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BOX 14,
 136 KINGSLAND HIGH STREET,
 LONDON E8,

③ Reprinted from Angry Workers' Bulletin no. 2; available from AWB, 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Box 2200, Berkeley Ca., 94704, USA.

④ This is by way of a brief introduction to the background of the Iran-Iraq war and the role of the world arms trade in encouraging it to continue.

⑤ This was first put out in Spain by a group of young people who came into conflict with the Basque nationalist movement.

⑥ This leaflet was distributed door-to-door on an estate managed by one of North London's biggest short-life housing groups.

INSIDE INFO ON THE NORTH LONDON THREE MONTH LONG CIVIL SERVANTS STRIKE

(I'm a woman civil servant who has worked for 10 years in one of the offices in dispute).

A strike has taken place by low-paid civil servants over the last 14 weeks across North London D.E. offices. It has also involved Job Centre and DHSS staff who came out in solidarity when they were asked to do UBO work. They were suspended when they refused. It ended on March 31st in defeat.

Apart from one short news slot on London TV news, it has been virtually blanked in the newspapers, national as well as local London papers. Indeed, it seems *La Repubblica*, the Italian daily, mentioned the dispute more than the English-based newspapers! This has led many of us strikers to conclude that perhaps there might have been an orchestrated conspiracy of silence as it was rumoured that Alan Robertson, the new principal manager for the D.E.s, had Thatcher's full backing.

Certainly management acted in an unusually hard, but predictably clever, fashion and quickly dampened down and gave into disputes elsewhere in the civil service. Basically, management wanted some 'issue' to get rid of once and for all the militant disruption which has taken place over the last few years in the North London offices. A few days after the strike started, a mole at Head Office let us know that one of the top managers had walked out of a meeting saying, "This is the end of the CPSA [civil servants union]. It's finished." It seems the Government wanted to inflict a defeat in the heart of North London's militant offices in preparation for a long attack on civil servants' work conditions. In order, perhaps, to prepare the stage for the horrendous April social security changes, merit wages and flexibility, YTS employment, the privatisation of the Employment Service, the possible abolition of the dole and/or welfare paid through a cash card unit you can't argue with! No civil servants. No problem. No claimants. No problem.

Since the amalgamation of Job Centres and UBOs under the new title of Employment Service, staff at some North London UBOs would be compulsorily re-deployed to Job Centres without then filling the subsequent UBO vacancies. Previously, transfers had been conducted on a voluntary basis with the union. Camden 'A' was selected as the pilot office. On Dec. 21st (just before Xmas and fitting in well with increasing managerial sadism) casuals at Job Centres were sacked and those - on a last-in first-out basis - at Camden 'A' UBO were compulsorily transferred to the Job Centre. One girl casual in tears came to say goodbye to her friends in the UBO.

There was an immediate angry response and the strike started. On Jan. 11th, after a ballot, Marylebone 'A' and 'B' and Westminster UBO walked out in support of their Camden colleagues. From then on the dispute accelerated to effect 30 to 35 UBOs, Job Centres and DHSS offices in North London.

Initially the strike was a spontaneous angry response to managerial diktat. Strikers visited other offices to win support. Very quickly, however, the strike got taken over by Militant and SWP Trotskyists who tried to use the strikers as cannon-fodder for their own party political ends. Some non-party strikers didn't like the fact that SWP members were usually the ones to visit offices because they knew colleagues elsewhere would be suspicious of their motives.

As more offices joined in, mass meetings were held every Friday in Camden's claimants union* office, who were expecting any day to be evicted by the Labour Party-controlled Camden Council. In no time a self-elected strike committee, comprised mainly of SWP members, came into existence. After that the meetings were totally monopolised by the SWP, who used the occasion to have their own private (but much publicised) battle with Militant (who, in their turn, had a lot of influence on the official, NEC-appointed, disputes committee). Macreadie, deputy Gen.Sec. of the CPSA and Militant member, was present on the platform at all these mass meetings. Basically, Militant didn't want the dispute escalated, while the SWP wanted an all-out London strike.

There was, in fact, a token one-day, all-out London strike on Feb. 18th.

Brixton UBO wanted to come out in support but was denied strike pay by the NEC. Macreadie didn't really want to see the strike extended to South London. In fact, Brixton did come out for a while and some staff there stayed out to the end.

After the mass meetings, Macreadie would report back to the NEC about the strikers' decisions. Finally, after weeks of procrastination, a ballot was prepared for an all-out London strike but the rider that Macreadie and the NEC had decided there should be no strike pay from the coffers of the CPSA, which is one of the richest unions in the UK. It was a calculated shoot-yourself-in-the-foot policy, which (as was probably intended) gave hard-nosed management a good laugh. As it was, after a low turnout, with only 60% of CPSA members voting, and with some offices not having ballots, the voting was reasonably close: 41% for, 59% against. Nobody really expected any other result. And, like the miners before us, we've returned to work without any agreement, which has filled more than a few of us with the horrors.

The mass meetings became jargon-slanging matches with many determined and well-meaning strikers not realising what was going on. Generally, the same long-winded boring speakers would have their say every week. They weren't talking to the meeting but trying to prove themselves to their party. A lot of strikers felt too intimidated by this speechifying party atmosphere to ask questions. Moreover, all speakers had to submit their questions to the chair and many questions were passed over with the excuse of insufficient time. One excellent proposal suggesting that there should be a mass picket targetting on a particular office decided secretly the night before (a tactic which would have terrified many scabs and possibly would have gained much needed publicity) wasn't even considered because it was a non-party proposal*. Tactics, in fact, didn't emanate directly from the mass meeting but had been decided on in advance in closed party sessions. In fact, the different Trotskyists didn't want direct action and relaxed open communication, but behaved as pressure groups on lumbering union bureaucratic procedure. Because all real discussion was suppressed, the meetings finally degenerated into mad debates on any unrelated, fashionable issue. One of the last meetings spent half the time drooling on about whether members could smoke or not!

Non-Militant, non-SWP strikers got rapidly pissed-off and didn't turn up for further meetings. Then strikers started to get suspicious about what was being discussed between the strike committee and management. Management let it be known to the scabs that all the strike committee wanted to talk about was SBS (Staff Basing Scheme) figures, which they wanted to stay over the 10% level. It wasn't what Camden 'A' had walked-out over in the first instance. Issues were being slung-in by the self-elected strike committee which strikers knew nothing about and weren't informed about. This resulted in more scabbing, plus the fact that the strike seemed to be going nowhere.

Towards the end of the strike, a union rank in the group called "Workhouse" produced leaflets criticising the running of the strike (a little too late). They had valid points (e.g. condemning the party political games, emphasising the need to take control of the strike fund, etc.) but after so much manipulation of strikers one was left with the feeling - maybe they had an axe to grind! ***

In the militant offices in North London, because management over the years has been pushed back a lot, there's often quite a merry-prankster, bawdy, joking atmosphere which can make it a pleasure to be with your work-mates. It's been said of one of these UBOs that strikes there are an unholy alliance of the hard left and the hard drinkers. Some of this atmosphere got carried over into the strike. Although the dispute was a serious business, the way it was conducted meant the strike became farcical. Joking was one of the outcomes. In fact, in no time at all, the jokers occupied the front rows at the meetings purely to wind-up the platform and to bring in a bit of comic relief. When arguing over dates for an all-out London strike (the 14th or 28th of March) one hard-crinking striker loudly said, "April the 1st would be more appropriate". Another loudly mused, "Is Macreadie anaemic?" Another proclaimed, after a meeting's conclusion, that "I haven't had so much fun since my leg fell off." This repartee got the Trotskyists furious. Other comments were more serious. One person asked if Macreadie and co. would contribute 50% of their wages towards the hardship fund. The platform remained silent.

