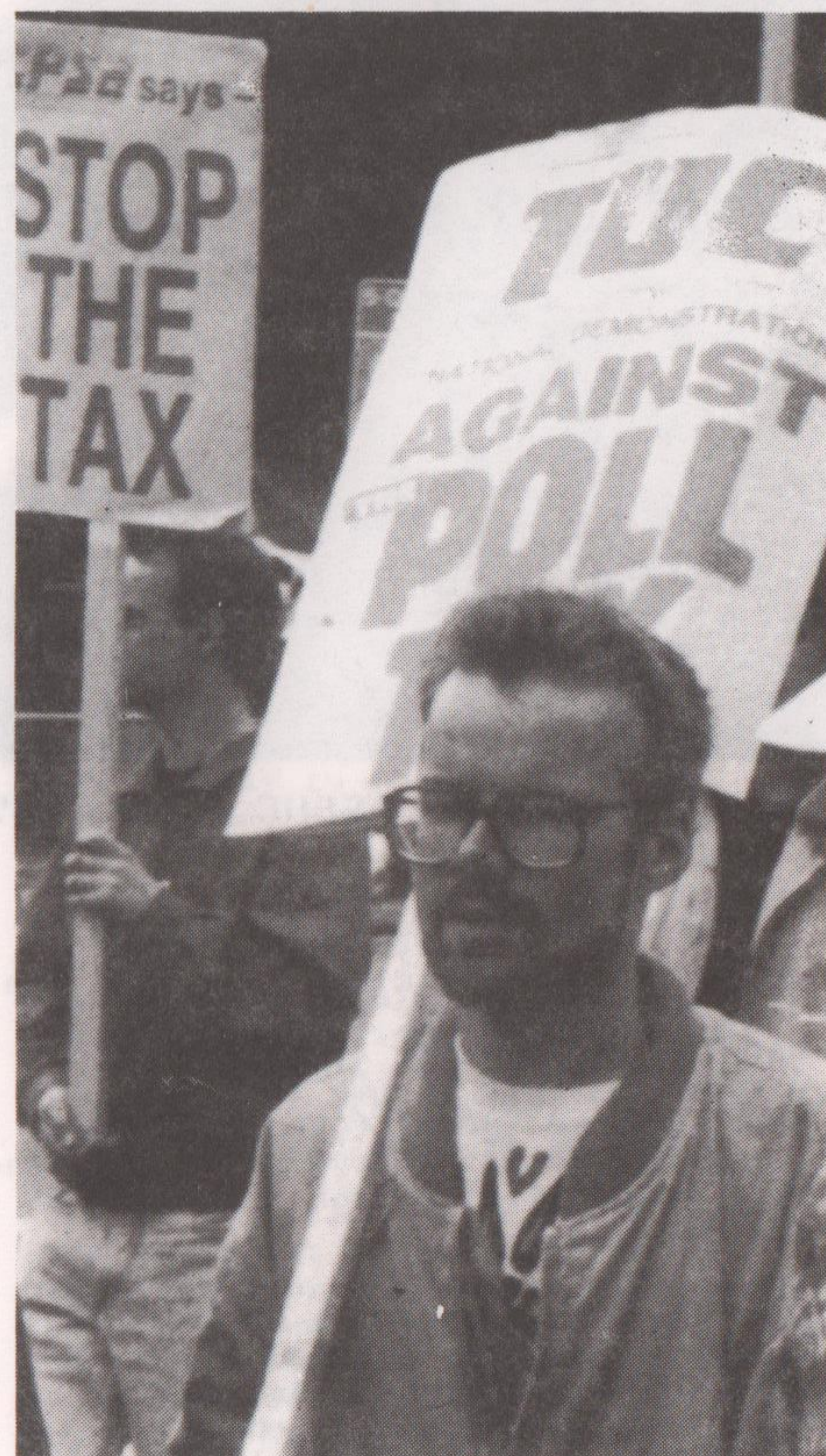
Finally, arguing for non-registration is often inseparable from arguing for non-implementation. Registration requires access to various public records which places those workers required to supply these details in a position of effectively helping to implement the poll tax.



## NON-PAYMENT

As we have pointed out, non-registration alone cannot defeat the poll tax. Its use is to initiate a collective campaign of non-cooperation and defiance of the law. As with non-cooperation, any campaign of non-payment must be organised on a mass collective basis: street-by-street, estate-by-estate, and ultimately town-by-town. This is the only way to prevent individuals from being isolated and picked off one-by-one.

But, non-payment itself is no guarantee of victory even if organised on a mass scale. The Tories have obviously been worried by the levels of support for non-payment in Scotland which is why they have invested in 'safety net' handouts for England and Wales worth £100 million. Equally councils have been given powers to send in bailiffs to seize goods as payment from non-



payees, and order employers or DSS officers to arrest poll tax directly from wages and benefits. Whilst a mass campaign could physically stop bailiffs from seizing goods, it will not be able to stop deductions at source. Therefore non-payment in itself is not enough.

## NON IMPLEMENTATION

a strong campaign for non-collection and non-implementation must be built amongst council workers, DSS workers and other groups of workers strategically placed. If they refused to collect poll tax or deduct it from benefits or wages the non-payment campaign would be given a cutting edge.

