

UP AGAINST THE STATE

THE BATTLE FOR BROUGHTON ST
UNEMPLOYED WORKERS CENTRE





THE CENTRE AND SOCIAL STRUGGLE

"If you exploit us, we will shut you down"

Who is in control? That was the question posed by the occupation of the Broughton Street Centre in Edinburgh. The Labour-controlled Lothian Regional Council were determined to quash the occupation - they could not tolerate a self-managed initiative linked to and involved in social struggles.

For the battle for Broughton Street was not just about the building, central though that was. It was about wider social struggles and how they should be fought. It was about direct action versus reformism. It was about autonomous struggle versus party control. It was about a vision of revolutionary change versus managing capitalism.

WE WILL NEVER PAY

The poll tax was key. Introduced in Scotland by Thatcher's Tory government in 1987, a year before the rest of the UK, this totally unjust tax was implemented by Councils of all political stripes, including Labour-run Lothian Regional Council.

A huge community-based independent non-payment movement rose up to fight the tax, and defy the Councils and sheriff officers trying to enforce it. Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre was to the fore, among many other inter-linked community groups. Several activists from EUWC were involved in Community Resistance, an anti authoritarian revolutionary group, which helped start several of the local anti poll tax groups.

Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre and the linked Lothian Claimants Union produced leaflets urging the claimants and unemployed not to pay the poll tax, and giving practical advice on the law and how to resist. The Lothian Claimants Union banner was hung from the windows of the occupied Council Chambers in Parliament Square when the Lothian Anti Poll Tax Federation took over the Regional Council meeting on 6th December 1988.

The Centre featured prominently on the public phone trees widely circulated to mobilise community resistance to sheriff officers, and was itself was a base for organising. We were present when hundreds put sheriff officers to flight as we defended non-payers homes from "poindings" or seizures of goods. On one famous occasion we were among the dozens who turned up at Councillor's houses to "poind" them!

As all know, mass non-payment and mass direct action defeated the poll tax. The Councils, sheriff officers and bailiffs proved powerless in the face of millions of non-payers. Thatcher's flagship was sunk, and the Iron Lady followed, forced to resign as the whole country turned against her hateful policies.

Lothian Regional Council did not forget the role the EUWC played in anti poll tax direct action, and it was very likely they were no more taken with our long history of claimants' direct action against benefits cuts and the harassment of claimants. When we were still at the old Cranston Street Unemployed Workers Centre we had occupied Lothian Regional Council to demand emergency vouchers for claimants denied payments by benefit workers strikes. Other mobilisations of that time included photographing and chasing the special dole snoopers teams off the street outside the old Torphichen Street Unemployment Benefit Office in August 1987.

THE COUNCIL ATTACK

At the beginning of the 1990's Lothian Regional Council moved to cut off all funding to both the Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre and the Citizens Rights Office. The CRO, also based in Broughton Street, was an independent welfare rights centre which backed the claimant and punter - this was to be replaced by a toothless council-controlled service. Despite a campaign of protest the cuts went through and the CRO closed - though The Rights Office emerged as an independent successor, and operated till recently out of the South side community centre.

The Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre battled on, and the struggle to defend it is described in other articles in this pamphlet. Here we will emphasise that over the two and a half years that the EUWC - then dubbed simply "the Centre" - was run by its users, from Spring 1992 till December 1994, our involvement in social struggles flourished.

The Scottish Radical Library holds copies of the revolutionary news-sheet Counter Information produced at the time - this widely distributed free sheet was itself often designed on the Centre's old apple mac computers. Here we can read reports of many struggles in which the Centre was involved during the period from 1992 - 94.

DIRECT ACTION

Edinburgh Branch Lothian Claimants Union was based in the Centre. We took direct action at Unemployment Benefit Offices against new rules that cut benefits entirely from claimants deemed not to be "actively seeking work" - sounds familiar doesn't it?! - but this was in 1993!

Along with claimants' fights we participated in the continuing resistance to the poll tax debts, opposition to water privatisation and the imposition of VAT on fuel bills, solidarity with the Timex workers in Dundee, defiance of the Criminal Justice Bill, anti racist activity, solidarity with asylum seekers and direct action against the new M77 motorway through Pollok, Glasgow.

Direct action was to the fore. An unauthorised demo against VAT on fuel marched along Princes Street and then occupied the old electricity board showrooms. When a Centre activist was arrested in the occupation it was handy that he was taken to Gayfield Square police station - refreshments could be obtained from the nearby Centre while a picket continued at the polis station.

In Dundee the Timex workers were resisting the closure of the plant by its multinational owners. The Timex support group was closely linked to the Centre and 1993 saw us journeying up to Dundee to join the combative pickets of the factory, and organising solidarity pickets of shops selling Timex watches in Edinburgh.

The opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill saw the emergence of a new defiant youth culture. Party hard! was the slogan and free music raves and temporary autonomous zones flourished. Locally the Sativa Drummers were somewhere in this mix and their defiant drumming echoed over the barricades of Broughton, at our marches and demos against the eviction, and also at the occupations of unemployment benefit offices and workfare companies.

BEATING THE BENEFIT BULLIES

The eviction of Broughton Street in December 1994 didn't stop our activity. Claimants actions really took off with Britain-wide resistance to the new Job Seekers Allowance, which imposed more conditions and potential sanctions on claimants. Edinburgh Claimants upped the ante with a direct action campaign targeting bullying benefits officials, dubbed "Three strikes and you're out." This campaign was denounced on the front page of the Sunday Post - and at the national conference of the benefits workers union.

We occupied benefit offices against early forms of workfare, such as Project Work. In one imaginative action we forged invitation letters to a compulsory jobsearch course - Jobplan workshop. Our disruptive questioning caused the session to descend into chaos. In a strange role reversal the official running the compulsory workfare scheme insisted: "You don't have to be here! You have to leave!"

We ran a weekly minibus through to the direct actions against the construction of the M77 motorway in Glasgow, visiting Pollok Free State, and joining up with striking school students from the Pollok council scheme who swarmed over the construction site with unstoppable energy. Overlapping with this struggle, around 1995, was strong defiance of the repressive Criminal Justice Act.

ACE IS BORN

In early 1997, after one or two false dawns, we eventually found our new premises at West Montgomery Place, and a new base was established. Space doesn't permit more than a brief mention of some of the major struggles ACE has been involved with over the last 17 years.

The Angry Youth school students group were based in ACE and excited predictable outrage from the Evening News. McDonalds Workers Resistance used ACE resources to produce their devastatingly humorous McSues magazine.

The struggle by Glaswegian East Enders against the establishment of a waste dump in their street was an inspiration. We regularly ran a minibus through to support the residents of Gartocher Terrace in their battle against "Rubbish Rat", aka businessman William Combe, and his friends in Strathclyde police. A residents occupation of the police station and ingenious blockades involving paint pots and concrete-filled fridges were just a couple of highlights of this amazing struggle in 1999.

We had a prominent role in Edinburgh's Reclaim the Streets actions around the turn of the millenium - the creation of a special magic carpet banner for pushing through police lines and the use of a police hat as a frisbee were two particular innovations pioneered by Centre activists.....

