

THE RED MENACE

No.3

JUNE 1989

FREE

UP AGAINST THE PROLE TAX

POLL TAX

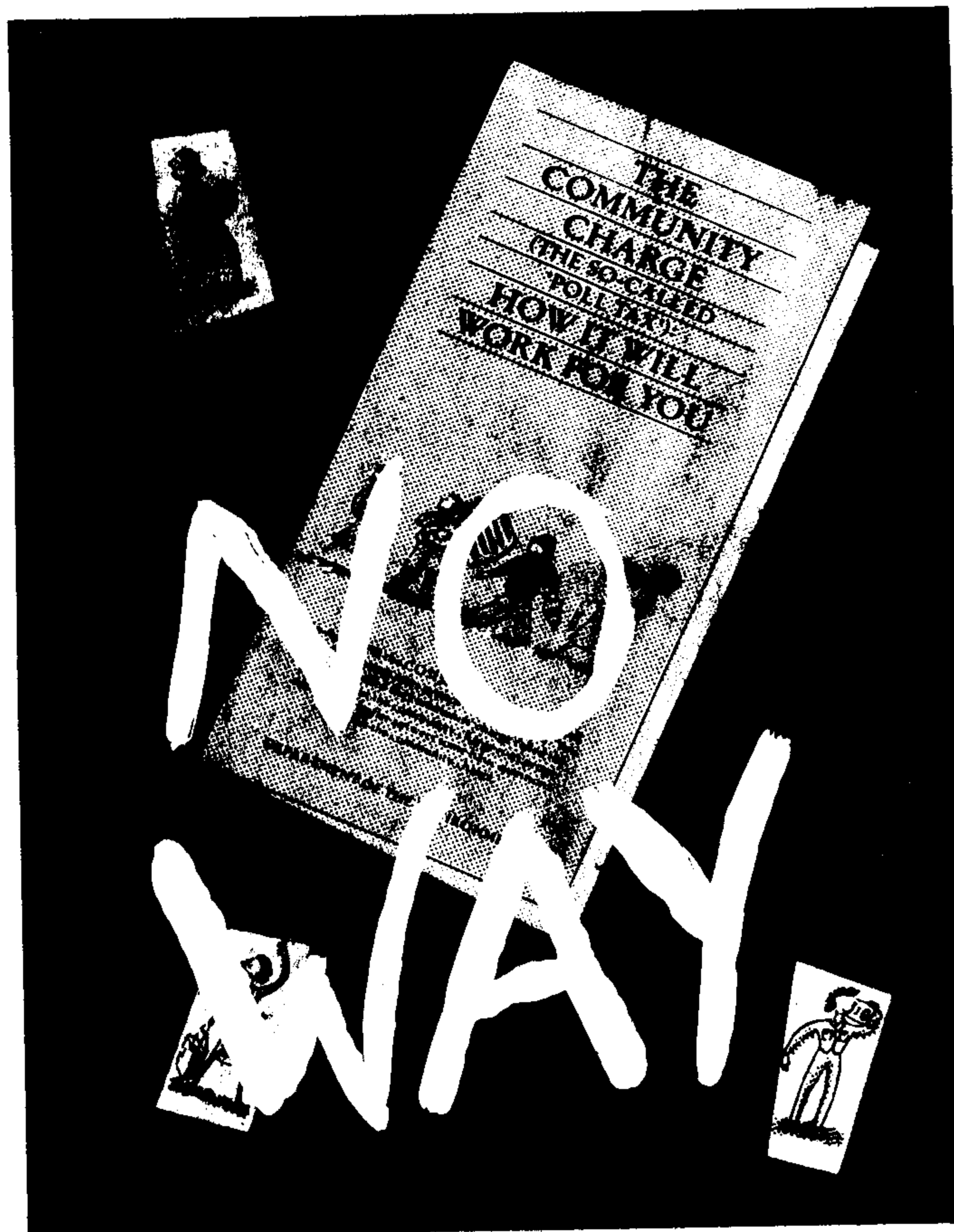
On April 1st, the Poll Tax came into operation in Scotland. Meanwhile in England and Wales, the bureaucracy to manage Poll Tax south of the border was put into operation - hordes of snoopers will emerge from the recesses of council buildings to scour the locality for over 18s to register. As they do so, lefty and nationalist politicians (and other poseurs) look hard at their consciences and wonder whether to opt for new realism or being a "(wo)man of the people".

