

# BIG FLAME

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Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

10p

## TAX CUTS - SMOKESCREEN FOR LONGER DOLE QUEUES

Don't be misled by the Budget tax cuts. Labour's hammered the working class for the last four years with wage controls, public spending cuts and police harassment of blacks and Irish.

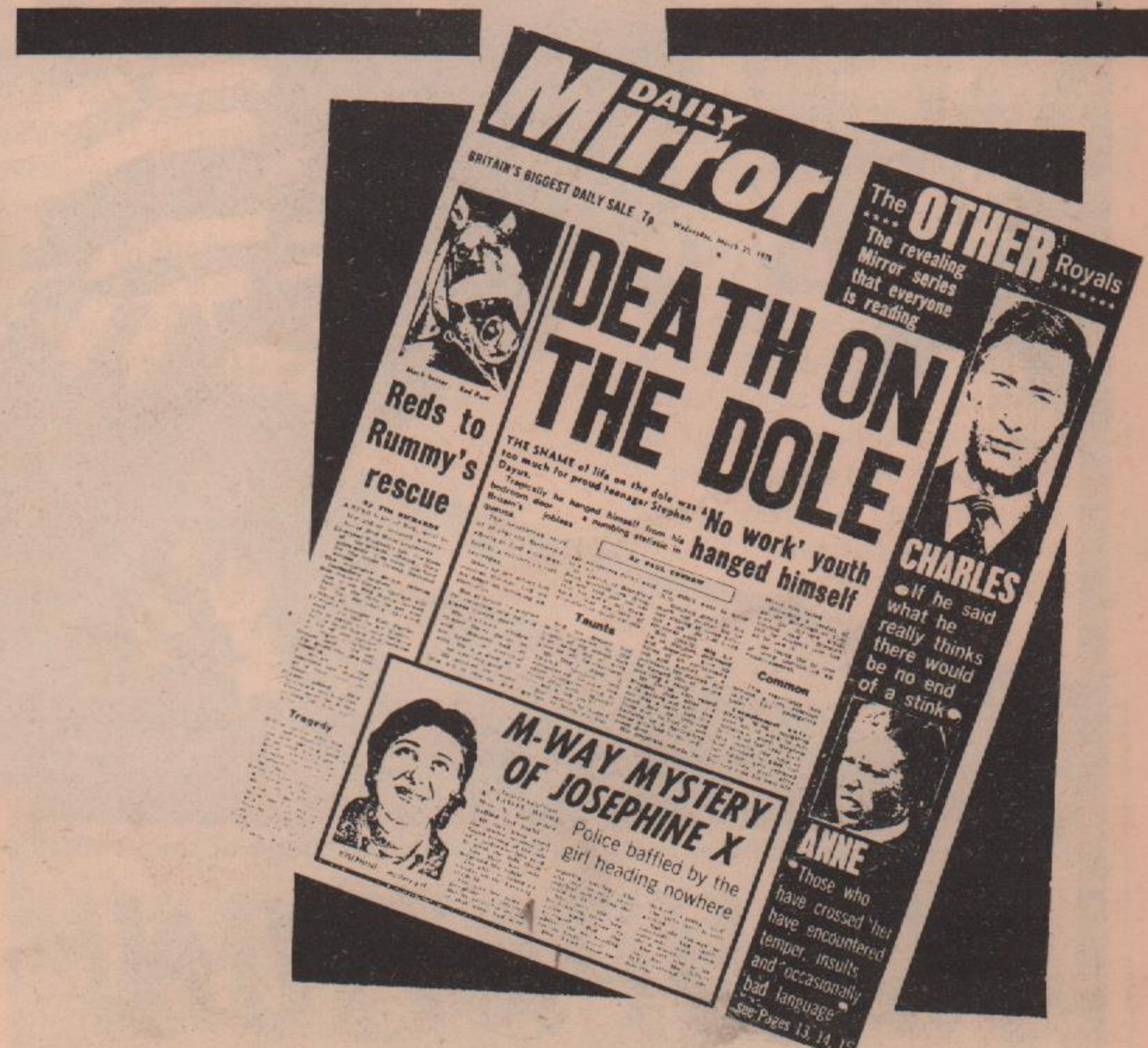
Now, with elections coming up they've started to turn on

the charm. But it doesn't wash. A few pence off tax doesn't do anything for the growing dole queues.

Labour wants our votes, but they're more concerned about the bosses' profits than our living standards. That's why the attack on workers' organ-

isation continues. With the help of the Labour Government, employers everywhere continue to push through productivity deals and to root out the militants who oppose them.

And when a productivity deal isn't enough, there's always complete closure.



### Another Dole Suicide

Last month we reported about the 16-year old Birmingham school-leaver, Stephen Dayus, who committed suicide with despair at being on the dole.

The case preyed on the mind of John Fiddler, aged 63, who was made redundant from British Leyland's Castle Bromwich plant a year ago.

One day he walked into the garden and hanged himself with a piece of flex.

His brother-in-law told the inquest: "He said if a young kid of 16 could not get a start in life, what chance have I got "

Capitalism is a violent way of life and death.

## WE'VE BEEN ROBBED!

The closure of Spillers' bakeries throws thousands on the dole. The company's excuse was that their bakeries were losing money. True. But it's the milling which churns out the profits for all the baking firms. Overall, Spillers profits rose 40% between 1972 and 1974 and are still going up.

Not only does the milling and baking industry offer poor wages and conditions to its workers in exchange for long hours and very little job security, but it doesn't give a very good deal to the public either. Since 1960 bread prices have risen considerably faster than other retail prices.

It took three and a half centuries (from 1600 to 1939) for the price of bread to double. In just the last 27

years, though, the price of bread has escalated to 13 times the pre-war figure and the nutritional standard has declined.

### FD CLOTHING, KIRKBY BREATH-TAKING GET-AWAY

An even more daring robbery has just been carried out by FD Clothing, at Kirkby. Having set up shop with the aid of 40% government grants, they suddenly announced closure days before the deadline when they would have been forced to pay redundancy money.

FD Clothing workers have occupied their factory. Workers at Leyland's Speke plant may yet do the same.

It was Leyland who started the current craze for close-downs when they said the car plant would have to go because of strikes. The real reasons were very different: the failure to sell the TR7 car, and the workers' refusal to be pushed around without any say. Although closure at Speke would throw 3,000 on the dole, the Government is backing the bosses' plans. (reports, p2 and p3)

### ROLLS ROYCE ENGINEERS OCCUPY

George and Paul O'Brien have just been sacked from Chryslers. Against them were not only the management but also their union officials. Like the stewards

facing expulsion from the union at Cowley, Oxford, their crime was to be active in the defence of the interests of the workers they represent. (report p.3)

At Rolls Royce, Coventry, the workers aren't having any nonsense: they've occupied their factories against a management deal to buy out piecework. (report p.3)

In many of these cases, the underlying conflict is caused by workers' resistance to management attempts to increase productivity. And it might seem that they are just being short-sighted and obstructive. In any rational socialist society higher productivity would be welcomed as a

way of making work easier and cutting down on the amount to be done.

### BOSSSES WHO HATE THE UNIONS

It's often the bosses who run small firms, employing immigrant labour who dig their heels in against unions. Certainly, the two most celebrated cases, Grunwicks and Garners Steak Houses (report p11), involve mainly immigrant workers. Now the Government is proposing a new nationality law which would rob immigrants of rights and make them sitting ducks for employers like George Ward.

## NF's MARTIN WEBSTER LOSES HIS GRIN

Confrontation with the National Front reached a high point on April 22nd when anti-fascists chased through the streets and beat up NF members who had been attending an 'election' meeting in a school in Leeds.

Amongst the 60-odd fascists done over was 'National Activities Organiser' Martin Webster who got injuries that sent him to hospital. In the fighting, letters were found on Webster that reveal NF infiltration of the Anti-Nazi League in Wakefield and a scurrilous anti-Semitic leaflet. It would be interesting to know whether the police failure to defend the fascists was

accidental or deliberate.

The rout comes during a three week ban on demonstrations brought on by the NF threat to march on St. George's Day (April 20 to May 7). The ban includes the Trades Council May Day march on April 29th. A member of the executive of the Trades Council told Big Flame:

"We have decided to go ahead with the May Day march. Whether or not we hold the march depends on how much support we get from the Yorkshire area."

The demo starts from Woodhouse Moor at 11 a.m. on Saturday 29th April - BE THERE!







FDC struggle: 'young women have been the backbone of the occupation'. Photo: JOHN SMITH (JFL)

## OCCUPATION! Women Focus For Fight Against Merseyside Dole Queue

OVER THE last few months closure of factories have been nothing new, but a group of workers have taken action and what is new is that they are WOMEN.

The factory is Fashion Design Clothing Centre in Knowsley, which employs 200 workers, nearly all of whom are women. The plant has been open for 16 months and is owned by a Swiss multinational firm. Government grants paid 40% of the cost of the £400,000 worth of machinery. The company has adopted a hit and run policy — it has taken advantage of government aid and has now decided to close, leaving 200 workers on the scrap heap — which is growing into a mountain. The women aren't even entitled to redundancy payment as they haven't been working for two years continuously.

On March 20th a unanimous decision was made by the workers to occupy their factory and since then they have been looking at ways to save their jobs. Possibilities include getting another firm to take over or a workers co-operative.

They are now in the forefront of the fightback against unemployment on Merseyside. Whole families are being affected by redundancies in Liverpool as one girl at F.D. Centre explained "My sister works here as well and I've got a brother who's being made redundant at Leyland's, so we've got to fight against losing our jobs."

The women at F.D. are surprised to find themselves in an occupation "Around here it's never been heard of to have women doing this." Many have found the experience has given them a confidence that they never had before.

Often male trade unionists don't take women workers seriously — they don't encourage them to participate in the union, and don't represent the particular interests of women: for example demands for nurseries. Women themselves sometimes lack faith in their own ability to take action and regard home life as their major concern.

But the women at F.D. have clearly shown the important contribution women have to make in organising a fightback. They have shown that when women do act they often move ahead of the more traditionally organised sectors of the workforce.

Please send contributions to: F.D. Clothing Centre (Liverpool), Randells Road, Knowsley Road, Knowsley Industrial Estate, Knowsley.

## CRIMINAL TRESPASS USED AGAINST LIVERPOOL SIT-IN

ON MARCH 20th, 1978, an officer from Copy Lane Police Station in Aintree arrived at the distribution depot of the Smiths (crisps) Foods Group in Aintree, and informed the shop steward, Mr. Blackstone, that if the rest of the workers did not leave the depot forthwith, he had power to arrest them there and then without a warrant.

In support of this statement were a piece of paper, which he showed to Mr. Blackstone on which was printed 'Criminal Law Act, 1977'; and two carloads of police officers parked in the road outside the depot.

The workers left the premises, and thereby ended, through police intervention, a short sit-in.

The background of this event was that as management at the depot, (negotiations with the union not having gone to their satisfaction) had issued dismissal notices without warning to the workers and ordered

them to leave the premises. The shop steward contacted the district office of the T&GWU and was advised that this move by management was quite out of order, and that workers should remain on the premises until the matter was resolved. It was after management had been informed of this position that the police arrived on the scene.

The significance of the event at the Smiths depot is that the workers there, simply by remaining on the premises, could not in any way be shown to have committed an offence under the Criminal Law Act — or indeed any other criminal offence. It would appear clear that the police were relying on ignorance of the law on the part of the workers and on their respect for the word of the police.

It is also significant that neither the shop steward nor the district official was aware of the terms and implications of the criminal trespass

legislation and consequently were unaware, even after the event, that they had been conned. This is a reflection, not on those individuals, so much as on the very large areas of the movement which have so far failed to take up the question of this legislation, have failed to consider deeply its implications for trade union activity, and have failed to ensure that information is distributed about the new law.

The Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law, in an attempt to provide a clear guide to what the law, both civil and criminal, has to say in relations to occupations, sit-ins, work-ins etc — and what it does not say — as well as ways in which workers can avoid or reduce the possibility of harassment, has produced a new pamphlet: "Workplace Occupations and the Law" — 17p including postage, from CACTL, c/o 35 Wellington St. London WC 2.

## 'PROBLEMS OF THE WORKPLACE' — THE 35 HOUR WEEK

Too often the revolutionary left tries to intervene in industrial situations by formulating demands that do not relate to the specific problems facing militants in the individual workplaces. We see 'Problems at the Workplace' as a series in which militants write about particular problems they face organising. For this issue a lorry driver from Leeds writes about the problem he faces fighting for a shorter working week, given the drivers' need for overtime. Contributions for the series (not more than 800 words) are very welcome.

Trade unionists and socialists have argued for many years that the first solution to massive unemployment is to cut the working week. The T.G.W.U. leadership want to make the 4 day or 35 hour week the major demand in the next round of negotiations — 'phase 4'. Next to pensions Jack Jones talks of little else. And the 35 hour week is the first item on most socialists lists of demands, as in the last Big Flame. But just how realistic is this demand? What do rank and file workers think of it, and how will they act? What would a 35 hour week mean in actual terms to shopfloor workers?

### OVERTIME

Whenever the papers quote average industrial earnings it's never based on basic pay, but on overtime and all those other parts of today's pay packet, from shift pay through to clothing allowances etc. There's no doubt the majority of us depend on regular overtime to keep our living standards above the poverty line; and in a period of harsh wage controls we can even find ourselves demanding more overtime from the boss, and actually stopping companies from starting new workers. A 35 hour work week for the majority of road transport drivers would probably mean five hours more at overtime rate! It wouldn't create new jobs.

We don't want the extra overtime, but we need the money it brings.

### SHIFTWORKING

A second look at the eight hour day system shows up some other problems. Most drivers don't work regular Saturday shifts these days, but with the new law hauliers will certainly be pressing for a 6 day 48 hour week, instead of a 5 day 55 hour week at present. Also there will be a definite move to greater shift working as hauliers try to increase 'efficiency' with more overnight stays. The earning potential of drivers will decline as the unsocial aspect of the job will increase — unless the basic pay issue is solved. We can and will demand compensation for loss of earnings potential but this won't easily be won. In face of unbroken wage controls, we have, where I work, only one other way of increasing our pay, apart from overtime — to work the productivity scheme. Well, the fact is, even if we drove like James Hunt, we'd still fail to make as much as we can by working our day off. And somebody would, definitely, go down the road — we would lose jobs!

### WAGE FREEZE

So we come back to the central problem — the wage freeze. While basic pay is frozen, we are forced to work overtime or work productivity schemes, and so take the bread from our brothers or sisters mouths. The shorter working week demand cannot be taken separately from wages. It isn't an alternative as the T.G.W.U. leadership claims. They are the same problem.

WAGE CONTROLS MUST GO IF SHORTER HOURS ARE TO MEAN ANYTHING

## Sheffield: STRIKE OVER SACKINGS

ALL THE hourly-paid workers — about 1,200 people — at the four Stanley Tools plants in and around Sheffield have been on strike since Tuesday March 28th. They are demanding the reinstatement of 36 forge and heat treatment workers who were sacked from the Ecclesfield factory on that day. They also want an indication from management that they will begin serious negotiations about a new wages structure for all employees.

Stanleys sacked 44 people in the same shops about a year ago when they stopped work over a demand to make the afternoon shift less unsocial by starting and finishing half an hour earlier. All Stanleys had to do was recognise a 30 minute showering off period. But they refused. On that occasion AUEW officials arranged for reinstatement of the 44 in exchange for dropping the demands. The union officials were embarrassed because the strikers had apparently not completed the full "procedure for the avoidance of disputes." A condition of reinstatement was that in future this procedure should be rigidly adhered to by the whole workforce.

Since then the stewards in these shops have raised several other grievances, for instance about lack of safety precautions, with the solid support of the people they represent. Earlier this year they put in a claim for higher piecework

earnings. It went through the entire procedure, and the result was a "failure to agree." The forge and heat treatment workers then restricted their output to 100% performance, which is a mild sanction. Management gave them seven days to resume normal work, then sacked them.

