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JUNE '89

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ANN HANSEN

was given a total of 41 years, which was transformed into a "life" sentence. She was convicted of the Brinks conspiracy, the Litton bombing, the Red Hot video firebombing, the B.C. Hydro bombing, possession of explosives and weapons, auto theft and possession of stolen goods. She is presently imprisoned at Kingston Prison for Women.

ANN HANSEN

B.C. Supreme Court
New Westminster, B.C.
June 5th, 1984

When I look back on the past year and a half, I realize that I have learned a lesson. Not the kind of lesson that some people would hope I had learned, but rather through direct life experience I have re-learned what I once only understood theoretically—that the courts have nothing to do with justice and prison is where they punish the victims of this society.

For many years now I have understood that the justice system was actually a system of injustice when seen in the broader social context. I was aware that parliament is where men make laws to protect big business, wealthy individuals and the status quo. Police were employed to enforce the laws, courts were created to prosecute those who broke the law, and prisons were built to punish the guilty.

My faith in the justice system began to erode as I grew up and saw the big business ripping off people by selling poorly produced products at high prices, resource companies gouging and raping the earth, governments producing nuclear arsenals capable of destroying life on earth many times over, pornographic magazines that normalized and glamorized rape, incest and sexual assault, and Indians being herded onto reservations to die. All these crimes against humanity and the earth are legal. They are protected and sanctioned by parliament, the courts, the law and the police. This was all very wrong.

In Oakalla, where I have spent the past 16 months, I have found that seventy per cent of the prison population are Indian women, even though Indian people make up only 1 per cent of the total outside population. This disproportionate number of Indian people in prison is reflected in prison populations across the country and reflects the racism of our society.

Everyone I have met in prison is poor. No one owns cars, homes, land or anything. They are there because they were forced to commit crimes to survive in a society that has no place for them. They have never owned forest companies that rape whole mountains of their forests, or handled nuclear murder weapons or stolen oil from Arab lands to be sold at scalper's prices in North America.

In the beginning when I was first arrested, I was intimidated and surrounded by the courts and prison. This fear provided the basis for the belief that if I played the legal games, I would get acquitted or perhaps less time. This fear obscured my vision and fooled me into thinking that I could get a break from the justice system. But this past eight months in court has sharpened my perceptions and strengthened my political convictions to see that the legal game is rigged and political prisoners are dealt a marked deck.

From the beginning in January '83, the police illegally orchestrated press conferences and furnished the mass media with evidence, photos, and information that became the basis for nationwide news stories convicting us as terrorists. We were portrayed as dangerous, psychotic criminals without politics.

Then our charges were separated into four separate indictments, of which the first was the Brinks conspiracy, so that we would be criminalized. This would make it harder for people to understand us as political people for our future trials.

During the voir dire, it became obvious through police testimony that the different police departments had committed illegal acts during their investigation. The Security Service in all probability watched the WFB (Wimmins Fire Brigade) do the firebombings since Julie and I had been under intensive surveillance by the SS for days prior to and during the day of the firebombing.

CLEU (Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit) had committed illegal break-ins to plant the bugs in our house and in Doug's apartment among other illegal activities. But despite this, the judge permitted the wire-tap evidence. This taught me that there is one law for the people and none for the police.

But the event during the court proceedings that has had the most politicizing effect on me, was Julie's sentencing. The judge ignored the fact that she had plea bargained and slapped her with the maximum prisons sentence suggested by the Crown—20 years. During the sentencing, the judge said that this case is criminal not political, and yet the 20-year sentence contradicts this view and instead reflects the real political nature of these proceedings. The 20-year sentence was justified by the judge as a necessary social deterrent which indicates that the court is so threatened by the potential of a social upheaval that it takes a 20-year sentence to deter others. That is political. It seems that the severity of the prison sentence is in direct proportion to the perceived level of discontent in society.

I understand why I have participated in the legal system up to now, but, in retrospect, in order to be honest to my political principles, I should have refused to collaborate in this legal sham and instead simply stated my political reasons for doing what I did.

Since I didn't then, I have the opportunity to do so now. Over the last couple of days we have heard witnesses who are activists around the different issues. They have spoken at great length about their efforts and the efforts of other groups to prevent the testing of the cruise, the construction of the Cheekye-Dunsmuir line and to stop Red Hot Video. I think it has become fairly obvious through their testimony that in each case they had exhausted all the legitimate channels of social protest in order to stop these projects and businesses. It was because there was no legal way to stop these crimes against humanity and the earth, that I felt I had to use illegal actions to do so.