A lot of UBO/DHSS staff earn a lot less than a sizable proportion of the claimants moonlighting in the black economy (& good luck to them!). Throughout the 80s, because we've been constantly standing up against further incursions by the Tory government plus a growing recognition of just how badly paid we are, there's been a growing sympathy from many claimants****.

In one of our local West London pubs, where UBO staff were having an Xmas drink, a claimant gave a bottle of champagne, with a nod and a wink, to a desk clerk. Delighted cheers all round!

It's unfortunate, but during the strike it was the poor claimants who were the real ones to suffer. Outside one office, pickets on a stint were confronted, on a bitterly cold winter's day, by a Mam and Dad with 2 kids who had no socks on their blue-with-cold tiny feet. These parents were enquiring about emergency payments. The pickets were devastated, and suggested a whip-round to help them. In other circumstances, this has happened before in the past.

Of all people, though, the fraud squad was running emergency offices for pay-outs. One such was Paddington Green church hall. In fact, there were heavy scenes and police were constantly called in. Obviously, the fraud squad were scabs and ready to fill-in for striking staff but also they did this "service" with an eye to their future career. Obviously they were trying to nail claimants who were claiming and working. Job Club and Restart didn't strike (though in the one-day strike against YTS in late '87 some Restart staff did strike).

Although receiving half take-home pay from the CPSA, strikers supplemented their hand-outs by finding jobs - ironically, considering our function - in the black economy. When doing these jobs, they were afraid to say they were striking UBO/Job Centre staff because they were often working alongside people who were signing on. Strikers were worried in case some claimant recognised them and thought they were undercover fraud squad agents!

Once it became apparent we were being manipulated by the SWP and others, a lot of strikers virtually forgot about the strike - even though they'd never cross picket lines. They silently got their heads down waitressing, baking croutons in a bakery, pairing up shoes in a shoe factory, handing out rush-hour free mags, etc. Sadly, quite a few of the best people who could have made an imaginative contribution to the strike, left the civil service during the course of the dispute. The danger is that this could make the scabs cockier.

We returned to work on the 31st of March, defeated, but with our heads held high, to be told "Welcome back" by management. Maybe this was an individual response but it makes one suspicious. A lot of the scabs looked shame-faced and so they should - the amount of overtime they had been clocking up meant they had been doing very well by stabbing their striking colleagues in the back.

Management seem to be wary of crowing too much because of the imminent restructuring of the civil service. It's going to mean many fights in the offing.

APRIL 1st '88.

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*During the strike some people at Camden C.U. wanted to produce a leaflet in support of the strike but claimed they couldn't as the council had cut off their funds. This was a poor excuse - they could easily have got them printed at other C.U.s. The excuse was probably to hide more secret reasons: as a claimant from another C.U. said of Camden C.U., "What gets put out doesn't depend on what you say but who you are... Camden C.U. is largely organised around cliques..."

**The outright rejection of even a discussion of mass picketting could have been a starting-point for a challenge both to the bureaucrats, and to the union form of the struggle: in order to discuss such basic actions a completely different form of struggle has to arise. It's worth considering some of the struggles elsewhere, whose actions could be exemplary. Like, for instance, the French railway workers' strike of '86-'87. There, over a month before the strike, a class-conscious train driver put out a petition calling for a pledge from other drivers to an indefinite strike, listing the various demands. It was asked that this petition/pledge be reproduced and passed round by those in agreement. It received an overwhelming response, & so later a leaflet was produced by other train drivers, 2½ weeks before the strike, also to be reproduced and passed around: it clearly put the strikers' demands, stating exactly when the strike would begin, asking for the unions involved to support the strike, threatening them if they didn't. The strike began without a single command from the unions - and developed partly by means of daily assemblies of strikers held in each station, in which no particular striker held any greater power than any other. Where delegation seemed necessary, it was subject to immediate recall by the assemblies. Of course, many exemplary actions - such as sabotage - were carried out without discussion in the assemblies, and occasionally specifically against the desires of the majority. But, without wishing to make out that assemblies are some insurance for active commitment, they did provide an environment of direct communication which made manipulation largely impossible, and provided the strike with some continuity. And it's a challenge to traditional left-wing notions that such a magnificent collective activity had been launched by a simple individual initiative. Of course, you can never mechanistically transplant workers' struggles elsewhere & in other times to the here & now, but they're still well worth considering, & applying to different circumstances.

***At a meeting on the Wednesday before the return to work strikers from Workhouse put forward - as a bloc - the idea of returning to work on the Tuesday after bank holiday, rather than the Thursday before Good Friday, an idea also hoped for by sections of management. After all, since every striker knew they were returning on the Thursday just to get their 2 day holiday money, it could only mean that Workhouse were, as one striker put it, "just wanting to be different."

****See, for instance, the (mostly) excellent leaflet "The strike and other struggles - some views from a claimant's perspective".

THE STRIKE

and other struggles

--- some views from a claimant's perspective ---

It is unfortunate that this strike should end just when real links were being developed between strikers and claimants - discussion was underway for the joint organisation of a demo by claimants and strikers to publicise the dispute, joint leaflets for the national unwaged day of action on April 11, joint action for emergency payments if necessary..... Formal and informal links always exist but it's hard to forget that our daily contact is across a counter and shatter-proof screen, as well as less physical barriers. But your struggle is not over, and we too have many battles ahead, through which to develop our common struggle. Maybe the horror of returning to work alongside the scabs could be lessened by pointing them out to claimants as those (partly) responsible for the lack of improvement in our conditions.

The most important factor in the success of the strike, and the respect gained from claimants (and others) was the fact that it was organised, run and controlled by the strikers themselves. There have been continual attempts to disguise (and so sabotage) this strength, by the SWP's constant complaining that the union bureaucrats weren't leading it. Their bleating about leadership is really nothing more than whining about the fact that nobody'll follow them, the self-proclaimed leaders of the working class! The party bickering merely sabotaged debate, while the party lines themselves served to stunt the development of more direct tactics, mass pickets etc. - those who know the difference between discussion and parroting the party line must learn to deal with those who don't. But recognising this strength of the struggle must also mean taking responsibility for the failures, not blaming them on those who we should've known years ago will at best do nothing and at worst sabotage

The union leaders and bureaucrats are not being forcibly transferred to Job Centres, their jobs, wages and conditions are not threatened by cheap labour schemes, they don't have to face screaming, homeless, broke, confused claimants day in, day out, their jobs aren't being moved across the country into clerical factories... which is just as well for them, as if they did have to go on strike, who'd notice? The only threat to their jobs comes from 'their' members getting out of their control, organising their own struggles, making and enforcing their own demands and making their own real contacts with other sectors of the working class. Today we have the unpleasant spectacle of union leaders queueing up to offer their services to the bosses, to make deals that will mean greater control of the workforce, by the bosses, through the unions. We're offered for sale, at any price, so the leaders can get their cut, which sounds rather like pimping, in Italy, where railwayworkers, airport workers, teachers and others have been running their own strikes, through 'committees of the base' ('Cobas'), mass assemblies with revocable delegates to the national coordinating committee, the union leaders have gone to the government to demand the banning of strikes in the public sector. Is this leadership?

The restructuring they're trying to impose in dole and SS offices is the same as in every other sector, the same re-imposition of profitability, the same screwing the last ounce of labour out of the workforce. They tried to force UBO staff into new jobs the same as they try forcing us claimants onto cheap labour schemes. But this unified attack means that our immediate interests are even more unified, along with our common experiences and struggles. And the enforced flexibilization and the de-skilling technology are themselves destroying the separation of those who happen to do different work, leaving only our ability to labour, and our ability to fight. It has never been more clear that each struggle is the struggle of us all. Together we can not only fight these attacks, but also destroy the domination of profit over our lives and our production.