Stanleys management are trying to use the procedure for the avoidance of disputes as a delaying tactic, hoping that grievances will get talked to death in the process. It is obvious from a letter they sent to all employees that they regard the stewards at Ecclesfield as troublemakers, and they had no intention of reaching any agreement with them.

Union organisation at Stanleys has suffered like a lot of other places from lack of shop floor participation. And the stewards have had no news sheet or other organised way of keeping everybody informed about what is going on in other departments and plants. This is reflected now in few strikers joining the picket or going on visits to other factories. There's the danger of demoralisation when workers have to face having no money on their own.

Donations to the Strike fund can be sent to: W. Ryan (Strike Committee Treasurer) 365, Abbeydale Rd South, Sheffield, S17 3LG



# Coventry Bosses Attack

## LEYLAND: Anger Grows

TOO OFTEN in our reporting of individual industrial disputes we forget to mention that employers also act as a class with a united strategy. It is through bodies like the Engineering Employers Federation that employers come together to meet and sort out their plans. For instance, the simultaneous announcement of redundancies by many different employers in the Merseyside area is no accident: they are fully fully aware that many redun-

dancies announced together will have a much greater effect in undermining workers' militancy. In the Coventry area, engineering employers have recently commissioned a study to find out at which time of the year workers are in a better financial position to go on strike. The report concludes that the worst time for workers to go on strike (for tax reasons) is in early April, so employers are advised to use that period to change work relations in their favour.

As the two articles below from Coventry point out, the priority for employers right now is firstly to try and get rid of militants they think could play a key role in organising shop-floor resistance, and secondly to resist all attempts by workers to keep (or re-introduce) piece-work, which is traditionally one of the main reasons behind high wage rates in the Coventry area. It is clear that the fact that the company (Rolls Royce) is state owned has in no way affected the tough bargaining position they have adopted.

WITH JUST a few weeks to go till the projected closure date, the fight is hotting up at British Leylands Speke plants. At a mass meeting at the Liverpool Stadium 2,000 workers unanimously rejected the company's derisory redundancy terms — instead of the £5,000 - 10,000 that had been rumoured for the last two months it turned out that the average payment would be little more than £600.

Nearly six months of strikes and lay-offs had left the Speke workers open to rumours of a substantial golden handshake — bills and debts have to be paid off — and anyway, the stewards were not giving a clear lead in the fight against closure. But the mass meeting has changed all that. Despondency has given way to the will to fight. The pathetic cash offer was a slap in the face for the Speke workers and remind-

ed the majority of them that management are playing with their lives and futures.

Leyland workers must show, their jobs are not for sale. The best way to show this resistance would be an immediate occupation of the factory. Combined with this the building of support throughout Merseyside for their struggle against closure, as well as giving support to the trades council's call for a one-day strike on May 9th against unemployment and the closures.

The shop stewards at Speke should work with the Combine Committee to take up a clear position against productivity deals and closures, and to put forward a workers' plan for Leyland — an alternative socialist solution. As well as demanding a cut in the working week with no loss of pay (throughout Leyland) to save jobs.

## ....AT CHRYSLER

Last month Chrysler succeeded in victimising two shop stewards (George and Paul O'Brien), both key militants in the fork-lift drivers section. Their victimisation could not have taken place without the active collaboration of the convenors and the full-time T and G officials who, by their behaviour have made it clear what 'participation' means for them. Chrysler because of the subsidy it is getting, is the first company to sign a 'planning agreement' with the government.

The O'Briens were sacked after they had taken themselves off the clock to investigate a dispute involving fork-lift drivers in the plant. The full-time officials and convenors were on the scene surprisingly quickly and at a meeting between them, management and the O'Briens, management refused to rescind the sacking. When the other fork-lift drivers came out of the plant, management laid the whole plant off — good tactics for them as it meant the left wing stewards had little time to organise. Also they hoped that by doing this they would play on the divisions in the workforce.

When management offered to suspend the O'Briens on full-pay whilst an inquiry was made into the incident, the O'Briens accepted realising that the convenors would not recommend strike action.

The drivers went back to work only when the convenors agreed to support them in any further strike action they felt needed over this issue. Despite this agreement full-time officials and convenors advised a mass meeting not to support the

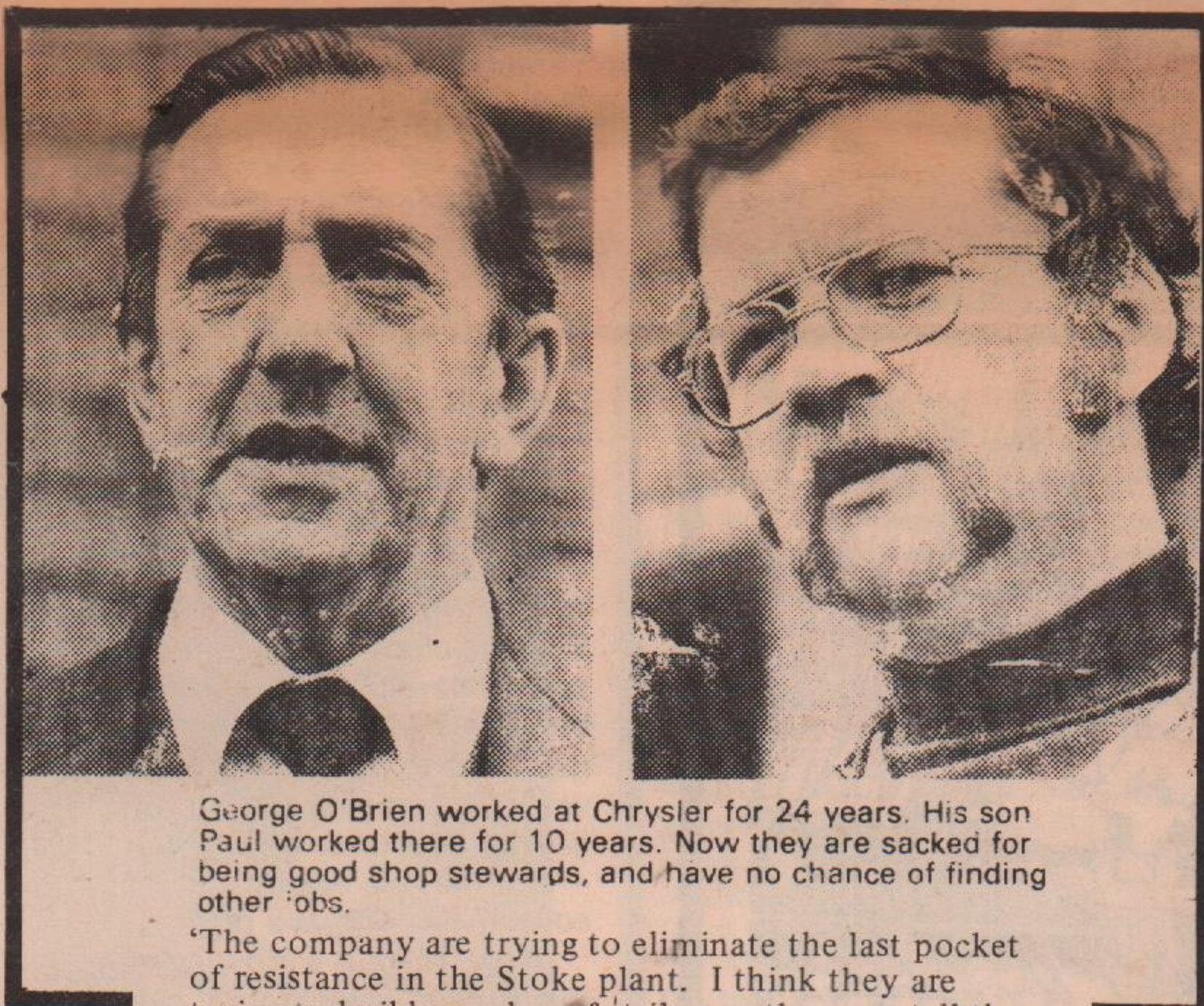
O'Briens when it was made clear that management was not prepared to reinstate them. No speeches from the floor were allowed — they never are at Chrysler — and the vote was 4 to 1 in favour of a return to work, which meant crossing the picket lines of the drivers.

Without fork lift drivers, the only way the plant could be kept going was by management driving the trucks. So here we had convenors backing a situation where managers (with one hours training) were driving fork lift trucks whilst the drivers picketed from the outside!

Sensing it was time for the kill, management sent a letter to all

the drivers that they could be considered in breach of contract and sacked if they did not return to work by the following Tuesday. With threats from management, their stewards outside the plant and the convenors allowing other workers to cross the picket lines, the drivers had little choice but to return to work.

Managements successful attempt to get rid of the O'Briens is a blow to the shop floor at the Stoke plant. Getting rid of key militants is necessary before management launches a full-scale attack on shop-floor organisation. At Stoke as at Cowley, full-time officials and convenors gave management their active support.



George O'Brien worked at Chrysler for 24 years. His son Paul worked there for 10 years. Now they are sacked for being good shop stewards, and have no chance of finding other jobs.

'The company are trying to eliminate the last pocket of resistance in the Stoke plant. I think they are trying to build up a log of strikes so they can tell the government they are justified in pulling out'.

## ....AT ROLLS ROYCE

THE 4,000 ENGINEERS at the Ansty and Parkside engine factories are in the second week of their occupation.

The occupation is the end result of a drawn out set of negotiations. It comes at a time when work was in short supply and the strikers get no tax rebates.

The dispute is being presented as being over 0.3% — the shortfall on the company's 9.7% wages offer. In fact, the reason lies elsewhere.

Rolls Royce is one of the diminishing number of engineering factories still on piecework. Strong organisation over the years has established steady wage drift with top pieceworkers averaging well over £90 a week and the toolroom on £86.

At Parkside, where the occupation started, the 0.3% held back from the across the board offer was

to be used as a pay-off to the remaining 300 or so pieceworkers.

The company has made it perfectly clear that this is the real issue for them. The shop floor leadership however, has offered to talk about piecework going once the 10% claim is conceded.

This attitude could create real problems later on if the dispute becomes a lengthy one. The occupation itself started as a series of sanctions — such as blacking sub-contracted work. When the company responded by suspending the workforce, a work-in was started. When electricity was cut off the work-in became an occupation complete with pickets, braziers and hot soup.

Since then the Ansty (marine engine) factory has joined the Parkside (aero engine) works in dispute and that factory has also been occupied.

The determination of the company and the phoneyess of its claim that the issue at stake is 'liquidity' is shown by the fact that the dispute would cost £60,000 a year to settle, but they are paying £40,000 a week in lay-off money to the staff. Clearly, it is not the 0.3% that the company is fighting about — it is their need to crack down on the piecework wage drift by buying out the agreement and 'controlling cost planning' as they put it.

The 700 TASS members laid off on full pay have responded by levying £2,000 (£3.50 a head) in support, despite management threats that this would lead to their pay being cut off for supporting the dispute.



Picket Line of Leyland's Speke Plant, Liverpool Laurence Sparham (IFL)

## Strike For Health

A strike over health and safety has just ended at Vauxhalls, Ellesmere Port. Management very quickly installed necessary ventilating equipment and have agreed to investigate the possibility of phasing out use of Bostick 1437, the dangerous substance at the centre of the dispute.

The dispute began when a trim-shop worker reported back for work after being off sick from the effects of working with the adhesive Bostick 1437. The glue is used for sticking part of the interior trim to the central pillar of the car body as it passes down the track.

Over the years this job has been notoriously unpopular because of the fumes from the glue which have caused dizziness, nausea and headaches. The turnover on the job has been high.

The worker requested that he be allowed to do some other job, but his foreman was determined that he would have to carry on with the glue job come hell or high water. When the union safety officer was called to the management refused to allow him to be released from his job to carry out his role and the reason given was that he was not qualified to deal with the matter.

The trim section then walked off the job and a mass meeting of the T.G. W.U. workers voted to go home for the rest of the day. This was followed by the night shift and the same

happened the following day. The workers demanded to know what the glue was composed of and if it was being used safely.

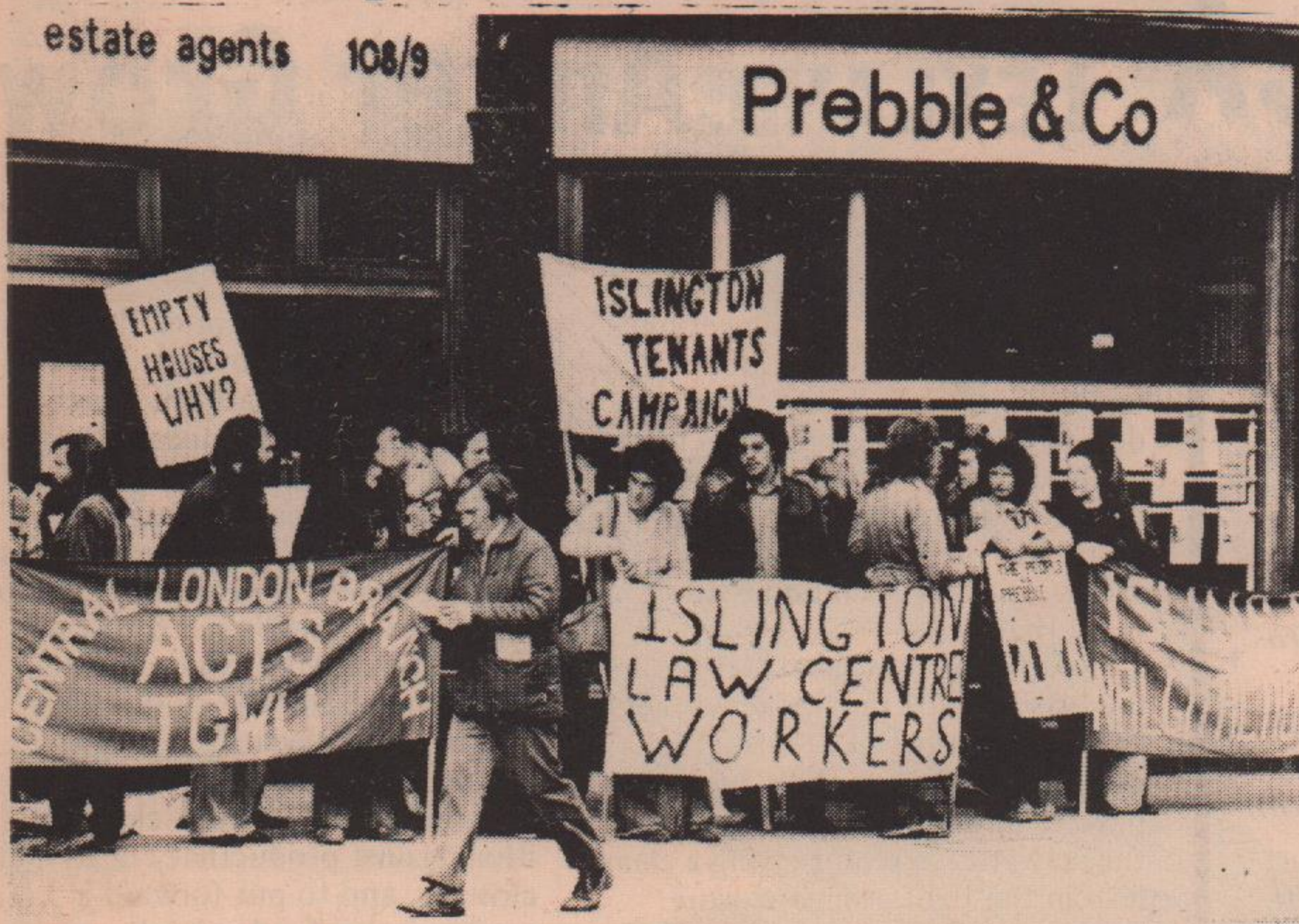
As soon as the mass meeting was called, the management started jumping into action. The safety rep's right to visit the job was immediately conceded. Ventilation equipment was flown in from all over the country. They rang up the manufacturers and discovered that the solvent for the glue was toluene which has a threshold limit value of 100 parts per million. The section was inundated with filters putting up the equipment with safety engineers measuring the concentration of vapour. They claimed that it was below the threshold limit value (TLV), but when the union safety-rep measured it he found it to be 84% above the limit. The ventilated area was measured and found to be well below the limit with the equipment working, but, outside the area it went up above the TLV. The men went back to work, but wouldn't work outside the ventilated part of the track and just let the cars go whether they had finished the job or not. The possibility of replacing the glue with studs is being considered.