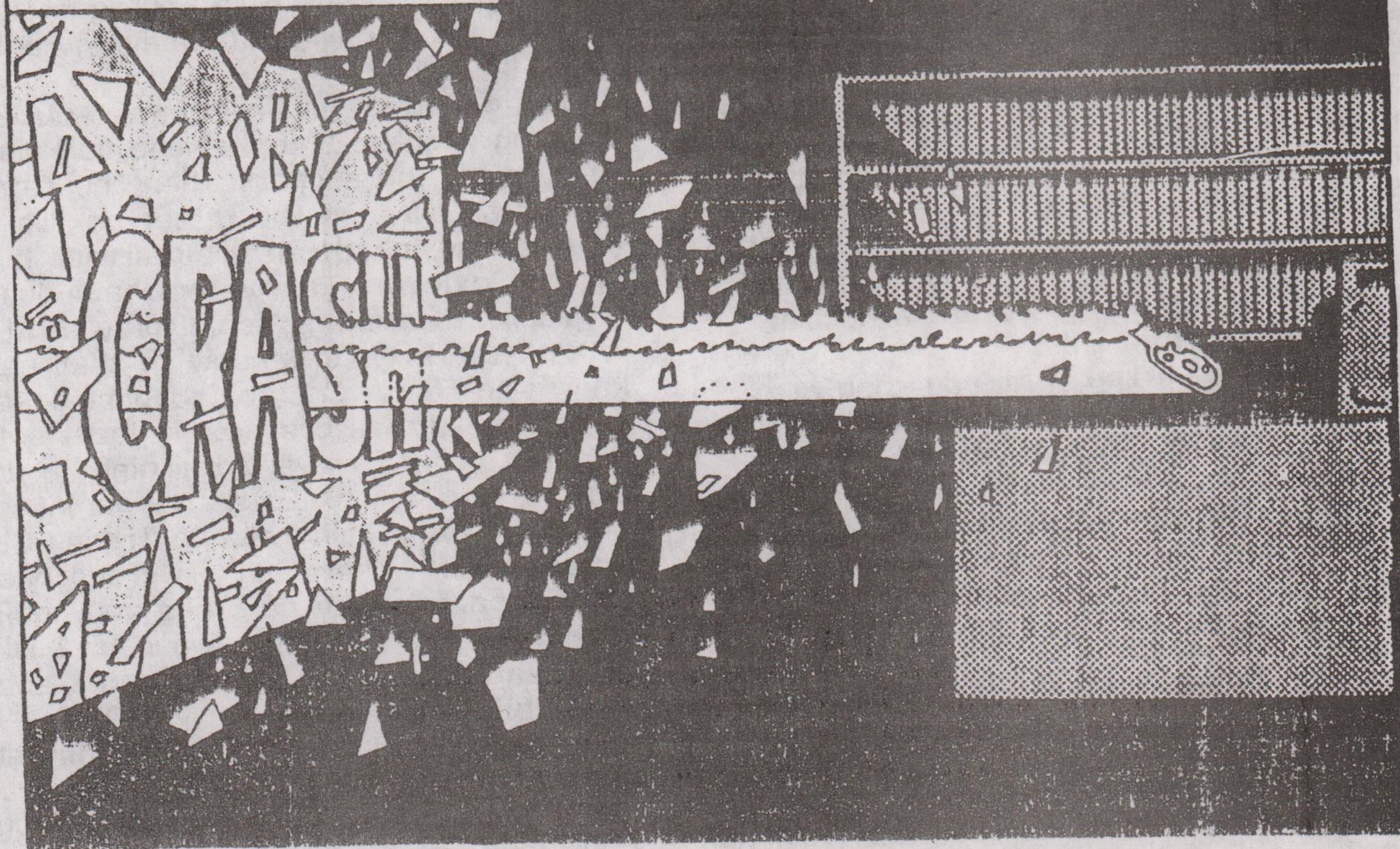
I didn't just feel that I should, I felt I had a duty and responsibility to do everything in my power to stop these crimes. At this dangerous point in human history, we have a moral responsibility to stop the arms race, violent pornography and the destruction of the earth. This moral responsibility far over-rides any obligation to adhere to man-made laws.

I would prefer to live in peace but when I looked around me, I couldn't find it anywhere. Everywhere I looked, the land was being destroyed. The Indians were victims of genocide, third-world peoples were oppressed and massacred, people lived in industrial wastelands and women were being raped and children molested. I could never live in peace—only quiet—the kind you find in cemeteries.

Even though I knew that a few militant direct actions would not make the revolution or stop these projects, I believed that it was necessary to begin the development of an underground resistance movement that was capable of sabotage and expropriations and could work free from police surveillance. The development of an effective resistance movement is not an overnight affair—it takes decades of evolution. It has to start somewhere in small numbers and whether or not it grows, becomes effective and successful, will depend upon whether we make it happen.