Non-implementation must be fought for at all official levels with the civil service and local authority trade unions. But, we cannot rely on the union leaderships to do this. In the face of the law they proved themselves completely unwilling to



Photos: Col Crompton

risk their union assets. Marion Chambers, CPSA President personally ruled every single non-implementation motion to the union's 1989 conference out of order. It is clear therefore that non-implementation must be organised independently of the union leaderships if, as will probably be the case, they refuse to fight. Any non-cooperation must also be backed up with strike action to prevent individual suspensions.

Non-implementation cannot simply be argued for on the grounds that it is 'unfair, undemocratic and unjust' but that it is an attack on working class living standards. It will mean that councils will have to shed more jobs and services. Low paid public sector workers have no interest in implementing the poll tax, and this is the basis on which to build non-collection. We should not, however, see non-implementation itself as an alternative panacea to non-payment, and one that can substitute itself for a mass campaign.

"Millions of people reject the tax but fighting it depends on a few groups of NALGO workers in the council in the finance department, or in the DSS in the CPSA." (4)

Unlike some on the left, we do not counterpose workplace to community action. We cannot rely on non-implementation alone because it means putting the burden on small groups of workers who may easily be isolated. It does not matter how strategic groups of workers are, many will not take action unless they can see a mass campaign which will support them. The poll tax is an all-out attack on our class and must be met with a class-wide response. We must recognise that local government and DSS workers cannot take on the Tories alone. The strategies of non-payment and non-collection are mutually supportive. But even together they need to be supplemented with a force that can deliver the knockout blow.

## A CLASS-WIDE RESPONSE

The decisive blow against the poll

tax must be struck by the mass of organised workers taking strike action. Trade unionists in all industries must be convinced of the need to take political strike action as soon as non-payees are taken to court or as soon as workers are victimised for non-implementation. Again, as this action will be illegal, it will be bitterly opposed by the Trade Union leaderships.

Workplace and union-wide non-cooperation groups must be built at a rank-and-file level in all industries. These must become the focus for those who are prepared to break the law, and agitate in the workplace for strike action in support of anyone victimised for doing so. Such action should be fought for throughout the unions, but if it cannot be official it must be unofficial.

## AN INDEPENDENT CAMPAIGN

With the Trade Union leaderships, Labour councils and the Labour Party all determined to stay within the law, it is obvious that a campaign based on defiance of the law has to be organised independently of the official labour movement. Community and workplace anti-poll tax groups must be able to organise and mobilise the working class around non-payment/non-collection. It is these organisations who must co-ordinate and agitate for a class-wide confrontation with the Tories.

To do this Anti-Poll Tax Committees must group together all the forces of non-compliance in each locality. These must become alternative centres of action to the TUC and Labour Party. They must be democratic bodies consisting of recallable delegates from the workplace and community groups, who are accountable to general assemblies of these groups. Such a movement could unify and mobilise the forces of non-compliance and can ensure victory without being derailed by the official labour leaders.

## THE POLL TAX CAN BE BEATEN

The poll tax could prove to be one of the decisive battles of the Thatcher decade. Victory for the working class would undoubtedly tip the balance of class forces in our favour. The key to winning the battle is the mass action of the working class, and no battle can be won if one side goes into combat without believing they can win. This is a problem with the anti-poll tax movement. There are those like Kinnock and Willis, who believe that the law cannot be broken; and there are those who believe that the working class will not fight unless led by Kinnock and Willis.

"If Neil Kinnock was to call a massive law-defying campaign against the poll tax, it would tap into a huge reservoir of anger against this and other Tory policies" (5)