On April 11th we'll be outside Archway Tower 9-11 (and probably other local offices) and outside Alexander Fleming House at 1. Where will you be - inside carrying out the

another local war?

On 17 March 1988, French-made Iraqi jets bombarded the town of Halabja in north-east Iraq with chemical weapons. Thousands of civilians were killed instantly from inhaling cyanide and mustard nerve gas. Casualties included workers, peasants, students, teachers and hundreds of deserting conscripts who were hiding in the town. 5,000 people dead and it only merited one newflash on British TV. This is just one of the latest developments in a war that has been going on for 8 years, that has cost millions of lives and devastated the economies of both Iraq and Iran.

BACKGROUND TO THE SITUATION IN IRAQ AND IRAN

The first period of the Iranian revolution in 1979 was the open expression of a long-developing anger felt by workers and peasants towards the Shah's dictatorship. For the State the only way to crush the revolutionary movement was to present Khomeini-style Shiite fundamentalism as a credible alternative to the Shah, given the strong historical roots of Shiite Islam in Iran. Despite Khomeini using anti-imperialist propaganda ("Neither East nor West but the Islamic Republic") to win support from the Iranian working-class his return from exile was welcomed and encouraged by the Western powers. Since Khomeini consolidated power his repressive drive against the revolutionary movement "in the name of God and the poor" has destroyed all the gains, however limited within the democratic context, made in the first period of the revolution and instituted a religious dictatorship even more repressive than the Shah's.

The Algerian agreement of 1975 between the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran gave some Iraqi territories to Iran in return for the withdrawal of funds to the Kurdish national liberation movement in Iraq (which Iran had been supporting under the influence of the Western powers and Israel who wanted to put pressure on Iraq for having nationalised the oil industry and establishing trade and military agreements with the Eastern bloc).

However when Khomeini began to gain control in Iran, support for the Kurdish national liberation movement in Iraq was resumed and the Shiites demanded the secession of the Iraqi cities of Karbala and Najaf to Iran as sites of religious importance. Iraq as a frontline state and representative of Arab nationalism wanted to regain the territories granted to Iran in the '75 agreement, particularly Arab-populated Khuzistan which had good oil resources. In September 1980 Iraq began invading Iran at a time when they knew the Iranian army would be weakened by the revolution. For both countries the war has served to divert the class struggle into nationalist/religious directions.

Since the war began wage levels in both countries have been going down and working hours increased. Both the regimes have used the war to smash the revolutionary movement and avoid any social/political crisis. Imprisonment, execution and torture of revolutionaries and any opponents of either regime has become common practise. Where the Iranian workers have been subjected to primitive fundamentalist propaganda the Iraqis have been given heavy doses of false Arab nationalism and brutal state intervention into every aspect of daily life has become much more intense in both countries. Any attempt at resistance by workers and the soldiers who refuse to fight has been crushed at birth on both sides of the border.



IRAN/IRAQ AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

In the 1970's the Soviet Union armed Iraq while the West armed Iran. The latter ceased with the overthrow of the Shah and the taking of the American hostages in November 1979. Direct US supplies to Iran began again in a clandestine way in 1985, which



was later exposed in the Iran/Iraq scandal. The Soviet Union stopped its supply of arms to Iraq at the outbreak of the Gulf war but resumed in October 1982. Both the USA and the USSR now arm both belligerents, in most instances through their allies and the so-called black market.

In 1987 the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute identified 26 countries who had supplied arms to both the warring parties. These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Czechoslovakia, Britain, Bulgaria, Chile, China, West Germany, France, East Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Korea, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Twelve countries have supplied only Iran: Algeria, Argentina, Canada, Finland, Israel, South Korea, Libya, Mexico, Syria, Taiwan, Turkey and Vietnam. Four countries are selling only to Iraq: Ethiopia, Egypt, Jordan and the Philippines.

Profit is an obvious motive for any arms supplier. This conflict brought welcome relief to manufacturers worried about slackening demand in arms purchases from the Third World, while indebted Third World suppliers, such as Brazil, are desperate to sell weapons to both sides in an effort to boost exports and use

However, profit is not the sole motive of many of the arms suppliers. For Israel and some of the Arab states such as Egypt and Jordan the object of arming the contestants is to keep the war going. Israel is happy to see Iraq occupied on its eastern front and instability in the Arab world. With the recent resurgence of Palestinian resistance to Israeli rule in the occupied zones Israel has an even greater interest in the war continuing. The Arab states want to stem the tide of Khomeini style revolution and curb the political ambitions of Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein. Thus there is a desire to see Iraq and Iran go on battering away at each other, weakening each other indefinitely.

The USA and USSR are also deliberately fuelling the conflict by supplying arms to both sides. Both superpowers fear that a clear winner would further destabilise the Middle East and perhaps seriously change the balance of superpower interests in the region. It is also in America's interests to see the war prolonged as it makes nervous Arab regimes rely more heavily on Washington and it provides the United States with a reason to increase its military presence in the region. China has also played a part in fuelling the conflict as a part of a larger strategy to actively compete for the first time for economic and political influence in the Gulf. This has involved aggressive trading and military sales to both combatants, and is aimed at challenging the Soviet strategic structure in the region, strengthening China's claim to Third World leadership and positioning it for a lucrative share of post-war reconstruction which is one reason why the war has been going on for such a long time.

The final consideration is also on the minds of other suppliers for after the war Iraq and Iran are likely to want to rebuild their civilian and military structures devastated by the war.

Britain's official position since '85 has been to stop the supplies of lethal weapons to either side on the termination of existing contracts. This is of course diplomatic doublespeak as all military supplies contribute to killing. From the beginning of the war until now Britain has been supplying both sides with spare parts, equipment and military training.

The Iran/Iraq war is only one of many local wars (as the media would like to present them) such as Angola, Lebanon, Cambodia, Afghanistan etc. The unstable situation in the Middle East could be the catalyst for a non-nuclear global war. AS the only way that capitalism could resolve the latest crisis that it has created, ie solving unemployment by getting millions of proletarians to kill each other. It has to be stated again that the only solution to war, famine and poverty is the creation of international links for the extension of struggles in all countries against the ruling class of every nation-state.

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For more detailed information about the international arms trade and Britain's role in the Gulf War see the leaflet "Iran and Iraq: Arms sales and the Gulf War published by CAAT, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ.

Hello--

It has been a year-and-a-half since publication of Angry Workers Bulletin#1. We are pleased to get it to you. The third issue of the Angry Workers Bulletin is already taking shape and will appear sometime next Spring. With that date in mind, we would appreciate letters, essays, brief reports on local/regional events by February 1988 from those interested. Also, since we are only able to print an extremely limited number of copies of each issue, we request that readers pass along their copies to others, or, if feasible, make xerox-copies of the issue or of particular articles and make them available to friends, co-workers, neighbors.

As the cover graphic illustrates, the Iran/Contra-gate fiasco has thrown the current U.S. administration for a bad fall and into disarray. There was the discovery of the highly secretive offer of weapons to Iran, (wholly contradicting the "anti-terrorist" baloney of the Reagan Administration), and revelations of high-level "private" government involvement in war-making, drug-running, money-laundering and every other white-collar crime (rudely interrupting the righteous "anti-drug" crisis program then in progress. As R. Hatch writes about the anti-drug campaign in "Drugs, Politics and Disinformation", Covert Action Information Bulletin#28: "The truth is there was no 'crisis', and the panic was manufactured primarily for political gain."). This exposed the world to a

spectacle which, denials of politicians and the news media aside, is quite simply an expression of the intensifying battle within the U.S. ruling class over measures to shore up control and slow the collapse of the U.S. They want to avoid the "Britainization" of the United States as a declining world-power.