I believe these direct actions of sabotage complement the legal radical movement and serve a purpose that it can't fulfill. Not that the legal movement is ineffective, because although their efforts often fail to stop a project, their work will increase people's consciousness. The important thing is that the aboveground and underground support one another, because our strength lies in unity and diversity.

AND THAT NIGHT, AT A
SURREY PORNOGRAPHY
STORE...



Although I did do these political actions, they were not the result of the culmination of a legal struggle around the respective issues. In fact, the point of an underground resistance movement is to develop a strategic political analysis and actions that are based on an understanding of the economics and politics of the corporate state. Instead of reacting to every issue that pops up, we carried out actions that were based upon an analysis. This way if an effective resistance movement does develop, we can be subjects who determine history instead of reacting to every singularly obvious symptom of the system's disease.

The politics of Direct Action saw the inter-connectedness of militarism, sexism, environmental destruction and imperialism. We saw that all these problems are rooted in the value system and way of thinking called capitalism and patriarchy. These values are passed on from one generation to the next through the institutions of this society—the multinational corporations, schools, mass media, church and commercial culture.

The main value of this society can be boiled down simply into one word—money. All life on this earth is reduced to its profit value by the capitalist economic system. Women, animals, third world people, and the environment are reduced to a product and thus are objectified. Workers are valued for their productivity, women for their value as sex objects, animals for food or furs, the environment for its potential as a natural resource base. If some living being is of no economic value in relation to the capitalist system, then it is valueless. Consequently, traditional Indian people become victims of genocide, and huge areas of the earth are designated as "Natural Sacrifice Areas." So the Litton action, Cheekye-Dunsmuir action and W.F.B. action, at least for me, were not issue oriented actions but were our resistance politics transformed into action.

Contrary to the Crown's and police's theories, Direct Action and the W.F.B. were two different groups. Of the five of us charged with the Red Hot Video firebombings, only Julie and I did the firebombings. There were no men involved with doing the firebombings. Doug, Brent and Gerry just happened to either live with Julie and me or visit us. The W.F.B. was not an ongoing underground group, it was simply a group of women who come together for the purpose of firebombing Red Hot Video because we felt there was no other way for us to stop the proliferation of violent pornography.

Direct Action carried out the Litton and Cheekye-Dunsmuir actions. I do sincerely regret that people were injured in the Litton bombing. All precautions were taken to prevent these injuries, and an apology to the people injured and an explanation as to why it happened was released almost immediately after the bombing. But I must add that I criticize the Litton action itself, because it was wrong for Direct Action to place a bomb near or in a building that people were working in regardless of the number of precautions taken to ensure that nobody got hurt. In carrying out actions, revolutionaries should never rely on the police or security guards to clear out buildings and save people's lives.

There is no excuse for these mistakes which I will always live with the pain that I am responsible for, but these mistakes should never overshadow the incredible amount of pain and suffering that Litton contributes to every day and the potential for planetary extinction that the Cruise missile embodies. Every day, millions of people are slowly starving to death because so much money and human effort is diverted into the international war industry instead of being used to feed the people of the world. In Canada, essential social services are cut so that the government can pour more money into the war industry and mega projects. For example, the federal government has given Litton \$26.4 million in subsidies to build the guidance system of the Cruise.

The use of 1984 double-think has become an important part of today's psychological warfare against people developing radical consciousness. We experience it every day, even in this courtroom. I am called a terrorist—one who tries to impose their will through force and intimidation—by the court and the press. But I am not a terrorist. I am a person who feels a moral obligation to do all that is humanly possible to prevent the destruction of the earth. Businesses such as Litton, B.C. Hydro and Red Hot Video are the real terrorists. They are guilty of crimes against humanity and the earth, yet they are free to carry on their illegal activities while those who resist and those who are their victims remain in prison. How do we, who have no armies, weapons, power or money, stop these criminals before they destroy the earth?

I believe if there is any hope for the future, it lies in our struggle.

POLL TAX UPDATE

Apparently, Leeds city council was supposed to start getting everyone on the poll tax register on May 22nd, BUT, as of yet, the council hasn't even got the forms ready! But, with true bureaucratic arrogance, they still think it will only take 5 weeks to complete registration of the Leeds population!! Scotland has had the poll tax in 'operation' for over a year, & they still haven't got a completed list!!

Registration needs to be delayed for as long as possible, & there are a number of ways you can do this:

- 1) Don't send back the form - your dog ate it, or the post office lost it for you, or your daughter was sick all over it, etc.
- 2) Once they have sent you a second form, say you don't understand it, send it back incomplete within 18 days asking a question about one of the questions it asks you. Keep this up until you run out of questions to ask.