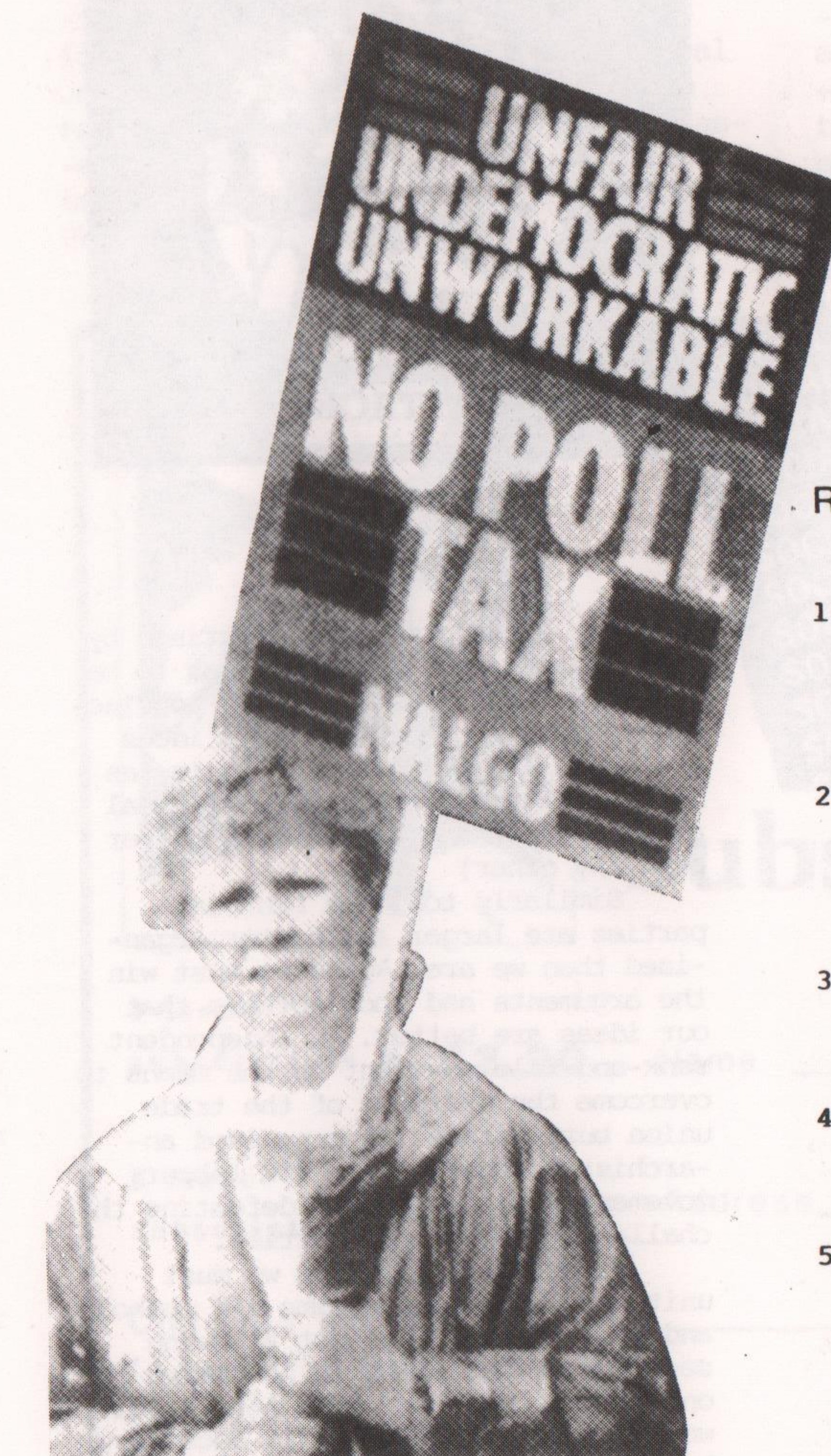
The fact is that the working class must break the law and must build an independent campaign because Kinnock simply won't do anything that may ruin Labour's election chances, such as defying the law.

Many on the left have used the Glasgow rent strikes to prove their own political points. These

important events do however show the need for a campaign based on all the elements we have identified as necessary.

At the start of the First World War migrant workers poured into Glasgow to work in the expanding war industries of munitions, shipbuilding and steel production. This resulted in acute housing shortages which in turn led to rent agitation against profiteering landlords who were exploiting the crisis by pushing up rents for those workers who were involved in the war work. The rent strikes were mainly organised by working class women, and they swept across Glasgow reaching a culmination in November 1915 when up to 20,000 tenants were on rent strike. The turning point came when 18 tenants were taken to court for non-payment of rent increases. On the day of the hearing 10,000 workers from 5 shipyards and one armaments works struck. A massive demonstration, including delegations from factories not on strike, descended on the court. The intervention of organised workers was decisive. The charges were dropped and within weeks the Government had rushed through the Rent Restriction Act to head off unrest.

The crucial lessons of the rent strikes are just as relevant today with the poll tax. They do not prove that community organisation alone or, for that matter workplace action alone forced the Government's hand, but a combination of the two. The groundswell of rent agitation by tenants organisations created the conditions which sparked off the



mass strike. Both elements were essential to the equation, as they are with the poll tax. Equally, the fact that Clydeside shipbuilders and engineers were prepared to take strike action when their union leaders supported the war and the industrial truce, and when the Munitions Act outlawed strikes on war work, demonstrates that the task of fighting independently of official leaders and in defiance of the law is clearly realisable. If we are serious about defeating the poll tax then we must also be serious about the strategy required to win. The Tories are well prepared with wage arrestments, warrant sales, safety-net subsidies and the judiciary to enforce the rule of law. We must match their determination and fight with every weapon at our disposal. The struggle must be built on non-payment and non-implementation but must be backed up with a massive political strike wave. We want to play our part in contributing to unleashing this potential power. We know that if our class moves into action on such a scale then no law in the world can stand in its way.

Midge Mitchell &

Eric Lewis

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# REVIEWS

## Will the real Tin-Tin please stand up ?

**Breaking Free: The Adventures of Tin-Tin** By Jack Daniels, published by **Attack International** £2.00

Excellent produced **Breaking Free** uses the increasingly popular format of the comic book for getting its ideas across.

Unlike the more trendy political comic strips featured in publications like **Crisis** and their ilk, this story is set in the here and now although fantasy is never far away. The story's 'heroes' play a central role in a struggle that leads us to the brink of international revolution, all within just three months!!