The thing about the Left's Anti-Poll Tax campaign is that it is a wonderful way of focusing working class discontent on parliamentary solutions. Whether it is hard campaigning (We won't pay), or soft campaigning (we will pay, but won't enjoy it), such campaigns lead to reforms which aren't even reforms - they merely return things to the miserable state they were at before. Labour Party hacks (in England) can be leisurely in their approach, knowing full well that the logic of such campaigns leads to kicking out the Tories at the next election. Hence their pathetic "Poll Tax Protest Petition" which offers such gems as "Labour says that tax should be fair and based on ability to pay". We are not interested in alternative ways to finance the state.

DON'T DELAY - THROW IT AWAY

The left's non-payment campaign focuses on a public stance, in particular on getting MPs and councillors to give the lead by committing themselves to non-payment. The example of the campaign in Scotland so far shows that the best tactic is not to draw attention to yourself as an individual. In the Lothian area up to 60,000 have succeeded in not registering by ignoring the forms sent to them. All the people fined for non-compliance (about 100) had entered into correspondence with the authorities.

Another point to remember is the opposition to the 1981 Census. Prominent Liberal politicians stood up to be not counted, and were promptly taken to court as exemplary cases. But thousands of proletarians simply told census collectors to fuck off, and despite various threats, were by and large left alone. Of course, Poll Tax is a lot heavier than the census, so such an outcome is less likely. But nevertheless, there is not much point in conducting a campaign which will centre on a few public figures trying to gain popularity by being dragged through the courts and possibly jail, with the idea that this purgatory will lead to the heaven of election. Poll tax must be resisted in a way that draws people together to resist the state, landlords and bosses in a stronger way and undermines the politicians.



REGISTERING OUR RESISTANCE

Firstly the Poll tax is given the pretty name "Community Charge" - an attempt to incorporate a seventies buzz word. This is designer legislation aimed at fragmenting the opposition. For a start, certain crucial sectors will have little choice. All those in receipt of state benefit will be sent a form to "apply" for an 80% reduction. These forms have not yet emerged from the bastions of the DHSS, so at this stage it is unclear how this will be worded. But underlining it is the threat that if you don't make such an application you will be liable to pay the full whack. This is going to be a pretty effective argument for applying - which amounts to registering. That's one slice of the population captured. Secondly, students will be netted when they turn up to register at college. There will be a "Community Charge cop" making sure that all their particulars are taken down.

It is of course possible that workers both in DHSS offices and College offices will refuse to do this dirty work, as could other workers who have to co-operate with the tax in some
(continued back page)

BREAD, BLOOD AND CIRCUSES

For four days at the beginning of March, the Venezuelan poor staged what amounted to a nationwide uprising against the government's austerity programme, recently agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

After months of food shortages, the final straw was a 90% rise in petrol prices and a 30% increase in bus fares. Riots started after school children were refused their usual half-price bus fare concessions. They took to the streets, tearing down lamp-posts to build barricades in Caracas, the capital. Rioting spread to 17 towns and cities, including Los Teques, Guarenas and Ciudad Guayana. Men women and children looted supermarkets and slum-dwellers exchanged gunfire with police and troops.

The uprising did not come out of nowhere. In January 1,000 housewives looted supermarkets in Maracay, 75 miles west of Caracas. Last October 14 fishermen were killed by security forces on the Colombian border near to the town of El Amparo. After the massacre, believed to be organised by "DISIP" paramilitary police (Department of Intelligence and Prevention Services), weapons were planted on the bodies to make it appear that they were Colombian guerrillas. In response to the killings there was a general strike in El Amparo and rioting (apparently initiated by students) in Merida, Valencia, Maracay and Caracas.

Send all comments or criticism, death threats or donations to:

RED MENACE

BM WILD,

London WC1N 3XX

Thanks to our friends at SUBVERSION (Box W, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2BU) for helping with distribution in North West England.

ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS

In Venezuela, as in Britain, riots have been blamed on 'agitators and foreigners'. The government has talked of "minority groups madened by revolutionary ideas" and "illegal immigrants who are used to acting like vandals in their own country". The roots of the uprising are of course not to be found in manipulation by any 'outsiders', but in

These letters were received by our comrades at **Le Brise Glace** (The Ice Breaker). We are publishing them because they give an interesting eye-witness account of the situation before and immediately after last year's uprising in Algeria. The reference to "Chadli" is to the president, Chadli Benjedid.