Between May & October, canvassers MAY call at your house with the registration form & ask for details of all adults living there. DON'T fill in the form at the door; say you're too busy, or want to read the attached notes in detail, etc.

There are penalties for not registering, warning letters may be sent, followed by a £50 fine, but looking at Scotland, where thousands did not register, only a handful - the activists - got fined. Also, the Government's

own advice is: if you don't understand something send the form back with your questions. So there are many ways of delaying registration quite legally.

The poll tax can be defeated, but it means fighting together. People need to know who to turn to, find support when the forms eventually plop through the letter box. We need to organise locally, preferably street by street eg. the Bexleys & Bayswaters have just formed a group in Harehills. Also, display a 'NO POLL TAX' poster in your window so that neighbours know who to turn to for support & advice.

In Leeds, there are now 13 local anti-poll tax groups, & every fortnight a delegate can be sent to the Leeds Campaign Against the Poll Tax meeting at the Trades Club, Saville Mount, Leeds. If there isn't a group near you, then the campaign group can give you advice on how to set your own group up, & will help with leaflets, posters, information & speakers for public meetings.

In Scotland, 40% of the population still haven't paid their poll tax. In New Brunswick, Canada, the Government tried to introduce a similar payment, but the people organised, fought back, & defeated the poll tax. It can be done, so let's get on with it!!!

FIGHTING

THE POLL TAX

STARTING OFF

Think locally - start where you live. Two of you is enough, 4 or 5 plenty to call a meeting.

Most groups have started as a few friends. Make contact with local organisations - eg. The Tenants' group. When it comes to booking a hall their support would be useful. Staff at the community centre should help you get in touch. The Poll Tax is a community issue - you have a right to facilities for meetings. Establish a local address if at all possible. Leaflet the area door to door first, ideally. Or call the meeting first, and leaflet later when there's more of you and you've got some money. Advertise with posters in shops - most small shops will probably be keen to display them. Flypost as well. Do this about 10 days before. You will get enough people this way - even if only a dozen people turn up, you've started!



THE FIRST MEETING

Don't be afraid of public meetings - they're not so bad.

Prepare: have a chairperson

and preferably two speakers. Speak yourself - that's the way to ensure what you want gets said. Avoid councillors unless you know that they're not going to speak gibberish. Know the basic facts, but don't worry about details or getting everything right. In speeches concentrate on "what to do" and not "what's wrong with the poll tax" - everyone knows! You don't need to be a great speaker. Allow plenty of time for comments from the floor - everyone needs to be involved - start as you mean to go on. Don't forget: have a second meeting booked already, for the following week or two, so you can announce it at the first. Prepare slips to give out, so people don't forget. This will save advertising all over again. Pass round a sheet and ask for name, address and telephone number. This is vital. Ask for money from those who can afford it.

STREET SUPPORT

At the second meeting have some plans ready. A good idea is to have "No Poll Tax" window posters to distribute. People can deliver these, by knocking on every door in their own street. This is the first step towards street by street support. Other methods that are used are: "Pledge forms"; street stalls; flyposting; further leaflets with detailed advice on non-registration; regular meetings; "block blitzes" to build neighbour support block by block; asking people to agree to become "street co-ordinator"; forming street "committees"; regular house meetings; regular visits to all houses; meetings to fill in (or not fill in) registration forms together.

DELAYING REGISTRATION

Delaying registration falls into four categories:

- 1) Pretending you lost the form and other excuses;
- 2) querying the form, failing to sign it etc. Both these are common sense.
- 3) Appealing against being named the "Responsible person".
- 4) Harrassing the canvassers and announcing their presence to everyone.

None of these are illegal. If this fails to halt the introduction of the tax and demands for payment, threats of prosecution etc. start arriving - use street committees and public meetings to support non-payment. No-one should be left to pay up, nor to go to court alone - they must know where to get support, they must seek that support, and everyone must offer that support.

Window posters - have a space on the poster where the street co-ordinator, or person delivering the poster can write their name, address and telephone number, so that people can get in touch quickly and without necessarily having to come to a meeting.

Public meetings - a cheap and effective way to advertise your meeting is to tie a placard to the railing near the shops, and leave it there all day for a few days before the meeting. And don't call your meeting at the same time as Eastenders is on.

ARMLEY Contact: Tel- [redacted]
First leafletting: Meet Golden Lion, 31st May.

BAYSWATERS AND BEXLEYS Contact: Brian, [redacted]
c/o Harehills Place, Harehills Road.
First meeting: Harehills Road Community Centre, 5 June

BEESTON, Contact: Tel- Steve [redacted]

BELLE ISLE Contact: East [redacted] for
Tenants, Low Grange House, Belle Isle. Tel [redacted]
First meeting to be arranged in June.

BURLEY
Preliminary meeting Thursday 1st [redacted], 8.00pm.

