

COUNTER INFORMATION

MAY/JUNE 1988

STAMFORD HILL HELD FOR 2 DAYS

WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH, 10am: 50 bailiffs backed up by 500 riot police invade the Stamford Hill estate in Hackney, N. London.

The aim? To evict 120 squatted flats, and make 240 people homeless - by order of Labour-controlled Hackney Council.

The housing committee claimed that the flats were needed to house some of the borough's 785 homeless families.

But there were already over 1,100 houses available for relet, 150 of them in Stamford Hill! Perhaps the real reason was the squatters' involvement in community campaigns (see C.I. 17).

Two weeks prior to the expected eviction, squatters decided that they would resist flat by flat. Steel windows and doors, corrugated iron and wire mesh were collected from all over London. Within a week everything was ready. Threatened houses were barricaded and an alarm system of fog-horns and whistles was organised. It would warn of any police or bailiff attack. This would give people time to get to the nearest threatened flat, or to form groups to delay, harass or attack the bailiffs inside the estate.

The final week was spent informing appropriate groups and contacts, producing posters and leaflets, and discussing tactics. But judging from the police surveillance of the estate the police operation was going to be much bigger than anticipated. Tactics had to change!

Instead of waiting until police and bailiffs were smashing down doors, it was decided to defend the whole estate, not just individual flats. This would also

have the advantage of forcing police action, and so avoiding both the surprise attack and/or a long siege.

Barricades were erected at the four entrances to the estate. Each wo/manned by up to 20 people. The result was that the estate was successfully kept police-free and unevicted for over 2 days.

To begin with, organisation was poor. But the squatters quickly realised that they also had responsibility towards the other tenants. This meant that problems over rubbish collection, milk deliveries, access for elderly and disabled people etc. had to be dealt with quickly. Addressing these practical issues would help gain the support and co-operation of the whole community.

Similarly during the 54 hour no-go/free space, the idea of rioting was discussed - but rejected. Rioting risked losing the credibility and trust of the other tenants.

But strength of police numbers meant that no resistance was given. All the threatened houses being evicted, the whole operation lasting only 4 or 5 hours.

Later the same day 60 people paid a visit to Brynley Heaven, the housing chairman, during a full council meeting. Despite police protection he got the kicking he deserved. Five were later charged, but all released without serious charges. Most people evicted have now resquatted in the area, and the protests will continue.

Info from HHAG, c/o 61 Leswin Rd., Stoke Newington, London N16.



31st March: Anti poll tax groups burn government propoganda outside the Scottish Office in Edinburgh to mark the beginning of registration in Scotland. In Glasgow protesters unfurled a FIGHT THE POLL TAX banner on the City Chambers roof. Anarchists in London demonstrated outside the Scottish Office, Whitehall in solidarity.

We know of anti poll tax groups in the following areas:

EDINBURGH: Haymarket/Tollcross, Gorgie/Dalry, Southside, Stockbridge, Leith, Easter Rd./Abbeyhill, Newhaven/Fort Prestonfield, Wester Hailes, Canonmills/Broughton, Muirhouse/Pilton, Roseburn.

GLASGOW/WESTCOAST: Govan, Maryhill, Dennistoun, Easterhouse, Drumchapel, North and South Pollok, East Pollokshields, Govanhill, Cokerhill, Clydebank, Ferguslie Park, Renfrew, Barrhead/Neilston, Johnstone Castle, Millside.

OTHER AREAS: Bathgate, Falkirk/Linlithgow, Grangemouth, Methil, Kirkcaldy. [plus groups are starting to form in England e.g. Leeds].

Neighbourhood groups, based on people collectively refusing to pay, are central on defeating the unjust Poll Tax. Advice sheets on starting such a group are available from Community Resistance to the Poll Tax, pigeonhole CR, c/o 11 Forth St., Edinburgh.

In Glasgow poll tax snoopers have been driven out of the Summerston and Pollok areas on several occasions. In Summerston people made a bonfire of the registration forms, while in Pollok the locals dumped them in the burn.

