

resistance

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On the home front

The government's housing policy has taken a serious battering over the last year, with council tenants up down the country resisting stock privatisation.

ORIGINALLY A TORY IDEA, the transfer of council housing to private control has been taken up with vigour by the Labour government. In setting standards for all council housing to reach by 2010, the government is forcing cash strapped councils to push for the sell off of housing stock they cannot afford to maintain. The transfer of ownership to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), or Housing Associations as they used to be known, means that private money not available to councils can be spent on doing them up.

Very, very wrong

This policy has started to go very, very wrong for Downing Street bureaucrats. In order to transfer housing stock, the relevant Council has to obtain a "Yes" vote from a majority of its council house residents. Despite large sums of money being spent by Councils on propaganda drives for "yes" votes, tenants the length and breadth of Britain have voted "No".

So if voting "yes" means extra cash to be spent doing homes up, why are so many voting "no"? According to Defend Council Housing, rents are an average of 16% higher under RSLs, evictions 14% higher, and "service charges" are added to the bill. RSL boards are run as businesses, dominated by bankers and

even more unaccountable than councils. Additionally, once transferred privatisation can't be undone. There's no way to



Some Camden residents celebrate their victory

transfer back to council housing if RSLs turn out to be even worse.

Government dismay

To the dismay of many councils and the government 35 sets of residents have voted no to housing transfers, with a particularly spectacular and influential residents victory taking place last year over Britain's largest council - Birmingham. One local demanded, "The growing number of no votes and abandoned privatisation ballots should tell the government that we want our homes improved, not sold off to any Jack the lad who thinks they'd make a good housing magnate."

These defeats have led the government to create two additional options for residents in the hope that they will be conned in to accepting one of these. The first is the controversial private finance initiative (PFI) - where

homes are improved by a private sector consortium typically over a 30-year period. The second option is arm's length management organisations (ALMOs), under which homes remain in council ownership but are run separately from council control.

However, residents are showing signs of seeing these options for what they are - a more subtle and creeping form of privatisation. Critically, only a few weeks ago, Camden residents, who had already rejected wholesale transfer to a RSL, voted more than four to one against the transfer of control of their homes to an ALMO. The government had pledged £283 million to the ALMO should they have won the vote. This amounted to little more than a bribe for a "yes" vote. Residents are now calling for the government to spend this money on their homes directly.

Vote No!

One Camden council tenant explained "Throughout this campaign no one has been able to give a satisfactory answer to the simple question: if £283m of additional investment would be available to an ALMO why the government cannot give it to the council direct - if that is what tenants say they want."

Unfortunately for Tony Blair and his rich mates, people aren't falling for their bribes and phoney propaganda. If your house is up for transfer, VOTE NO, and campaign for a no vote locally.

As anarchists we see only absurdity in a system that leaves such a basic need as housing to the whim of market forces. Forces, what's more, driven mainly by profit mad speculators and anonymous bankers. Keeping council houses under council control is better than them ending up in the hands of such people. Campaigns with this aim will hopefully develop to the point of realising that council bureaucrats are also unnecessary for us to organise our own housing needs.

Some useful information can be found at www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk ★

The government has recently admitted that it plans to spend £800 million in 2003/4 subsidising privatisation by writing off 'overhanging debt'. This is just less than the £840 million available as housing investment for all 2.7 million council homes in England & Wales. They could almost double direct investment in council housing if they stopped privatisation.

ON THE FRONTLINE

The Tyne and Wear Metro was shut down by strike action.

TRAINS STOPPED ON Sunday night on the 18th January workers walked out. The dispute involves a long-running row over the length of the working week. Services did not return to normal until Tuesday morning.

New row as Sainsburys strike ends in lockout

A row has broken out after Sainsburys depot workers holding a 24 hour strike over pay rates were locked out when they returned to work. Night shift staff turned up at the warehouse in Haydock at midnight on Tuesday but could not get inside the building. The supermarket company said the employees should have started work at 10pm on Monday, but because they were taking part in the 24 hour strike, they arrived for work at midnight. Bosses said they were not allowed in the depot because it was not practical for them to start their shifts later. The Merseyside workers started a second 24-hour strike. About 750 members of the workers walked out from the Haydock depot at 10pm.