BRAMLEY Contact: Dave [redacted]
First meeting to be arranged soon

BURMANTOFTS contact [redacted]
First meeting: Shakespeare Midd [redacted] Wednesday 31st April.

CHAPEL ALLERTON Contact: Gordon [redacted]

CHAPELTOWN contact: [redacted] afternoons.
First meeting to be arranged in the near future.

COUNCIL WORKERS contact: NALGO, 111 Portland Cres,
Tel: 458442.
Public meet, Friday June 2nd, 7.30pm, The Grand Theatre.

HALTON MOOR contact: Halton Moor Tenants Assn. Tel:
644436.
Next meeting to be arranged.

HAREHILLS contact: [redacted] 55
Hilton Rd.
First Leafletting: 6.30pm, Weds
Public meet June 6th, venue to b

HEADINGLEY Contact: [redacted] x,
c/o Leeds Trades Council, Savile

HYDE PARK Contact: [redacted] 1:
758560.
Next meet, All Hallows Community e.

KIRKSTALL Contact John, [redacted]

LINCOLN GREEN
Meeting, Agnes Stuart School, 7.30pm, Tuesday 14th June.

LITTLE LONDON Contact: Dave,
First meeting to be arranged soon.

WOODHOUSE Contact: Richard [redacted] Chris
446838.
Next meeting Tuesday, 6 May, 7.30pm, Qua

For latest information contact: Mick [redacted] 48) or
Office 623822.



ABORTION NEWS.

The Government is considering options for reducing the upper time limit on abortions, from 28 weeks to 24. This will be the first time that the Govt. has initiated a legislative change of the 1967 Abortion Act. However, there is already a practical limit, as set by the DHSS, who threatened to withdraw the licence of any clinic doing abortions over 24 weeks back in the early '80s, so many may think there will be no great change. BUT, Drs allow a 4 week margin of error, so 24 weeks may mean in reality a 20 week limit. ALSO, the anti-abortionists would be overjoyed at a Govt. change to the '67 Act, which has remained in tact despite numerous attempts to erode it. This one small victory may fuel many anti abortionists fires!

LESBIAN HEALTH REPORT AVAILABLE

A report called 'Promoting Our Health' is now available as a follow-up to the 1988 first national Lesbian & Gay health conference. Copies of the report are available from;
Health Promotion
Oxford City Environmental Health,
The Old Rectory, Paradise Square,
Oxford OX1 1QH.
Cost is £5 to organisations, £3 individuals & voluntary groups, cheques payable to OXFORD City Council.
Also available from this address are 'Lesbians & AIDS' leaflets. cost is 5p each, minimum order 10 copies.

10 YEARS OF MAGGIE

May the 4th, 1989. Maggie has been in office for ten whole years. Depressing news or what.

RICH V' POOR.

The most obvious thing that she has achieved is to increase the gap between rich & poor, even though in 1985, Maggie was quoted as saying 'The Conservative Party does not believe in inequity'—who's she trying to kid? In 1986, the top 1% of the population owned 18% of Britain's private wealth, the top 2% owned a quarter, & the top 10% over a half. In contrast, the bottom 50% owned only 7% of total wealth. Since the infamous 1988 budget, the richest 1% of the country have seen their unearned income rise by 89%. Over the past decade, their total income has seen a rise of 346% due to tax cuts, salary & interest rate rises. Their tax cut alone has cost the govt. £26.2 billion.

Britain now has 20,000 millionaires—a privilege that the majority have inherited rather than 'made'. ~~But~~ whilst the Thatcher years have been good for the mega rich, the super rich & the plain rich, they haven't been so good for the pensioners, unemployed, single parents, & others dependent on state benefits.

Before the Tories came to power, pensions were uprated yearly by the rise in prices or earnings. When they came to power, they broke the link with earnings. If it had been maintained, a single pension would be over £54 rather than £43.60. A married couple's pension £87 rather than £79.80.

Over the last 10 years, the number of children living in households dependent on supplementary benefit & its replacement, Income Support, has more than doubled. And they haven't been helped by the frozen child benefit, £7.25 when it should be at least £8.20. For a chancellor who is free with tax cuts for the rich, this child benefit freeze saves £203 million.

Following the 1988 budget, Thatcher claimed that 'everyone in the nation has benefitted from the increased prosperity—everyone'. As the Low Pay Unit commented 'This will come as a surprise to the 9.4 million who have an income at or below supplementary benefit level. Their numbers increased by 55% between 1979 & 1985 alone.'

In 1979, Thatcher set out to create a property owning Britain. This was seen in the sale of council houses, 1.4 million having been sold, & in the extreme lack of housebuilding. The result being that more than 370,000 people a year are being accepted as homeless by local authorities—there are many more thousands that aren't.

