

DAVID ROSE talks to the people who revel in the riots

# The fear and loathing show

MANY radical groups have been accused of participating in the urban riots of recent weeks, but few have acknowledged their preference with such enthusiasm as Class War. This is an anarchist group, some two years old, and the latest issue of its journal greets the Brixton riot with full-throated gusto.

"The best Saturday night out for years," its centre spread begins. "Bleeding brilliant — sheer inspiration. We took on the murdering fascist pigs as a community on our own turf and smashed them... Bill bastards running, shitting themselves... we confront these bastards and maim them and kill them BECAUSE WE HATE THEM..."

The paper regards the casualties of the rioting with delight. Journalists, it says, got "a well-deserved kicking," and alongside a photograph of Paul Davidson, a Sunday People reporter slashed across the face and temporarily blinded, it prints the caption "serves you right for straying out of El Vinos." A regular slot in the new issue, "back by popular demand," features photographs of injured policemen under the rubric "hospitalised copper"

While other revolutionary groups have insisted that they played no part in the current series of riots, Class War displays no such coyness:

"We fully admit that many of us were there and took an active part in the proceedings... it may come as a shock to the forces of law and order but only a handful of us actually live in the area. Why shouldn't we pour into the riot area and fight alongside our comrades and our class?"

Class War was founded in 1983 in Swansea by a handful of experienced anarchists led by Ian Bone, a butler's son turned sociology graduate and rock musician. When Bone moved to London, the group established its unique identity and invective.

Its "Bash the Rich" marches through middle class suburbs and regular disruption of other group's activities — Joan Ruddock of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had her mouth filled with mud by Class War supporters at the Molesworth air base protest last year — have brought the group notoriety — and growing support.

The latest issue of their journal, Class War, claims a readership of 15,000, and, while this may be exaggerated, there is no doubt that the group has, in a short time, become more widely known than any comparable group, beyond the narrow circle generally reached by anarchist formations.

But with this rising profile has come mounting suspicion, criticism and condemnation from other groups. The allegation that Class War is run by former leading members of the National Front, published in the Guardian two weeks ago, is false. Class War says that it is dedicated to fighting racism and fascism, and, by way of credentials in this field, points to its affiliation to the new broad-based organisation Anti-Fascist Action. This group, however, has voted to suspend Class War's membership, and to return its subscription.

The steering committee of AFA recognised that there is no evidence of direct NF involvement in CW. But it is worried on two counts. First, supporters of fascist groups have participated in Class War actions. And second, the damage caused to other groups by Class War supporters — often, as in the Molesworth case, to the point where publicity focused almost entirely on the anarchists — has given rise to a fear that CW's behaviour could harm AFA's cause.

Much of the unease concerns the series of three

"Stop the City" demonstrations last year, in which Class War played a leading role. The CW journal revelled in the overturning of a Bentley, the smashing of plate glass windows in banks, and "rich bastards glued up inside their own cars." The same issue contained a violent attack on CND — "a hopeless pile of shit."

The London Class War collective insist that they were unaware of the presence of fascists on the Stop the City actions, but National Front literature published afterwards claimed that the far-right organisation was strongly represented.

It is known that the National Front has made overtures to other anarchist groups since it was taken over last year by a superficially radical "Strasserite" faction. Ian Bone says that no such approach has been made to CW.

According to a National Front source, skinheads who sometimes attend NF activities and marches have also taken part in Class War "bash the rich" demonstrations. Of this, Martin Wright, a prominent member of the Class War collective, says: "People don't have fully formed ideas. If they're actually in the Front, then we'll kick shit out of them. But if someone has some good and some bad ideas, then you argue with them."

Recently a new publication has appeared called Angry, describing itself as the "theoretical journal" of Class War. This carries an article headlined "The fist of fury," which complains of "the anti-white sentiments of the Caucasian guilt-tripping middle class extreme left, constantly bombarding us with dogma about the rights of coloured immigrants." The article attacks positive discrimination as "double standards," multiculturalism as an "increasingly hysterical quest for assimilation," and Rastafarianism as "an extreme right wing religious cult."

Bone says that this article was written "by a 15-year old. It was more an attack on the lefty liberals, in particular the trendy middle class who make a career of being anti-racist. It's more a matter of phrasing. We went through the article with a felt pen." The article did not reflect the views of CW as a whole, Bone says.

CND is not the only radical organisation regularly attacked both in the pages of Class War and, sometimes, physically on demonstrations. Others who have been the targets of CW's wrath include the Labour Party, the animal liberation group BUAV, and, a particular figure of hate since he evicted squatters from Effra Road in Brixton, Ted Knight, the leader of Lambeth council.

Martin Wright says: "They call us provocateurs, but the real provocateurs are people like Kinnoch, who sit there saying they're going to do things when we know damn well they won't."

The central CW collective numbers about 25, according to Bone, but reaches a "far wider periphery," the main target of their efforts. He recognises that Class War on its own is not going to achieve a revolution. The objective is to raise consciousness:

"Most of us have a lot of class hatred. We wanted to give other people the confidence to express their hatred of the ruling class. That's why we produce a paper written the same way people talk to each other, using the same language. It is intended to have a bit of oomph, instead of the usual theoretical crap."

The latest issue promises: "Today Handsworth, tomorrow you Volvos," and goes on to make yet another attack on Labour, and on CND — "the biggest joke of the lot." Class War promise to be out in strength for the CND march in London next week.