A very useful checklist called 'What to do if you have an accident at work' has been produced by C.H.A.S.M. in Coventry. It costs 3p + postage and can be obtained from CHASM, 229 Bredon Avenue, Coventry (phone 0203 456635).



# New squatters hand book

estate agents 108/9



Struggle against a system which creates homelessness and slums as a permanent feature of its housing

THE NEW squatters' handbook is a must for anyone in a squat or intending to squat a house. Although the Criminal Trespass Law does not make squatting illegal it certainly makes it more difficult and makes it even more important for people to understand their position before they open up a squat. At 20p this handbook is packed with this information. The most important section is that on the Criminal Trespass Law and how it will affect squatters. Other sections include how to find a place, moving in, organising to make life better and defend your home, getting the place together, eviction, a section on licencenes, housing associations and co-ops and how to claim social security whilst in a squat. There are also lots of useful addresses and a bibliography.

You can get the handbook from 2, St. Paul's Rd. London N1. 20p + 10p postage and packing

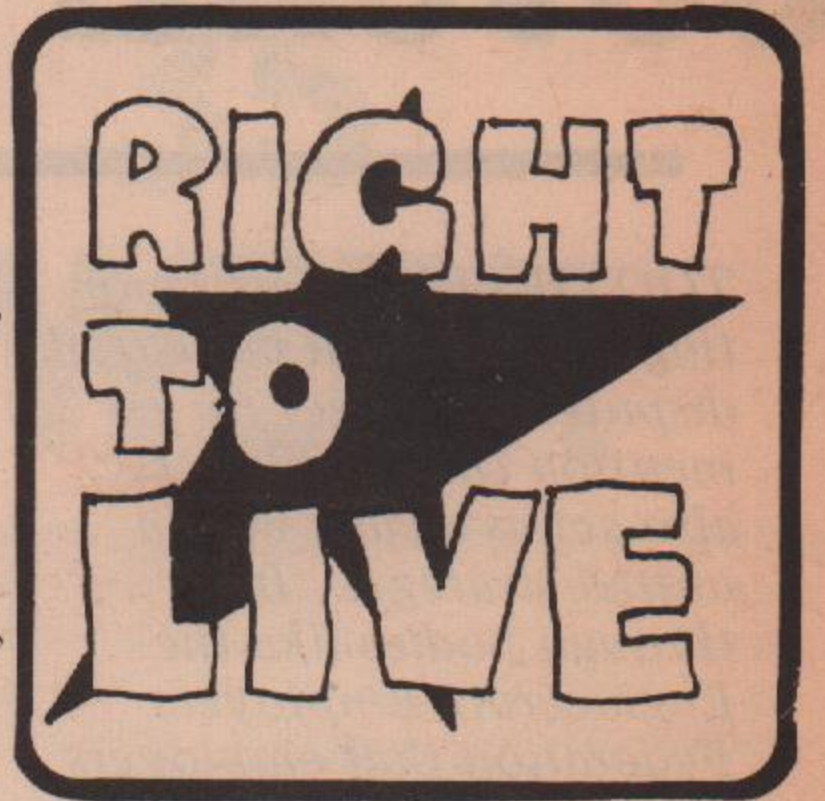
# UNEMPLOYMENT

THIS NEW handbook from the Claimants Union Movement, price 25p isn't up to their usual standard. It's much harder to read than most C.U. handbooks, for a start, being a collection of single page articles which don't really tie together.

The section called "Unemployment" wezzes through "economics", "politics" (unfortunately treated as separate), Labour and Tory parties and Race, in one stunning page. It argues that "big business interests have always opposed full employment", which they haven't, and doesn't put enough stress on their wish for a docile workforce.

The section on the "role of the state" is exceptionally bad giving only a few examples of the state's role, rather than pointing out the major planning ahead that the state does, for the bosses interests and against ours.

Apart from that, the practical information on Benefit Rates, Review Officers and so on is, of course, very useful, while the page on Women and Work is good, showing the influence of feminists within the claimants movement. It must be because the CUs have few worked out ideas on industry that a lot of this pamphlet is disappointing.



However, the Introduction is among the pamphlet's many strengths and explains that "the struggle around unemployment is much more than for "the right to work". It is a struggle for a society freed from the oppression of wage slavery and unemployment. This pamphlet puts forward the need for "a Guaranteed Minimum Income for every person in or out of employment. This should be available to every person or group of individuals as of right with clear legal entitlement."

# The Local State

## Cynthia Cockburn

A LOT of the 'new politics' of the the 1960's and 70's has been concerned with the areas of our lives outside the factory or office - as we grapple with the problems of being a tenant, resident, housewife, school-kid or pensioner, in a society which creates these problems in an attempt to shore-up the power of our rulers.

Many of the struggles have been recorded in papers like **Big Flame** or **Community Action**, but they are not often put into the overall context of the fight between Capital and Labour. Cynthia Cockburn in her book, **The Local State**, has remedied this by pulling together the strands of what is often inaccurately called community political and explaining their importance inside a Marxist perspective.

The book has two main themes. Firstly, the internal changes of local government - adopting business management principles (corporate management) and the new District and County Council structure, and the setting up of various 'community development' programmes are two sides of the same coin. This has happened in response to the development of the class struggle and the encouragement of central government. This is why Cockburn calls Local Government the 'Local State' - it is fully linked with the overall aims and structures of the State in London.

### THE NEW TERRAIN OF CLASS STRUGGLE

The second theme defines 'community politics' firmly in marxist terms. Social struggles have to be seen as central, not peripheral, to the struggle between capital and labour. They are struggles within the field of the reproduction of capitalism, that is, reproducing the labour force (using housing, education etc. to produce the next generation of workers) and reproducing the relations of production (how the ruling class ensures that people have the "right" attitudes to using schools, the family, welfare agencies.)

By using this framework we can see the importance of the increased consciousness and organisation of women as housewives, and the links between increasingly militant local government employees and their 'clients' - the receivers of local government services. The system we live in is not the product of conspirators sitting in Whitehall or the CBI, but an outcome of the ebb and flow of class struggle. For example, the Welfare State was a product of working class struggle and expectations. But it was not a total gain for us because to the state and capital it was not a total loss. That is, it allowed capital to produce a more efficient, productive workforce; increasing capital

accumulation, control over our lives, and diverting working class discontent.

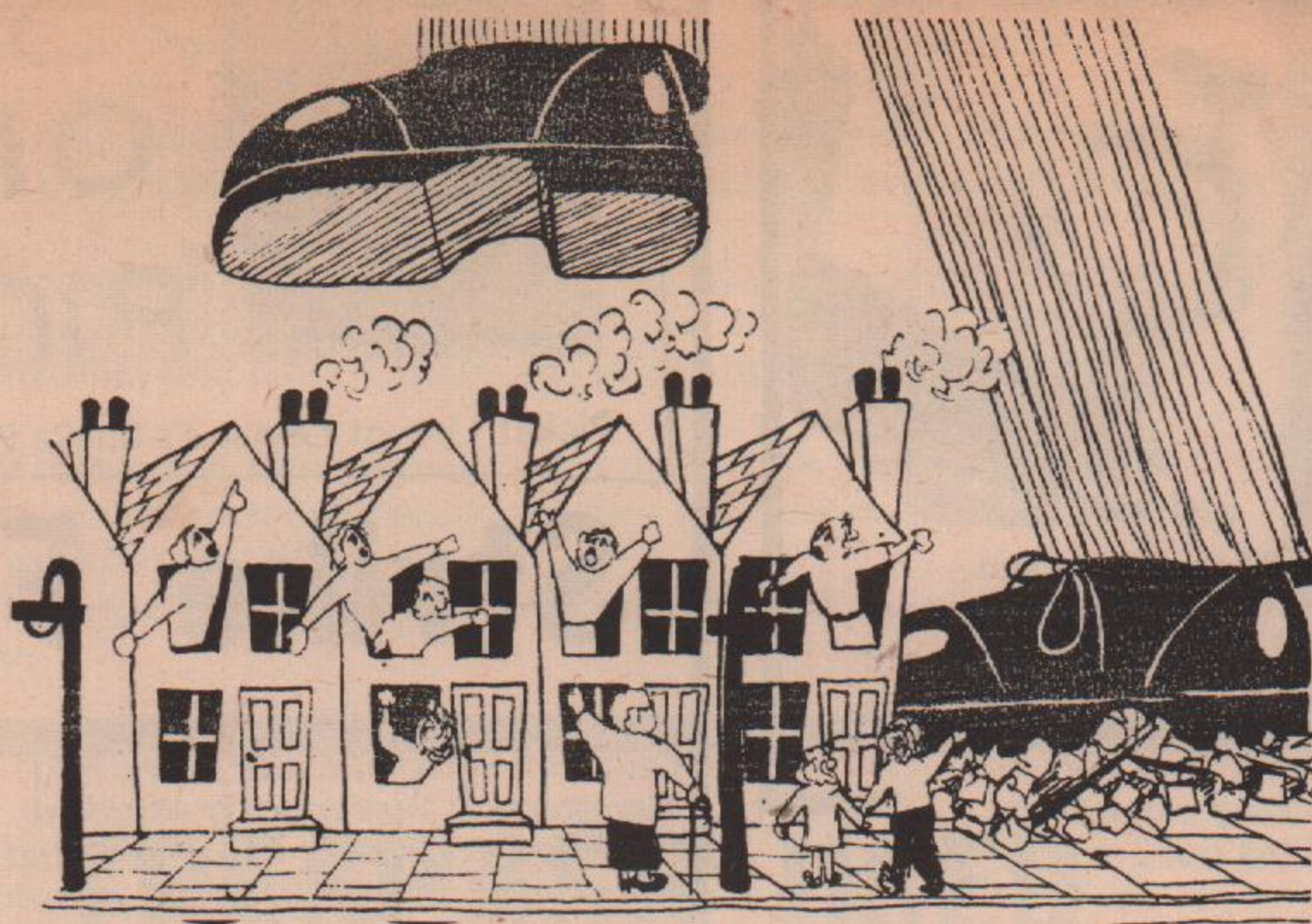
### SQUATTING

An example of the type of struggle dealt with by Cockburn is squatting.

A pamphlet has been produced recently about a group of squatters in Nottingham.

It is written by one of the squatters and tells the story of what happened when nine people (including two kids) took over a large empty house in the city

"The Local State" by Cynthia Cockburn Pluto Press. £2.50. Dancing House Squat is available both from Box 2, NV, c/o People's Centre, 33 Mansfield Rd, Nottingham; and from Publishing Distribution Co-operative, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.



# Up against a brick wall

THE NATIONAL Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and Services to Community Action and Tenants (SCAT) have got together to produce this pamphlet about housing policy.

It deals, in a question and answer section, with some of the myths there are about housing, exploding the one which suggests that the housing problem has been solved and showing how, despite their promises, the Labour Government has brought about some enormous cuts in council house construction.

It goes on to show how the cuts are affecting housing in this country, how rents have increased but with cut backs in Direct Works Departments the waiting list for repairs has got longer and longer, and how Council housebuilding, improvement of older properties and redevelopment have all been affected by the cuts. The pamphlet also points out how the cuts in housing have affected jobs.

In its final section the pamphlet looks at the effects which the Government's Green Paper on housing will have and how this could compare with what we need - a socialist housing policy.

This pamphlet would be useful to anyone interested in housing. It provides useful facts and figures to use in discussions and with the use of the question/answer technique it is quite easy to find your way around.

One of the best things about the pamphlet is the way it makes links between the effects of the cuts on tenants and people working in the housing field: Direct Workers, caretakers etc. As it says in the conclusion: "Cooperation between trade unionists and community groups is essential if the housing battle is to be won."

Available from SCAT, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

# SCIENCE FOR PEOPLE

EVERY DAY, we watch ads on the telly for pills for headaches, bath salts for aching backs, iron tablets for when you're feeling run-down. We go to chemists and buy expensive make-up with 'natural' ingredients to give us a glowing look. Women's magazines always have a page of 'dear doctor's' advice and every cigarette packet now has a government warning. You'd think the new age of health and natural beauty had dawned.

But there's more to health than swallowing a pill. In this society, being fit means *being fit for work*, vitality means looking good to hook your partner and impress your boss, and if you happen to be born a cripple, then your best is never good enough. You're always a second class citizen

But supposing you lived in a society where you didn't have to beat the clock all the time? Where people were treated as flesh and blood and feelings rather than just machines to put in a hard day's work for someone else's profit? That is what a socialist society would do - end the rule of profit and put *collective* health as a priority.

Now, there is a growing movement of struggles around health care. Issue 38 of *Science for the People* has drawn together the work of many of these different

## HEALTH ISSUE SPECIAL

nervous · anxious · irritable · fatigued · restless nights

While you're calming her down with a tranquilizer.

treat what may be her real problem with PREMARIN CONJUGATED ESTROGENS TABLETS, U.S.P.

A Drug Company's View of Women

groups and is very exciting as the beginning of a dialogue between them. There's something to interest everyone in this issue, and more importantly, there are no hard and fast lines laid down about the correct approach to the state of your body. Instead, there are arguments and examples from different campaigns.

- the fight to stop the cuts and save the Elizabeth! Garret Anderson Hospital by having an occupation.

- a history of the NHS and the way it's tied to the economic ups and downs of the country, so that just when you need it most, the government is slashing it to ribbons.

- an analysis of where medical students come from and the way they are taught which combine to make them treat working class patients with contempt.

- news of a large amount of work done in the women's movement for control of our bodies around abortion, contraception, self-help groups and home childbirth.

All the articles in this magazine have further references and there are book reviews as well. As well as making it open to people to find out more about what interests them, *Science for the People* is also organising a conference in the summer to discuss the relationships between these many campaigns and ways of taking action.

*Science for the People* 38 costs 30p: it is available from any left wing bookshop or from BSSRS, 9 Poland St, London W1.





# Women— Beware of the National Front

THE NAZIS in Germany gained much of their support from the traditional right wing, by expressing 'concern' about 'moral degeneration' in the country. In the same way the fascists of today strongly oppose the womens liberation and gay liberation movements. In their terms signs of this same 'moral degeneration'. They seek a return to 'old style' authoritarian family life, with its repressive sexual morality, and women and children firmly 'in their place'. This is just one aspect of their philosophy, which denies people genuine control over their own lives and makes them subordinate to an all-powerful state.

In two recent articles in 'Spearhead', the National Front have made their position plain. In

the first one 'The feminine condition' the writer attempts to make his attack on Women Liberation sound convincing by using the writing of right wing biologists and psychologists to back up his views — in much the same way that fascists have done with ideas of racial 'superiority.'

He attempts to prove that the 'roles' that men and women are expected to play are not due to the way people are brought up, and what is expected of them, but to their physical differences which completely determine their behaviour.

(Just as Jews in Nazi Germany were described as the 'syphilis of the nation' because they were said to be biologically inferior.)

He claims, on 'scientific' evidence that 'masculine' and 'feminine' brains cause us to think differently, women, of course being less capable of rational thought. A good excuse, if ever the NF came to power for giving girls a second rate education, and excluding women from jobs where rational thinking is required.