THE STORMING OF EDINBURGH CASTLE

The struggle against the Iraq war saw Centre activists involved in a cunning if crazy plan - an anti war occupation of Edinburgh Castle! To our astonishment the 30 or so usual suspects were joined by 250 striking school students - not only did protesters successfully storm the castle drawbridge but the students also flooded onto Princes Street, bringing the capital's city centre to a halt.

The Iraq war highlighted how valuable it was to have a meeting place of our own - in the emergency situation we could organise meetings to plan action whenever we needed in ACE.

Two years later, in 2005, the G8 came to Scotland. The Carnival for Full Enjoyment took over Edinburgh's streets in defiance of a UK-wide police mobilisation. The Carnival denounced "wage slavery, dole slavery, debt slavery and army slavery", and local youths physically resisted the riot police.

From the days of the Broughton Street centre, the Muirhouse anti racism campaign and anti BNP mobilisations, through to recent mobilisations against the SDL/ EDL, people around our centres have been involved in efforts to stop fascists and racists organising in the city.

"IF YOU EXPLOIT US WE WILL SHUT YOU DOWN"

The foundation of Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty in 2008 re-invigorated our involvement in claimants and low waged struggles. Mobilisations against the council tax were followed by an ongoing resistance to workfare which continues today. Occupations and blockades of Tescos, British Heart Foundation, the Salvation Army, Learndirect and more have deterred many employers from involvement in the exploiting schemes.

ECAP has also taken action in opposition to sanctions and, along with disability rights groups, to resist the attack on disability /sickness benefits through ATOS assessments. The increasingly busy Tuesday drop-ins see us fighting people's cases, wherever possible meshing together with the wider struggle.

ECAP has also acted in solidarity with workers' struggles. Along with the IWW and others from Centre-based groups, ECAP organised squads to rove the city centre and blockade scab bin lorries being deployed to break the council bin workers industrial action against pay cuts in 2009/2010.

More recently ECAP and ACE have been centres of resistance to the bedroom tax, with publicity for the large Edinburgh demos being produced at ACE and activists involved in local organising.

Now, in the aftermath of the September 2014 independence referendum, ACE and ECAP have come together with the IWW and the Anarchist Federation to promote and encourage direct action to make government austerity policies unworkable. From Yes to Action is the cry.

This article focuses on the Centre's involvement in social struggles, and of course - from Broughton Street to West Montgomery Place - there have been and there are many other invaluable aspects of our centres. Discussion and group meetings, self-help workshops, large public meetings sometimes with international speakers, international solidarity from Chiapas to Mumia Abu Jamal, the Info Shop, the Broughton Street People Kitchen and today's Leith Wholefood Co-op, ACE cinema, fundraising gigs which are about creativity and self-expression as well as the vital moneyraising... these are just a few examples.

The provision of meeting space and also the networking of different grass-roots groups, including initiatives like Edinburgh City and the Forum, has been an important role for the Centre and ACE. At its best such activities and the social struggles complement each other, with the discussions and the development of confidence and knowledge influencing the way the struggles are fought.

One prominent aspect of our Centres has been organising to resist patriarchy and oppressive gender roles. The Womens Health Workshops, the Anarcha Feminist group, Queer Mutiny are some excellent examples. In fact, arguably we should redefine social struggle to encompass such resistance to patriarchy.... certainly the recent contact with the Spanish anarchist feminists who have demonstrated in the city for Women's right to choose over abortion, in Spain and everywhere, is an inspiring example of an anti patriarchal social struggle. As is the Hollaback campaign against harassment of women on the streets of Edinburgh...

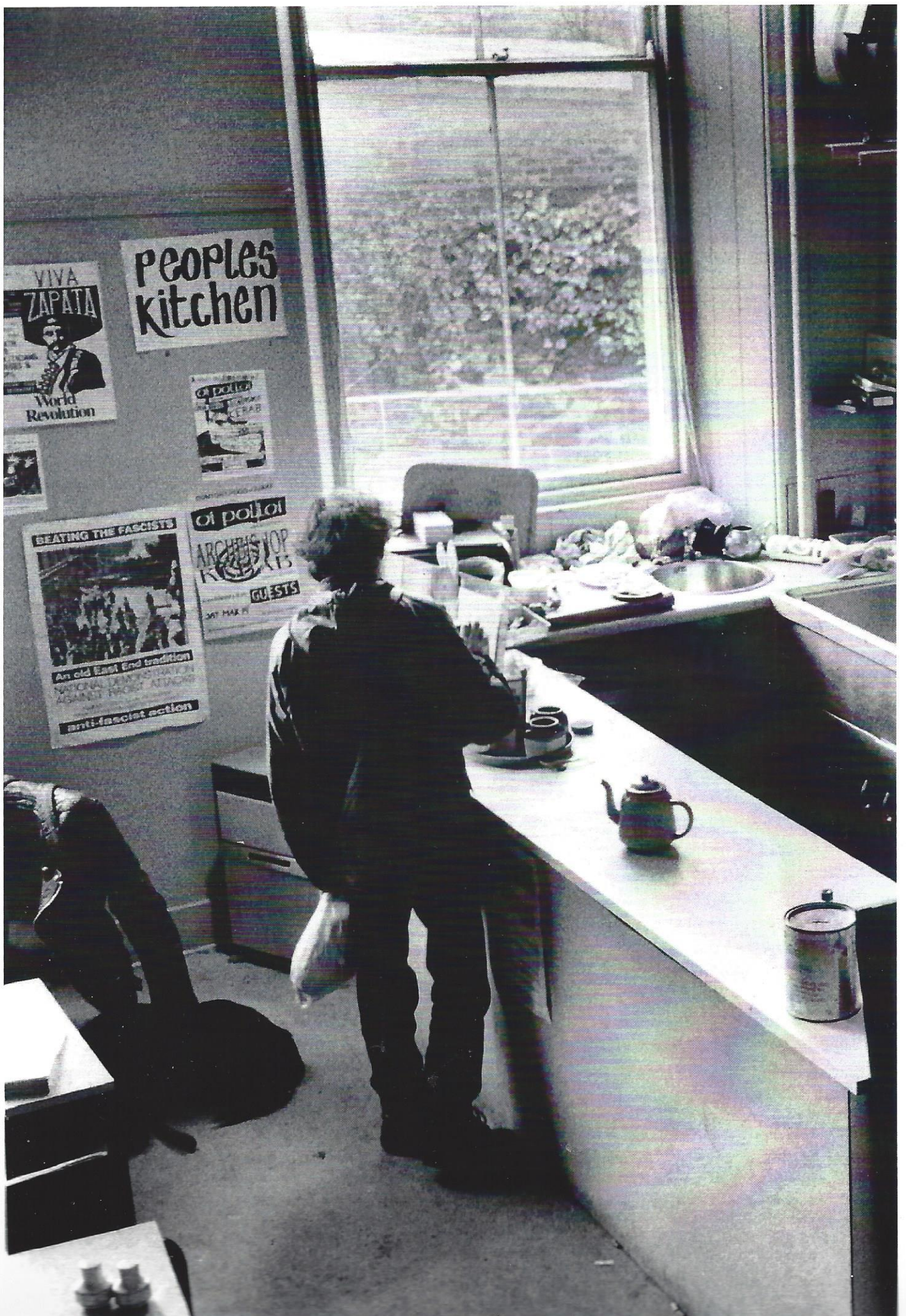
FROM RESISTANCE TO REVOLUTION

The involvement of the Broughton Street Centre and ACE in social struggles is central to our activity. It's only if social struggles develop and come together on a big enough scale that the attacks of the governments and bosses can be fought back - it's no good appealing to those in power, we need to make their policies unworkable. The poll tax and the bedroom tax victories show this is possible.