Land Rover workers limit hours in pay row

Workers at Land Rover have stepped up industrial action in a dispute over pay. Members of the three unions are taking joint action by withdrawing flexible working time arrangements previously agreed with management. Workers at the Land Rover plant in Solihull, West Midlands, enforced an overtime ban days before Christmas and warned bosses further action would be taken in the New Year if the pay situation was not addressed.

Rubbish piles up as binmen in Scotland stay at home

Rubbish bins have been left unemptied across the Capital after plans for the city's festive collection service fell apart. Scores of refuse staff failed to answer to answer a plea to work voluntary overtime at the weekend, leaving hundreds of bins jam-packed. Areas affected included Pilton and Corstorphine. The rubbish mountain built up after a large number of binmen refused to work voluntary shifts at the weekend.

Spanish air traffic controllers wildcat

A surprise strike in early January snarled air traffic in the country and caused 49 flights to be cancelled and dozens of other national and international flights to be delayed. Madrid's Barajas airport was at the centre of the action. ★

CAN'T PAY, WON'T PAY...AGAIN?

THE FIRST MONTH of the new year saw a two thousand strong demonstration against the Council Tax. People from around Britain converged on Central London to oppose the current national system of local taxation.

The demonstration was organised by the campaign group Is It Fair, who emphasise, on average, the cost of council tax has risen by up to 70% since 1997.

The protesters complaints of ridiculously high tax rises caused a predictable response from Local and National politicians - they both blamed each other! There demands for a new system of taxation based on the ability to pay fell on deaf ears.

One protester said "We will march again if it's necessary. We must get the council tax changed - it needs to be changed into something fairer. We cannot afford to pay it."

While demonstrations are worthwhile, this faith in the power of demonstrations

alone to change things for the better is misguided. It is direct action that matters, as expressed by another member of the campaign:

"My pension went up £100 last year. My council tax went up £154. It does not make sense. A lot of our members are considering not paying above the rate of inflation this year. If we have to go to court we will go mob-handed."

The anti-Poll Tax movement showed how effective direct action by the working classes is, especially when compared to the ineffectiveness of meek appeals to politicians.

"Our aims are to make people aware of the need for action and to have the existing property-value-based council tax replaced by a system that takes account of the ability to pay. People power will achieve this."

Also on the Is It Fair website is info about how to set up a local anti-Council Tax group, visit the website for details of groups in your region: <http://www.isitfair.co.uk> ★



MISSION UNBELIEVABLE

JUST BEFORE OUR print deadline scientists excitedly announced that they had found water on Mars. Big fucking wow. We at Resistance far from technophobic or reluctant to see humankind put boundaries on its quest for knowledge, However, we are suitably unimpressed by this useless discovery whilst there are billions here on Earth without regular access to clean water. The only word we can think of to describe spending hundreds of millions of dollars on searching for a drop of water millions of miles away, is obscene. ★

LIKE WHAT YOU READ?

WE'RE HAPPY TO keep giving out resistance free, but doing so costs us. If you like what you read and you want to support our efforts to get anarchist ideas across to people, how about sending us a donation or setting up a monthly standing order?

Cheques to AF, address on back page. No amount too small, no amount too large. ★



ALL COPPERS ARE ...

IN TODAY'S NANNY state and informer culture, trade unions do the government's work to such an extent that some are actively encouraging their members to become oppressors of the working class. Officials from the retail trade union USDAW recently welcomed a new scheme to "reduce retail crime" by training shopworkers as special constables.

In an initial scheme, 15 staff from stores including Dixons, Woolworths and The Link will be signed up as special constables with the Metropolitan Police. Staff will complete three-week training courses with the police and receive paid leave to go on patrol with full-time officers in retail areas.

This scheme is part of a bigger drive by the government, encouraging people to report on and police other working class people - not for their own safety but to save businesses and government money. If the workers were to target the real thieves, they'd target their bosses who pay minimum wage and reap huge profits.



Trade union coppers: coming to a retail park near you? ★

ITALY - RETURN OF THE WILDCAT

THE AGGRESSION OF Italian transport workers has been causing their bosses and the government a headache this last month.

A 100% solid two day wildcat by Milanese workers against a management/union stitch up on pay brought the city to a standstill. The municipal authorities had to agree that on the 12th and 13th of January not one bus, tram or underground train ran in the entire city.

The only union supporting the action is COBAS, and they represent a mere 7% of the striking workforce. The strike was largely self organised.