"Unfortunately this book is a work of fiction," say **Attack**, "it isn't about how to make a revolution." What then was the point in producing the book? We are told "revolution is the only real option left to us," Yet **Attack** aren't prepared to define the content of this 'option'.

### RIGHT ANSWERS

"There are no right answers", they write, "People who say that they have the right answer are the ones who will try to ride on our backs". Yet the characters in the story constantly argue for answers:

"What we really need is working class power..."

"We'll make a better job of it (running the country) than those bastards ever did!"

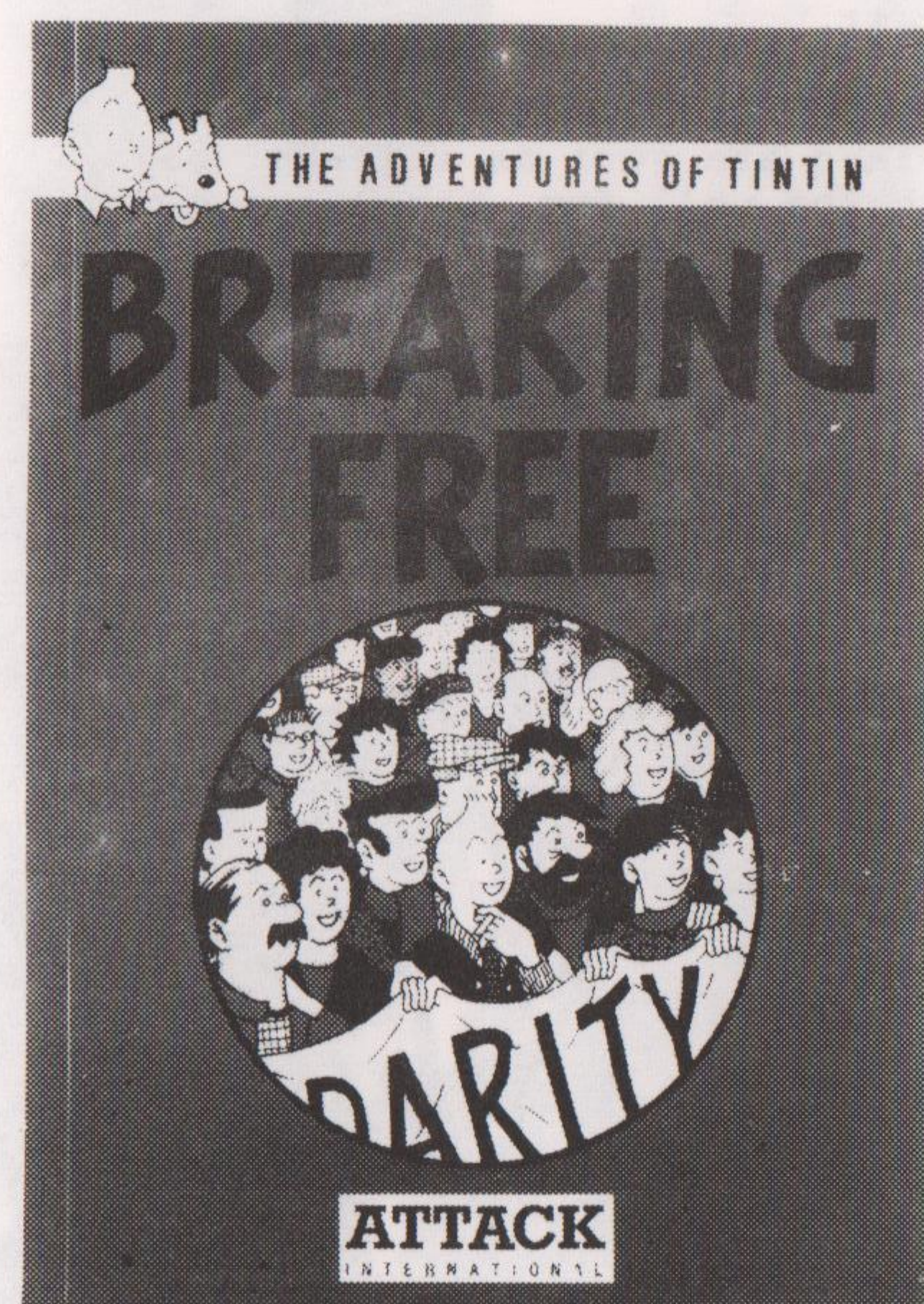
"We should start organising patrols and we should arm ourselves."

These 'answers' are correct in context of the story. They are found almost effortlessly and accepted with little or only token resistance by the characters in the story.

### EVERYDAY LIFE

The strength of **Breaking Free** is that it relates revolutionary, libertarian and insurrectionary ideas to everyday life. Arguments about sexism, racism and homophobia take place. References to the war in Ireland, to industrial blacklisting, unemployment, to police violence and all manner of social and political antagonisms are made. This is all achieved in most cases without

being too patronising, corny or tokenistic. **Breaking Free** is also a very exciting adventure story. Therein lies its weakness as a revolutionary tale. In reality the struggles that the story is concerned with have as much to do with patient organising, frustration and setback as with victory and celebration. The more difficult to answer questions are either glossed over or left out altogether. The trade union bureaucracy is defeated with a few lines of verbal abuse. The Leninist parties are easily dismissed by being told to "piss off out of it" and "leave your bloody papers outside". Individual acts of sabotage are automatically accepted by the working class even though these acts are isolated and prone to possible distortions. If only it were so simple!