And a great contribution of Centres like ours is that we send a clear message that it's not enough just to stop things getting worse. The grass-roots counter power that can defeat the ruling class' attacks can be the beginnings of a revolutionary transformation, to create a world where people share resources in common and co-operate as equals. As the planet teeters on the verge of ecological collapse due to global warming, this is more than a utopian dream, it is essential for human survival.

By using the law and the police to shut down the Broughton Street Centre the authorities aimed to put an end to a focus for dissent and grass-roots organising. 20 years of initiating, promoting and active involvement in local struggles show they have not succeeded. 15 years after the Regional Council evicted us we were blockading the scab bin lorries being deployed by their successors, the City of Edinburgh Council!

As activists in Mexico put it recently, where they continue to resist despite a repression beyond our nightmares, despite activists being murdered with impunity : "They tried to bury us, but they did not know that we were a seed."



EXTRACTS FROM "THE BARRICADES OF BROUGHTON"
BY RIDDLEY WALKER, SCOTTISH ANARCHIST NUMBER 1, 1994

"The once-familiar wooden doors are Derried now 'neath steel, sheets of steel shaped and bolted on by blacksmiths who refused all and any payment. 'Our donation to the Centre' said they. Solidarity lives.

"But the doors are open twixt noon and four every day bar Sunday, and the Centre is inhabited around the clock, seven days a week. Within opening hours a busy vegan cafe, famously cheap and substantial, is the hub of Centre activity and behind the chatting diners poster-festooned walls advertise gigs, meetings and actions, while the skirting tables sag beneath the mass of flyers and brochures explaining anti-VAT on Fuel, Criminally Injustice Bill, Stop the Fascists, community arts, homelessness, hunt sabs, gay rights, claimants' issues, women's issues, Poll Tax arrears, AIDS, Parks for the People...

"Above the cafe the pine-beamed mezzanine floor is being transformed into a snug reference library and reading room, while next door the Centre office advises callers, who phone in or drop in, on benefit rights. There's a well-equipped children's playroom and a basement darkroom.

"Upstairs, one end of the large hall is carpeted with defenders' sleeping bags while the other end is a mass of art and craft odds-and-ends with which the Creative Resource Network makes the puppets and props for its street theatre. The door of the small room opposite bears a hand-drawn sign - 'Cheap Claes Shoap'.

"The atmosphere is busy, cheery and sociable. No-one gets paid. Anyone can get involved. But when the doors are locked and blocked and the Centre quietens down, ears are cocked and nerves steeled for the baying of the bailiffs and the grunting of the pigs"

"we're going to lock them out, we're going to stay here 24 hours a day. If the police and the sheriff officers come, we'll not let them in" Angela, Centre Volunteer, STV reporting Scotland.

"the whole issue is, of course, about power and control. The attempted destruction of Edinburgh's autonomous volunteer-run centre is part of a worldwide attack of such self managed social centre by the state, national or local. The centre recently received a letter of support from Spain telling of attacks against social centres in Bilbao and Zaragoza. Similar letter have arrived from London, while a recent vistor to the centre, described the resistance to evictions mounted by squatted centres in his native Netherlands. Meanwhile in Italy dozens self-managed of social centres, like the renowned Leoncavallo in Milan, continue their activities despite state harassment. Grey Orwellian drabness and conformity is the order of the day. International support has been more than on paper. So far, two months into the sit-in, folk from Holland, Canada, USA, Australia and Germany have turned up and got involved widening the difinition of `community centre`.

More help is needed though. Operating a 24h, 7 days shift system is demanding and we need more people to get involved, in any way.

The Centre must remain open and self-managed."

RE-FUSE

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FURTHER DIALECTICAL ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN



Cockaigne, Running Around in my Brain.
Sacha Kahir

It's 1989 in Aberdeen; I've left school and I'm 'working' at a printing firm for the sum of £30 a week through a Youth Training Scheme. The firm prints oilrig plans and blueprints for an industry worth billions. The printing fluids give me headache. I constantly count down hours and minutes to the next break... to the end of the day. The pretend job is the result of me telling a career advisor at school that I liked art. It's an open plan office and frequently there is little for me to do but to pretend to work. The company doesn't care as they are receiving money from the government as part of the scheme. There is little training and printing is an industry where technical innovations make skills quickly obsolete.

My school years were set against a backdrop of a class war being fought by the state against working class extra-parliamentary power. The first political action I was involved in was a strike by pupils for and against the teachers who were striking at the time. This was originally organised by scabby swats fearful that their results might be affected by the strike; however, a horde of delinquents hijacked it and turned it into a rampage through the city centre frightening off the original organisers. It was a kind of lumpen auto-critique where report cards and punishment exercise books were burnt and attempts were even made to enlist the support of our enemies at the other city centre school. There was some confusion as to whether we were for or against the teachers. The general feeling was that we were for them despite our natural antagonism. Feel Scargil aka Feel Bill (pronounced Bell) a notorious under 5's soccer casual, famous for the width of his jumbo cord flares, voiced this sentiment to a reporter from the local paper (Feel is Aberdonian slang for someone who is a bit radio rental).

We were 'Generation X': the first wave to be worse off than their baby boomer parents, victims of the post war social democratic consensus grinding to a halt. The 70's had witnessed a global recession – the first since the war – fuelled by an oil crisis and the instability of a dollar no longer pegged to gold. There had been very little investment in infrastructure since the late 70's. Tower blocks became ghettos and schools crumbled. The post war consensus of full employment was dealt a final blow under the monetarist policies of the Thatcher Government. Monetarism was the brainchild of the Chicago School of Economics whose ideas were implemented in Pinochet's Chile after the overthrow of the democratically elected government there by a CIA backed coup. Behind its economic 'science' monetarism was an ideology about breaking working class power. In the UK this was partly achieved by putting many redundant workers on invalidity benefits to mask the unemployment figures. However, we should not look back with misty eyes at the preceding period. Many Scottish communities that were built around a particular industry like mining had already suffered from widespread occupational illnesses due to harsh working conditions and the implementation of Taylorism as far back as the 1930's. Capitalism is a vast machine that turns everyone into cogs and machine parts.

Interviews I conducted with ex-miners from Fife repeat a familiar tale of being slow to get to work while racing out at the end of the day. In mines like Seafield it could take up to half an hour just to get to your underground workplace, traveling on lifts and man riding belts in almost total darkness.

High youth unemployment, fear of Aids, and nuclear war mingled with desires to break out of the norms of the suburban dream. Post-punk zines influenced by Situationist and Autonomist politics articulated this feeling. Publications like Vague, Here and Now, and Britain's most unruly tabloid Class War attacked the traditional left as a clique of soft cops made up of social workers, teachers and other state apparatchik. The Church of the Sub-genius's messiah Bob Dobbs proclaimed the mantra of being 'Slack as Fuck' and each issue of Class War's featured a different 'hospitalised copper' on page 3. There were also literary zines featuring new writing, like Rebel Inc. that first published writers like Laura Hird, Irvin Welsh, and Alan Warner. Cultural critic Mark Fisher cites a lack of free spaces and a withdrawal of welfare, which had once operated as an informal subsidy for cultural production, as one of the more obvious reasons for what some see as a recent cultural decline.