He asserts that the tendency towards aggression in men is not just

that they have been taught 'to be tough', and to reject anything that may seem 'feminine' but is caused by a 'high concentration of androgens in the body'. 'Power, resistance, energy, combativity, the hunting instinct, the itch to conquer and dominate' are all supposedly male characteristics, a convenient explanation for 'masculine pursuits such as rape, where the male urge to dominate and conquer is being displayed — proof of being a 'real man'. Of course, this view of masculinity also serves to glorify the thuggish activities in which the National Front takes part.

His view of women on the other hand, is that they are characterised by 'submission, passivity, sensibility, tenderness and intuition'. Perhaps he never saw pictures of Vietnamese or Angolan women fighting in their national liberation struggles.

This view of women provides for the National Front, and other fascist groups, the explanation of why women should be denied any other place in society than in the home, in fact it gives them the opportunity to glorify this position, as the 'spiritual' heart of the traditional family, rather than someone at everyone's beck and call, whose working hours never finish.

We are told, however, that womens material dependence on men is compensated for, by a 'variety of psychological and sentimental influences' that she exerts over the man. In other words, in the fascists 'ideal world', the woman has no place in society in her own right, but must try to gain the things she wants by manipulating her male acquaintances!

In the second article the NF leader John Tyndall puts all this 'scientific' evidence to good use. He piously suggests that the church, particularly those members of it that have attacked his organisation, should be more concerned about this country's 'moral sickness'. This 'sickness' is apparently due to the 'breakdown of family life' in Britain, the 'growth of one parent families' and the 'irresponsible' behaviour that leads to them.

Many people, such as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (an anti-abortion organisation), members of the Festival of Light, or traditional conservatives look back sentimentally to a time when 'Christian

values' ruled the family. The NF wants to influence these people in order to swell their own ranks. Of course what went on under the surface of Christian family life is not to be talked about — illegal backstreet abortions resulting in the death of thousands of women, mothers with 'illegitimate' children treated as outcasts without the possibility of keeping themselves alive; homosexuals, jailed and hounded, and for the majority of women complete and utter dependence on their husbands. This is the 'good old days' to which the NF would have us return.

Their desire to influence the Mary Whitehouses of this world can be seen in the following statement 'Our literature and theatre with the encouragement of TV, have become cesspits in which all manner of moral depravity and perversion abound. Presumably the 'perversions' to which they refer are not their own racist and sexist ideas!

Finally we read that they 'do not accept the rocketing rate of illegitimacy' and nor will they attempt to 'make life easier' for those who 'breed illegitimate children'. Here again we see what their so-called morality really

means — not to ensure that all children have a decent standard of living, but to make life impossible, materially and socially for women who, for whatever reason, find themselves outside the family situation. Especially where women have actually chosen this way of life.

Of course, even without NF interference, women can not easily choose to live independently. But what the NF want, as did their German Nazi friends, is to reverse the gains that women, through their struggles, have made.

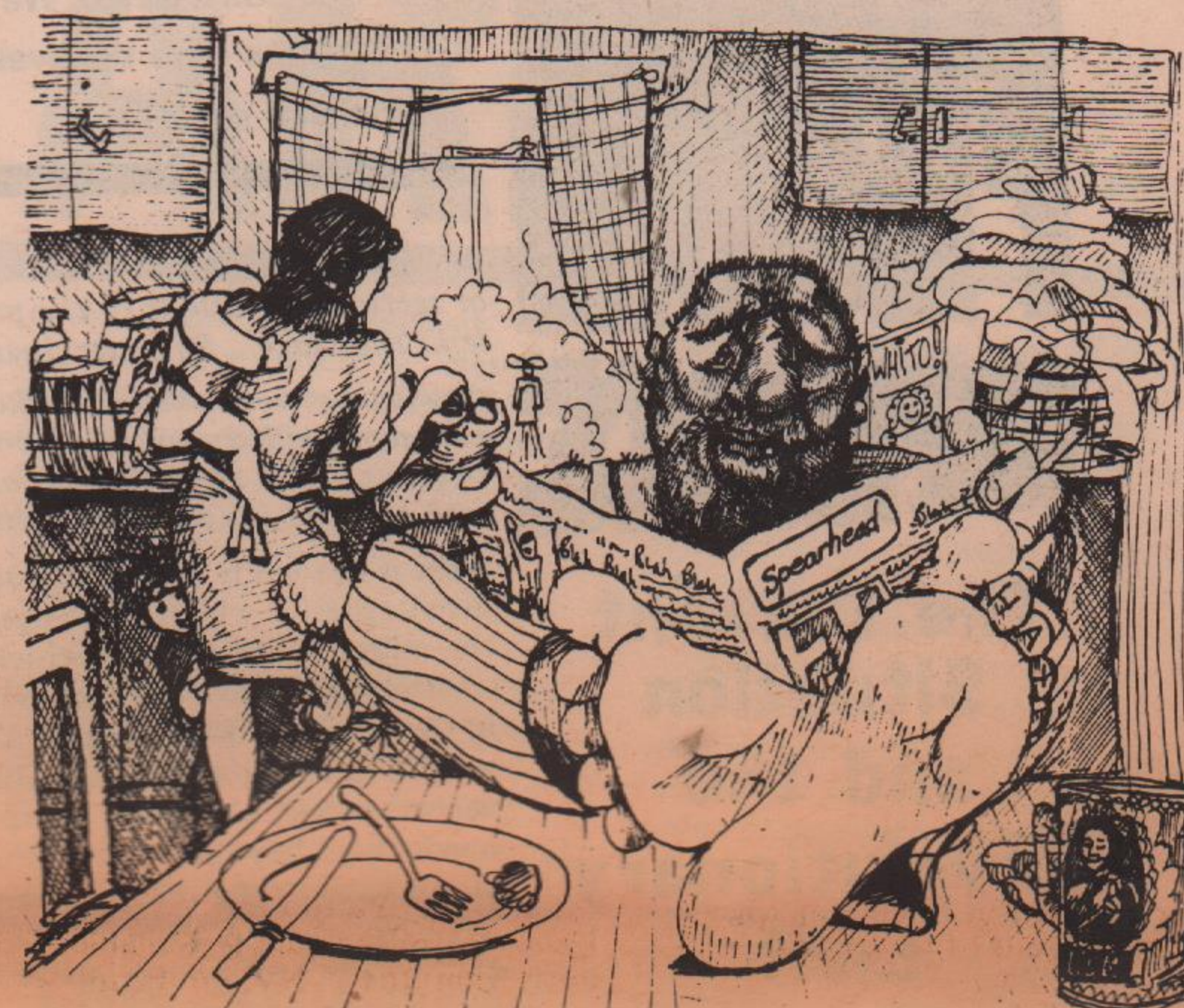
There are several reasons why the NF adopt these positions. On an immediate level, whether or not they adopt this strict morality for themselves, they hope to gain the confidence of the traditional right wing, who do believe in it.

In the longer term, they know that in a fascist regime, the authoritarian family with its emphasis on sexual purity and women submissively in their place, is a necessary part of political control. And the opposite is also true — that the demands of womens liberation and gay liberation, which are attempts to bring women's and gays' lives under their own control, would present the fascists with an intolerable threat.

# Racists attack old people



The Levy's smashed door: the Levy's are one of several old couples in North London who are being terrorised by fascists. The same week their front door was kicked in, they were shot at and got someone on the phone saying 'Get out, Jew bastards. Asians in the Stroud Green and Muswell Hill area have also been attacked and slogans saying 'Hitler was right' have gone up in the area. Though the police claim 'to be taking the attacks very seriously', they have not come up with much hard information. In the meantime, the Levys live in terror, as Ester Levy says 'We sit here in fear as it starts to get dark'. This is the reality for victims of fascist brutality in England to-day.



Family Life 'NF Style' (From a leaflet of Hackney Committee Against Racism and Hackney Socialist Feminist Group.)

# Why I was a racist

Recently a leading member of the NF in Leeds stopped being a racist when his Asian workmates supported his fight against sacking. In this article, an anti-fascist militant writes about his childhood in Wolverhampton and the reasons he supported the racist ideas of Powell.

WHEN ENOCH Powell made his 'Rivers of blood' speech in 1968, he took over in the minds of the people of Wolverhampton, from where Stan Cullis had left off — he put the place back on the map.

Wolverhampton is an important centre for car foundries and engineering, but lacks a strong socialist tradition. The workshops and small factories of the past, when the boss worked on the same bench as the workers, blurred class distinctions so that the Tories had a lot of working class support, including my family.

During the fifties and sixties, in response to massive advertising from, among others, Enoch Powell, as Minister of Health, there was a steady influx into Wolverhampton of poor people from the shanty towns of the West Indies and the villages of Northern India. Because of the low wages they got, they automatically gravitated to the worst housing, in places like Whitmore Reans, Snow Hill and Bricklin Street, where my gran lived. Houses were hard to come by anyway, and a lot of the landlords were real Rachmans, who took advantage to charge exorbitant rents and avoid doing repairs. So a lot of immigrants clubbed together to buy a house, and found it hard to refuse when their mates came round looking for a place to live. That's why the overcrowding occurred.

Wolverhampton was all most people knew — in places like Bricklin Street the same families had

lived next door for generations, and life revolved around the boozers and corner shops. Now the corner shops were being taken over by immigrants and, as the whites who could move out to the new council estates, the new neighbours didn't even speak English, let alone Wulvrunic, and played 'strange' music which came through the thin walls at all hours.

Apart from football, tenpin bowling and Monday night dances at the Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, like most other places, didn't have much for young people. You had to wear trousers and short hair to get into the clubs, so you got gangs of lads with lots of energy and nothing to do roaming round the town at night, with the predictable results. The West Indian lads were respected because of the music, and their 'aggro', especially one gang called the 'In Crowd' but the Asian kids were too different to understand, and so got rejected. All that has changed a lot since, especially when I saw the Asian kids go into action against the NF kids at Winson Green last year, and there are a lot of multi-racial gangs in Wolverhampton now.

I went to a Grammar School, where I was constantly put down by the teachers for my accent and made to feel ashamed of being working class, but by seventeen I was confident enough to identify with my background against the school. Just like lots of lads and girls, racism was attractive to me, in that it meant you could rebel against the system with the implicit support of your family. Plus let's face it, it's a lot easier to be a racist when there are no blacks to face, which is one reason why Powellism is still strongest on the all-white Council estates like the one where I lived.

But the real clincher for why I became a firm Powellite was the reaction of the middle class, whose abstract, liberal tolerance was totally irrelevant, ill-informed and patronising. "They don't have to live next door to them" was the racist response. I remember vividly a TV discussion following on a documentary about racism in Wolverhampton in which a middle-class do-gooder from Hampstead said "To be terribly frank, one finds the speech of the white people in Wolverhampton quite as alien as that of the ethnic minority"

And so racism and class-hatred became intertwined. I spoke in a debate on immigration at school in favour of Powell, totally unmoved by the 'classless' argument that racism is "nasty and unChristian". I still get the creeps when I hear that "One race, the human race" line, because it allows the NF to manipulate the germ of class consciousness in a racist direction. That's why they try to nail the revolutionary left as 'nigger lovers', students and 'do-gooders'.

Racism in the late '60s was primarily an emotional response to changes which were happening too quickly to comprehend without a socialist understanding.

It is only through developing ways of organising and struggling against what Capitalism does to our lives which can bring concrete victories in the here and now — in building the reality of working class power — that we will break down racism. Because racism is an expression of fear and powerlessness as much as anything else. Had the left been able to translate the abstract slogan of 'black and white, unite and fight' into a real struggle for adequate housing, decent class sizes, the racists would never have been able to make play with their fake concern for white workers. It is all the more urgent that we are able to do so this time round.



# SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Mass unemployment, the growth of fascism, and the most right-wing Labour Government since the 1930s — these are the problems facing today's working class movement. The end of the post-war booms and the drastic shift to the right of British politics in recent years means that we are now in a new period.

However, the thinking of the left is still firmly anchored in the past. Unless we can take account of the changes in the class struggle, how can we stop the drift to the right?

The need for new strategies and new ways of organising: that's the focus for debate at Big Flame's 3rd National Conference in London this month. We'll be talking about these issues because we don't believe that there are any timeless solutions.

On these pages we review the discussions coming up at our conference. We think they will be of interest to everyone who believes in the need for the creation of a socialist society.

# BIG FLAME CONFERENCE

## The Current Situation and the Revolutionary Left

*'Over the past three and a half years of Labour Government, unemployment has increased by far more than one million; the working class has suffered a major cut in its standard of living; there have been heavy cuts in housing, health and education; and the trade unions have been tied even closer to the state, making the conditions for class struggle ever more difficult.'*

*Now this is being followed by an extremely important (but little understood) political attack on the power of the working class in the workplace. The bosses want to use their present strong position in relation to the working class to permanently alter the balance of power between themselves and the working class. They want to force us to work much harder (through productivity deals, cuts in manning, increase in mobility, more flexibility) and at the same time to dramatically reduce our ability to fight back — through destroying our unity and workplace organisation where we've built it up over the years, through negotiating tighter disciplinary and procedural agreements, through 'no strike' guarantees, and through attempts to involve shop stewards and convenors in local shop floor management 'participation'.*

This is how the report from Big Flame's Industrial Commission describes the situation. It goes on to explain why the working class takes all this from the Labour Government and the trade union leadership. It's not, as some sections of the left see, simply a matter of the ideological hold of reformist leaders in the unions or the Labour Party. Reformism has a real basis in the way production is organised:

*"At a time of growing divisions in the working-class, particularly with the growth of unemployment, workers don't feel that the working class as a whole has the power or unity to challenge the system —*

*so they organise around individual or sectional solutions to the problems they face. So acute divisions grow up between skilled workers and semi-skilled workers; men and women; white and black; those with a waged job and those without."*

What is needed is an overall socialist alternative which challenges the militant sectionalism which has traditionally kept reformism alive in the British working class. And as 'The need for a Socialist Alternative' argues, a socialist alternative needs to go beyond "the traditional positions of the revolutionary left ('No cuts', 'Right to Work', etc.). Given that many militants are themselves posing questions like 'production of what?' 'what kind of health service do we need?' etc., there is no reason why we can't."

## Which Way for Big Flame

The doubt and uncertainty as to the best way forward which is in Big Flame is shared by comrades in other revolutionary organisations and unaligned militants. There is a shared belief that there is a potential for revolutionary politics in this country which is being lost because of the inability of revolutionaries and revolutionary organisations to throw off ways of thinking inherited from the past. We all agree in Big Flame on the need for a new 'mass' revolutionary socialist organisation and we do not see the regroupment of existing revolutionary organisations as a substitute for the building of a new one, though the former may be a stage towards the latter. But there is argument inside Big Flame as to which way this new organisation is best built.

There are those who believe that our main priority must be to fight for those politics which are specific to Big Flame (summed up as 'mass politics tendency') and that it is a tactical matter of secondary importance whether we do that inside a new, larger organisation or on our own and there are those who believe that the fight for our politics in joint work with comrades from other political tendencies must precede any moves towards organisational unity.

In any case, there is general agreement that Big Flame must take recruitment more seriously, something we have neglected in the past and as soon as possible set up a programme of cadre training and more comprehensive internal education for our members.

## What kind of Organisation?

Much of the debate at this Conference centres on the kind of organisation we would like to see and its relations with the working class struggle. As more than one document makes clear, Big Flame's present views about organisation and the role of the revolutionary party owe a lot to Lenin. For Lenin, the party was indispensable in overcoming the unevenness of the class struggle and in generalising the needs of the distinct sections of the working class, "the greater variety of movements and struggle increases the need for organisations which can provide political and practical link-up points." There are strong criticisms of traditional positions which are felt to be outdated: "Leninism has implicitly depended on a model of the party as the focal point of an industrial working class, as a large structure which had satellite arms in non-industrial sectors. This has made it difficult to adapt to a situation where the vanguard parties are small and the non-industrial movements large and independent. The Leninist theory of vanguard-masses must be re-situated inside these new developments. Those who fail and who see the solution still as building party sections among black people and youth: inevitably produce manipulative and politically uncomprehending relationships to the new movements."