### IDEAS

The grip of reformism as practised by the trade union bureaucracy has to be defeated 'from below' through convincing other workers that these ideas are wrong and that revolution is, as **Attack** themselves say, the only real alternative. (Not that there has ever been any other)

Similarly too, the Leninist parties are larger and better organised than we are. Again we must win the arguments and show workers that our ideas are better. An independent rank-and-file movement is the means to overcome the obstacle of the trade union bureaucracy. An organised anarchist current within the labour movement is the means of defeating the challenge of the left parties.

To defeat capitalism we must unite around concrete aims and methods and we must guard against allowing sections of our class to be picked-off one by one. We agree with **Attack** that working class solidarity is necessary but realise that it is not as automatically forthcoming as this book suggests. It must be organised for with a clear idea of the final objective.

SCABS!

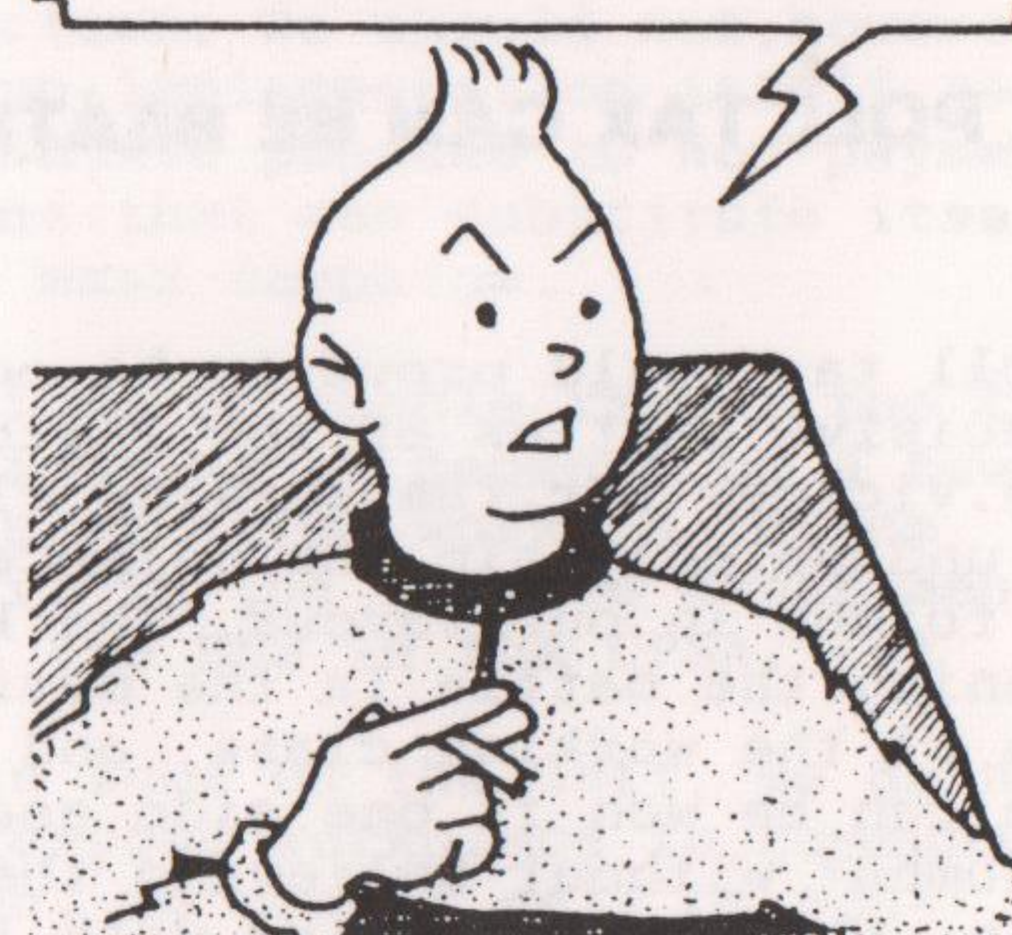


### SPONTANEITY

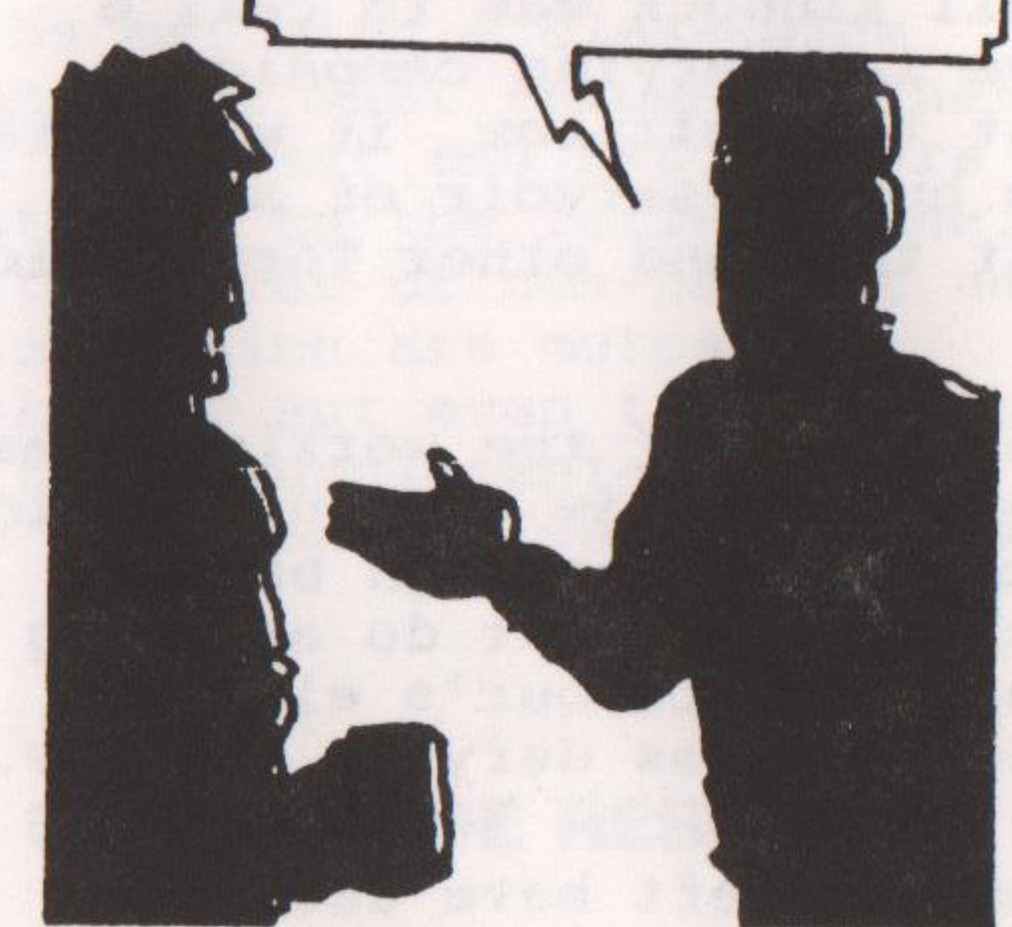
Despite all of its political inadequacies **Breaking Free** shows that ideas can and do change in the course of struggle, it shows that the bosses fear industrial action more than anything else and it exposes the trade union officials (albeit simplistically) as being in the pockets of the bosses and having different interests to their members. At a time when the anarchist movement finds itself unable to relate to the class struggle it would have been good to see a more serious analysis of the balance of class forces rather than the glorification of spontaneity that makes up the adventures of Tintin. An anarchist classic or a sad reflection on today's anarchist movement? Probably both but not to be taken too seriously.

David Luton

WHAT WE'VE GOT TO DO IS TOTALLY CONTROL OUR AREAS



WAR?! IT'S US OR THEM....



# REVIEWS

## Anarchism and Ireland

A WORKERS SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET

This precise, compact pamphlet is a reprint by the Workers Solidarity Movement. Initially published in 1985, the intervening four years, rife with unemployment, rising emigration from the republic and austerity, have more than demonstrated the need for an alternative based on the WSM's socialist vision. In the face of the weak-kneed Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) the