During the 60's and 70's the Situationists and Autonomists fused artistic, cultural and political elements to create a heretical and irreverent form of communist politics. Their aims might actually have been truer to Marx's project than the statist forms often associated with him. Marx saw the proletariat's historical role as its self-abolition and therefore the abolition of a class based society. The worker is only free to sell his labour in order to survive according to Marx. This is the only real freedom under capital. Capitalism produces classes; poverty is not just the failure of organising supply and demand within a world of scarcity and uncertainty. Scarcity and uncertainty are part of the logic of capital.

We should ask what it was that we actually ran out of during 2008 crisis? What disaster happened that means we have to accept cuts and lower living standards?

Our world is dominated by the weight of centuries of capitalist production, and thousands of years of imperial and patriarchal organisation. The 'reserve army' of the unemployed is part of this. The term proletariat, which Marx used to designate those who had nothing to sell but their labour, originates as a term used in Roman censuses to categorise free Romans whose only property was their children. Offspring were valued monetarily as potential soldiers. The proletariat, who were often poorer than slaves, made up the backbone of the Roman army. In the 1700s it became a derogatory term similar to 'Chav' or 'Ned'. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary (1755) defines the proletarian as someone who was 'mean, wretched and vile'.

The Situationists and Autonomists, unlike many leftists who demanded full employment, advocated a 'refusal of work'. In the 1920's Berlin Dadaists called for a program of progressive 'full unemployment' and this heresy continued amongst the aforementioned movements. Autonomia in Italy was a strange patchwork subculture that manifested itself in everything from armed urban guerrilla groups to naked political assemblies at music festivals. It would eventually merge with the punk music scene and squatting culture, spreading through Germany and Greece. With the fall of the Berlin Wall squats filled the void left by the collapsing eastern block regime. Leading autonomist Tony Negri, with his usual manic optimism, proclaimed the coming of the Berlin commune.

This contamination also infected the English countryside, as squatters were forced out of the city and became new age travellers living in vehicles. With strong links to the anti-nuclear movement they appeared as modern embodiments of the subjects covered by fellow 'ban the bomber' EP Thompson's histories from below, modern day diggers, levellers and ranters. Free festivals sprang up that were spikey and political, a million miles away from the commercialised glamping of the current scene. EP Thompson's famously wrote that the working class were already there at the moment their creation. Rather than domination by capital forming subjectivity as some schools of thought proclaimed, Thompson's working class was a living agency a priori to their moulding by production. This vitalism mixed easily with the workerist cornucopian turn in Italy, which claimed that the working class literally produced the entire world, and later with the philosophies of desire emerging from France. Histories from below explored working class culture as it was expressed in urban myths, songs, and movements of dissent. The musical dissent of the free festivals was to see a leap in scale with the arrival of Rave culture.

House and Techno expressed a kind of blankness, it was a stripped down machine music with only hints of human expression. Vocals were often modulated and abstracted into pure sound. It was a non-live music designed to be played through sound systems. This blankness and reproducibility meant it spread like a virus. It could be heard everywhere from the yachts of playboys to squats in the inner city. Many of the political notions of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: French philosophers of desire – popular with autonomists – seemed to chime with Rave culture. German experimental Techno label Mille Plateaux named themselves after Deleuze's and Guattari's most famous work, and techno fanzine Break / Flow introduced raver's to Deleuzian concepts through articles like 'D&G for Scallies' (a pun on the designer label Dolce and Gabbana). D&G explored the smooth

space created by circuits of capital that they described as a 'Body Without Organs.' Overturning classical ideas of revolution, non-identity became the new political subjectivity, and hit and run tactics the method. Free Parties were Temporary Autonomous Zones, and though these theories had a lot of problems and were prone to exaggeration and simplification, the occupation of large parts of the countryside by travellers and ravers meant they were considered 'the enemy within' along side militant mining communities and black urban youth. The Criminal Justice Bill in the mid 90's effectively outlawed techno being played to crowds in open air spaces. This heralded a new round of dissent and the birth of 'Reclaim the Street' where raves met occupations up town as a tactic of direct action. Interestingly the first techno track to come out of Detroit by the group A Number of Names was called 'Charivari'. Charivari was a type of legal system based on music that was popular with medieval French peasants. Participants banged pots and pans and would follow the perpetrators of crimes mockingly serenading them with noise and insults. EP Thompson explored this culture in his work on 'Rough Music.'

Detroit is literally the city of 'post-fordism' where the death of the car industry created what is often described as a 'surplus population', which is created by capital but remains outside it as non-workers. This population is criminalised as a form of bio-political control, creating work for overseers - often from the white working class - that oversees a system of containment through the legal system and industrial prison complex. It is at its most blatant in many Black communities within the United States. For example in Ferguson - where a growing insurrection is taking place after the murder of black teenager Michael Brown by police - the city's second largest form of revenue is derived from fines issued against its predominantly black population by its predominantly white police force.

It was against the backdrop of the struggles of a growing 'surplus population' of the unemployed that the events around the occupation of Broughton St occurred. Unemployed Workers Unions attempted to organise outside of the workplace. The Poll Tax that had attempted to extract money from those who could barely pay was challenged and to some extent defeated. The centre was a hub for organising these struggles, and made it a target for the State, which only wants politics to be the reserve of an administrative executive and politicians. Though the battle for the centre was lost many groups emerged from the struggle, most notably Edinburgh Claimants / Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty who continue to fight on the terrain of what autonomist's would describe as 'social reproduction' (housing, welfare etc.).

Organising what the traditional state based left often deems the unorganisable, is part of a legacy that stretches back at least as far as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW's base was the unemployed, itinerate labourers, and hobos who had been driven to destitution during the economic crisis of the late 1920's. A culture had developed in the US of people traveling across that vast country looking for work. The IWW mixed ideas from Marxism, Syndicalism and Socialism and advocated direct action and sabotage as tactics for class warfare. Organising in the tent cities that sprang up around developments like the building of the Hoover Dam brought the IWW into conflict with the Salvation Army, a legion of missionaries who preached a mixture of christianity and capitalism, advocating a doctrine of work under the guise of helping the homeless. The Salvation Army had been part of wave of missionaries who had destroyed paradises around the world forcing the natives to work for the advancement of British colonial interests, and the supposed salvation of their souls.

In recent years Edinburgh Claimants / ECAP have been organising around the issue of workfare. Government schemes are forcing the unemployed to work for nothing or risk losing their benefits. Through blockades and direct action many companies targeted have pulled out from the scheme, due in part to this charities became the focus for making these schemes work. Most have signed a pledge to keep volunteering voluntary with the notable exception of the Salvation Army. Instead they have aggressively promoted workfare claiming, in a manner similar to the Nazis, that work makes you free.

The Hobos who rode the trains looking for work sang songs of a land of plenty, passed down from medieval peasant's myths of the magical lands of Lubberland and Cockaigne, knowing that it is a freedom from suffering and toil that makes us free.