The illegal funding and arming of the Nicaraguan Contras (we are not referring here to left-wing counter-revolutionaries like the Sandinistas) by "private" government(-supported) sponsors, using profits from the sale of arms to Iran, linked two extremely crucial areas of foreign policy concern for the U.S. ruling class. The Reagan Administration felt compelled to seek its aims covertly. This might appear, as the ruling groups hope it will, to indicate that there are qualitative differences in the strategies of the Republicans and Democrats. But, if the reader followed the Iran/Contra hearings and commentaries, or the Congressional "debates" about sending the Navy into the Persian Gulf, or the further aid to the Contra forces, you would most likely see that there is no significant disagreement over the general aims within the government over the results desired in the Middle East or Central America. Paramount is the defense of U.S. imperial/multi-national interests and domination versus their "Communist" rivals (like the



Soviet Union, Nicaragua, Cuba or Angola); in other words, against further development of "equally"-independent competing national capitals or the "Communist" exploitation of "underdeveloped" nation-states, which U.S. Democracy itself needs to exploit.

The purported "opposition" between the Democrats and Republicans proves to be simply questions of tactics. In their constantly changing lash-ups, compromises and manipulations, the "opponents" often do not unite and divide along Party lines. Nonetheless, the crisis for the ruling class, in Central America, for example, is so severe that factions of the government are drawing out apparently counter-posed, partisan alternatives (i.e: Reagan, North, Casey, Helms etc., vs. Dellums, Dodd, Kennedy, Wright etc). But the issue still fails to be explicable as "Democrats vs. Republicans", because there are Republicans and Democrats on both sides of the alternatives: support for

either the Contras or Sandinistas as the appropriate means to defend U.S. interests. The "progressive" Democrats are presented by most leftists as a lesser-evil to the "reactionary" Republicans. But it is only fair to note that the "reactionary Reaganites" backing of the Aquino government in the Philippines after the "People's Revolution" is exactly the policy the Democrats are advocating for their crisis in Central America.

In the Middle East, as well, the Reagan Administration has ended up pursuing a policy similar to the Carter Administration, a policy which, for electoral-stupification reasons, the Reaganoids had roundly denounced as equivocating and cowardly at the time of the First Hostage Crisis of '79-'80. In a de-classified document reprinted in Covert Action Information Bulletin #28 it appears that: "On February 20 [1986], a U.S. Government official met with...[deleted]...the first direct U.S.-Iranian [governmental] contact in five years. At this meeting, the U.S. side made an effort to re-focus Iranian attention on the threat posed by the Soviet Union and the need to establish a longer term relationship...based on more than arms transactions." (p. 22). Not any strategic differences between the two main parties of U.S. Capital. Hardly any tactical ones, either. No doubt, those "evil-empire" state-capitalist competitors, the Soviets, were whispering similar

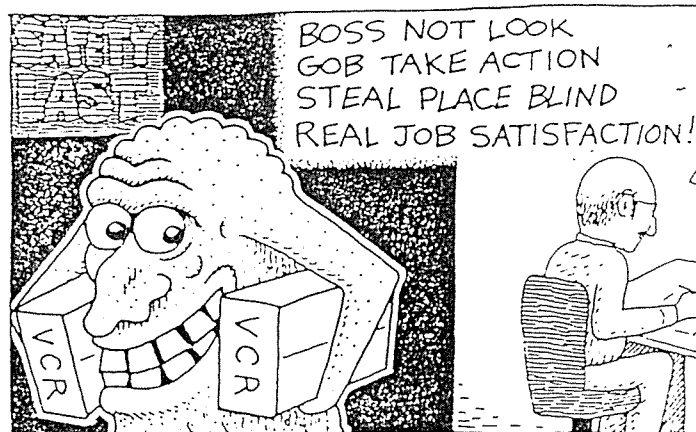
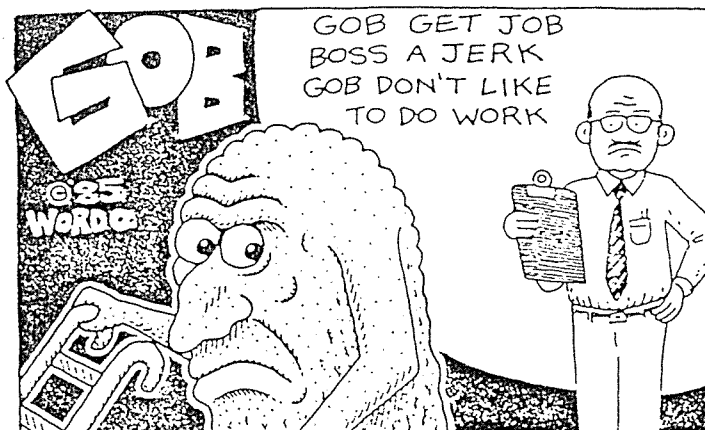
things to the mullahs shortly before the U.S.S.R. and Iran signed their recent agreement for improved and increased trade relations.

Ultimately, what we are getting is the whining self-pity and devious subterfuges of "our side" in a bitter struggle with the other "big guy", not as whiney, though perhaps a little more self-assured in its deviousness. Those in positions of power, particularly in other upwardly-mobile nations like West Germany and China, know all this. The fact is that if it wasn't for some ancient mullah exploiting the hypocrisy of the Reagan Administration we might never have heard about it--because the Democrats (at least the ranking party members) were probably as aware as anybody of the 'secret' Iran initiative and the 'covert' private-governmental Contra aid. The deals had only been 'secret' to the public, no matter how much people like Senator Inuoye were kept in the dark about the particulars of these particular dealings. The news was probably leaked by Ayatollah Hussein Montazeri to a Lebanese journalist named Hassan Sabra as a political ploy against 'moderately pro-U.S.' Speaker Rafsanjani in the Iranian government's own internal power-struggle.



The Iran/Contra scandal has been neatly tied up in the issues of "constitutionality", "advise and consent" and patriotic "defense of democratic principles". Never was it argued that the initiatives were not reasonable possibilities. But the means and personnel for implementation were discussed and selected *without* the approval of the legislative branch, outside the legal framework of the U.S. Constitution, whose prime purpose is to insure the general involvement of the capitalist class as a whole in policy-making and governance.

Every effort was and still is being made to keep the story penned into the most superficial and personalistic criteria feasible. Like an executive editor of an electronic National Enquirer, the State produced a dramatic parade of betrayed innocents, attempted suicides, convenient deaths, fighting leathernecks and sultry secretaries. The Congressional report of the Iran/Contra hearings apparently intend to indict Casey, Poindexter and North as the culpable agents--looks like they hope the "plausible deniability" of a dead man and two dummies will protect the system. The Iran/Contra gate fiasco (and the backstabbing spree amongst the Democrats, lately) has served to strengthen a crisis of governmental legitimacy among a population experiencing a deepening decline of living standard



as they power the current "boom"-period for Capital. This "boom" for the bosses is badly affecting sections of the middle class as well as working class and poor people, both women and men, and all races (see for example, * Michael Harrington, "White, Male and Poor"). There has never been any reason to demonize Reagan, or give him credit for powers that he has never had. With the exception of the invasion of Grenada, the American government has faced an almost uninterrupted string of foreign policy defeats since the Indochinese debacle. America is an imperialist power in a state of decline. The U.S. economy is increasingly colonized by foreign competitors and the population of urban poor is large and growing. In this situation beyond its control, the Reagan Administration has been forced to sell weapons to Iran, to one of the regimes that the Administration hates more than almost any other regime in the world. All this dishonesty to try and absorb or re-capture John and Suzy Q. Public's waning interest and growing cynicism in the charade of

* San Francisco Chronicle, 3-15-81

elections, taxes and patriotic duty. They know better than the public at large that participation in elections has been steadily falling since the early '70's and is now down to near only 40% participation in the Presidential offering. In the most recent California State elections, voter turnout was lower than it has been in any other election in the twentieth century. All sections of the U.S. ruling-class are still haunted by the defeat in Viet Nam, the massive domestic crises and rebellions during the war period and the the fear of its recurrence. And for good reason. The government's awareness of the decline in public faith in the most fundamental institutions of American political life is also seen in the implementation over the past decade of strategies for rapid deployment of elite forces and low-intensity warfare through proxy armies like the Nicaraguan Contras, strategies first formulated by the Kennedy Administration (see for example, War Without End by Michael Klare).