prospects for a drastic reversal of these conditions will rest with socialists willing to organise an independent workers movement. The route to change on such a scale must begin with the mere propagation of ideas. For the WSM the starting point of **Anarchism and Ireland** is therefore to outline the history of anarchism and its political ideas.

### NO ANARCHIST TRADITION

Unlike, say, Russia, Spain or America, countries in which a deeply rooted anarchist tradition can be seen, Ireland has little, if any, specific anarchist history. Perhaps the only figure of any notoriety could be said to be Jack White. After experiencing such immense struggles as the Dublin Lock-out of 1913, he found his way to Spain where he fought alongside the anarcho-syndicalist CNT during the Civil War and became a convinced anarchist. Aside from White precious little heritage exists for the WSM to draw on. Nevertheless, this doesn't deter them, and the international experience of anarchism is used to good advantage.

### THE NATURE OF THE STATE

The actual structure of the pamphlet takes a familiar course, focussing as it does on both vital aspects of the struggle, such as women's oppression, and what we might term the component parts of political anarchism. From a critique of the system as it stands we are led into examining the nature of the state. In their own words: "The state is a direct result of the fact that we live in a class society". This is an important facet of anarchist thinking, one which distinguishes us from both parliamentary socialists and those Marxists who believe in the alternative state - the 'workers' state'. The WSM are quick to point to structures which would truly allow for direct workers' power: **workers councils**. They played a central part in the most important revolutionary upheavals this century. These bodies encompassing the mass of workers, and subject to their direct democracy, provide a reference point for socialists showing the ability of the class

to create organisations best suited to meet their needs. Workers' councils were 'organic' developments built in the process of the destruction of the institutions of class society itself. It has long been our contention that workers' councils and the 'workers state' are mutually antagonistic. Nowhere has this been realised more vividly than in the Russian Revolution. This is explored in a specific chapter in **Anarchism and Ireland**.