DUTCH OPPOSE CLAUSE 28

1ST FEBRUARY: 40 lesbians and gay men occupied the Amsterdam office of British Caledonian as a protest against the anti-gay Clause 28.

British Caledonian was targeted because of its proposed merger with British Airways which has a policy of compulsory HIV testing for employees. The occupiers were evicted by police after half an hour with apparently no arrests, despite violence from 1 British male employee of BC.

The occupiers expressed solidarity with British lesbians and gays in their struggle against the clause.

P.S. A national demonstration against the clause was held on 16 April in Amsterdam. There has been disturbing changes in Dutch police and judicial systems which co-incide with the introduction of more repressive laws in other European countries. Thus Clause 28 is seen as a direct threat to lesbians and gays in Holland.

South Africa: Opposition despite the Odds

THE EXTRAORDINARY RESILIENCE of the grassroots opposition is being severely tested by unremitting repression, restrictions on organising public protests and defence groups; assassinations in Paris, Mozambique and in the townships, and the role of vigilante groups and the Zulu Inkatha movement in spreading terror and communal strife.

Yet there is some hope. On the 21st of March there was massive support – especially around Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape – for the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. This was the more remarkable because it was achieved by an informal network of clandestine organising which is fighting back in the townships and unions against stooge Councils enforcing evictions and against racketeers and informants to the Security Forces.

Within the unions there is growing questioning of the support by COSATU (Union Federation) for the 'Freedom Charter' which only seeks to reform capitalism. Affiliates such as CCAWUSA support a socialist programme. Meanwhile, the temporary reprieve for the Sharpeville 6 has to be set against the execution of 7 activists in Pretoria on March 7th and 40 others on Death Row.

Our support is needed more than ever.

The Long March Bulletin of the Sarmcol Strikers in Natal can be obtained (by donation) from SAWCO, 12 Manor Rd. Extension, Leicester LE2.

UNIONS BYPASSED

A GRASSROOTS workers' rebellion is sweeping the public sector in Italy. In a major development, Alitalia airline ground staff have voted to reject a Trade Union-management agreement. The result of the country-wide ballot, announced in early April, promises new strikes at Italy's airports.

The ballot outcome is yet another rejection of the authority of the trade union bureaucrats, and a boost for all the unofficial grassroots workers' committees (comitati di base or COBAS). The railway workers' COBAS have just announced more strikes and initiatives for mid-April till early May.

Activists from the Workers Autonomy movement in Padova write:

"Italian workers and proletarians have an enormous experience of controlling their own struggles. This experience has developed from the 60s right through to the 80s, causing a crisis for the traditional trade unions.

In the early 80s, the restructuring of capitalist production, with the widespread introduction of automation and information technology, weakened and disorientated workers' grassroots organisation.

In contrast, in the last few years, especially in sectors such as transport, education, and the

public services, new forms of self-organisation and struggle have resurfaced.

On the State Railways the workers have organised 2 national co-ordinating bodies, one for the engine drivers and one for the ticket collectors etc. These bodies have already called 8 national strikes, in which 60-80% of the workers have participated.

In the schools the teachers, organising in their grassroots committees, are blocking the marking of exams in 90% of the schools in Italy. They want substantial wage increases, permanent jobs for the temporary teachers, and a maximum of 25 pupils per class.

The same process of self-organisation is being developed by the grassroots committee of the airline Alitalia. Strikes there are involving 100% of the airport ground staff.

In many sectors of state employment similar developments can be noted, from the post office to the local government workers in Rome.

All these grassroots struggles have in common the aims of higher wages and a shorter working week.

The traditional trade unions are doing everything they can to avoid being crushed: they have even proposed that strikes not called by the official trade unions should be made illegal!"

STEEL STRUGGLE SPREADS

ON APRIL 11TH hundreds of West German steelworkers blockaded a main bridge over the Rhine in Dusseldorf. They then marched on the North Rhine Westphalian state government HQ.