CIVIL LIBERTIES.

Civil liberties have also been under constant attack since 1979, including 13 new laws representing one of the most substantial campaigns of legislative change by any British government.

They have concentrated on 5 specific areas

- the media
- North of Ireland
- gaging public employees
- increasing police power
- immigration

The govt. has put pressure on television companies to ban, reschedule or withdraw 12 programmes between 1979-83 in its attempt to limit discussion on the war in the North of Ireland. Five other programmes concerning the secret services & govt policies, have been restricted. Newspapers have been taken to court, including the Guardian & the Independent, in attempts to suppress information.

The North of Ireland remains the testing ground for many government policies. The use of rubber & plastic bullets, together with CS gas was first seen in the North of Ireland in the 1970s. Since then they are used in Britain too.

The Govt. continues its 'shoot to kill' policy in dealing with IRA members. In 1988 the right of IRA prisoners to remain silent was ended—this too will soon be the case in Britain.

Public employees can no longer express their opinions—whether it be about anti-privatisation or displaying CND posters. Unions have been banned at GCHQ, & GCHQ employees are not allowed to take part in TV programs or to submit evidence to MPs.

The 1988 Official Secrets Bill, currently being debated, is aimed at pledging a wide range of government employees to a lifetime of silence about their work. Well publicised leaks are to be dealt with by legislation which the govt. hopes will frighten its employees into silence.

Since 1979 legislation has been introduced giving police the right to stop & search, perform intimate body searches, ban demonstrations, set up road blocks, use plastic bullets & CS gas & extend the info held on their files. Workers taking industrial action & Black people have felt the brunt of such increased power.

Since 1979, the rights of British Black people have been drastically reduced. The 1981 Immigration Act resulted in a fundamental change in the immigration law by removing the right to British citizenship. Black people are deprived the right to settle in Britain & in turn denies citizenship rights to those born here to non British parents.

These attacks on civil rights will continue, with the government already planning to control broadcasting, I.D cards to be introduced & the removal of the right to silence.

THE ECONOMY.

During the ten years of the Tories, they have often boasted about their handling of the economy—even though we have seen record unemployment, massive trade imbalances & high interest rates.

Between 1979-81, unemployment grew by 88%. These high figures soon became a liability for the govt., so they were manipulated, thus losing ½ a million people.

The Tories reduced income tax from 33p in the pound to 25p. However there has been a big increase in national insurance, VAT has nearly doubled. Meanwhile the top earners have had their taxation cut from 98%-40%.

From the time of the Industrial revolution until 1982, Britain has exported more manufactured goods than it imported—but not anymore. This trade deficit has been masked by our North sea oil production, BUT its running out, so things are going to get much worse. The government balance of payments has consistently been underestimated, by £10 billion.. Britains manufacturing industries are almost nonexistent—costing a lot of people their jobs & communities.

Meanwhile, company profits have soared to record levels, BUT this has not been accompanied by reinvestment.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS.

Employment rights have consistently been under attack since 1979. The Conservatives have limited both collective rights, like those to organise & to strike & individual rights, like the right to protection from arbitrary dismissal.

The new legislation has come in the form of amending laws rather than brand new acts, so as to avoid trade union uproars. However, having done this for the past 10 years, they are now confident enough to speed up the process of change & introduce a new Employment Bill. Further legislation, outlined in a green paper published at the end of March, is planned for 1990, suggesting that the Govt. may now be on course for a new law every year leading up to the next general election.

Almost all of the employment legislation introduced since 1979, has focused on 4 issues—

- the ability of workers to take industrial action

- trade union recognition & organisation

- internal union procedures

- individual rights, mainly on wages & dismissal.

Like any government, the Tories want to control industrial action, & so ballots before industrial action, the outlawing of secondary action & new limitations on picketing were introduced.

The govt. states that it's FOR individual rights—however this is only if you're an employer, as since 1979, a worker has no rights unless she has worked there for 2 years (previously 6 months). Young people no longer have minimum wage protection, workers laid off have less entitlement & manual workers have lost wage protection rights which they have had since the last century.

Proposed legislation on parental leave has part-time workers, & temporary workers has been blocked. Women working in small firms have lost their right to return to work following maternity leave. The rules covering return to work have also been made much more complex & the right to return to the woman's own job is no longer an absolute one.

PRIVATISATION.

Believe it or not, the word 'privatisation' did not appear in the 1979 Tory manifesto. Then in 1981, it all began... first with the selling off of British Aerospace to the BAA (formerly British Airports Authority in 1987, with British Telecom, British Gas in between & the Electricity Board & water to come. Not that state ownership is the answer, but it all must be seen in terms of the Tories selling industries off cheap, & giving investors incentives to buy shares. With State industries you also get strong unions eg NUM, NUR & ASLEF, yet another reason to smash national industries.