Big Rock Candy Mountain

One evening as the sun went down and the jungle fire was burning
Down the track came a hobo hiking, and he said "boys I'm not turning
"I'm headed for a land that's far away, beside the crystal fountains
"So come with me, we'll go and see the Big Rock Candy Mountains"

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains there's a land that's fair and bright
Where the hand-outs grow on bushes and you sleep out every night
Where the boxcars all are empty and the sun shines every day
On the birds and the bees and the cigarette trees
The lemonade springs where the bluebird sings
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains all the cops have wooden legs
And the bulldogs all have rubber teeth and the hens lay soft-boiled eggs
The farmer's trees are full of fruit and the barns are full of hay
Oh I'm bound to go where there ain't no snow
Where the rain don't fall, the wind don't blow
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains you never change your socks
And the little streams of alcohol come a-trickling down the rocks
The brakemen have to tip their hats and the railroad bulls are blind
There's a lake of stew and of whiskey, too
You can paddle all around 'em in a big canoe
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains the jails are made of tin
And you can walk right out again as soon as you are in
There ain't no short-handled shovels, no axes, saws or picks
I'm a-goin' to stay where you sleep all day
Where they hung the jerk that invented work
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

Reading

Autonomia: Post – Political Politics, Lotringer and Marazzi (eds.) Semiotext(e)

Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Works of the Situationist International, Christopher Gray (ed.), Rebel Press

The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the 18th Century, Peter Linebaugh, Verso

The Making of the English Working Class, EP Thompson, Penguin



DIARY OF AN OCCUPATION

I first went to The Centre in 1992 when Neil from my band Archbishop Kebab was involved in organising there. I had talked about anarchism and feminism with my friends and was lucky to have played gigs in DIY social centres in Europe, many of which were squatted. I had not read much about politics - it seemed all about political parties and politicians and - or had I any experience in activism and grass roots organising but in The Centre there were books and leaflets I had never seen before and people to talk to who were directly involved with social struggles.

The monthly open planning meetings were truly inspiring - a safe space to learn how to organise collectively, without judgement or bullying - I was inspired to be critical in my thinking and to make things happen for reasons other than for surviving financially. For me these meetings were the head and heart of the beast of resistance and nearing the time of the eviction in 94, 25 or more people attended the open meetings. Folk from far away places visited The Centre, activists, writers, poets and musicians, some stayed and joined bands and made Edinburgh their home. It was great fun, I loved it.

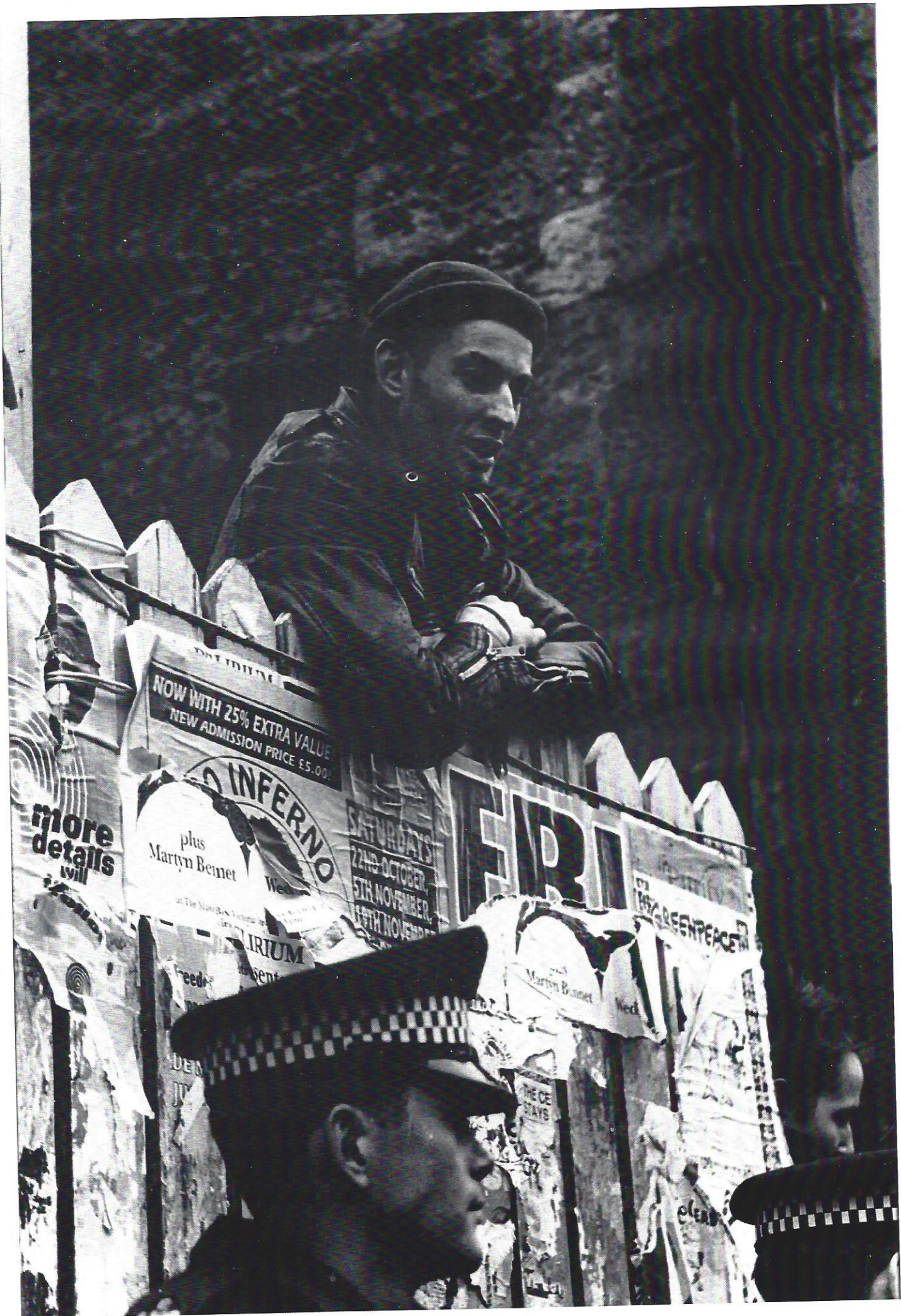
At this time the centre collective was putting together the case to keep control of the building as a vital community centre for the area. So much work was done to reach out to the surrounding community, even attending local community council meetings in an attempt to build some kind of bridge. But a self-managed social centre focused on social justice and direct action was a major threat to the authorities and they wanted us out. Mean while activities in The Centre were building up. There was four floors and so lots of space; in the basement we built a stage and had gigs, there was a dark room, the ground floor housed The Peoples Kitchen, the info shop, a crèche, an office, upstairs the big room was used for theatre performances and gigs too and above this a wee second hand shop.

Activist groups used The Centre for organising meetings and also socialised there. Edinburgh Claimants held drop in welfare rights sessions, resistance to the Criminal Justice Act, the anti-road movement was picking up, Fazlane Peace Camp, Earth First, Anti-Fascist Action, Edinburgh Hunt Sabs, Anarchist Black Cross-Prisoners Solidarity, and Counter Information, - am sure there were many more groups I have forgotten. It was such a good sized space with enough room to create great stuff and the Peoples Kitchen cooked good cheap food. It was vibrant and exciting because the people that used the building were in control.