The government and the media were apparently unable to sustain interest in

manly patriotism or red-white-and-blue constitutionalism (and there are a lot of petty capitalists stuck with loads of unsold Ollie North memorabilia!). As usual anyway, the government and media, in the spirit of advertising and the tabloids, said "Quick cut! Upbeat! Re-Assuring! "No Nukes" in Europe (a lie); the promise of Peace and Democracy in Central America (a deception); support for Democracy and protest against Violence in South Korea (hypocritical); or a new crisis in the Persian Gulf. Forget about the bumbling Reagan's attempt at a second "hostage-victory" to win some points in the popularity polls; forget the selling of weapons to Iran while at the same time giving top-secret reconnaissance photos to Iraq, the better to bomb Tehran and sustain the continuing carnage on both sides. Rest assured, fellow Americans, that this was all being done to insure peace between insane Arabs and Persian barbarians. It did not succeed, so we are compelled to send in the Navy to protect our



shipping and oil from Iranian assault following an attack on the Frigate U.S.S. Stark by an Iraqi fighter-bomber, even though it is not our shipping or our oil, it's our... but forget that, anyway. Most of all, please forget. Trust us! We are having a crisis and we need you to make it your own!

The pathetic character of this Crisis Manufacture and Management, Inc., would be laughable if these maniacs did not actually manipulate social history, psychic distress, information, money and the military with the aim of continuing to dominate the world the way the United States did in the years following World War Two.

The fear of losing their ba... (...er.. uh...pardon us) their dominant position is expressed in the domestic and foreign policy arenas, respectively: for example,

under the bland name of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, both main political parties of the ruling class prepare for the possibility of martial law as the last step in insuring domestic tranquility--and "democracy", of course-- in the event of large scale war or massive social unrest; on the other hand, Gary Hart, neo-liberal and non-candidate for the 1988-Democratic Presidential nomination, came out and directly stated that Reagan was the inferior of the Soviet Union's Gorbachev, and that, if Reagan policies continued unabated, the U.S. would find itself a second-rate power behind the world's new dominant super-power--the Soviet Union.

It is not far-fetched to expect the next world war might begin in the Middle East, or specifically in the Persian Gulf. The regional war has been sponsored for years by nations in and outside the region who are individually, as well as by bloc, desperately seeking the privileges of ascendancy in dealing with the local despots and the oil wealth of the region. For the U.S. to lose its dominant political-economic position in this region would be, in the deranged minds of the bourgeois, like signing their own death warrant.

In the attempt to avoid such an eventuality, the rulers of this country already risk the lives of *others*, and soon even *others of "us"* (danger-pay for sailors in the Gulf) in

open war to keep *themselves* from "dying" as a class.

Their "booms" and "crises" are not ours. Why not make the bourgeois addicts of Capital end their dependencies *on us* cold-turkey? Even though they will feel, as individuals like they are dying, for the most part it will be their class and this hellish civilization that will be dying! It's time we lived for ourselves, and create an actually libertarian and egalitarian society, the wanting of which our dreams and ideals express, the lack of which our nightmares and fears possess.



Why don't you shake them off?

MENDEKU (revenge).

We are writing to you from Portugalete, a town of 70,000 inhabitants, 12 Km from Bilbao, with the specific aim of explaining a whole number of facts, which would help to clarify the situation which has taken place after the petrol-bomb attack on the "Casa del Pueblo" of Portugalete, the H.Q of the Portugalete PSOE (1) on 25/4/87 which resulted in the death of 2 PSOE militants, a lot of casualties, and substantial damage to property.

We imagine you would have heard about this, since there has been a lot written, said, manipulated, misrepresented etc.... by the organs of power (Media, Political organisations, Institutions) about this event. All this has once again called our attention to the existing crap, making obvious everything we have discussed so many times - the necessity of creating and spreading counter-information by any means possible.

. Therefore in order to clarify things, we are going to give you the facts.

For a better understanding of the ins and outs of the whole story, we need to go back to the summer months, when on the initiative of Jarrai (the youth organisation of Herri Batasuna)(2) the Gazte asanblada (youth assembly) appeared in Portugalete with the intention of giving expression to the specific demands of local youths. This assembly is made up of about 30 young people.

Jarrai's real intentions concerning this assembly soon became clear. A trick that hoped to strike a chord with the young people of the town, which they had not managed with their organisation: a movement that would follow the campaign they had organised throughout Euskadi, attempting to win over or recuperate loads of young people, who are out in the street, who don't give a shit about acting as militants in any political organisation, and who take orders from no-one. They are trying to win back areas which they have been losing, because the locals are getting involved in different things, acting as an assembly, getting stuck in, which it seems H.Baren't interested in. What they can't control they try to crush.

For a clear example of the crap: the "Martxa eta Borroka" (3) (Marcha and struggle) promotion by H.B of what they called Radical Basque Rock, which has a clear vote-catching intention, and hopes to either win, recuperate or redirect lots of young people who don't give a toss about what H.B are doing. Another example is the Gaztetxes (4) which they promoted and then tried to control at all cost. And what they helped to organise, hoping to score a big political success, is beginning to organise itself, generally ignoring H.B's orders.

It's within this context that we have to place the row, which took place within the Gaztetxes between Jarrai and other people who didn't want anything to do with their blatant manipulation and who understood that things had to be done another way. These major differences caused the split and later disappearance of the youth assembly.

A group of people who had participated in the Gaztetxes together and who had kept themselves to themselves from the beginning believed it necessary to form a collective which continued to fight against those things which oppress us, taking no notice of the people who are trying to profit from our lives.

In this context, in the middle of march, Mendeku (revenge) emerged.

The points of departure are clear, we are talking about an open collective, an alternative of an assemblyist nature, with no dominant ideology, which brings people together who want to act within an autonomous context.

The first assemblies took place and the idea started to take shape. About 30 of us young people met regularly and the first project we organised was a popular mural in the "Casco Viejo" (5). Some walls were whitewashed, everybody was called together to paint what they wanted, without any restrictions. Quite a few people turned up and the results were great. A whole load of subjects were covered, including ; military service, sexuality, squatting, anti-pigs, anti-politicians, the basque language, anarchy....

After this first action, we realised the need to bring out a magazine, creating a space where the youths could express themselves and tell their story outside the media controlled by the system. Some stickers were produced demanding the right to a home, to get some money for the magazine.

NOTE 1 : PSOE: Partido socialista obrero de Espana : The present socialist government.

NOTE 2 : HERRI BATASUNA (HB) : the political wing of ETA.

NOTE 3 : MARTXA/MARCHA: A word with no english equivalent which can mean; what's going on, energy, excitement, fun. "BORROKA" means struggle. H.B used the feelings behind this slogan in promoting their own slogan "High and combative" within the activities which preoccupy young Basque people: "Radical Basque Rock" groups, squats, fanzines, radio stations, womens' groups, anti-drug groups, Basque language schools etc....