So we've had 10 years of Maggie, it's enough to put anyone off party politics for life. I mean, I haven't even mentioned the poll tax, sorry, the 'community charge', or clause 28 Or was it 29? Then there's all the education changes, to fit in with the new needs of capitalism, etc, etc. I'm not saying that we'd be better off under Labour, but the thing

many MAJOR changes in a relatively short period of time.

And along with all their changes, different groups are getting it together, so I don't think it's all doom & gloom, especially with the transport workers' unease at the moment, let alone the dockers. Whilst here in sunny Leeds, anti-poll tax groups are springing up all over the place: Armley, Woodhouse, Hyde Park, Harehills.....

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

THE REPRESENTATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA

The mass media machine takes little account of any minority, including disabled people, with the exception of sensational events such as the recent compulsory sterilisation case, or events where people are "crippled" in accidents or acts of violence. These are reported from the establishment viewpoint which refuses to acknowledge that disabled people are oppressed and have opinions and grievances resulting from that oppression. But there are few vehicles for disabled people to voice these grievances - those that exist are often inadequate, e.g. the Spastics Society's "Disability Now", or the appalling Leeds Forum for The Disabled newsletter.

Stereotyped portrayals of disability in the media reflect and reinforce the opinions and misunderstandings of the majority of the public. It's not only access to the media that has been removed from disabled people, but the ability to make decisions which affect all areas of life. Institutionalised caring has done this, started in the Industrial Revolution, with the increase in mechanisation and machinery

designed with little consideration for even its able bodied operators. Since then disabled people have been recipients of charity, there to salve others' consciences and remind them how lucky they are to be able-bodied. A dependent community of disabled people has been created, with an able-bodied profession of medical experts to speak for them. The opinions of this profession are usually completely out of touch with the increasingly radical views of the people they claim to represent. The struggle for acceptance of disabled people in society requires them to articulate their views themselves and be active agents for change.



The mass media is in total opposition to this. Disability is presented from the completely uninformed able-bodied view and is therefore seen as tragic and hopeless. It is usually assumed that the lives of disabled people are not worth living. (In the recently renewed abortion debates the view of

disabled people has rarely been consulted, and the idea that a foetus that would be born disabled should automatically be aborted is rarely challenged). Disabled people are seen as unlucky and are expected, in fact pressured, to lead unfulfilling lives. If disabled people reject this stereotype and lead fulfilling, or even "ordinary" lives they are seen as "brave", "plucky", etc., etc.

Disabled people who attempt parachute jumps, for instance, are seen as doubly courageous as their able bodied counterparts, even though many more safety measures will have been taken. Surely, according to mainstream thinking, disabled people have less to lose in such stunts, being already "crippled"!!?

A recent example of this singling out of disabled people for their bravery has been the media coverage of Falklands veteran Simon Weston, badly burned in the war. His courage has been awarded by Lord Snowden, even though Weston describes himself as "just an ordinary lad from the valleys". The norm is further enforced by this singling out. Disabled people who are not exceptional are further demeaned, seen as wingeing or bitter.

The idea that disability need not

be tragic or an end to a full life is an uncomfortable one for capitalism. What is the point of striving for the ideals of wealth, physical perfection and beauty if they aren't essential to an enjoyable life? Advertising is one of the most powerful manipulators and pushers of these attitudes.



Obviously ads use models chosen for their beauty and fitness, apart from a couple of examples where the comical capacity of wheelchairs to run away out of control is exploited. In these case cases (lager and insurance ads), a leg in plaster is prominently displayed stating the passing need for the wheelchair and making the character a safe figure of fun. The wheelchair rather than the person in it is the real star.

In charity ads and programmes disabled people are reduced to mere objects to manipulate the onlookers'

feelings of guilt and pity in the hope that consciences will be stirred and then eased by making a donation. These ads present disabled people as a problem, despairing, tragic - "how awful it must be" is the required reaction. This negates the idea that disabled people are normal, creates 2 worlds - disabled and able-bodied, and creates feelings of rejection and anger amongst disabled people.

These ads close minds to the real issues and oppressions and reduces them to putting money in tins. The status quo is not challenged, nobody is saying that society must change to benefit everyone, and these are ads by charities supposedly benefitting disabled people.



A new report published by the King's Fund says that charity advertising campaigns show disabled people as helpless, hopeless, childlike objects of pity. Even though charities spend £4.25 million a year on adverts, these same adverts shape "the generally devalued public image of people with disabilities".