Once the eviction order was received the doors of the centre were reinforced with steel and scaffold poles cemented into the floor to barricade against the pigs and sheriff officers. Two hundred people marched on Broughton Street in demonstration, a 24 hour rota was organised and an emergency phone tree of hundreds of names was at the ready. The doors were closed for six months, folk had to knock to the door to get in but The Centre was open six days a week. The pigs came on December 4th 1994. I can't even remember how they got in. The collective were tired from the constant stress but when the pigs broke in, hundreds of supporters soon arrived at The Centre in the small hours of the morning to attempt to take back the building from the pigs.

There were so many pigs, I heard they came from Dalkeith and were well known for their violence. No one at the eviction had faced this amount of brutality.. People were pulled to the ground, thrown against the wall, punched and kicked. There were 25 arrests and the pigs were in The Centre.

The next week the angry collective held demonstrations outside the building and made plans to carry on but without a building it was difficult to pull together focus. We tried to inspire a squatting movement but with different laws to England, squatting was not an option and this energy was turned towards a more sustaining space. Alas we had to rent a space. At this time I retreated to the country and was involved with setting up Talamh Housing Co-op before heading on my travels with my daughter. And now back at ACE in this different building for the past five years and ACE is still a vital community centre. The tenacity of all involved over the past 17 years is an inspiration.



Auld Reekie's unemployed got an early Christmas gift from the Labour-run Regional Council when, at dawn on 1st December, police and bailiffs battered down the barricaded back door of the former Edinburgh Unemployed Workers' Centre and evicted the rudely-roused occupation nightshift onto the capital's frigid streets.

The Centre's emergency phone-tree was immediately activated and within an hour scores of unwaged activists had gathered before and behind the building to prevent removal vans and council workers from plundering and boarding up Scotland's only autonomous, unfunded, self-managed community centre. By noon about 70 protesters were standing-off 9 vanloads of Lothian's finest and had determinedly but peacefully blocked 2 attempts to move the vans to the Centre's doors.

But at 2pm the police attacked in force, moving a hidden second line up behind the picket which they then encircled. As the circle tightened, protesters were knocked to the ground and some were crushed against walls. 21 were arrested and taken to the city's notorious St Leonards' Station, home of the Special Branch and scene of numerous mysterious cell deaths. Most of those arrested were charged with breach, some with police assault. All were held in soundproofed single cells for up to 12 hours before being released on cognisance of attending court. During their incarceration, despite the stifling isolation, the unbowed protesters mutinied in concert, the men beating out a tattoo on their cell doors while the women's wing was rent by a 'scream-in', causing vociferous rage in their captors.

The sprit of resistance remained unbroken, but the 6-month occupation of the Centre had been smashed, by the Labour council.

The Labour council might have won the battle, but the war rages on. The conflict has its roots in a transfer of power within the management board, from 'Labour movement' bureaucrats to the non-aligned grassroots unemployed activists who actually used and ran the Centre. Here's the story...

AND SO IN THE BEGINNING

The Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre Trust was set up in 1981 on Labour/Trade Union guidelines as part of that movement's miserable response to mass unemployment. Originally situated in the basement of the Trades Council building where it functioned as a small resource centre and where it was clique-riddled, the EUWC moved in the mid-80s to part of a disused church off the city's Royal Mile. Funded by the Region, and in a more accessible situation, the EUWC attracted unwaged activists and broadened out, and became known as 'the Centre'.

THERE WAS THE LABOUR PARTY

The Centre was, theoretically speaking, managed by a board of seven trustees. A full-time paid worker was employed by them, an ex-TU official who soon became the focus of a sycophantic clique. But the day-to-day running of the Centre and its activities were decided by users-group weekly meetings. The users group contained two broad factions - the 'Labour movement' clique and a growing band of independent unwaged activists, who were involved in the fight against welfare cutbacks, formed a thriving Claimants Union and became highly active. The Centre became a focus for the anti-Workfare campaign. Then came the Poll Tax.

In 1989 the Centre moved to a three-storey disused school, owned by the council, in Broughton Street, on the fringe of the city's affluent Georgian New Town. Things looked promising, but the internal differences were increasing. The Labour controlled council was sending the bailiffs in against Poll Tax refuseniks. At the same time the Centre was an organising base for independent anti-Poll Tax activists. The Labour council was not happy, especially when the Centre's trustee board had four 'independents' elected to it from the users group, leaving the party bureaucrats in a minority of three. The Regional Council then cut off all the Centre's funding.

local state, Labour Party controlled, had been forced to send in scores of police and have 21 people, mostly unwaged, arrested and charged. It was a massive loss of face, especially with council elections looming large. Less than a fortnight after the eviction and arrests, hundreds demonstrated outside the shut-down Centre, which was by then well-graffiti'd: 'Viva la Centre!', 'Vote Labour-Vote Tory'.

THE NEXT STEP?

What now? The Centre collective has regrouped in temporary premises and is still conducting a range of activities - including how to get the Centre back. A spokesman says: "We are asking community groups not to accept any offer of the premises. If they do they would be co-operating with the Region in closing the Centre down. We'll take peaceful action against any group who try to use the building. What's at issue here is the right of ordinary people to take charge of their lives".

Resistance to the harassment of claimants is being organised, with regular leafleting of benefit offices. A new initiative from the centre is involvement in the direct action against the building of the M77 in Glasgow, weekly minibuses travelling through to join the inhabitants of Pollock Free State and the nearby council schemes in defiance of the tree cutters and JCBs.

Of those arrested on 1st December, two women and a man are soon to be tried, one woman on two charges of police assault, breach and resisting arrest.

Centre users demonstrated outside the year's first meeting of the Regional Council on 1st February. After the meeting, Cllr Brian Cavenagh, who had been instrumental in shutting down the Centre, boasted to the press and TV cameras that the council had just given £2,000 towards the publication of a booklet called 'Surviving on the Streets of Edinburgh' which is being distributed to homeless people.

Some of them used to sleep in the Centre, which now lies locked and empty, guarded around the clock by security firm heavies. When asked by journalists about the Centre's future, Cavenagh replied: "It's a secret".

Death to all politicians! La lotta continua!

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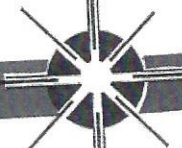
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MARC go into action

THE FASCIST BNP attempted to step up their campaign profile last week in the form of racist and fascist posters and graffiti. However, Muirhouse Anti-Racism Campaign (MARC) were on the scene within minutes to remove the offending material. Willie Adams, a spokesperson for the group said "We believe that at least one of the posters contravenes the Public Order Act and is an incitement to racial hatred." Willie went on to say of the BNP's recent claims that they always 'stay within the law' - "How can they be within the law when they murder, fire bomb and seriously assault people in our communities. We will be removing any BNP propaganda that goes up in the area and would urge others to do the same."

Local people have been angered over the recent news that the BNP are fielding a candidate in the Edinburgh West constituency which encompasses Drylaw and Telford. The candidate, David Bruce [48] is a taxi driver and a founder member of the National Front.