NOTE 4 : GAZTETXES : places where the gazte asanblada meet.

NOTE 5 : CASCO VIEJO: the "traditional" working class area in most spanish towns/cities.

In Easter week, an atheist procession was organised - the first in Bizkaia (the basque provinces) - and the meeting was a complete success. About 200 people got together (which for Portugalete is a hell of a lot of people). There was fancy dress, crucifixes and puppets, a lot of Calimotxo (wine and coca cola), burning depictions of priests, hymns, "Marcha"(3) and provocation....enough for 6 van-loads of National police to turn up and attack people. They got as good as they gave for several hours and there were clashes in the "Casco viejo" (5).

Right from the beginning, the existence of the Mendeku collective provoked a hostile reaction from H.B. with them accusing us of trying to split the Basque National Liberation Movement (which they seem to have a monopoly of). The arguments continued, they hassled us one by one and they even ended up by threatening us. Two comrades were expelled from Aizan (a feminist organisation close to H.B) for belonging to Mendeku. H.B got pissed off about the mural against military service and in support of refusing it, against politicians, demanding free booze and anarchist activities.

After the atheist procession H.B flipped their lid. They accused us of having fucked up their politics for the last four years, their potential voters would have identified the procession with them and as this would have been harmful to their electoral hopes (they couldn't steal votes from PNV (6) or keep their supporters happy by displaying their atheism in the streets).

After all this past history we arrive at the day of the attack on the PSOE H.Q. You more or less know how things happened but we think it's necessary to explain a bit of the context in which it took place.

Portugalete had been in the forefront recently, because of the violence of its protests against extraditions.

From the beginning there were demonstrations after deportations, and on certain occasions in response to police attacks, there was rioting. These demos called by the pro-amnesty co-ordinations became more and more successful, due to the increasing campaign of collaboration between the spanish and french States against basque refugees. There were regular clashes with the filth, actions became more and more radical.

It came to the point where it was no longer possible to have demos in Portugalete. Before every rally the governor responded with tons of cops, brought in especially from Logrono for the occasion. Rioting became commonplace, buses piled up and burnt, attacks against the H.Q of the PSOE and french car showrooms, petrol bombs, stones, catapults, destruction of banks and similar places, brutal charges by the police, evacuation of the Casco viejo, beatings inside the bars, police using live ammunition, lots of injuries etc....

The pro-amnesty co-ordination tried to avoid the radicalisation of the struggle which was slipping out of their hands and prejudicing their electoral interests. The confrontations between the coordinations and the rest of the people (the majority of people who go to the demos) were commonplace. The situation was "out of control".

It is in this climate of total tension, of daily rioting that the attack on the Portugalete Casa del Pueblo needs to be explained and understood.

We aren't going to enter into an evaluation of the action itself. Everyone has their own opinion about it. But Mendeku as a collective has no position.

One thing which we all agree on, is that the action, a result of the anger about the two extraditions which had taken place that same day, wasn't done consciously, and didn't take into account the consequences that could have resulted (the dead, the wounded).

On many other occasions the H.Q of the PSOE had been fire-bombed without anyone getting injured. But on the 25th of April there were people still inside the bar at the time the attack took place, and you all know the results. We know for sure that the young people who did this neither intended nor hoped for the consequences which the attack brought.

Maybe all these facts will help to explain the ease with which the police solved the case, the confessions etc....

After the attack in Portugalete there was total paranoia, everybody was shitting themselves. The place soon filled up with Pikolos (Guardia civil), Maderos (Policia Nacional), Munipas (Policia municipal), Ertzainas ("Autonomous" Basque Police), firemen, ambulances etc...There were rumours of 3 deaths. The story went from mouth to mouth, and more or less everybody knew who was behind the affair.

The reaction of the PSOE wasn't long in coming. In their first announcement they accused H.B of being the people responsible and that is where the whole thing starts getting complicated. H.B brought out some posters denying their involvement in the affair, and at the same time strongly condemned the attack.

NOTE 6 : PNV *Partido nacional Vasco* Basque Nationalist Party.

In the early morning of 26/27 April the arrests began. The first to get nicked (about 10 people) were the people close to H.B already known by the police. After 3 hours the police changed their tune and started arresting supposed members of the "Mendeku Brigade" (7). Two members of our collective were arrested accused of belonging to this "Brigade". Later, more people were nicked until finally the alleged culprits were arrested. The number of those arrested went up to 21.

They are all interrogated by the usual methods and after two days some of them are released, leaving 11 inside who are kept in for another 6 days. This group includes 2 Mendeku comrades who had nothing to do with the matter and 3 of the supposed culprits who also belong to the collective. After 6 days in the police H.Q at Indautxu, they are moved to the security command in Madrid called the DGS.

Finally on Monday May 4th, after 8 days in solitary confinement, they are taken to Crown court, where 6 of the prisoners are released without charge. The Mendeku comrades are among those freed. The rest are sent to Carabanchel (Prison in Madrid).

We don't want to go into detail about what happened at the police station because nearly all of you know what that means, and what's more, whilst people are banged up, the real action is in the street.

After the arrests, the whole media starts speculating about the attack, and the story makes the front page in all the papers. The political organisations continue to hurl accusations at each other. The PSOE carries on accusing H.B of being behind the attack. But the best part of the story is that H.B (we have to remember that we're in the middle of the holy electoral campaign) doesn't limit itself to denying its involvement in the affair and condemning the attack, but what a surprise! - they look for a scapegoat and openly accuse the Mendeku collective of being the perpetrators. They know well that it's totally false but they set it up with the shameless intention of killing two birds with one stone, cleaning up their public image, and to do that, what better than to look for a guilty party, and even better if on the way they can get rid of a collective that will bother them less by not being around. They and only they put Mendeku in the trap.

The media, including Egin (a newspaper managed by H.B, and supposedly directed at the radical, alternative, combative sectors) support this theory and spit their ink at Mendeku, defining it as a direct action brigade, a group of young marginals, habitual delinquents, violent by nature, punks, degenerate anarchists etc....

But H.B's crap doesn't stop here. Some important leaders of "la Mesa Nacional" supreme body of this organisation, like Jon Idigoras, Txomin Ziluaga or Txema Montero (European candidate representing revolutionaries, radicals, alternatives etc... from Euskadi and the rest of the State) make declaration to any sector of the media that will listen to them accusing Mendeku of being the "ideological and political enemy" and of being "outside the Basque National Liberation movement". What's more, they challenge the civil governor about the date on which he said our collective appeared, the middle of March - which was the right date - but Jon Idigoras deny this and claims we had been going for several years, and taking advantage of the similarity of names accused us of being responsible for the death of the socialist candidate Enrique Casas (7). Later we were accused of being a brigade organised by the Ministry of the Interior which in close collaboration with GAL (8) was trying to fuck up H.B's campaign.

For their part Txema Montero and Kepa Landa (lawyers for the pro-amnesty coordinations) announce that they are going to search for the perpetrators of the crime, considering them their enemies, until the events have been completely clarified, and declare that they are going to make use of "popular action": that is to say they are going to act like public prosecutors shoulder to shoulder with the two public prosecutors which the PSOE and the state Attorney General are going to present.

You can imagine our surprise and anger in the face of this avalanche of accusations, including those coming from people who we thought were on the same side of the barricade as us (now we can see with whom and on what side they are). The media are attacking us on all sides, also the political organisations, and the police continue to put pressure on us.

We decided to publish a communique explaining to people, that Mendeku is not a Brigade, it is a collective, open, alternative and assemblyist, which being what it is, has nothing to do with the attack. We condemned the manipulation of H.B and the rest of the friends of power and we demanded the public withdrawal of the accusations hurled by the members of the Mesa Nacional.