Hello,

..... I spent a dozen days at the seaside..... the sea is the only thing here which is still beautiful. Our country is in the process of living through a very difficult moment, a major economic crisis. Inflation is at full tilt, which means that the number of people on the take has increased a lot. Corruption is everywhere. It even touches the popular classes. The people suffer and console themselves with a silence which will be heard sooner or later. Because things here are really over the top. But then, unfortunately the leaders are lacking, and there are no mass organisations of the people.

The party of the FLN (National Liberation Front) is just a collection of corrupt and treacherous shysters, a kind of mafia, who can only milk the people. There is no bureaucrat who is not a thief. Money is syphoned off by the billions by the DGs (Directeur Général), who only risk a few months in jail. At the moment all the bigwigs are feathering their nests. Even the president and his entire family are implicated. Recently there was a bloke here who, with the complicity of the DG of the banks, embezzled several billion; he was arrested and held for several weeks at the same time that the bank manager, who was in Switzerland, was sent back here. Result; they were only

the global economic crisis and the austerity measures that all our rulers are introducing in an attempt to solve this crisis. In Venezuela the crisis has hit particularly hard because revenues from oil - the backbone of the economy - have fallen by nearly 50% in the last five years.

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

In every country in the world capital is imposing a general deterioration in our living standards. In Britain so far, the bourgeoisie has managed to isolate resistance by attacking our class section by section (first the steel workers, then the miners and so on). Elsewhere however, the depths of the crisis has limited our bosses room for ma-

LETTERS FROM

held for a few weeks, and the police aren't bothering them now. I always used to see this bloke driving around in his Porsche. No-one trusted him. And the reason that the police aren't interested: well Chadli's son (a right little fucker) and the son of a general (as much a fucker as the former and as his dad) are involved in the business. So long as the people are being screwed they are no longer in power. Socialism, what's that? Those who don't really know about socialism have ended up hating it, because they judge it by the style of the Algerian regime. And the worst is that Chadli and his clique are in the process of selling the country to the west, the USA in particular.

The Algerian authorities have even secretly extradited Algerian nationals that France has asked for. What this means is that if France or the USA want to liquidate or condemn such and such an Algerian, they only need to act through the intermediary of the authorities here. This is truly revolting! (...) Well that's what's happened to our country. It is very difficult to do anything here. Everyone is very fragmented here, because they are scared and they know this can't last much longer. So, firstly there is a lack of propaganda material to inform people and to prepare them. Then there is the lack of money and guns. But to have this is a dream in a country like this. Because people only worry about filling their pockets and becoming more and more selfish.

Personally, I want to leave this country this month - I'll contact you from wherever I am.

oeuvre, and they have been forced to simultaneously attack the working class as a whole, provoking mass resistance.

BREAD

In Burma last August the increasing price of rice sparked off an armed revolt, with strikes, looting and attacks on police stations. There were similar scenes in Algeria in response to austerity measures, and in December a 500% rise in the price of sugar led to a general strike in Sudan. In some cases of course mass struggles have exploded because of a general feeling that "life" cannot go on like this anymore, rather than simply in response to economic attacks. This

seems to be the case with the Palestinian *Intifada*.

BLOOD

"Democratic" or "military", "Islamic" or "socialist", the response of the state to such movements has been brutal and bloody repression. In Venezuela, President Carlos Andros Perez introduced a state of emergency announcing "we must first safeguard the right to life, the right to peace and the property of our nation". 10,000 troops were flown into Caracas to suppress the rioting. The state claimed that 270 died, but over 500 bodies were counted in the morgues and hospitals of Caracas alone. 7,000 people were arrest-

ed. In Burma up to 10,000 people have been massacred by the military junta. In Algeria hundreds were killed as tanks were sent in against rioters.

CIRCUSES

At the same time as they shoot down proletarians in the streets, our rulers mount a political circus of reforms to convince us that they are clearing up their act. In Burma the junta talks of holding an election in the future; in Algeria a referendum on a new constitution has been held, while in Sudan a new government has been formed. The Venezuelan ruling class has had plenty of practice at this sort of thing. It was after riots and strikes against the Perez Jumenez dictatorship in 1958 that elections were held which brought the ruling Acción Democrática party to power for the first time.