David Elders, the BNP's information officer for Edinburgh claimed recently in the Evening News that their platform was one of loyalty and total opposition to devolution. He also admitted that their candidate would be spending very little time in the capital. Mr Elders has stated that the BNP are not aiming to win the seat. Bearing this in mind their goal must be seen as divisive. They want to divide this community and whip -up racial tension. At the same time cashing in on the media interest in Scotland as a whole and more particularly this seat because of its marginal nature.

No Platform

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton declared at last week's joint local forum for Pilton, Muirhouse, Drylaw/Telford that he would not share a platform with the BNP. Most other political parties have made similar statements regarding the BNP. The BNP, however, have chosen to stand in the Edinburgh West constituency because it is a marginal seat. The concern of anti-racist campaigners is that on April 9 the BNP will take advantage of the media interest and coverage of the count to put out their message of racial hatred.

UNEMPLOYED LOCKED OUT

TRUSTEES DENY ACCESS TO RESOURCE CENTRE



A BATTLE is being fought for the future of the Edinburgh Unemployed Workers' Centre at 103 Broughton Street, Edinburgh. The unwaged users of the Centre, are fighting to have an open thriving Centre. They want a Centre whose resources are readily available for use by the unwaged, low waged and by all groups and individuals who are striving to create a better life for ordinary people.

However, a minority of the Centre's Trustees, Jim Milne, plus Labour Councillors Tony Kinder and Des Loughney along with George Wilson, the former paid worker at the Centre,

have recently locked out all the users of the Centre and denied access to all but themselves. On 15 March, two weeks after the users and a majority of the trustees had repossessed the building, George Wilson and Jim Milne illegally removed much of the Centre's equipment from the premises at Broughton Street to an undisclosed hiding place. This included computers, printing machinery, photographic equipment and a washing machine (purchased for the use of homeless youngsters).

Beyond the removal of the above equipment which belongs to the Centre's Trust, they also caused substantial damage to the building which belongs to the Property Services DI-

vision of Lothian Regional Council.

The unwaged users are now back in control of the Centre and it is open again. They are demanding the immediate return of all the equipment and are determined that the attempts to stop the self-organisation of the unwaged, the community and working people will not succeed.

The unwaged volunteers and the majority of trustees, despite the current problems, are determined that the centre is to have a flourishing future. As John Donaldson, one of the unpaid volunteers points out "We need many more people and groups to become involved. We are an open and democratic organisation and it is unfortunate that a few trustees are attempting to deny the unemployed of these facilities for their own interests." He continues "We have already had messages of support from unemployed groups and Claimants Unions in other parts of the country and are keen to encourage groups and individuals in the Edinburgh area to use what facilities remain. It is vital that we keep this excellent resource up and running."

The Unemployed Workers Centre has regular meetings every Monday at 1pm and is open every weekday from 10am till 4pm. Rooms are available for use by groups for meetings and social activities and support and information is available on various issues concerning the unemployed.

Board avoid Forum

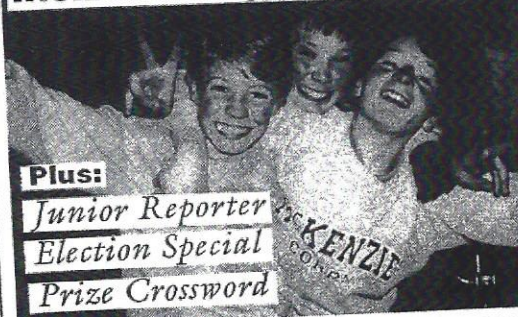
LOTHIAN HEALTH BOARD managed to avoid the wrath of local residents and members of the Western General Action Group (WGAG), when they failed to send a representative along to the recent Pilton/Muirhouse, Drylaw/Telford Joint local forum.

The board, steering clear of public debate in the run up to the election, are unlikely to make any decision on the Accident and Emergency Ward at the Western General until August, when the results of a special review of services will be published.

The review itself is the direct result of pressure from not only local residents and the WGAG, but also the Scottish Office Minister Mr Michael Forsyth. In a letter to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton he states that "he has severe reservations about the level of accident and emergency services in the Lothians".

Following the recent publication of Lothian Health Boards 'Charter for Health' and the obvious strength of feeling of local people to re-establish services at the Western, questions must be raised not only about why there will be such a long delay in coming to a decision about the A&E, but also about the make-up of the Health Board itself and its accountability to the general public.

INSIDE: Tackling Teenage Boredom



Plus:
Junior Reporter
Election Special
Prize Crossword

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The anti-terrorist brigade broke up the meeting and some people were arrested but released later. People regrouped and held the meeting elsewhere.

official demo which was forbidden to go through the city centre. Shop windows were broken and some people smashed and plundered a yuppie-bar!

success, we need more actions like this."

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COUNTER INFORMATION

FEB. / MARCH 1989

PAY NO POLL TAX



The new year ushers in a period when the actual Poll Tax levels will be known, and canvassing by local anti-poll tax unions will start in earnest: those in multi-occupancy households hardest hit, will be joined by those who politically or morally oppose this regressive and authoritarian tax.

Local Authority works in NALGO and DSS staff in the CPISA will be crucial if the imposition of the tax is to be disrupted & resisted. Union leaders and Councils have been trying the scare tactic that their jobs are at risk if they join forces with the anti-poll tax resistance. The Tories have played their usual 'divide and rule' tactic by softening this year's poll tax level to reduce the possibility of such solidarity action. With Regional Elections in 1990 and 'Scottish Homes' intended to break up Council Housing stock it is a certainty that Councils will be forced to greatly increase the tax in 1990 or slash services. Either way they can't win.

They can, however, be stopped in their tracks. Capitulating to the Tories is a recipe for the slashing of services. Local authority workers can help protect services and their own jobs by disrupting collection of the tax. This can be done by industrial action, working to rule and refusing to impose surcharges or initiate wage arrestments. Similarly DSS staff can show united action by refusing to arrest benefits. This in turn would greatly stimulate the involvement of claimants in the anti-poll tax campaign and overturn fatalism and resignation. The greatest challenge remains in the communities, for local campaigns to win the support of their neighbours through open and imaginative agitation. The simultaneous mass non-payment in Scotland combined to resistance to Registration in England from April onwards is the best time to overturn the policies of this Government.

POLAND Federating! Gdansk

30 October: 70 people from 10 towns attended the 1st Anarchist Conference to be held since the war. The anti-terrorist brigade broke up the meeting and some people were arrested but released later. People regrouped and held the meeting elsewhere.

HAMBURG. Dec. 12th: 2 - 2,500 turned up at a demonstration to support the INTIFADA-uprising in Palestine, which began a year ago. A few hundred broke away from the official demo which was forbidden to go through the city centre. Shop windows were broken and some people smashed and plundered a yuppie-bar!

SICK of Government

France - At the beginning of October 20,000 nurses and health workers from all over France marched through Paris to demand higher wage levels. (Wages had fallen 10% behind other workers).

This demo so caught the anger of the health workers that a similar demo the next week attracted 30,000 and by the end of October over 100,000 public sector workers marched with the health workers in support of their demands, 5 million workers from gas, water, electricity, buses, the metro, schools, hospitals, trains - you name it! - took to the streets.

The action was led by unofficial committees (co-ordinator: which sprang up spontaneously at each hospital (only 4% of nurses are unionised).