NOTE 7 : MENDEKU BRIGADE : The name of a brigade belonging to the autonomous anticapitalist brigades (CAAC) who were smashed several years ago. They shot dead the socialist Enrique Casas in 82/83. Of course the people from Portugalete have nothing to do with CAAC and don't constitute in any way a brigade. Despite this the confusion remained for some time.

NOTE 8 : GAL : Killers connected with the french and spanish police which mainly carry out assassinations against spanish basque refugees in France.

This communique appeared, pretty much censored, in the media.

On the other hand while our comrades are still inside, H.B and the rest of the organisations in Portugaleta, are not only doing nothing to bring out the freedom of those arrested, but, what's more, are exercising a total boycott of the whole gang connected with Mendeku, who are trying to find out the situation of the people inside. Tense arguments are still taking place in which it becomes more and more clear that H.B are trying to get out of the whole situation and criminalise Mendeku. There are even death threats; we are totally pissed off.

The pro-amnesty coordinations maintained an ambiguous position about whether or not they were going to support the defense of the arrested people, which is why, and having seen the press announcements, Mendeku got in contact with the lawyers' collective, Berdin de Donosti, (which usually defends alleged members of the CAAC) and which has always been prepared to support us when we've needed them.

In the Crown Court, the ambiguity kept up by H.B (deceiving the families and not wanting to get its feet wet) went up the wall. Gestoras' lawyer, Kepa Landa, simply represents "popular action", ignoring the defendants. The female lawyer from Berdin has to defend the five people accused of the action against PSOE, which she hadn't expected, since no-one would represent them (the co-ordinations had told the families that they would defend them).

Whilst from the system the attacks have been continual, the solidarity action by loads of collectives from the Gazte asanblada, fanzines, pirate radio etc... has been brilliant. Everyone understands the fact that H.B supposedly linked to the "popular sectors" in criminalizing Mendeku implies the criminalization of all the collectives and people in Euskadi who are trying to wage their struggles without taking any notice of the theories of H.B's "organisation". This attack, which is not the first, is, in this case, totally blatant. You are either with them or against them. If they don't control the street, not even God himself will control it, if you don't follow their orders, you will be threatened and declared outside of the MVLN (10).

Thanks to the support of people outside of official organisations, we managed to bring out a pamphlet (10,000 copies) with an explanation, which is being distributed throughout Euskadi, through pirate radio, fanzines, and all the means of counter-information collaborated with us to clarify the affair.

There have been loads of discussions in many villages and towns in Euskadi directly explaining the whole thing to people. Mendeku continues and we are preparing the "Fuerzas Mamadas" (11) week. The fanzine will be out soon. We'll send you a copy. The clashes in Portu carry on everyday. We are threatened and insulted. The pigs are still everywhere.

We don't know what's gonna happen but we'll let you know. Oh we forgot: we set up a fucking brilliant "Vote Fumeiro" (vote for a spliff) campaign with posters, stickers, and the rest of it.

Thanks in advance for your solidarity and support.

CUENTA APOYO
CAJA LABORAL POPULAR
621 .04918-5

MENDEKU

Translated from Spanish in December 1987.

NOTE 9 : MVLN : Movimiento Vasco de Liberation Nacional , Basque National Liberation Movement.

NOTE 10 : FUERZAS MAMADAS : Every year the spanish State organizes the celebration of the armed forces called fuerzas armadas. But Fuerzas mamadas is a play on words using the word "mamon" which means bugger.

RESIST THE POLL TAX!

In April 1990 the government intends to introduce a replacement for the rating system in England and Wales. (The changes will come a year earlier in Scotland.) The proposed replacement will be called the community charge or poll tax. The result of this measure is that everyone over the age of 18, with a few exceptions, will have to pay their own individual contributions to local government. These contributions will not depend on how much your home is worth, or on your ability to pay. People living in the same local government district will have to pay the same whether they are a millionaire living in a mansion or a factory worker living in a council flat. Because people will each have to pay their own contributions, a large family living in an overcrowded house will have to pay more than an individual or couple living in much better accommodation. It is estimated that 37 million people will have to pay the charge: 22 million people will be worse off.

Another aspect of the proposed legislation is that industry, especially large industry, will pay much less towards local government than at present. So a boss will gain twice from the new system, once because his or her personal contribution will plummet, and again because business costs will fall due to the drop in rates for business premises. This handout for the rich will be paid for out of our pockets.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Over the last 15 years or so, the world economy has been in crisis. Although this crisis has been deeper at some times than at others, and although it manifests itself in different ways (e.g. unemployment, inflation, stock market crash) it has been with us constantly since the early seventies. Rulers the world over have been forced to attempt to fend off the 'recession' by the same means: attacking the working-class. In many countries first inflation and then unemployment have been manipulated in order to make us work harder for worse rewards. The last Labour government in this country used a wages policy to attack workers. In the Soviet Union 'perestroika' will mean wage cuts and price rises. The present Tory government plans to replace the rates system with the 'poll tax'.

This 'poll tax' is a particularly blatant attack on the working class. It will mean a massive drop in living standards for many, including many already at the bottom of the social ladder. Under these conditions many people will attempt to avoid paying the tax. Some people will have little choice but to avoid paying.

It has already been recognised by some sections of the ruling class that resistance to the community charge may well be widespread enough to make the tax inoperable. Some of these people (Tory as well as Labour M.P.s) are already advocating different systems which will not be as harmful to the working class. The more resistance we offer to the implementation of the community charge, the more likely it is that the government will be forced to climb down and keep the old rates system or introduce another, less vicious, system.

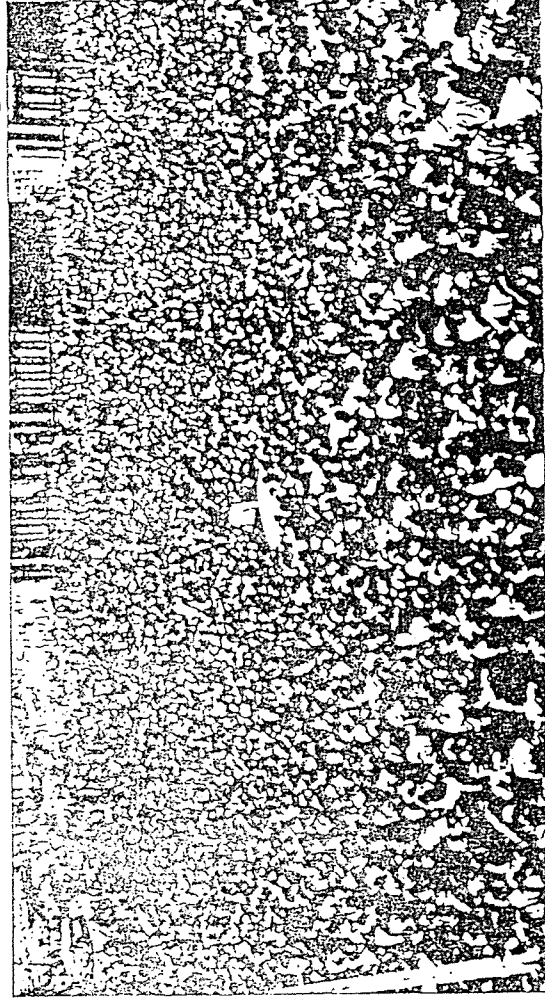
We have stated how the community charge will result in a drop in standards for many people. We do not however see ourselves as being in the business of forming better policy for the present government. We are against the poll tax not because it is unfair and will be resisted, but because it represents an attack on our class. Because we take this view we are in favour of all working class people avoiding the tax whether they themselves are much worse off or not. Refusing to pay the tax means refusing to allow the ruling class to rob us in yet another way. We need no excuses to defend ourselves from our class enemies.