Although such reforms give the bosses some breathing space, in the end they run the risk of exposing the fact that whatever the form of government, exploitation and repression are all this system has to offer.

The increasing similarity in the living conditions of our class across the world, and the eruption of struggles at the same time in different places, is opening up the possibility of an extension of the class struggle beyond national frontiers.

FROM ALGERIA

27/12/88

Hello,

I sent you a letter just before the recent events, but I think it must have been intercepted like many other letters, because the post of the "Algerian people" is censored in case the truth gets out, but the truth is already out.

I have already told you that the people were at the end of their tether, and I had a good idea of what was going to happen. I have lived very close to the recent events, or rather the revolt by the "kids". I often found myself in the front line. Unfortunately I have been very ill and weak; I had to go home and recover my strength whenever it abandoned me.

What has happened here has not been seen in any other part of the world, even Chile or Palestine, where the soldiers have been gunning people down for four months (The Israeli Prime minister said: "What we have killed in 8 months, the Algerians have killed in 2 days! So the Medal for Repression must go to the Algerians.") In two days more than 200 people were killed, a more accurate estimate would be more than 500 dead. In my neighbourhood we have buried 2 youths aged 10 and 11 years old (the youngest). The youngest wounded in our neighbourhood was one year old, although a mother was killed with a baby in her belly. A nineteen year old friend of many was brought down as he tried to help a wounded person lying on the ground. In our sector, there have been at least 30 people killed and 100 wounded. Personally, I have endured many bursts of MAT49 fire. The

only reason I'm still alive is because the soldiers are such lousy shots and the MAT49 doesn't aim too good in the hands of a crap shot. But with the Kalachnikovs we have to keep out the way and even lie flat. I felt no fear, but I was careful not to get killed, whereas the youth threw themselves at the tanks and machine guns like kamikazis with the carelessness of their age. Unfortunately we did not have any guns or any way to stop the tanks. No-one was ready for it (now, not far from Algiers, there must be nearly 400 tanks. I can't think what they're waiting for!) These *fachos* have shot at us when we were going to bury 3 people, including the two kids. They have no respect for the dead (you're going to say they have respect for the living!). I saw 6 people drop during the funeral cortege.

I tell you such experiences so as to tell you that French imperialism has been inherited here: amongst other obscenities, torture. The mopping up after the revolt was merciless. The French were soft next to this race of monsters. Some youths have been finished off, because after having tortured them so much, they could not let them go in the state they were in, which would have been very bad evidence against them. Whilst the youngest kids were subjected to the most horrible sexual abuse, those who were only raped or sodomised were lucky. Some were castrated! In what country have you heard of things like this? It is unbelievable.

Ali

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75623 Paris Cedex 13
France

We've taken a while to get this issue out, and in fact we haven't included any reviews in this issue (something we had hoped to make a regular feature of this little bulletin). However we are holding over a couple of reviews till next issue. One is of Guy Debord's recent book (as yet only available in French) - *Commentaires Sur La Société du Spectacle* (Editions Lebovici, 27. Rue Saint Sulpice, 75006 Paris France)

The other is *No Reservations: Housing, Space and Class Struggle* (£1 + SAE from News From Everywhere, Box 14, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS or Campaign For Real Life, BM CRL, London WC1N 3XX)

If it's down to good intentions our next issue will be out at the beginning of July.

(Continued from front page)

way, such as council workers and postal workers. A strategy based on this alone is liable to fail as these sectors of workers are unlikely to stick their necks out on masse, while the rest of the proletariat applauds from the sidelines. They might get involved however if the struggle hots up elsewhere. We can make a start by resisting registering - every effort should be made to make sure that the scumbags have to dig up library lists, the voters register etc. etc. (Also as well as avoiding getting names on lists, it is possible to flood the lists with false names - preferably living in posh streets!) Such tactics can effectively delay implementation, but they will not prevent it or stop it.

CAN'T PAY, WON'T PAY?

This is the hardline position, and the state has plenty up its sleeve. Docking money from benefit payments will not be hard - already they have put the boot into claimants to such an extent that they presume they'll be little resistance. In fact, in this respect there is no reason to see Poll Tax as any different from other cuts in benefit.