This view of the revolutionary party tends to produce a type of revolutionary which is also outdated: "The Leninist model has assumed the cadre as professional revolutionary, full-time, floating and free. That had lot of validity in a revolutionary era (i.e. when revolution was an imminent possibility), with large parties having consistent dialogue with mass movements. Sacrifice and a lack of concern with personal questions was part of the ethos of what one German revolutionary called "dead men on leave." While sacrifices are still called for today, the prospect of a long revolutionary process in relatively small organisations requires a concern for the social-personal aspect of activity and a means of making accessible to part-time activists with kids."

Several comrades develop these ideas in their opposition to a draft constitution for Big Flame which comes up for discussion at the conference.

*"The proposed constitution represents one more step towards ortho-*

*doxy and one step away from the innovation which has so far characterised Big Flame."*

*"It is the great strength of Big Flame — a unique contribution to the development of the revolutionary left — that we have been able to show that it is possible to combine an anti-authoritarian tradition with a Marxist framework to create a highly democratic and centralised political organisation. The questioning of authority and the concentration of power is a major component of all progressive social movements. The abuse of power in the Soviet Union is one of the most repugnant features of so-called communism for many working-class people." (Democratic Centralism — No Way!)*

Not so draconian in reality is the draft constitution. For the first time it sets out clearly the workings of the organisation and the rights of individuals. In the sense that it proposes a control commission — a kind of court of appeal for the membership — it could even be said to be a decentralising constitution. It calls for an elected National Committee — to replace our present delegate body — which will elect a National Secretariat responsible for the day to day running of the organisation. Most amendments centre on this question of election versus delegation of the National Committee and also on its and the Secretariat's powers. An important point in the draft constitution is that for the first time Big Flame members would have powers to re-call their National Committee members and to convene the National Conference.

Several Documents question the nature of our leadership:

*"We need to reject — I take it we do reject — the approach of some Trotskyists that only the National Committee initiates (either most or occasionally all the time, depending on the particular Trotskyists one has in mind), while the rest of us march in disciplined ranks behind. We also need to modify the idea that the National Committee should be a body of "the most experienced.... comrades", which really means the "best." (Comments and Amendments to the Draft Constitution)*

Finally, a member of the Secretariat, Big Flame's day-to-day leading body, calls for special attention to be given "to the needs of women, especially those with kids, and to working class people" in preparation for leadership positions. This is because "it needs to be established that leadership is not the exclusive preserve of particu-

*lar people or types of people. Bourgeois society equips some people with the skills of leadership. It teaches them to write documents, to make political analysis, to make speeches. We have to ensure that our organisation provides all our militants with those skills. We have to take account of the social, sexual and racial oppression of class society in the political preparation of our militants." (leadership and leaderism)*

## Socialist Unity and the Labour Government

A resolution at our second conference in Liverpool in 1976 committed Big Flame to supporting "socialist alternative" candidates in local and national elections. All the motions for this conference favour our continued involvement in the Socialist Unity campaigns. After this two opposing positions emerge: those who say that Socialist Unity must remain an electoral coalition; those who want to go beyond electoral work to create a "real working class base."

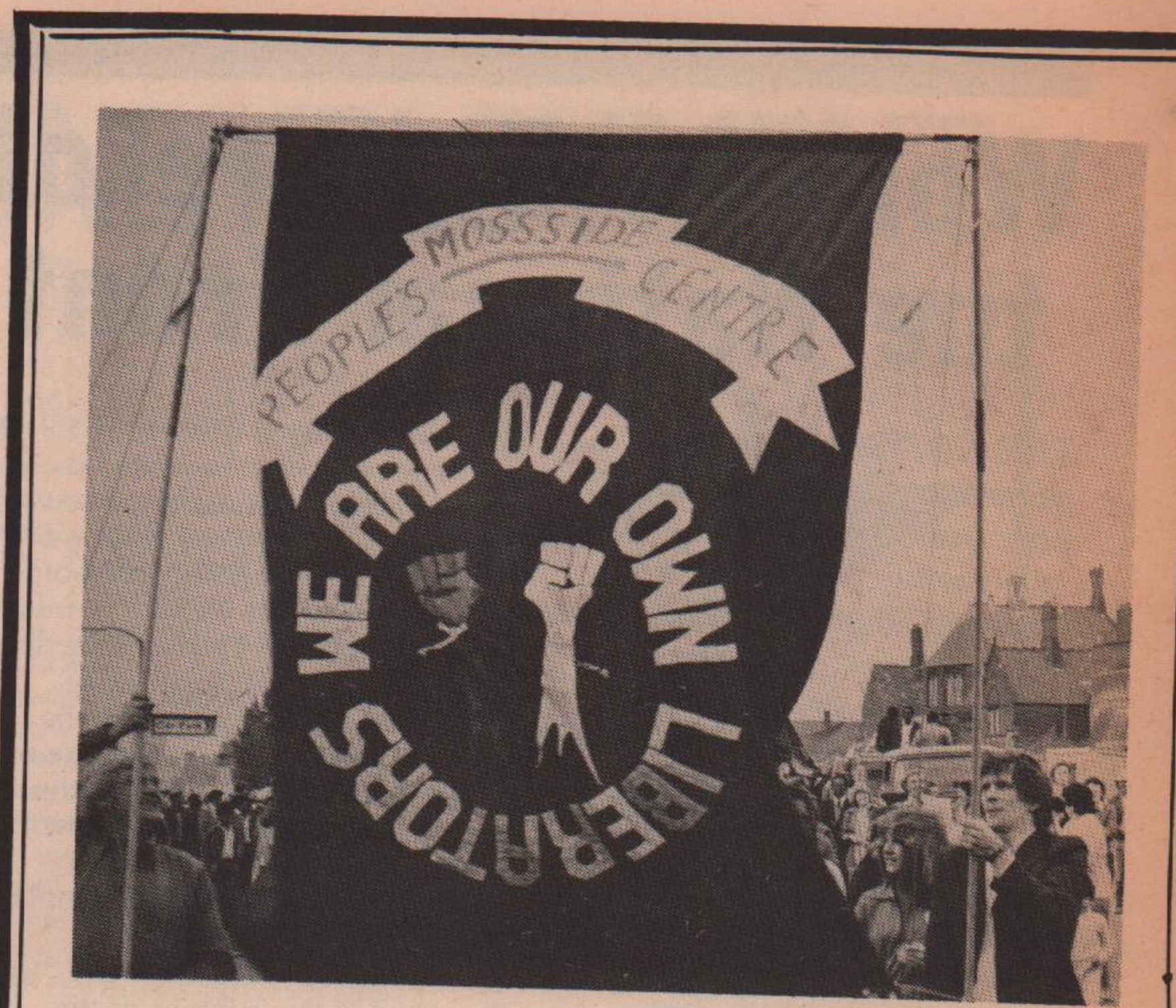
A second debate is about what we should do in areas where there are no Socialist Unity candidates. Do we call for an abstention as three West London Big Flame members argue:

*"The only situation in which we could call for a Labour vote would be in the case of a probable massive Tory majority — which could lead to a major defeat for the working class. But given the popularity of Labour in certain sections of the middle and ruling classes, and with the rise of Welsh and Scottish nationalism, this is an unlikely eventuality."*

So in the General Election, unless there is a major change in the situation, we should call for a vote for Socialist Unity or SWP where they are standing, and abstention — no vote for Labour, no vote for the Tories or National Front where there is no revolutionary candidate. In local elections, there is no reason why we should not support strongly anti-racist, class-struggle Labour candidates."

The opposing position of a vote for Labour, based on what he calls the "lesser evil" argument, is put by a Liverpool comrade, with this proviso

*"It does not mean that like the Communist Party and Labour left we should be afraid of developing class struggle so far that a Labour government might fall and the Tories return. The threat of a Tory return*



BIG FLAME PHOTO

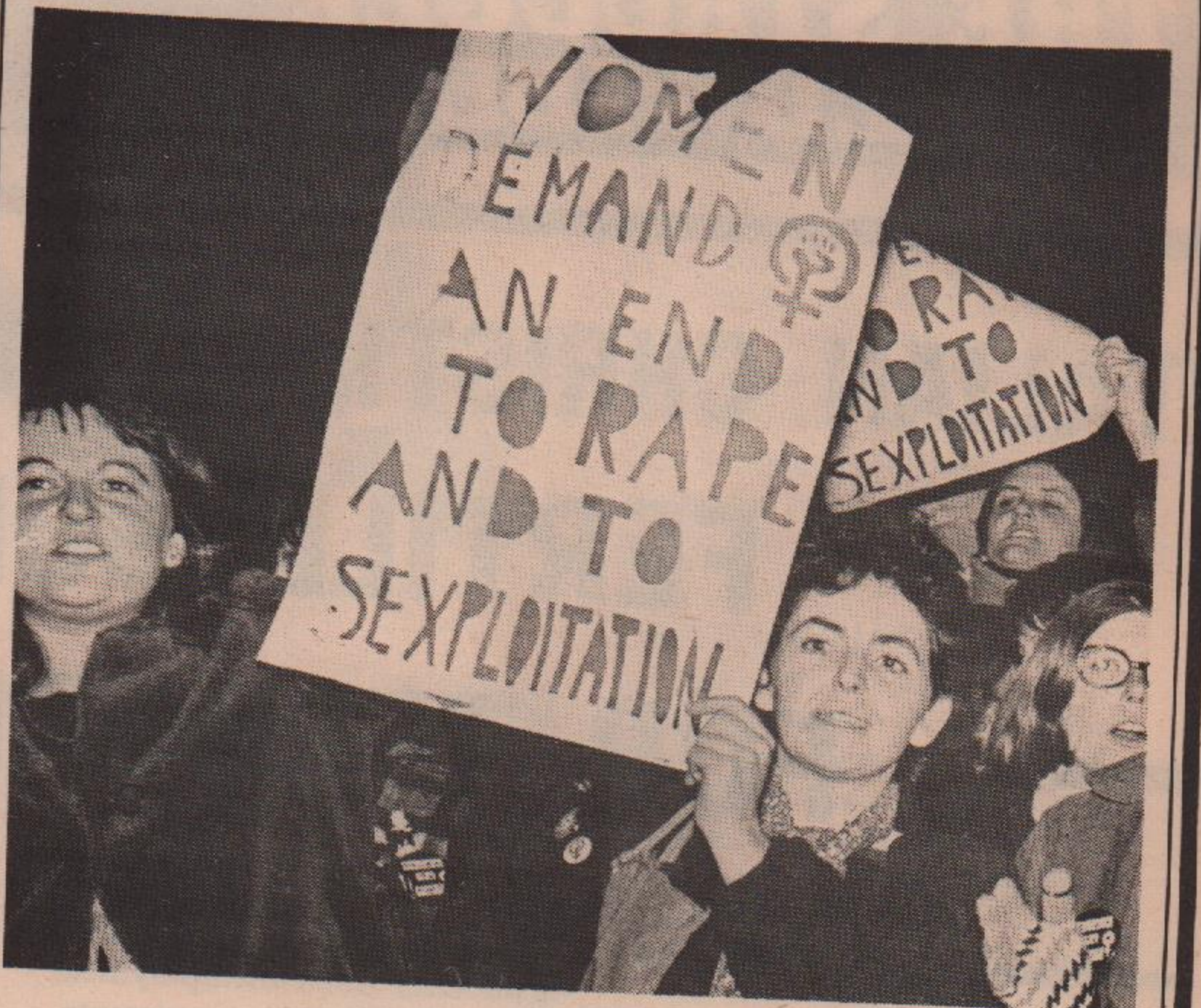
Mosside (Manchester) People's Centre Banner.

# WHICH





Trade Union Mass Rally in Support of Grunwick Strikers. July 1977.



Women Marching to 'reclaim the Night'.

ANDREW WIARD (Report)

ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

# WAY FORWARD?

can never be accepted as blackmail on working-class mobilisation. The Labour government or any future Labour government as a lesser evil is only a minor consideration against the overriding need to build class struggle and a socialist opposition."

Superficially, the call for a vote for Labour seems to line Big Flame up with the IMG. But there is a clear difference in the basis for this position between the two organisations which rests on two starkly contrasting views of the nature of reformism.

"IMG describes the Labour Party as a bourgeois party politically – but as the 'mass party of the working class'. They see the reformism of the working class as a result of ideological illusions that the masses have in Labour. They therefore believe that the key to breaking reformism is to keep the Labour in power and on the spot. So that gradually these illusions and beliefs can be shattered as the masses see in practice who is for them and who against."

For us, the reformism of the working class is not the result of continuing ideological illusions in Labour and its policies. Reformism, the lack of anti-capitalist struggle and consciousness – is quite simply the result of the weakness of the socialist revolutionary alternative. So come elections the continuing working-class vote for Labour will be for much the same reasons we have argued above: not active socialist hopes in the 'mass party of the working class', but the more down to earth realism and cynicism that Labour is at least better than Tory."

This is the motion he proposes:

1. At the next election the priority for Big Flame is to build Socialist Unity and the local and national class struggle in general. Whatever the outcome of the elections, the prospect will still be hard class struggle against the new government, Labour or Tory.
2. However we are not indifferent to the composition of the next government. We are for the return of a Labour government.
3. We say this because a Tory victory will be a boost for the right-wing in every sphere of society. And because the winning over of rank and file Labour activists to revolutionary perspectives will be aided with a continued Labour administration.
4. We raise the slogan 'For a Labour government but build the struggle against Labour's policies.'

## Our Newspaper

There is a wide range of views about the future of our newspaper. One document 'On the Newspaper' which rejects collaboration with 'Socialist Challenge' argues strongly for maintaining the separate existence of Big Flame and for strengthening it especially as a means for the education of our own members.

On the other hand, in their 'Way Forward' two Liverpool members, would like us to negotiate with Socialist Challenge towards transforming it into a "democratically run, popular newspaper, aimed at the broadest possible vanguard of militants." If that

can't be done, we should examine the alternatives to our present unsatisfactory monthly paper.

## Ireland

The Irish Commission calls on the organisation:

"to make a serious commitment to building the United Troops Out Movement (UTOM) at a local and national level by:

- i) Investigating and reporting on the possibility of supporting or building UTOM branches in every area in which we have a presence.
  - ii) giving practical and political support to the national role the Irish Commission plays in the developing of a national anti-imperialist movement."
- It also puts forward agreement on a three point position on Ireland as the condition of membership of Big Flame. The three points are:
- a) supports the right of the Irish people as whole to national self determination.
  - b) is in solidarity with all forces fighting British imperialism in Ireland.
  - c) recognises the crucial importance of building a single anti-imperialist movement in Ireland on the question of Ireland.

## Towards Independent Rank and File Organisation in the Workplace

The Industrial Commission lays down a "plan for our activity in the workplaces over the coming period":

"In the next three months we will be publishing a political manual for industrial militants, aimed at analysing the problems facing militants in today's defensive situation. It's aimed both at educating militants and developing our ideas about mass work, which is the key area of difference we have with other political tendencies on the revolutionary left.

After the publication of the pamphlet, we're planning a series of open educationals and a number of public meetings in areas where there are groups or sympathisers. This will provide a basis for opening up the commission to a wide range of militants outside Big Flame as a forum for discussion and for the co-ordination of mass work interventions in a widening range of industries. The long-term aim of all our

isations, work in "Fightback" and the motor industry "Network" group – is the development of a genuine mass rank and file movement (small r, small f) which goes beyond the limitations of trade unionism, and which also goes beyond the economism and the party domination of the SWP controlled "Rank and File Movement". We do not rule out working in some "Rank and File" groups, alongside the SWP, however, as a means of developing unity at the base around a mass work initiative."