### THE PLATFORM

The failure of the Russian Revolution leads us to mention another WSM reprint, **The Organisational Platform of The Libertarian Communists**. Written by a group of Russian exiles in the desperate years following the 1917 revolution, it examines with all the harsh experience at their disposal the failings of the Russian anarchists during that period. In contrast it sets out a new course for the anarchist movement, recognising the need for political clarity and theoretical unity. The response to the **Platform** has been far from impressive. Dismissed by most anarchists as an attempt to model anarchism on the Bolshevik Party, it has long remained a thorny

topic for most anarchists. An in depth look at the **Platform** and the tradition it spawned will be contained in a future issue of **Socialism From Below**. What concerns us here is that the WSM locate themselves clearly in the libertarian communist tradition.

### ORGANISE

"While **Anarchism and Ireland** explains the core ideas of anarchism, some ideas and perspectives are left in need of further explanation. But, as with all short introductory tracts, its real strength lies in the degree to which it inspires the reader to search out further 'recommended reading'. The closing chapters succinctly spell out the message: "What anarchists are saying are not just nice ideas. History shows us that these ideas can work. A new society can be built with workers in control. But it won't happen spontaneously. We must organise for it." That organisation needs a working programme and a sense of history. The WSM are acutely aware of both these points. To use their own phrase: whilst we may be small in numbers, we are rich in ideas.

Colin Crompton



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# 1969

## MYTH • ILLUSION • AND WAR •

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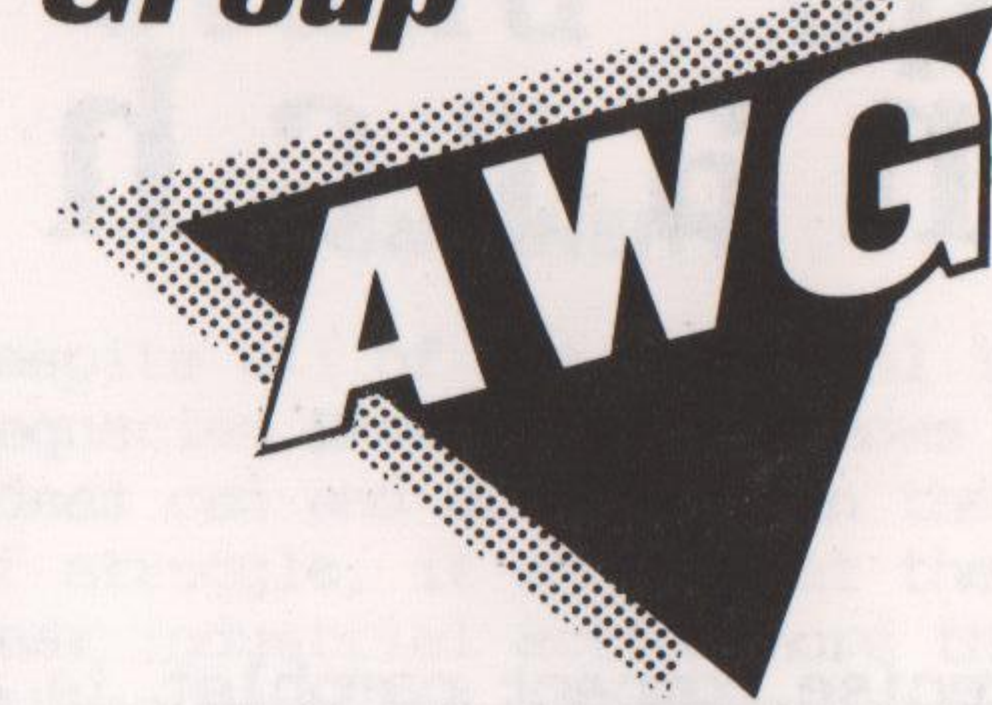
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caption to a picture of heavily  
armed troops dismantling a barr-  
icade. In the same issue it was  
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against the British troops..."But  
how can they if they can't tell  
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## Anarchist Workers Group



### Founding Statement

The origins of the AWG,  
and our perspectives  
on anarchism in Britain.  
Available free for a  
SAE from the national  
secretary.

# Party or class?

What we say, and what they say.

Committee to each bureau. This  
it would appear is a fully  
fledged 'oligarchy'. No import-  
ant political or organisational  
question is decided by any state  
institution in our republic  
without the guidance of our  
party's Central Committee.' (12.)

As anarchists, we fight for  
our class to exercise its own  
power, through its own organis-  
ations. As Rosa Luxemburg  
observed:

'finally we saw the birth of a  
far more legitimate offspring  
of the historical process: the  
Russian workers' movement, which  
for the first time gave expres-  
sion to the real will of the  
popular masses. Then the leader-  
ship of the Russian revolution  
leaped up to balance on their  
shoulders, and once more  
appointed itself the all-power-  
ful director of history, this  
time in the person of His High-  
ness the Central Committee of  
the Social Democratic Workers'  
Party. This skillful acrobat  
did not even realise that the  
only one capable of playing the  
part of the director is the  
'collective' ego of the working  
class, which has a sovereign  
right to make mistakes and to  
learn the dialectics of history  
by itself. Let us put it quite  
bluntly: the errors committed  
by a truly revolutionary  
workers movement are historic-  
ally far more fruitful and  
valuable than the infallibility  
of even the best Central  
Committee.' (13.)