Stephen Bradshaw of the Spinal Injuries Association said, "Even if the short term interest is lost, the long term interest has to be the image of disabled people in society". A typical advert by the charity the Winged Fellowship shows a wheelchair chained to a platform, lit by a dramatic spotlight. Admittedly, public access leaves a lot to be desired, but for many disabled people wheelchairs are the most natural means to mobility and freedom, rather than restrictive, as the advert suggests.

In this year's Comic Relief, the film about disability was dominated by Griff Rhys Jones and gave the popular, but misleading message, "Forget disability, think of ability". This idea is oversimplistic, and confuses disability with inability and incapability. When people forget disability, access to public buildings is omitted and disabled people are further imprisoned, and indeed forgotten altogether.

The message of disabled people is not that they want to be forgotten - they want to be more prominent in society, and therefore in the media, so that their oppressions are brought to light and acted on.

WHAT'S ON.

5th June. Anti Poll Tax Public Meeting, Harehills Pl, Harehills Rd, 7.30pm. Creche Available. Access poor.

Friday 9th June. Club Sandino with Benjamin Zephaniah and Others. 9pm - 2am, West Indian Centre £2/£3. Children welcome.

Saturday June 10th. W.Yorks Pensioners Action Gp march and rally. Assemble 12.30pm at the Cenotaph, Headrow. Rally at Civic Hall 2.00pm.

9th June. Anti Poll Tax disco Leeds University.

10th June. HIV & AIDS WOMEN ONLY DAY. The AIDS charity, Terence Higgins Trust, is holding an open day in London. For women who want to share experiences & gain information about HIV & AIDS. Fully Accessible, Creche, Signers. £10 for women representing an organisation, free to individual women. Tel. 01 831 0330 ext 454.

14th June. "Tony Allen" Benefit, W.Indian Centre, 8.00pm till 10.00pm.

13th June. Headingley Anti Poll Tax meeting, 7.30pm Beckett Park Students Union.

Friday 23rd June. Musn't Grumble Theatre Grp presents "Carry On Alice", women with disabilities. At 7.30pm. 50p donation/admission.

Wed 28th June & Sat 1st July. "Vinegar Tom" by Caryl Churchill, A feminist play telling the story of a rural community in the C17 who blamed witchcraft for successive crop failures. Women living in poverty o the fringes of society took the blame. At, The Studio, Bradford Playhouse, Chapel St, Bradford. At 7.30pm. Tel 720329.

Sat June 24th. 10am Blockade of Hinkley Point nuclear power station, Nr Bridgewater, Somerset. More info BLAH c/o Box DAM, 37 Stokes Croft, Bristol 2.

24th June. All Scottish march & rally 10am, John St (off George Sq) Glasgow.

1st July. Demonstrate against the Poll Tax in Manchester - Cotact your local Anti Poll Tax gp for details.

5th - 11th July. International Womens Week is defiately on - at Ruirgoord Nr Amsterdam. Cotact RESISTER for more details.

NATIONAL WOMENS HEALTH CONFERENCE

A national womens health conference will take place in Liverpool, 7-9 July. Organised by the Wirral Womens Health Network & the Womens Health Information & suport centre. The conference aims to bring together women actively involved in health promotion for women in their local communities in order to share information, ideas & skills. The cost will be: sponsored residential-£70; non-residential-£45. Unsponsored residential-£35; non-resident-ial £10.

Contact Liz Hall, 051 709 1938 or Carol Beaumont, Womens Health Network, NCHR, 15 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JP. There will be disabled access plus childcare facilities.

Fri 14th July. 7.30pm. Bradford Women Singers, Bradford Community Arts Centre Chapel St.

Sat 15th July. "Women Take Note" Music Workshops organised by Bradford Women Singers at Bradford Community Arts Centre Chapel St Bradford. Tel. Bradford 721372 to book.

REGULAR MEETINGS.

Burley Lodge Womens Activity Gp - Fabric dying, pottery, woodwork, DIY, cookery sewing, & more. Free

Fridays 9.45am - 12. Burley Lodge Centre, Burley Lodge Rd Leeds 6 Tel. 443335.

Leeds women & Ireland Gp. Meet Tuesdays, Civic Hall, Leeds. Contact Box 173, 52 Call lane.

WEDNESDAYS

Lesbian with children/in relationship with partner with children-Contact, Jennie, C/O Leeds other paper, 52 Call Lane.

DAM meetings, Woodpecker pub, Marsh Lane, 8pm.

THURSDAYS

Irish in Britain Representation Gp. meets 2nd & 4th Thurs. of month. 8pm, Trades club, Saville Mt.

Womens Action on benefits, Open Thurs. mornings, 9.30-12.30. 202 Bellevue Rd, Leeds

**RESISTER;
CO BOX DAM,
52 CALL LANE,
LEEDS.**