The workers are fighting the closure of the Krupp steel mill in Rheinhausen, Duisburg. This latest action was sparked off by the Social Democrats urging Krupp to 'speed up closure' and to 'end all the fuss'.

95,000 workers have lost their jobs in the steel industry since 1974, due to the international crisis in the industry. Unemployment in Duisburg is 16.7%.

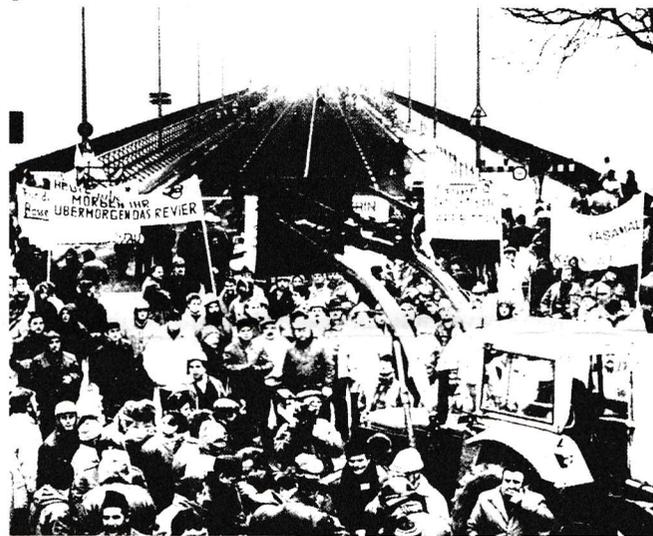
In the past, the closure of steel works implied the destruction of whole communities since these depended on dirty, hard, exploited labour in the steel

industry. Such closures were managed by trade unions (IGM – the metal workers union), the employers and the state without any considerable difficulty.

However, the history since November is different: wildcat strikes, street blockades, not only in Rheinhausen but all around Duisburg.

The resistance is not only independent from any Union organisation and interference, it is also against the peace-seeking strategy of the IGM. Twice weekly meetings of the 300-strong unofficial workers' committee co-ordinate the struggle.

This is a grassroots protest involving the whole community, spreading and gaining support from all over the country. Rheinhausen looks like the start of a new social movement.



WOMEN'S DAY DEMO

OVER 4,000 WOMEN marched through Barcelona on 6th March to mark International Women's day. The slogan of the march was 'No Aggression Without Replies'.

Marching up the crowded Ramblas on a Sunday afternoon the demo trebled in size as women enthusiastically joined in. The atmosphere was festive and musical but the message was serious.

The march was led by an effigy of policeman Manuel Solis Arenas, symbolising police and male violence of women. Manuel Solis repeatedly raped his neighbour and was then set free on bail by the police courts (see C.I. no. 18).

This time the police refrained from attacking the demo, even when the effigy was symbolically burnt outside the Catalan Government H Q and it ended without incidents.

Source: Ekomedia Barcelona.

ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE

ON 5TH FEBRUARY in the Santutxu district of Bilbao in Spain there was a demonstration due to another fascist attack on a woman in the area. This time, as well as beating up the woman, they carved their crosses into her face and arms.

During the demo, the bars in

the area remained closed in solidarity. A communique read out at the demo urged that there must always be resistance to such cowardly attacks, and that the fight against fascism must continue, until they abandon the world.

Ekomedia Barcelona.

NEW ADULT SLAVERY PROGRAMME

THE GOVERNMENT'S new 'Adult Training Programme' ATP, will replace both the Community Programme and the JTS from 5th September. It is the most savage attack yet on the unemployed, aiming to force 600,000 claimants off the dole to work full-time for their benefit plus £10, or be punished by losing 40% benefit for 6 months. More details in the Supplement.