RESISTANCE TO THE NEW SYSTEM

The most effective way of combatting the community charge is obviously to just not pay. There will be many people who will be doing this out of necessity anyway. The more people who refuse to pay, the more others will be encouraged to do likewise. In fact the main purpose of this leaflet is to help get this snowball moving as rapidly as possible. The most important thing to do now is to ensure that your name and address are not added to any local or national government lists, e.g. the electoral register. In the event of a census being carried out, refuse to give any information. If possible, remove snoopers from your area by force. Sabotage, industrial action and refusal by those asked to administer the system are also important possible forms of resistance.

If you agree with all or most of what we have written then we would be interested to hear from you. However we are not some leftist organisation looking for recruits. Neither are we a campaigning group seeking to represent those who oppose the community charge. We are a small group of people who will refuse to pay the community charge if it is introduced and who would like to see as many other people avoiding payment as possible. Discuss this with friends. If enough people refuse to pay then a less punishing system may be retained or introduced. In any case, we should be able to keep what we save by non-payment.

refuse to register,



refuse to pay!

We intend to produce more anti-poll tax material in the future, including information on the resistance to community charge in Scotland, and a pamphlet dealing with the issues raised by the poll tax and resistance to it. Write to us if you want to receive copies, or if you want to discuss this leaflet, or if you would like multiple copies of it.

squeeze.

Whatever happens, SCH rents are bound to keep rising steadily (probably in line with SCH wage rises) and SCH could become either exclusively an extortionate slum landlord or a housing agency for yuppies. At the moment, it is a bit of a mixture of both.

SCH-CAREERISTS IN THE BUSINESS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The squatting movement of the 1970's contained a number of middle-class activists within it, many of them the future bureaucrats of their generation, and it tended to be these people who became most active in organising short-life groups and co-ops to negotiate deals with local councils for property to use as short-life housing.

For the councils, short-life housing was a convenient way of appearing to be generous and reasonable to the needs of squatters. It was also a means of making profitable otherwise unusable housing, and of keeping it in better repair. But perhaps most importantly, it was a means of gaining influence and control over a section of those forced to struggle for housing, and using this influence to suppress and divide the struggle.

A future leaflet may deal with such things as financial fiddles by SCH, and SCH members and workers who are property owners on the quiet. All comments, correspondence etc to
Box 14,
136 Kingsland High St,
London E8

Large short-life organisations such as SCH gradually developed a bureaucratic structure run mainly by middle-class professionals, who were quick to recognise a new job market for their class. For many SCH non-manual workers, SCH has been a useful step in their careers, and they have left SCH to go on to a higher bureaucratic position. For years these bureaucrats did themselves and their friends many favours in the form of allocating the best housing to themselves. This became so obvious and such a scandal that SCH was forced to pass a ruling that none of their workers could apply for housing to SCH. It must also be part of the reason why SCH, particularly Hillview Estate, is so full of cliques and yuppies.

A founder of SCH tells why short life groups were encouraged by the state.

With municipalisation you had worried about unbridled squatting councils buying up housing to then and about the life style that let to people on the waiting list supposedly went with it and all and to homeless families. Because that sort of thing. There was a there wasn't housing to rent there general panic and hysteria about were a lot of desperate people and squatting. So even Tory councils, squatting really became quite a while not agreeing to major thing. A lot of it went on municipalisation, were prepared to in property owned by local make deals with what they thought were credible organisations to authorities,

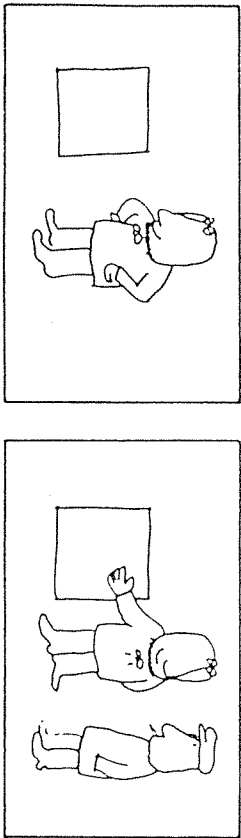
Those are context things and ensure that there was some short the government became increasingly term use of empty housing

JUNE 88

From SCH News

Supporters is such a middle-class stronghold, working for its own class' interests, class is one of the most rarely used words in their vocabulary. They will talk about every kind of social grouping except the fundamental one of class. "Positive discrimination for minority groups" is one of their favourite distractions - a way of slightly re-arranging who suffers most from what is an artificially induced scarcity of housing. (Its often middle-class people who can well afford market prices for housing that benefit from this policy).

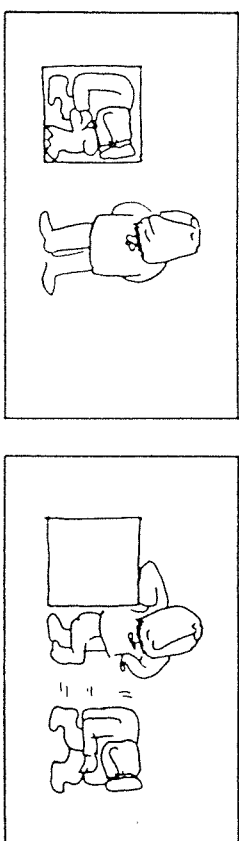
Squatting has been a practical criticism of the fact that mass homelessness can exist side by side with thousands of empty dwellings. It was necessary for the State to defuse the threat of the squatting movement by creating institutions that could bring it partially under State control. They could then bear down all the harder on unlicensed squatters and justify it by saying that only the "responsible and organised" squatters deserved any help. And those housing activists who were willing to function as an extension of the local State housing bureaucracy were soon to be seen doing the council's dirty work of securing properties with steel doors to prevent squatting in "their" co-op property. Of course the short-life groups still express their solidarity with squatters, but only as official policy. In practice, their role is directly opposed.



Short-life groups were originally dependant on the council for property and finance but now in a changed political and economic climate, their usefulness to the local councils is reduced and they are gradually being forced to function without State subsidy. This means that they must become profitable businesses in the marketplace. So if, for instance, the workers of SCH are to be able to maintain the wage levels they've become accustomed to (£6 per hour), they must enforce some very large rent increases very quickly. (Already, in 1987 some rents went up 94%, and this must be only the first of many sharp rises).

Few members ever attend the monthly General Meetings to exercise their "democratic rights" and "have a say" in SCH decision making. This is a convenient excuse which they use to dismiss criticism of their activities, but the fact is that most members have no interest in participating in what they know from experience to be a clique of corrupt, self-serving, careerist scum. Despite all the "co-operative" bullshit, the relationship between SCH management and licencees is a standard landlord/tenant one. There is no more "democratic participation" than you get from being a member of the local library. The main reason SCH workers are such regular (if inattentive) attenders of meetings is because they are paid £6 an hour to be there.

The future for SCH is uncertain. The main possibilities are: - the council may simply take back all or most of its properties from SCH. SCH would then have to find other sources of property from the private sector if it was to survive. They have already started exploring this kind of arrangement. With Camden Council in deep financial crisis, they are already selling housing property to make quick cash, and such SCH estates as Hillview and Gray's Inn Buildings would bring in several million pounds if sold to property speculators.



Any effective resistance to large-scale council evictions (with little or no prospect of re-housing) of SCH licencees would probably be difficult - partly because SCH management will always attempt to keep "resistance" within their control and to limit it to "reasonable and legal" activities of polite pleading negotiations with the council. SCH do not want to jeopardise their working relationship with the council, for this would endanger their high wages and their careers. Another consequence of this situation would be the rapid flight of the yuppie artist/professional elements who could afford to buy themselves out of the