The action quickly spread to Brescia – not one bus left the towns depot on the morning of the 13th. Brescia drivers had also been out four days earlier.

Strike action by various groups of workers at Rome's Fiumicino airport on the 8th January saw the National Terminal emptied. This was followed up by a spontaneous demonstration and general assembly (held in the airport cafeteria!) by thousands of airport staff on the 14th.



"I strike!"

Two days later baggage handlers were out on a wildcat strike over changing work practices, while other staff at the airport stopped work in solidarity. Three hundred occupied a parking bay containing a plane of a targeted company, preventing its take off. A confrontation with the police ensued.

Not at all dissuaded, workers at Fiumicino held another successful strike on the 19th, causing 364 flight cancellations.

A national transport workers strike has been called for the 30th January to coincide with a national Telecom workers strike. Clear evidence, if any were needed, that the Italian working class is not in the mood for compromise.

British workers could learn a lot from this sort of action. Too many strikes over here have been killed off by union bureaucrats. The strikes in Italy have shown that the unions are not needed at all and that successful strikes organised by us workers ourselves are both possible and necessary.

OVER THE LAST 2 months there have been media reports of letter bombs, from Italian anarchists, being sent to various bigwigs in the EU, including Labour MEP Gary Tittley. Our view is in agreement with that of our sister organisation in Italy, that the Italian state is using its usual underhand tactic of creating fake "anarchist" attacks.

• The Italian Anarchist Federation denounces the serious and slanderous attribution of this kind of action to an alleged group whose acronym is identical to its own acronym: FAI - Federazione Anarchica Italiana.



Gary Tittley MEP. *Does anyone seriously think anarchists would waste time on a fool like this?*

• The Italian Anarchist Federation reiterates the clear condemnation of bombs, letter-bombs and similar methods, since they can strike randomly and indiscriminately, and also reiterates that these methods resemble more than anything else a plan of deliberate provocation leading to the criminalisation of dissent in the media, at a time when anarchists are already the protagonists of social struggle, of strikes, and of initiatives against the war.

• The Italian Anarchist Federation reminds and reaffirms that the instruments of combat of anarchists and of federated anarchists are visible in public places: social struggles, cooperative bottom-up unions, and in movements in dozens of towns where we participate in public groups, in the open opposition to the ideology of oppression and State terrorism, and where we work for the construction of a society of liberty and equality. ★

Stealth browsing on the web at work:

The following link will take you to the free Ghostzilla browser. With Ghostzilla, your boss will see your normal work screen. You see the Web page, drawn to appear **inside your work application** and to **look like that application** to a bystander!
<http://ftp.nctu.edu.tw/ftp/Vendors/Softking/soft/en/g/ghostzilla-1.0-plus-install.exe>

TENANT POWER!

"WHEN A BLACK flag bearing the words 'no rent' floats over a single slum, when streets are torn up and barricaded, when from the windows and roofs of the houses there comes a shower of hot water and storm of stones and brickbats, what can the police or bailiffs do?"

John Greaghe writing in the anarchist *Commonweal* in 1891 during a rent strike in the East End that helped win the London Dockers Strike.

Recent acts of resistance by tenants in the UK, as highlighted on the front page, are far from an unknown occurrence. Rent strikes, tenants committees, attacks on bailiffs are all part of a long history of working class resistance in this country. Here are some examples from the last 40 years.

- 1968 - National demonstration of tenants in Trafalgar Square against rent increases.
- 1968 - 1973 - Wave of tenant activity with rent strikes and new organisations set up.
- National Association of Tenants & Residents organises protests against the 1972 Housing Finance Act with its "fair" rents and rebates. Rent strikes and tenant protests across the country.
- 1975 - 1976 - Estimates of 10,000 to 50,000 organised squatters living in abandoned private and public housing. Housing co-operatives formed.
- Late 1970s - National Tenants Organisation (NTO) formed along with tenants organisations in Scotland and Wales. Security of tenure for council tenants included in Labour Housing Bill. Community workers supporting tenants groups. Tenants Charters negotiated in some areas.
- Anti-damp campaigns and other tenant protest around high-rise and system-built housing.
- 1988 - Flood of tenant protests against Tenants Choice legislation. Anti-sell off and anti-Housing Action Trust protests lead to formation of new tenants organisations.
- Strong tenants federations (e.g. Sandwell and Kirklees) and tenant management organisations (e.g. Belle Isle North in Leeds) developed
- 1990-91 - Working class communities unite against bailiffs enforcing the hated Poll Tax. Houses are defended, bailiffs attacked on sight and their offices occupied.
- 1992 - Mass tenant rallies against compulsory competitive tendering of housing management
- 1997 - Tenant demonstrations against Tory plans to speed up transfers. ★