## The Struggle against Racism and Fascism

The problem with a lot of the present campaigns, according to

"Which way forward for Anti-Racist and Anti-fascist Work" is that they focus too narrowly on physical confrontation with the fascists. Not enough is being done to deal with the widespread racism in our society. The Socialist Unity campaign in Brixton has meant a leap forward for the campaign against immigration controls. Now, Big Flame is asked to contact sympathetic organisations about holding a national conference on controls.

This document also wants to see a conference organised on the "Strong State": the growth of police power and the extension of state interference in all aspects of life. And it talks of the need "to encourage the growth of an autonomous revolutionary socialist black movement as a prerequisite for real class unity."

## Socialist Feminist Politics

The last year has seen the rise of a large organised Socialist Feminist current in the autonomous women's movement in Britain. Members of the Women's Commission of Big Flame put forward two key issues for that current to fight around:

Rape and Violence Against Women "If we were totally honest probably most men would acknowledge that they have forced women to have sex with them when they weren't that keen on it. No doubt every woman knows that she has been on the receiving end of a sexual attack, whether it was being raped or flashed at or groped in the street or a club. Women go around with a constricting fear, which

they're with at any time of the day or night.

Sexism doesn't just oppress women by expecting them to make the tea and look after the kids, take shitty jobs at low wages and not complain about it. It also means that women often daren't walk out alone, or are constantly on edge when they do. The threat of rape or any sexual attack is a permanent and powerful form of social control on women, however 'liberated' or 'repressed'."

Housework

"We recognise that housework is work and the issue is of critical importance to women's liberation. We want to minimise the amount of housework we do. We want to challenge the concept of housework as women's work. We want to give women a choice and make housework a social responsibility. We therefore need to fight for:

- 1) Socialisation of housework, paid for by the state under community control.
- 2) No cuts and an increase in the social wage in order to resist attempts to intensify unpaid labour in the home.
- 3) An independent income for all.
- 4) No division of labour between men and women, inside or outside the home.
- 5) As part of the struggle for socialisation of housework and breaking down the division of labour we need money and facilities from the state to make housework easier.

This means the provision of decent well planned housing equipped with time-saving gadgets. Also money, equipment and support for the care of the sick, elderly and handicapped where their care in the home is preferred. These five points should be seen as a framework for our work in the community on the issue of housework. At the same time, we accept that women's position in the family and in society as a whole cannot be reduced simply to the housework issues and this framework needs to be developed together with perspectives on women in the workplace: rape and domestic violence against women; women's right to control our own bodies; the continued fight against sexism in all its forms."

Another motion, by Manchester Big Flame women, wants Big Flame to dissociate itself from the Wages for Housework Campaign and its perspective.

All the quoted extracts are from the collection of Conference Documents and Motions. (A limited number of copies is still available for those attending – 50p)

3rd NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
13 – 15 MAY, LONDON

REGISTRATION: 9 – 9.30 am, Saturday.

Saturday: PARTY AND CLASS

The changing situation and the new tasks of the revolutionary left. Which way forward for Big Flame? Internal democracy and leadership. Socialist Unity and the Labour Government.

Sunday: AUTONOMOUS MOVEMENTS AND INDEPENDENT RANK AND FILE WORKPLACE ORGANISATIONS

Socialist feminism and Big Flame. Action on rape and violence. Politics of housework. Anti-racist and anti-fascist activity: which way forward? Black autonomy. Work in the unions and building independent rank and file organisation in the workplace.

Conference fee: £5 for all sessions, including day-time food, child-care facilities, and overnight accommodation. Cheques should be made payable to Big Flame and returned by 6 May. Fees and requests for more details should be sent to: National Secretary, Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.



## THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



# ITALIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY - FERTILE SOIL FOR TERRORISM

YOU CAN'T understand what is happening in Italy today without looking at the economic and political situation that has developed there: two million unemployed, 400,000 of them university graduates, makes for a big pool of political discontent.

In the 1960's, the Italian economy grew very fast. This 'economic miracle' was based on the ability of Italian manufacturers to win export markets because of the comparative cheapness of their products. Their products were cheap because wages were low. Wages were kept down because of the existence of thousands of peasants in the South who acted as a reserve army of labour and because the left-wing trade unions and political parties were weak and divided.

The struggles in the workplaces during the 'HOT AUTUMN' of 1969 put an end to the advantages of Italian bosses. Wage rates were forced up to levels average for Europe and management's control of the production process (e.g. through labour mobility) was eroded by the growth of shop-floor organisation.

Faced with this erosion of their 'right to manage', the bosses used the oil crisis of 1973 as a pretext for a large cut-back in industrial activity. Unemployment, casual labour and

sweated work increased very fast. At the same time, unemployment forced 250,000 Italian emigrants to return from Northern Europe, and the student population increased five-fold in twelve years to reach 750,000 in 1972. Right now, there are nearly two million unemployed in Italy (8% of the work-force), three-quarters of whom are under 30 years old; more than 400,000 of them are graduates. Added to this are another two million 'underemployed' workers, working in 'marginal' jobs.

### FROM DEMOCRACY TO CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

The first response of the ruling class to the rise in working class organisation was the 'strategy of tension' - in which it gave support to right-wing terrorist groups. The idea behind this strategy was that a prolonged campaign of terror and bombings would shift the political balance to the right and increase support for a 'law and order' Christian Democrat government that would be able to put the boot in on a terrorised working class. In fact, the militant anti-fascism of the revolutionary left and the reformist left was strong enough to defeat the 'strategy of tension'.

So the ruling class was still in search of a political strategy with which to impose its order - this was a pre-condition to any end to the economic crisis. Luckily it



was offered a way out of this dead-end by the 'historic compromise' being offered by the Italian Communist Party, (the PCI) The PCI agreed to get its followers (over 30% of Italian voters) to support the government's policy of 'austerity and sacrifice' (for the working class) in exchange for the Christian Democratic government agreeing to consult the PCI - you can't get any fairer than that!

In 1945 the Party persuaded the resistance fighters to hand over its arms. Most of them buried their guns in the hills, convinced that all the Party's talk about defending

the new democratic republic at the ballot box was simply a clever ploy and that one day, the word would be given and state power seized. But in fact it was its commitment to insurrection that the PCI had abandoned as it adopted the strategy of a parliamentary road to power. With the emphasis on electoral politics, went a running down of factory cells of the party and the abandonment of its opposition to the economic policies of the government.

As it loses some of its working class support by its swing to the right, it is forced to search for allies in the middle classes. But the more

crous argument that the Red Brigades are simply another wave of the state's 'strategy of tension.'

A Chilean-type situation is fast approaching in Italy, with the difference that the reformist left, being outside of government, has even less control over the political situation it is being blamed for. The historic compromise has become a Christian-Democrat trap in which the PCI has been caught. The more the PCI discovers the growth of political movements to its left, the more it wants to deny that they exist. So all those on its left become 'germ-carriers'

it accomodates itself to the parliamentary game, the less credible it seems as a real force for change.

### RED BRIGADES

In this situation, it is not surprising that elitist groups like the Red Brigades have taken up many of the marxist-leninist themes (including that of the resistance) that used to be put forward by the PCI. And they are getting the support of some rank and file militants who are totally disorientated by the 'historic compromise' - especially given that the PCI is putting forward the ludi-

(as the PCI calls them) or even cowards, fascists and criminals. The PCI is committing a serious political error in its characterisation of the movement as fascist.

Recently a well-known Italian writer wrote that violence is a weed that has grown in the ruins of his country and that it was the Christian Democrats who had made these ruins. Now the weeds of violence are being used by those in power to hide the ruins. But it is clear that you get rid of weeds by getting rid of ruins and not the other way round.

# 'Not the state or the Red Brigades'

WE ARE printing a leaflet written by the Dockers Collective of Genoa (Italy) about the Red Brigades. For writing and distributing it around the docks, the members of the Collective have been expelled from the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The leaflet represents the views of many Italian militants who, whilst not agreeing with the strategy and tactics of the Red Brigades clearly see that the main enemy remains the bourgeois state. Members of the revolutionary left in this country who are prepared to accept the PCI's characterisation of the Red Brigades as 'fascists', 'hooligans' and 'germ-carriers' have a lot to learn from the lucidly put class line of the Genoa Dockers Collective.

Worker-Comrades, As workers and marxists, we feel obliged to give our opinion and give a political judgement on the earthquake that the kidnapping of Moro has caused in the ruling class, in the political leadership and in the country as a whole.....

Television, the press, the Pope, and the bourgeoisie in general are competing with each other not only to instil in people concern about the political situation (which we also feel)

but also fear and powerlessness which we are not prepared to accept.

And in all this, the bosses, the silent majority and Christian Democracy (that is all those who have 'mis-governed' us for 30 years) are making a lot of noise to try and make us forget a state and a democracy that would have to be a damn sight more radical to be worth defending....

Rome is like a city under siege - fear and confusion are being spread by the media, who are in the government's pocket. Is it this "state of emergency", with its special anti-terrorist laws that the working class, the unemployed, women and those outside the system must defend? (As the Communist Party tells us to do.)

We believe and we have always said that the proletarian and exploited masses of this state must form themselves into a class and fight to improve their conditions of life against those in whose hands all power and money lies.

The defence of democracy and participation in government must always be based on precise objectives and a well-defined programme... For the worker, whether they be communist, socialist or Christian these programmes must have as their goals the increased participation of the masses in political life and the bringing nearer of the working class to power.

Right now, we see that this is not happening - so we continue with the class struggle. We are against terrorism and armed struggle, because at this historic moment, it tends to work against the attempts of the masses to develop their autonomy - a process that requires of the working class that it develop its class interests and political clarity in its position of opposition to the system....

To end, we want to express our militant solidarity with the countless assassinated comrades. They have been savagely killed without any sign of emotion from the democratic forces in Parliament, without even the street marches that are being organised in respect for the threat that hangs over Moro's life. Those massacred by the state, all comrades killed in street-fighting the tragic victims of panicky policemen ....all these represent a heritage that must be defended by a mobilisation of the masses.

Worker Collective of Genoa Dockers

The secretary of the largest Italian trade union, which is dominated by the PCI, recently stated that "those workers who are in agreement with the slogan 'neither the State nor the Red Brigades' must be expelled from the union."

## SPAIN: NATO woos the Socialist Party

"MEMBERSHIP OF NATO is a guarantee against revolution. I can't be more explicit." General Haig, NATO supreme commander Europe, was addressing a closed conference near Oxford recently. The discussions, organised jointly by the University of North Carolina and the right-wing Institute of Conflict Studies (linked to the National Association for Freedom), were about Spain's entry to NATO. Delegates included top American and Spanish brass and representatives of the right-wing Spanish parties and the Spanish Socialist Party, PSOE, the country's biggest opposition party.

The PSOE officially isn't too keen on NATO. They talk about the need for a neutral block to counter-balance the power of Washington and Moscow. Still less do the Socialists go for the proposal for a South

Atlantic Treaty Organisation - to defend capitalist interests in Africa - which was put forward by the ex-Franco minister Fraga Iribane.

On the other hand, the PSOE are realists. They recognise that the ruling establishments in Washington and Madrid are together in echoing General Haig's sentiments. The U.S. Government is also sympathetic to the idea of a coalition government in Spain by the end of the year maybe, which would have to include the socialists.

On his recent visit to the U.S., the Socialist leader Felipe Gonzalez was told as much. It was also made plain that the U.S. want Spain in NATO. The aim of these deals is to exclude the Communist Party from ministerial positions. It would be surprising if the socialists didn't drop their criticisms of NATO for the sake of power.



# BLOW THE WHISTLE ON ARGENTINA

A FEW steps away from the World Cup football stadium in Buenos Aires, is the Navy Mechanics School. It's near enough to be converted into a social club for use by the world cup players in the city. But if they knew what went on there the rest of the year, they'd have to be pretty thick skinned to enjoy much social life. For the Navy Mechanics School is one of the most feared torture centres in the whole of a country littered with such places. The case of the Navy Mechanics school is only the most dramatic example of the use of the world cup by the Argentinian military rulers to cover up the bloody reality of their country.

## THE MYTH

The World Cup in the words of general Merlo — one of the country's self appointed rulers — is an occasion to show Argentina's "real way of life". By this he means the world cup is a massive propaganda exercise through which the regime wants to project the myth, that Argentina is a well ordered, stable and exuberant place.

And the violence? Well, the regime would like people to believe that it is beleaguered by terrorists and in order to preserve, in Videla's words "western and Christian civilisation", it is forced to take harsh actions against these terrorists and their supporters with a good and strong government which is making Argentina safe for foreign investment. The Junta are going to some lengths on all this. £350m has already been spent on the world cup and the public relations firm, Burston-Marsteller, have been appointed to do a propaganda job in Europe and the U.S.



## BIG CUTS

Workers, however, will have quite a different idea about the "real way of life". 10% of wage earners can afford the government's basic "shopping basket" of essential

goods and services. The working class's economic position has deteriorated rapidly since the Junta took power two years ago. All this has

been made much worse by the world Cup. The money for building the

● For further information contact:  
Argentine Support Movement,  
1 Cambridge Terrace London NW1

colour T.V. network specially for the event has effectively come from the workers' pockets. Big cuts in the welfare budget have been made to provide the cash. At the same time shanty towns have been bulldozed to make way for the new stadia and housing schemes delayed. The irony of all this is that the working class won't actually be able to see the games since ticket prices are far too expensive and a luxury item.

## DEATH SQUADS

Protest at the steadily worsening position has been more and more difficult to organise. Trade unions activities are banned and the right to strike outlawed. The military junta is intent on obliterating all opposition to it, and will use any means it can. Thus 7,000-8,000 people have been killed, 8,000 are political prisoners and 15,000 have been kidnapped by government sponsored death squads. The kidnapped generally aren't seen again. Anybody who is remotely hostile towards the regime runs the risk of being kidnapped by the death squads or simply the military who are subject to no law expect their own.

## SABOTAGE

But the Junta will find it difficult to crush the working class. The Argentinian labour movement has strong traditions and there are strong links between popular organisations such as the Montoneros and the working class. Only last November there was a mass strike involving 100,000 railway workers and thousands of others. There are weekly demonstrations outside government buildings involving the relatives of death squad victims. Sabotage is widespread. Only a few weeks ago, somebody, in a clear effort to discredit the regime, smuggled salt water into the stadium at Buenos Aires, so that it was sprayed onto the pitch, destroying it.

Sabotage and more open opposition will continue and popular organisations will no doubt attempt to use the world cup to embarrass the regime. It may well be then that the military's attempt to organise international admiration for Argentina will backfire.

## CELIA GUEVARA INTERVIEWED

(from Politique-Hebdo)

CELIA GUEVARA'S eldest brother was Che. Her younger brother, Juan Martin, is at present in an Argentinian prison, extremely ill. Since 1976 she has lived in exile. As a member of the "Commission of families of prisoners and those who have disappeared in Argentina", Celia is now touring Europe for the campaign for these political prisoners.

The recent 'riot' of the Villa Devoto prison, where between 70 and 100 political prisoners were assassinated, is just one of the bloodiest incidents in a horrific repression.

Celia has just addressed the Scottish TUC, her trip in England includes meetings in London, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool.

Q. What made you decide to get involved in the international campaign for freedom and liberty in Argentina.

I am not a political militant in the sense of belonging to an organisation. Until August 1976 I lived in Argentina in order to help my brother, a prisoner since February 1975. I used to go everyday to the Villa Devoto prison (where the massacre has just taken place) until the coup at which time political prisoners began to disappear or be assassinated. Then I had to begin a semiclandestine life and finally take refuge in Cuba. I am now in Europe to help the plight of political prisoners, in particular that of my brother Juan Martin

Q. Do you know what plans the military junta have for political prisoners before the arrival of the spectators for the World Cup.

For the last few months, the Villa Devoto Prison, which has been chosen to be shown to visitors, has been undergoing renovation.