For us, meaningful revolu-  
tionary action means not just  
tactical leadership in the  
class struggle, not just the  
raising of consciousness on a  
political level, but also  
whatever increases the self-  
activity, autonomy and confid-  
ence of the working class. We  
aim for the organisational and  
ideological independence of the  
working class. Independence not  
just from the capitalist state  
and from the trade union  
bureaucracy, but from substitut-  
ion by any political organisat-  
ion.

'The vanguard must set itself  
the task of developing the  
direct political responsibil-  
ity of the masses, it must aim  
to increase the masses ability  
to organise themselves... In  
the final analysis the  
revolutionary minority can only  
be the servant of the oppressed.  
It has enormous responsibil-  
ities but no privileges...  
Whatever the circumstances the  
minority must never forget that  
its final aim is to disappear  
in becoming identical with the  
masses when they reach their  
highest level of consciousness  
in achieving the revolution.' (14.)



Trotsky - "We'll shoot you down like partridges".

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Chris Holman

*a n a r c h i s t*  
**WHERE  
AWG WE  
STAND**  
*w o r k e r s • g r o u p*

**U**NDER CAPITALISM the workers produce the wealth  
of the world but neither own nor control the pro-  
duce of their labour. Capitalism creates poverty, star-  
vation, unemployment, waste, pollution, war and the  
threat of nuclear annihilation. Only when the working  
class seize control of, and plan production, for use not  
profit, can human needs be satisfied.

**T**HERE IS no parliamentary road to socialism. The  
company directors, top civil servants, security and  
army chiefs and landlords exercise real power and will  
prevent parliament from legislating for fundamental  
social change. The power of the ruling class can only  
be contested effectively at the point of production  
which is primarily where socialists must organise.

**T**HE STATE is an instrument of class domination  
and cannot be used in any way to further the  
interests of the working class. All gains conceded by  
our rulers can only be defended through the class  
struggle. The capitalist courts, local councils and  
industrial arbitration bodies cannot serve as a substi-  
tute for direct action by workers. The state cannot be

reformed, bypassed or brought under democratic con-  
trol. It must be destroyed and replaced by the power of  
workers councils.

**T**HERE CAN be no socialism in one country. Capital-  
ist production is international and, therefore,  
social revolution must be international in order to  
succeed. The working class have no country; British  
workers have no common interests with their bosses.  
As internationalists we side with all oppressed peoples  
fighting imperialism whilst promoting the primacy of  
working class interests in all such struggles.

**T**HE TRADE unions exist to defend workers' interests  
within the limits of capitalism: they cannot be  
vehicles for its revolutionary overthrow. The trade  
union leaders are a bureaucratic caste whose existence  
depends on the maintenance of their role as  
professional negotiators. This role fosters a conserva-  
tive outlook which acts as a brake on militancy. It is  
necessary, therefore, that workers organise a rank-and-  
file movement within the existing unions across sec-  
tional divisions and independent of bureaucracy. Such  
a movement would act, firstly, as a political coun-  
terpoint to the reformist bureaucracy and, secondly,  
provide, in times of struggle, the organisational frame-  
work to bypass the leaders who always side with the  
bosses in a revolutionary crisis.

**T**HE LIBERATION of workers must be achieved by the  
workers themselves. This task cannot be carried out  
on behalf of the workers by a vanguard party. Any at-  
tempt to usurp the role of the mass of the workers must  
be opposed. There can be no socialism without  
workers' democracy. Therefore we do not consider the  
Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China or Cuba to be  
socialist.

**C**APITALISM generates systems of oppression which  
divide the working class. To create a unified  
workers' movement and a genuine communist society  
we must fight all forms of oppression in principle.

To this end we oppose the oppression of women.  
In the family women are burdened with the main  
responsibility for childcare and domestic labour. We  
stand for free abortion on demand and the socialisa-

tion of childcare and housework through free pro-  
vision of 24-hour nurseries, laundries, dormitories  
and restaurants.

We are opposed to all forms of racial discrimina-  
tion. We are opposed to all immigration controls and  
support the right to physical self-defence against racist  
attacks.

We oppose all forms of discrimination against  
lesbians and gays and stand for the full decriminalisa-  
tion of homosexuality.

**A**LTHOUGH WORKERS learn through struggle they  
do not spontaneously become revolutionary.  
Therefore we advocate a political organisation of  
anarchist workers which can win workers to liberta-  
rian communist ideas and intervene decisively in the  
class struggle. We stand for the fullest democracy and  
independence of all workers' organisations and  
defend the right of all revolutionary currents to  
participate within them. We urge all those who  
agree with our objectives and policies to join us in  
building such an organisation so that Libertarian  
Communism can become a reality.

ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP.

**AWG**  
**PO BOX B 20**  
**HUDDERSFIELD**