INSIDE INFORMATION

Harold H. Thompson Update

The 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals refused Harold's challenge to a District Courts dismissal of his 1st amendment lawsuit. Now it goes straight up to the Supreme Court for a ruling that will be both decisive and binding. This procedure – i.e. a series of local rejections – is the route all cases must take to reach the highest judicial level in the land. Harold is not dispirited. He believes the case is eminently winnable and is going on with it. It needs another \$300 to get it there in pure presentational form. Help for this final hurdle will be greatly appreciated: 'Friends of Harold Thompson', PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey. GU21 2XL

Rob "Ruckus" Middaugh has recently had his federal case dropped. He wishes to thank everyone that sent letters for his letter campaign and has supported him inside and out. Rob had previously served two years for trumped up charges stem-

ming from his involvement in the 2001 Long Beach May Day demonstration. His latest case saw him charged with assaulting a government official (splashing him with soda water!) He wishes to thank everyone that sent letters for his letter campaign and has supported him inside and out.

US Anarchist prisoner Cassidy Wheeler #14282456 is receiving death threats from Nazis and their supporters, it is therefore, important that Cassidy is transferred to another institution for his own safety, as soon as possible. Cassidy is asking for letters supporting his transfer be sent to-

Superintendent. SRCI. 777 Stanton Blvd. Ontario. Or 97914 8335. USA

You can write directly to Cassidy at the same address, for now, though hopefully not for too much longer.

Russian Anarchists are facing repression. Two Krasnodar "Autonomus Action" activists - Lion S. and Dmitry R., have been found guilty of beating the director of the press-service of Kuban oil company "Rosneft" Mr. Dolgov. They face six months

in prison. More info at e-mail: info@avtonom.org Homepage: http://www.avtonom.org/eng

Native Prisoner in Attica Raises Evidence of Abuses

Michael Halfmoon 87D0102, who is currently incarcerated in Attica Correctional Facility NY wishes to raise awareness of the Native American Prisoners who are held as 'Political Prisoners' by the US authorities. Michael has been classed as a political prisoner for over 30 years and has been incarcerated in Federal as well as state Facilities.

He was denied parole in 2002 and is due another parole hearing in 2004, however it has become a foregone conclusion that he will be denied.

Michael has recently been moved from Elmira to Attica, this has been done to punish him (Attica is renowned as a punishment move).

More info at: <http://www.prisonactivist.org/alerts/>

Write to Michael at:

Attica C.F., P.O. Box 149
Attica NY 14011

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Subvert and resist

Take precautions when going on demonstrations and don't take cameras, booze or drugs. If you're nicked give your name and address then say 'no comment' to any other questions.

FEBRUARY

6-7 Demonstration against the NATO security conference in Munich, Germany. For more info contact: con_action@no-nato.de

7 International Day Of Solidarity With Leonard Peltier. Organise your own event! <http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/nwpeletiersupport>

7-8 Next organising meeting against the G8 summit happening in the UK in 2005. The organising meeting will be **taking place in Brighton**. Please email this address: g8gathering@yahoo.co.uk or send a letter to: G8 Gathering, PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ.

12-15 The Peace Not War Four Night Music Festival, Hackney Ocean, Mare Street, London E8 £17.50 per night + booking fee. 020 7515 4702 festival@peace-not-war.org www.peace-not-war.org

20 'Cartoon art and anarchy' talk by Donald Rooum (Creator Of The world famous Wildcat Cartoon Strip). Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1 8pm Organised by the London Anarchist Forum

MARCH

8 International Woman's Day www.enrager.net/hosted/m8/

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- I enclose £4 for a year's subscription to **Organise!** the magazine of the AF.
- I am interested in the **Anarchist Federation** and would like more information.

Name.....

Address.....

Join the resistance

The **Anarchist Federation** is an organisation of **class struggle** anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is **Anarchist Communism**.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the **ruling class** which controls all the power and wealth, and the **working class** which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the **direct action** of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it, such as working through parliament and national liberation movements, as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

The Anarchist Federation has members across Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above. Contact us at:

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