## on political prisoners

They are trying to clean the place up and break the prisoners resistance so they can put it on show to foreign visitors. On this we have eye witness accounts. For example, the 800 prisoners of the Villa Devoto are being subjected to a series of humiliating treatments including being searched while naked. Most of the prisoners have refused to undergo these searches but little by little, some give up under torture and accept it. Then, there takes a process of 'natural selection.'

The authorities are operating three types of control systems in the prison. The first one, which is reserved for prisoners who won't crack, is very tough, solitary confinement, bad food, torture etc. The second, more subtle, is for those prisoners who still offer some resistance. The third, the luxury one, is for those prisoners whose resistance has been broken — only a minority, according to our information. It is these prisoners who will be presented to the foreign visitors who come. It must be

made clear that many of these prisoners have been 'broken' under the threat of death, for themselves or their family (some have their babies with them).

Q. Is the massacre at Villa Devoto part of the 'cleaning up' process that the military want to carry out before the World Cup?

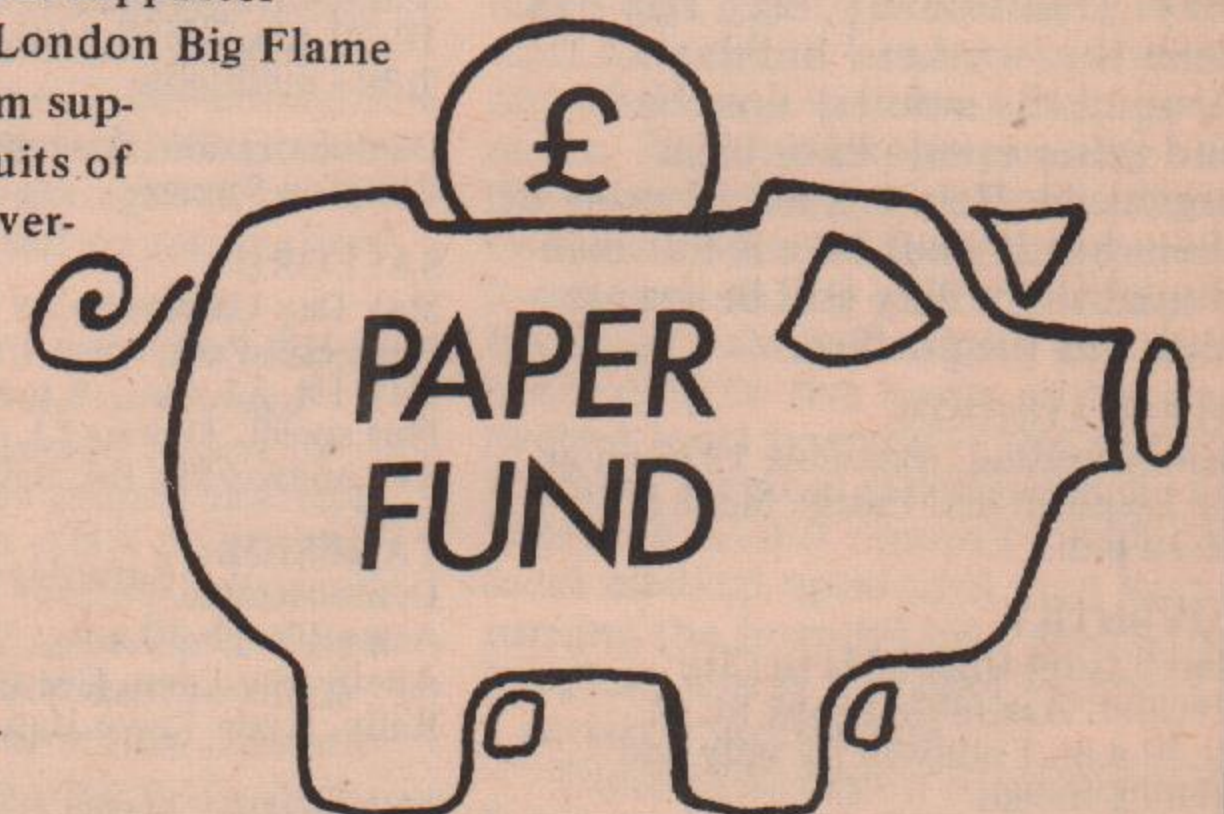
The campaign that we are waging today is aimed at denouncing these plans of doing away with prisoners. It must not be forgotten that organisations like 'Amnesty International'

and even the State Department of the USA have said that there are 30,000 prisoners and those who have disappeared, whilst the Junta claims the figure is 4,000. We must force the Argentine government to admit to the existence of the others, to publish complete lists, to make public where they are being held and their health condition. Investigatory commissions must be sent. The massacre of prisoners has already begun in Argentina and what happened at Villa Devoto is only the tip of the iceberg of repression.

We've slipped badly behind this month. Only £16.70 has come in taking us to a total of £198.35 — still a long way off our target of £500 by July. Our thanks for donations this month:

£6.70 Manchester supporter  
£5.00 Liverpool supporter  
£3.00 North London Big Flame  
£2.00 Evesham supporter (the fruits of compulsory overtime):

If you think we're doing a good job and find the paper useful, help us by sending a donation now.



Donations to the Business Manager, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.



# SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

TIME  
OFF

## A REVIEW OF THE FILM



'SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER' is a film that can be enjoyed at many different levels. Most obviously there are the stunning disco scenes with music by the Bee Gees, but more importantly, 'Fever' is a film well rooted in a community — working class Italian Americans. It is a culture that has already been developed by films like 'The Godfather', 'Mean Streets' and 'Rocky'. But 'Fever' is different in that the film is very clearly set in a working class context. Tony Manzano (John Travolta) is some-

one stuck in a dead-end job of clerk in a paint store. He realises that for people from his side of the tracks all there is a succession of lousy jobs, bad housing and no possibility of change. Added to this, there is the racism and sexism of a working class community that feels threatened by change it cannot cope with.

It was the long-established American Irish and American Italian Communities in Boston that led the struggle against Black kids being bussed into the schools in their areas.

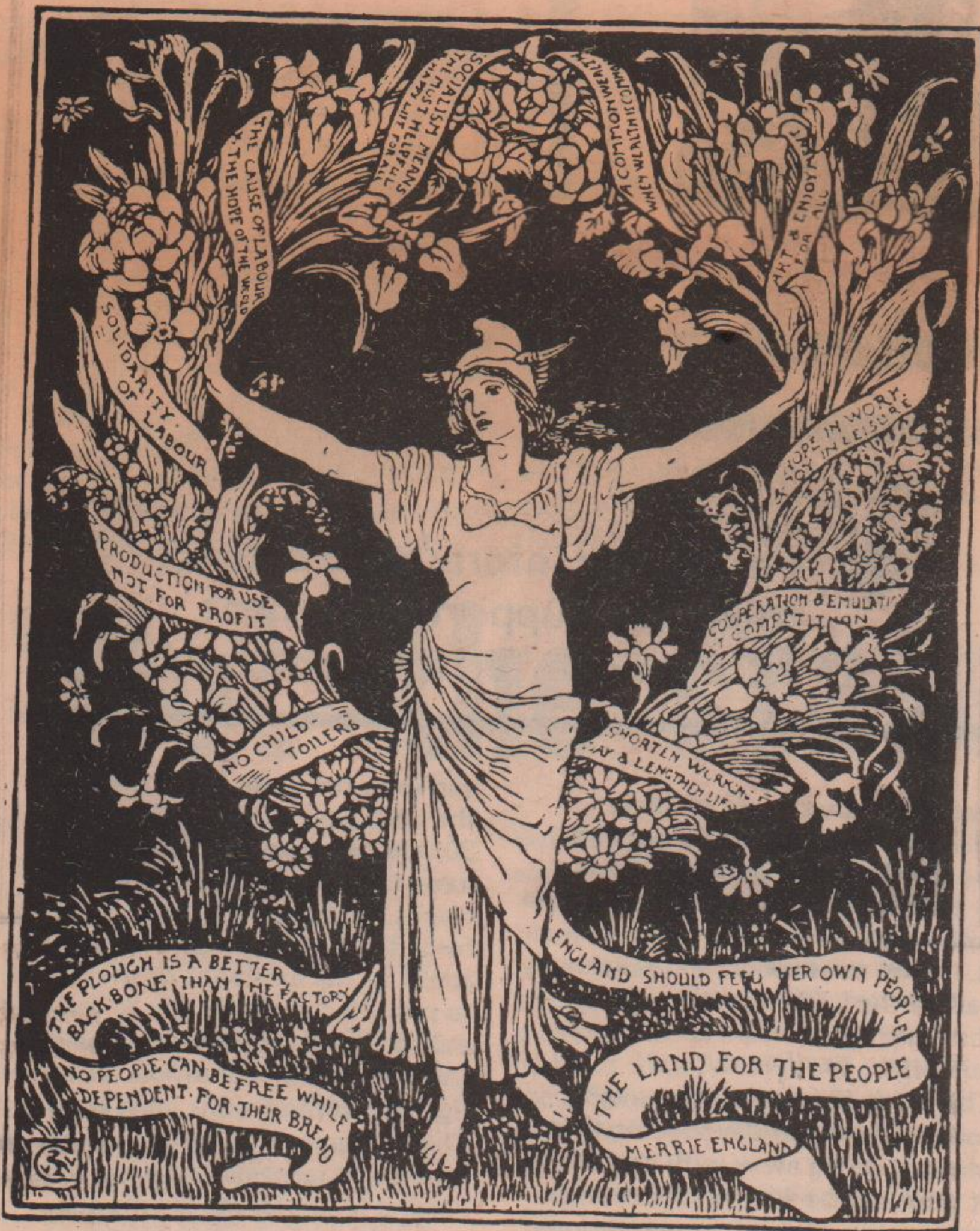
If 'Fever' were a crude political

film, its hero would join the Party and find his collective salvation in it. In 'Fever' it's the disco that fulfils the same role. The disco is a way out of the hum-drum dreariness of every day life. And for Tony, it's even a way out of the racist and sexist way of behaving that are accepted features of the environment he lives and works in. It is this all-enveloping racism that Tony is trying to break away from when he hands over his disco trophy to the Puerto Rican pair he knows should have won it. His comment 'We

dump on the spics and the spics dump on us. Everyone dumps on someone else' is a bitter comment on social situation where class cannibalism is dominant over class solidarity. And in the relationship that develops between him and his dance partner, there is a suggestion at the end that he will try to become her friend, a definite improvement on the role of sex objects everyone else in the film allots to women. Sure, as they say, one swallow doesn't make a summer, but at least our hero is trying to change.

Probably, 'Saturday Night Fever' is a film that will be remembered and enjoyed for its ace sequences of the Hustle, the Dolphin Roll, the Bus Stop and other Disco routines, and for the stage presence of John Travolta and Karen Gerney. But it is also a film that understands how working class experience is shackled by the social relations of the society we live in.

In 'Saturday Night Fever' there is only a suggestion of how those social relations could be changed — but don't let that stop you seeing it.



• A GARLAND FOR MAY DAY 1895 •  
• DEDICATED TO THE WORKERS BY WALTER CRANE •

This year for the first time in this country May Day is a public holiday. Traditionally, May Day has been the 'workers' holiday'. Around the country marches and other events have been organised. Here is a list of some of them but if your area is not mentioned there may still be events — look out for posters.

**SOUTH LONDON**  
Demonstration, Assemble 12 noon at the Elephant and Castle. Move off 12.30 p.m.

**COVENTRY**  
March from Highfields to City Precinct. Assemble Brook St. at 10.30 a.m. Followed by rally and evening social.

**BIRMINGHAM**  
Mayday Festival and March. Digbeth Hall, 11 a.m. - Midnight. Contact 021-622 2570 for details.

**LIVERPOOL**  
May Day Festival. Stanley House, Upper Parliament St. 10.30 a.m. - 5.30 p.m. 7.30 - midnight.

Demonstration. Assemble 11 a.m. Islington Square.

**SALFORD**  
May Day Gala. Buile Hill Park. May 1st. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Plus social. Tickets £1 from J. Hall, 34 Langworthy Rd. Salford 6.

**TAMESIDE**  
Demonstrate. Saturday April 29th. Assemble 11.30 a.m. Apethorne Lane, Gee Cross, Hyde. Rally, Hyde Town Hall. 3 p.m.

**TYNESIDE**: March starts 11 am from Cattlemarket Car Park — Scotswood Rd. (near Marlborough Crescent Bus Station). Gala in Exhibition Park, 12 noon — 6 pm. Dance & Social, Guildhall, Quayside, 8 pm — 1 am, Newcastle.



**MERSEYSIDE WOMENS DAY** Sat. May 6th, Liverpool University Students Union, Brownlow Hill, 10-5.00. Creche available, ring 051.727.4608 for details

**SOCIALIST TEACHERS ALLIANCE** "What School Students Want" Wed 10th May, 7.30., Martineau, Birmingham. School Students who were active in last term's protest will put their case.

**CELIA GUEVARA TOUR** Leeds 28th April 7.30pm, Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre.

**CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST PLANNERS** The re-arranged date for the Third Conference is Saturday 3rd June in Liverpool. Three themes will be: Small Firms and Worker co-operatives, Inner Area Initiatives and Partnership Schemes, The Local State. For further details and copies of the CSP Newsletter No 3, (20p inc. postage) contact Box CSP, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1.

**SUN 30th APRIL**. Carnival against the Nazis from Trafalgar Square at 11 am to Victoria Park, Hackney. Festival with Tom Robinson Band.

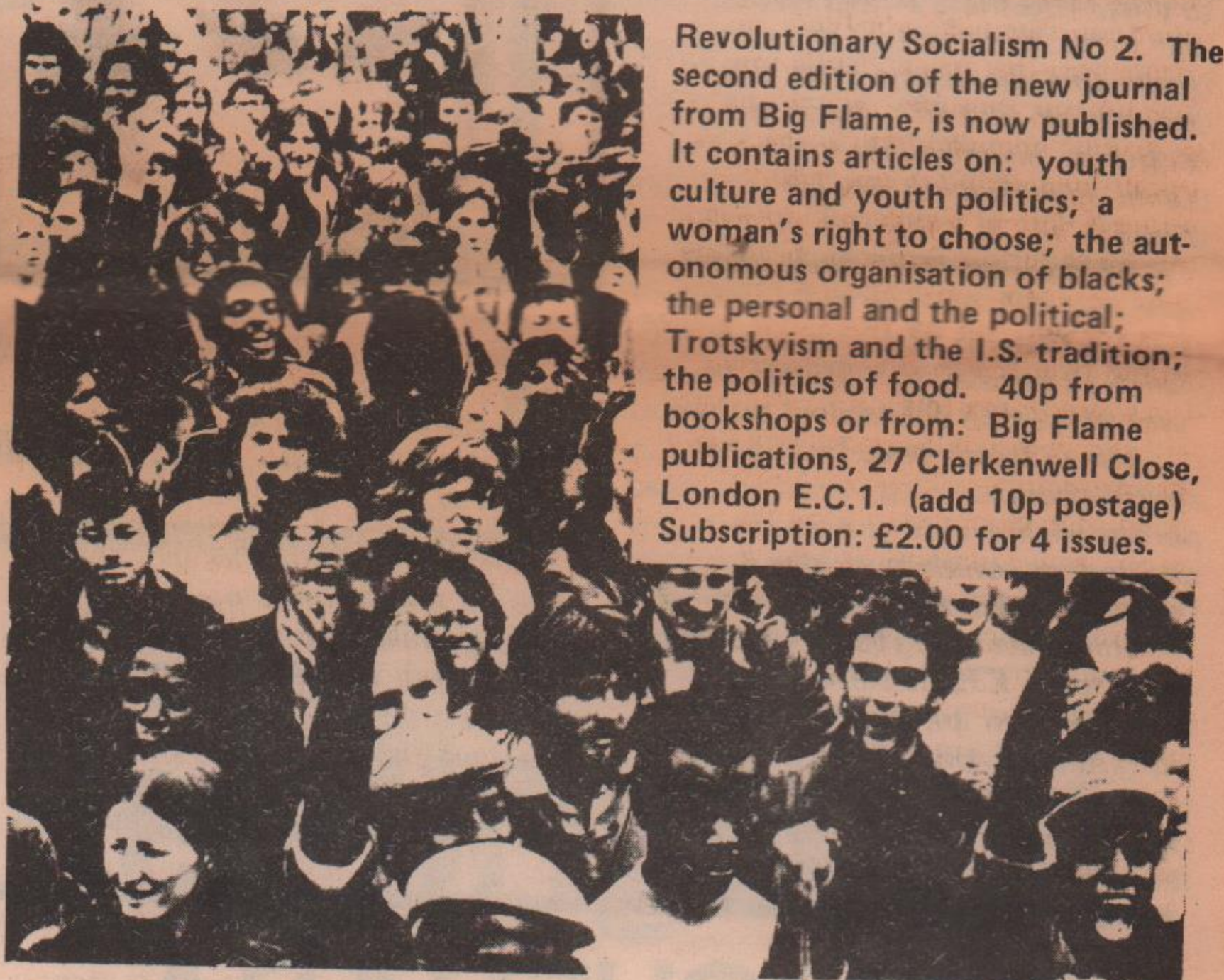
**CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM** Speakers include: A. Sivanandan (Director, Institute of Race Relations), David Edgar (Author of Anti-Fascist play 'Destiny') June 4th/5th. The conference will be open to local committees, shop stewards committees, shop stewards committees, Trades Councils, Immigrant organisations Ethnic minority organisations and community groups. For more details of the conference write to CARF Conference, Box 53 Rising Free, 182 Upper St., London N.1.