BOYCOTT

Community Programme workers are already threatened by ATP. Those starting after 1st March weren't told they must transfer onto ATP in September or lose benefit for 6 months. In Edinburgh, workers on several CP projects have decided collectively to boycott ATP, persuading project sponsors to make them redundant in September and to issue policy statements to reject ATP. Workers on one project are preparing to form a co-operative in order to continue independently.

Edinburgh Community Programme Workers Group has formed specifically to oppose ATP and has produced leaflets giving claimants the real facts and encouraging them to boycott ATP. The group would like to hear from any other anti-ATP/YTS groups; please contact Edinburgh CPWG, c/o 2 Cranston St., Edinburgh. More

MERSEY BEATS NUKES!

DOCKERS IN Liverpool stopped containers containing uranium hexafluoride on 22nd February.

The uranium was en route to British Nuclear Fuel's (BNFL) plant at Springfield for enrichment in the USA. The dockers asked for documentation to prove the uranium did not come from Namibia (which is illegally occupied by South Africa).

BNFL admitted all consignments of 'hex' are mixed, so their country of origin could not be vouched for.

Since the 22nd, nine containers have been loaded and four are still stranded on the quayside.

Source: Anti-Nuclear Network. STOP PRESS: All new consignments of 'hex' are now coming through Felixstowe dock.

GERMANY

500 ANTI-nuclear protesters blocked the transport of spent nuclear fuel rods to Sweden from the northern port of Lubeck in

details in the Supplement.

11th April was the start of a nationwide Week of Action against Social Security cuts and slave labour schemes. In Edinburgh a demonstration was held at Castle Terrace DHSS and was joined at midday by CPSA workers. Demonstrators went on to St Andrews St. Job Centre where they covered display boards with anti-ATP leaflets, plastered the window with posters and leafleted passers-by.

In London, local demonstrations were followed by an afternoon rally at Elephant and Castle DHSS HQ. At a local Job Centre official leaflets were removed and binned.

In Leeds the Claimants Union took to the streets on 3 days over the week with displays, stalls and leafletting against the benefit cuts and the Poll Tax.

21st April Dispersing speakers with stink bombs and shouting "no work for dole" 60 people broke up a conference in Liverpool called by the Industrial society to "explain" the new Adult Training Programme.

120 protesters took action against the compulsory work for dole scheme for young people in France, when they occupied DDTE administrative offices in Paris on 5th February.

REAL IRISH UNITY

SUPPORT FROM fellow workers in N. Ireland helped Dublin firefighters stop cuts in staffing to unsafe levels.

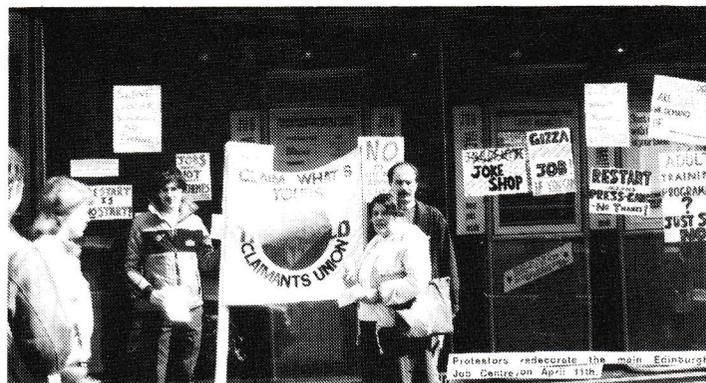
In January Dublin Corporation, as part of its austerity plan (sounds familiar!), sacked 16 firefighters. The firefighters went on strike.

Attempts to bring in crews from other areas failed when Dun Laoghaire fire brigade refused to scab. As a result some of them were suspended, so their colleagues joined the strike. Then army firecrews were called in.

Firefighters from Derry and Belfast joined pickets and marches in Dublin and gave financial support. Threatened with solidarity stoppages by hospital workers, the Corporation conceded in early March and safe staffing levels re-established.

Germany on January 13th.

The shipment was weapons-grade nuclear material that was thought to be bound for Libya and Pakistan.