It will be harder to dock workers wages. Where it's a matter of picking off isolated workers, it will be quite easy. (By this stage the mass media will be talking about "meanies" who don't want to help the "community" in the same way they spoke of "scroungers" in the seventies.) The bosses are ready to victimise workers who don't pay. But this can be resisted - John Lewis stores in Scotland backed down over such sackings after threats to picket stores over Christmas. The best possibility of resistance is where a substantial section of the workforce in a workplace have decided together not to pay, and to strike if pay cuts are imposed.

Aside from docking money, there is the possibility of the state seizing people's belongings and evicting them if they won't pay. This of course *must* be resisted - regardless of whether it stems from Poll Tax or from rent increases or any other trick the boss class has up its sleeve.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Poll tax is merely an element in the state's arsenal of new weapons to attack us with. In the class war, it is pointless to complain about the weapons the other side is using. The point is to resist - to resist in the work place, on housing estates, in the benefit offices. Poll Tax, Employment Training, Benefits cuts, changes in the housing laws - all these things spell out more misery, more poverty, and more homelessness. The left offers an isolated anti-Poll Tax Campaign which does not deal with these underlying issues.

So once again we have to stress, to underline that it is only the proletariat, organising itself to fight its own struggles, that will keep these attacks at bay. This is not to say that anti-Poll Tax groups are useless, but to say that they are only of any use if they break with labourite and nationalist reformism and merge with specifically class resistance. Groups set up to resist Poll Tax evictions can be used to resist other evictions for instance. But we must fight attempts to turn them into channels to divert resistance into the open arms and empty hands of politicians.

Info-packs are available for "genuine anti-poll tax groups and those committed to setting up groups" from Pigeonhole CR, c/o 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh. Send large S.A.E.

STOP E.T.
Thursday June 15th
Strikes and Demos against
Workfare

London & SE Demo: 2pm Bidborough Street
(Near Kings Cross)

CONFERENCE

Saturday, 1st July

Manchester

The SUBVERSION group will be hosting a conference on "The Importance of Bureaucracy and the Market for Capitalism and its Enemies".

Rather than repeat banalities about "East" and "west", about "state" and "private capitalism", there will be a discussion on the concrete significance of market and bureaucracy for those who profit from our dispossession, as well as the varying forms of resistance to them across the world.

A series of pamphlets is available:

No.1 - *Capitalism and Class Struggle in the USSR* 25p

No. 2 - *The State and Capital in Japan* 75p

No. 3 - (in preparation) tentative framework for analysis by looking at the UK from Keynes to Thatcher.

No. 4 - (in preparation) deals more specifically with twentieth century class struggle in the USSR.

There will be a creche and some limited accommodation is available. For pamphlets and more information contact:

Subversion,
Box W,
c/o Raven Press,
75 Piccadilly
Manchester M1 2BU

DEALING WITH THE SCHEMES

If you are on a scheme:

- Why not leave? You can leave ET without being penalised, though they may put more pressure on you to prove you're still available for work.

- Join the strike on June 15th. Last year 25,000 trainees came out on this day in the North West and thousands demonstrated across the country. Organise with others on your scheme and in your area.

- If there are advantages to being where you are, fight to get real employee status: rights, safety regulations and the rate for the job, or simply refuse to work more than you're actually paid for. Even just doing training you should get more money - a student grant could be £10-£20 more a week.

If you are a claimant:

- Don't go on their schemes. Their previous scheme, JTS, had to be scrapped because they couldn't get claimants onto it, and we can make ET go the same way.

- Join the demo on June 15th and other actions against schemes. Join us.

If you are a waged worker:

- Resist all attempts to bring the schemes to your workplace, to undercut your wages and conditions. Even workers at the MSC, which runs the schemes, had to strike to stop YTS being brought into their office.

- Join the strike and actions on June 15th. Recent attempts by the Spanish Socialist Government (don't forget it was the Labour government that started YOPs here) to start up work schemes were scrapped after 9 million came out on strike against it.

- Step up your struggle against your own boss - they're the ones who are trying to attack all our living conditions, to screw more profits out of us, and soon they'll be the ones directly running the schemes.

If you are a student:

These schemes affect you too - you won't be able to claim benefits if you leave school at 16, colleges are being taken over by the people who run ET, to be controlled by and for the bosses, and students will be suffering the new Restart interviews in the summer (and expected to work for peanuts).

Extracted from a leaflet by the Anti-Workfare Movement (S.E. Region) who can be contacted at:

Tottenham Unwaged Centre,
72 West Green Road, London N15
Tel: 01-802 9804