With the unions negotiating with the government the strike wave drifted into a limbo - with the government offering the same terms (almost) as before the strike.

However, a more positive situation has arisen because of the militancy of the nurses and health workers - public sector workers in post services and public transport have taken industrial action and in December French troops were used to scab on bus drivers (for the first time since 1971), and postal workers have blocked entrances to sorting offices. The future looks rosy

OCCUPIED!

Anti poll tax protestors invaded the Lothian Regional Council meeting on 6th December. 25 people occupied the Council Chambers in Parliament Square, Edinburgh for nearly an hour and gave the Labour-controlled Council the message: **Stop implementing the Poll Tax and Stop fining people for not registering.**

The action, organised by the Lothian Federation of the Anti Poll Tax Groups, forced the Council to abandon their meeting till a later date. In Strathclyde a mass lobby of the Council is planned for 25th January. The pressure will be on the Strathclyde Federation to carry out similar direct action.

One of the occupiers writes: "There were over 100 demonstrators. By pushing and arguing 25 of us got past the police, and burst into the Council Chambers.

We denounced the councillors for co-operating with the Tories' plan to rob the poor to pay the rich. They had to stop their meeting. We took over the Council Chambers and hung banners out the windows. The police physically stopped the other demonstrators joining us. But they stayed outside, chanting support.

Eventually the Council said we could address the meeting. We agreed - as long as the Council called off the police and let the other demonstrators in. The Council refused. Obviously they felt they needed police protection! So the occupation continued.

Later, another Council "offer" - some councillors will discuss with us outside - otherwise the police will forcibly remove us. We marched outside, chanting defiance. No-one was arrested. I think the occupation was a real success, we need more actions like this."

INDEPENDENCE

Afterwards 2 individuals - Militant supporters - issued statements in the name of the Anti Poll Tax Federation denouncing the occupiers! This despite the Federation having voted overwhelmingly FOR occupation.

Militant's commitment to the capitalist Labour Party led them to oppose the occupation and attack the occupiers in the media. To win the anti poll tax movement must develop independence from power-seeking political groups. Mass refusal to pay, organised in the communities and workplaces, is the basis for beating the poll tax. A collective direct action - in the streets and against the local and central government machine that's implementing the tax - can play an important part.

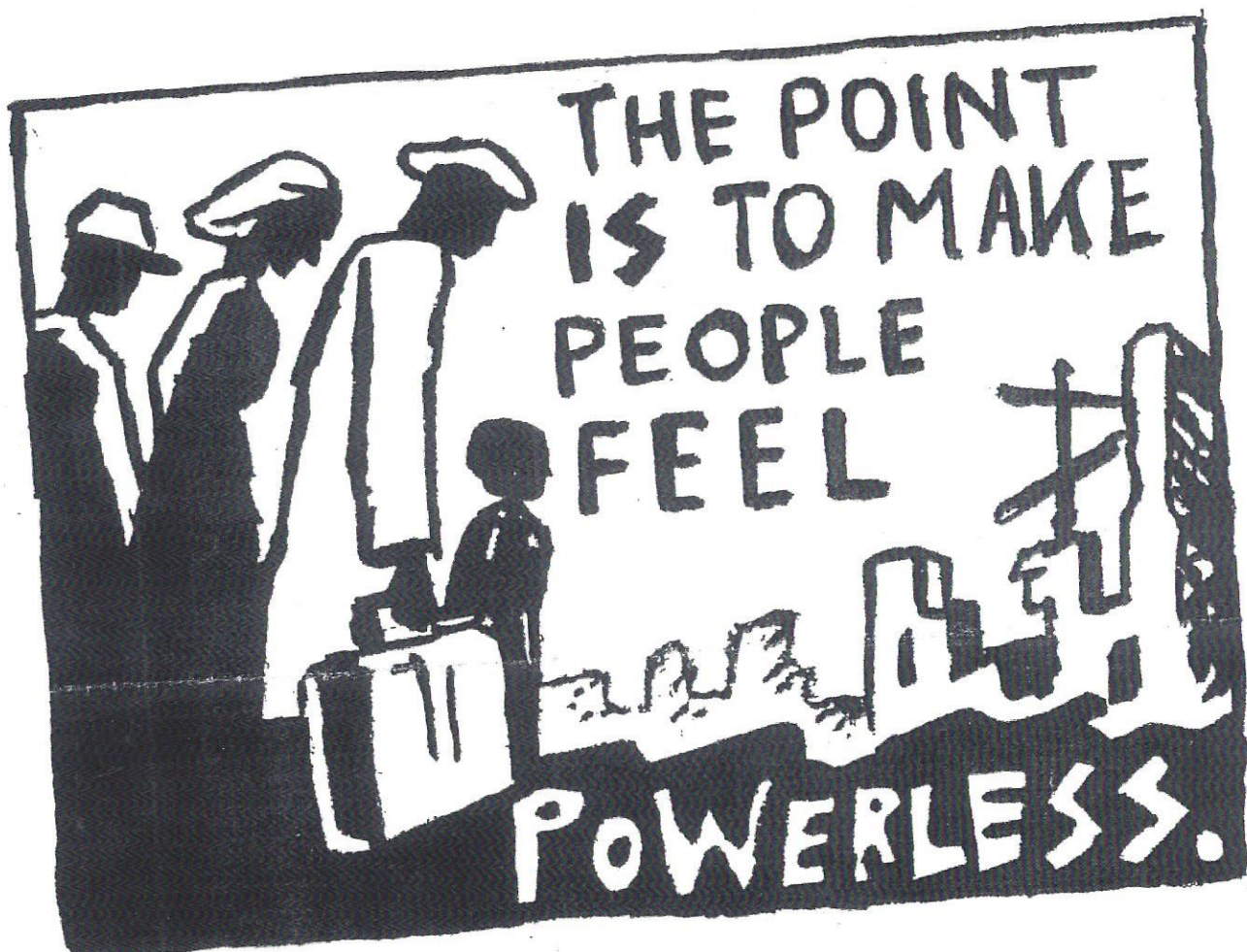
Polite argument will never persuade the Councils to stop collecting the tax. No, realistically, will a few occupations. But WIDESPREAD occupations and other direct actions can help create a social climate of defiance and resistance to the poll tax.

INFORMATION PACKS on poll tax resistance available from COMMUNITY RESISTANCE TO THE POLL TAX, p/hole CR, c/o Forth St., Edinburgh.

Clydeside Resistance broadsheet from p/hole 30, 340 W. Princes St. Glasgow (send large S.A.E. donation).

National Anti-Poll Tax Demonstration, Glasgow March 18th, 11a.m., Glasgow Green (special trains coming from London)

COUNCIL EVICT COMMUNITY CENTRE -21 ARRESTED-



DROP THE CHARGES PICKET THE COURT

9.30 a.m. Wed 17 May
Sheriff Court, Chamber St. Edinburgh

On 1 Dec. 1994 Lothian Regional Council sent in 70 police to violently evict The Centre, 103 Broughton St. On 17 May one of the 21 arrested is facing a catalogue of trumped up charges. Show your support! The council have since kept the Broughton St. building locked, barred & empty at great public expense. Join the battle to re-open Edinburgh's self-managed community centre.



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