Protesters redecorate the main Edinburgh Job Centre on April 11th

A CIVIL SERVANT WRITES:

A STRIKE has taken place by low-paid civil servants which lasted 14 weeks across North London employment offices and also involved solidarity actions from workers in Job Centres and other DHSS staff.

Management provoked the strike to give them the opportunity to smash militant North London UBO and DHSS offices with the long-term aim of work changes which would include: merit wages, flexibility, employing YTS slaves, privatisation of Employment Scheme, and the possible abolition of broo money through a cash card unit you can't argue with. No claimants, no problems!

In late December Camden Unemployment Benefit Office (UBO) came out on strike, due to casuals at Job Centres being laid off, and compulsory transfer of staff from Camden UBO to Job Centres.

The Camden workers were joined by Marylebone and Westminster staff who walked out in support.

Initially the strike was a spontaneous angry response to managerial diktat, with strikers visiting each other's offices to win support.

As more offices joined in, mass

meetings were held at Camden Unemployed Centre (which is still under occupation) and suddenly a self-elected strike committee of (petit bourgeois Trots!) 'party cadre' of the SWP and Militant appeared.

Many meetings later, a ballot was prepared for a London all-out strike, with the General Secretary of the CPSA (a Militant member!) saying that NO strike pay would be made available to the strikers.

The ballot was eventually lost 1,040 to 694.

At the meetings proposals set by non-party members were mysteriously overlooked, such as mass picketing of particular offices which would be chosen the night before.

As the meetings became more geared towards SWP and Militant slugging each other, non-party strikers lost interest in the meetings. In one farcical meeting half the time was taken up on whether there should be smoking allowed!

Near the end of the strike a union rank and file group called 'Workhouse' produced leaflets criticising the running of the strike, condemning party political games and encouraging strikers to take control of the strike fund etc. The strike ended on March 31st.

ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

BRICKYARD WORKERS throughout Iran have recently been on strike (January 1988) for better conditions and pay rises.

In the Whaygan area, on the outskirts of Tabriz, general assemblies were held at each brick factory to elect a representative, one of whom was later replaced after reporting back that he had 'negotiated' a smaller pay rise than was being asked for!

At the second round of talks the workers got their pay rise, plus money for tools and other materials.

During the strike many meetings and assemblies were held, where workers discussed common problems and methods of standing against employers and carrying on the strike.

Other areas affected by the strike were: Oromieh (a wage claim was won), Malayer (a wage claim and better conditions were won).

And an interesting turn of events happened at Cangavar, where workers won a pay rise, and also successfully fought off the Iranian regime's armed men who twice tried to enter the town to arrest army conscripts.

UNDEFEATED

A WAR OF attrition has developed in Lothian hospitals in the struggle against privatisation. While the STUC sits on its hands the workers fight on.

At the Royal Edinburgh in February 'efficiency' teams measuring a room to provide information for prospective contractors received some unexpected overtime when workers blocked the door and kept them there - for 10 hours!

Action on 24th of February began at 5am when 15 nurses picketed out Bilston Glen colliery. This was repeated with the afternoon shift. Miners left their buses and walked back out, handing over packed lunches as they left.

SOLIDARITY

MINERS JOINED shipyard workers, posties (who gave two fingers to their own bosses as they passed the central post office), council workers, teachers, firefighters, engineers, claimants, pensioners, a homeless action group and the Society for the Blind in a 20,000 strong march down Princes Street. 60,000 marched in solidarity with the health workers in demos throughout Scotland.

At the rally afterwards marchers were subjected to boring speeches about the need to win public support (really!). Strikers who called for action were suppressed by zealous stewards. Heckling continued but proved fruitless and most

BURTONS

PICKETS ARE spreading countrywide to demand the reinstatement of Burtons worker Tricia Jennings.

Tricia was sacked from Burtons Edinburgh store after she was off ill, with a threatened miscarriage. She charges Burtons with sex discrimination, and has applied to an industrial tribunal.

Burtons shops in Bolton, Leeds, Norwich and Lewisham have been picketed. Despite violence and threats from management and lackeys, weekly pickets continue in Edinburgh,

PICKET BURTONS,
PRINCES ST. EVERY
SATURDAY 12 NOON
STOP PRESS Pickets have now spread to Cambridge, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, Hull, and Oxford.

Contact Tricia Jennings
Defence Committee, c/o CRO, 43
Broughton St., Edinburgh. Tel:
031-557 3366.

workers left cursing the speakers.

SCABS

BATTLE recommenced next day when cooks at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary struck after spotting a management efficiency team. Royal Edinburgh laundry workers walked out after discovering that scabs were hired to cover while they were on the demo. Both groups stayed out till the following week.

25 porters at the City Hospital struck when a colleague was suspended for non-compliance with new management instructions on 10th March. 300 health workers, including some from the Royal Edinburgh, had a one day solidarity strike.

More City workers were sent home on the 18th for refusing to work with scabs. Both groups returned 6 days later when management backed down.

WILDCATS

THE UNIONS are attempting to control wildcats. Both COHSE and NUPE have threatened to discipline workers for trying to spread unofficial AND official strikes.

The healthworkers are determined to stop talks on privatisation. However, the Joint Trade Union Committee (JTUC) are trying to discuss in-house tenders (back door privatisation) with Lothian Health Board. An



Trying to be heard... Speakers at the health service rally in Hyde Park on Saturday were shouted down by nurses angry that no one from the health service had been asked to speak.

attempted meeting on March 15th was prevented when 150 healthworkers formed a picket at the Health Board's HQ.

NOT BEATEN

IN AN open letter to JTUC and Lothian Health Board, Royal Edinburgh Hospital shop stewards state:

"The present time is not one for negotiations. We are not beaten."

They call for mass meetings in every hospital. The letter ends:

"It is obvious to our members that an all-out strike with emergency cover is the only way to win."

Nuff said!

FIGHTING THE LAW

"YOU CANNOT HOLD a strike ballot. That would be unlawful secondary action, resulting in the seizure of the Trade Union's assets." The verdict of a court in a South American dictatorship? No, this ruling was made TWICE in late March by the High Court in London.

This 'class justice' was directed against seafarers and their Union, the NUS. As we write (mid-April) P&O channel ferry crews are in the 10th week of strike action against job cuts, wage cuts, longer hours, and lower safety standards.

The first 'banned ballot' was a national vote amongst all seafarers on whether to join the 2,300 striking ferry workers. Days later the High Court again backed the employers, ruling illegal a strike ballot of Sealink ferry crews, also threatened by redundancies and worse conditions.

The P&O strikers demanded the NUS carry out the national strike ballot anyway. But the NUS bureaucrats, as always obeyed the Courts. To spread the strike the strikers will need to act themselves, outside Union control.

Already the P&O seafarers have created 3 Support Committees, set up communal kitchens, and organised visits round Britain and overseas to raise cash and support. The strikers - all now sacked by P&O - need your solidarity.

Contact: NUS, c/o Magnus House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. Cheques to 'Women's Support Group'. Tel. Deal 582 8433.

STOP PRESS 22nd April: Following an "Accept our terms or else" ultimatum P&O are going to try and resume ferry sailings. Mass picketing and/or ferry occupations, plus solidarity action from ferry officers, other seafarers, dockers and others will be needed to sustain the strike.

FASCISTS BASHED

Liverpool Anarchists write: For far too long the National Front & the British National Party had been striking left-wing and anarchist targets in this area. One anarcho-feminist suffered 20 attacks to herself and her home within 3 months.

Now after severe intimidation the BNP regional and Liverpool organisers have resigned and the local NF group has disbanded after anarchists stormed one of their meetings. Donations for fines etc. much needed - contact P.O. Box 110, Liverpool L69 6AU.

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

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

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

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

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