**BRIXTON SOCIALIST UNITY** Open meeting of supporters to discuss the campaign and future activities. Sun 7th May, 2.00 pm., St. Mathews Meeting Place, opposite Ace Cinema, Brixton.

**SAT. 29th APRIL**. South London Anti-Racist march, from Balham through Brixton to Brockwell Park. Assemble 12 noon at Balham tube.

**UTOM BAND TOUR** 'Men of No Property' will be playing at 'The Swan', Clapham Rd. London SW9. Sun. May 7th at 8 p.m.

'Hemingford Arms', Hemingford Rd. London N. Mon. May 8th at 8 p.m.



**TAMESIDE NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN** Demonstration. Start from West End Community Centre, John St. Ashton-u-Lyne. Assemble 11 a.m. Sat. 20th May.

**PICKET AGAINST THE FRONT** Action Against Racism, Blackburn, is organising a mass picket of the Public Halls, Northgate, on 5 May when the National Front propose to hold a meeting there. AAR PO Box 32, Blackburn, Lancs.

### SUMMER SCHOOL

This year's Big Flame Summer School will take place near Whitby, Yorks., from Saturday August 5th to August 12th with an additional week for those who want to stay over. Cost is £25 per week for adults and £20 for kids, though we will try to make sure that the costs of kids are shared by everybody. Members and sympathisers who want to attend should let us know by the end of May with a £5 deposit for everyone coming. For more information, write: Big Flame Summer School, 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool 7.

**MERSEYSIDE WOMENS PAPER**: Spring Issue by Merseyside Women's Action Group. Price 10p + postage from 2 Belvidere Road, Liverpool 8.

**IRISH PRISONERS AID COMMITTEE** Public Meeting. Karl Marx Birthday Celebration, Friday 5 May, 7 pm. NUFTO Hall, Jockey Fields, London, W.C. 1.

**Revolutionary Socialism No 2**. The second edition of the new journal from Big Flame, is now published. It contains articles on: youth culture and youth politics; a woman's right to choose; the autonomous organisation of blacks; the personal and the political; Trotskyism and the I.S. tradition; the politics of food. 40p from bookshops or from: Big Flame publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London E.C.1. (add 10p postage) Subscription: £2.00 for 4 issues.

## WRITE FOR BIG FLAME

Do you fancy writing for Big Flame? We welcome reports, photos, cartoons, stories, reviews, articles and letters from all our readers — members of Big Flame or not. We have received some excellent contributions for our series, 'What It Would Be Like,' about people's impressions of what living in a socialist society might be like. We look forward to one from you. The maximum length is 800 words.

**DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES, THURSDAY, MAY 18th.**

We have to reserve the right to shorten or adapt articles.  
Big Flame Newspaper  
217 Wavertree Rd.  
Liverpool 7  
tel: 051-260 0305



# NOREEN IS FREE!

International feminist pressure has forced Roy Mason to grant the 21 year old Belfast woman a pardon.

Noreen Winchester was 11 when her father first started raping and sexually assaulting her. She was the eldest of 8 children, though her mother had had 16 pregnancies. Her mother left home, accusing Noreen of being her father's 'Fancy Piece'. For 6 years Noreen was kept locked up in the house, bringing up her brothers and sisters, running the house — and being assaulted by her father. She was allowed out on Saturdays to do the shopping.

Noreen finally decided to take action about her situation. Her father had threatened that if she told anyone or tried to leave home he would rape her little sisters, too. She had no-one to turn to — and probably no-one would have believed her, anyway. So one night she stabbed her father and buried

his body in the garden. For 9 months the police thought it was a sectarian murder (she lived in the protestant ghetto of Sandy Row). But in the end she was accused of murder.

## 'WILLING PARTNER'

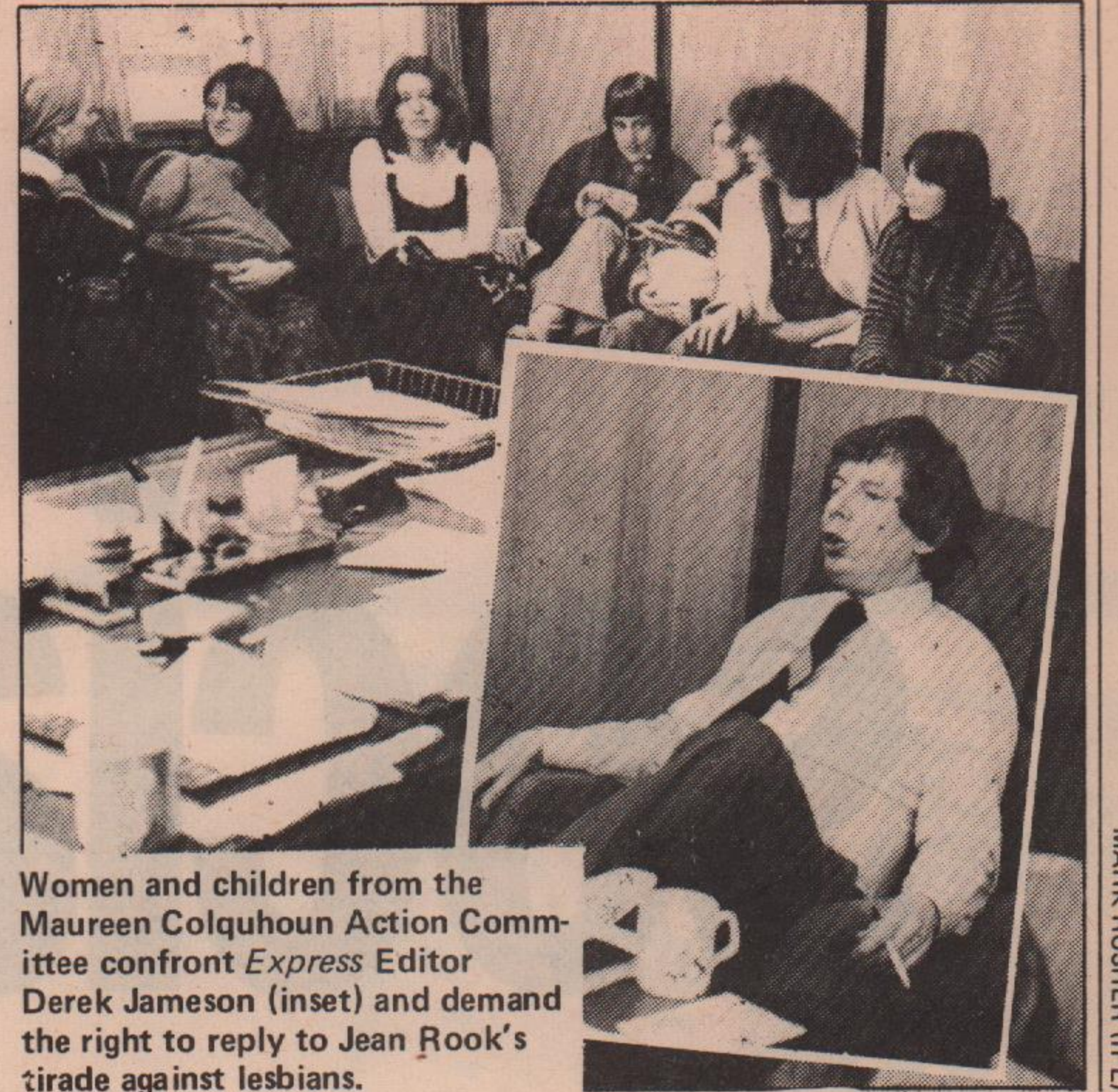
Her trial was a farce. Without sufficient consultation with her, the defence persuaded her to plead guilty to manslaughter. Little was said in court to explain the abhorrent family situation. Various members of her parents' families, including her mother, were openly hostile to her, and have subsequently campaigned to keep her in Armagh jail! The judge decided that she had been 'a willing partner for years' and had had 'plenty of time to go to the police'. Her father's murder, he said, was unjustified. She was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment.

Judges in rape cases have rarely found time to understand the situation raped women have been in, and the fear and humiliation in-

involved in talking about it. And for Noreen the violence was a daily reality, and already many of her relations had turned against her to the point of blaming her for her father's behaviour. It was the age old story: somehow she had 'asked for it'.

## WORLD CAMPAIGN

But luckily for Noreen there were women who believed her and decided to campaign for her release. A group of Dutch women took up her case with the authorities and within the international feminist movement. Feminists in Belfast who were active for her release were threatened by protestant extremists. But the campaign continued. At the 8th National Women's Liberation Conference in Birmingham a telegram was sent to Roy Mason, and all sisters were urged to write to him asking for her to be pardoned. The campaign was a success. Noreen Winchester is now free.



Women and children from the Maureen Colquhoun Action Committee confront Express Editor Derek Jameson (inset) and demand the right to reply to Jean Rook's tirade against lesbians.

MARK RUSHER (IFL)

## ROOK GETS THE BIRD .... AS WOMEN BURST INTO EXPRESS OFFICES

FOR THOSE of our readers who don't follow the Jean Rook gossip column in the Daily Express, we can report some good news.

"The Express, believing as it does in freedom of speech", was forced to print a reply by the Maureen Colquhoun Action Committee to Jean Rook's latest tirade against lesbianism. An article on Colquhoun, titled 'The Gay Lady is a Bore.'

Maureen Colquhoun, MP for Northampton, is, as the Action Committee point out in their reply, active around the Child Benefits for All Campaign, Women Against Rape, for free abortion, for single mothers and pensioners rights. Rook ignores all of this and also the political point made by Colquhoun by openly admitting she's a lesbian and arguing that this may: "in some way ease the misery of those homosexuals attempting to make a contribution to society yet still vulnerable to blackmail and indignity."

### ANTI-GAY AND ANTI-UNION

Not content with attacking gay people, the following week Rook

launched into the strikers at one of the establishment's symbols, Claridges, the Mayfair Hotel. Rook moans: "so much has slipped away from us — the empire, white £5 notes, proper bus tickets, and our self-respect. It would grieve me to see Claridges... go down the sink with the Fairy liquid."

Again, she mentions none of the issues at stake in the strike — low wages, the right to organise a trade union in the traditionally unorganised and super-exploited sector of catering, and instead says the Claridges strikers:

"heavily sauced with union jargon, are belly-aching that the hotel shouldn't take an 'upstairs-downstairs' attitude to 1978."

She ends by saying, "I'm sick of trade unions that creep into everything we do. Like garlic." Unfortunately for her and her employers people are no longer prepared to 'creep', but are instead 'bursting' like the women at the Express office and the Claridges strikers, into the inner sanctums of the bourgeoisie to get their rights.

## POLICE RACISM SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED IN BURNGREAVE

# Great Court Victory!

THERE WERE wild celebrations in Burngreave, Sheffield, on Monday 17th April, of a magnificent victory for the community against police racism and brutality. That afternoon in Crown Court No. 2 three white men and a black youth were all acquitted of charges of assault on police officers to cheers and applause from people in the public gallery. A charge of criminal damage against a fourth man was thrown out by the Judge earlier in the trial.

The charges related to an incident on July 4th last year when police investigating a robbery on Burngreave Bank arrived at a house used by black youths round the corner on Catherine Rd, and began to arrest everyone inside. One youth, Tony Armstrong, refused to go and was beaten with truncheons. His 8 month pregnant sister was knocked to the ground when she tried to protect him. Tony got in several blows at the police, but

was overpowered.

Local residents — both black and white — came out of their houses to stop Tony being thrashed unconscious and to protest at the arrogant lawlessness of the police officers. Four (white) men were arrested for their efforts. At the police station they were forced to stand "Northern Ireland" style against a wall for an hour and a half and were showered with threats and abuse.

However, the aggression of the police created a wave of indignation in the community. Public meetings were held at which the black youth and some of their parents aired their grievances and resentment at the police. A Residents Group was formed, and also two defence organisations: for the five charged with assault etc., and also for some black youths who were beaten and tricked into "confessions" of involvement in the robbery. On February 8th this year four of the youths were found guilty of robbery on

pitiful evidence, and three of them were sentenced to three years imprisonment by the notorious Judge Pickles. An appeal is lodged.

At the assault case, which came to court on April 10th, the police in their evidence perjured themselves out of court. The defence witnesses stood up impeccably to prosecution cross-examination. Photographic evidence was produced which clearly supported the defence case. At the end of the sixth day, with one more witness plus speeches and summing up still to be heard, Judge Cotton told the jury that there was a head-on conflict of evidence on practically every point. The jury was, he said, entitled at any stage in a case to say they had heard enough — they could reach that decision if they had unanimously formed the conclusion that the accused were to be acquitted.

And, after a 25 minute adjournment the jury returned with broad grins on their faces to announce verdicts of not guilty on all charges!!

## GARNERS STEAK HOUSES

# WHAT WE CAN DO

AS THE Garners Steak Houses strike entered its 12th week, the strikers called a large meeting of trade unionists to intensify the struggle. Nearly a hundred came — from S.E. Region of the TUC, Greater London Association of Trades Councils and many industrial, service and white collar unions, as well as John Ellis and Sidney Bidwell MPs.

Many delegates went back to their branches to mobilise their members to picket, raise funds and step up the blacking of goods and services to Garners.

Effective blacking — a very important aspect of the strike — is made difficult by the management's use of three full-time paid workers to ensure supplies during the strike. They constantly switch supplies and where possible are using non-unionised firms. For instance, as soon as the big dairies — (all unionised) — promised to support the strike — management switched to a small non-unionised city firm, Marshalls.

### WHAT'S BEING DONE?

Strike Committee Support Groups have been set up to develop the different areas of the strike — fund-raising, picketing, blacking and publicity. Letters have gone to all trades councils asking them to co-

ordinate blacking in their area and ways are being developed to fight back against the management. Groups are trying to organise workers at Smithfield to prevent meat supplies getting through. All firms who supply Garners are being asked to stop.

May 13th is being organised as a day of solidarity with the Garners strikers.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

The need for funds is very urgent — it's hard to sustain a strike if you're living on £6 a week strike pay, and the management knows that. To win this strike we need an adequate financial base.

— Could you or your group/TU branch/women's group etc make a weekly levy or regular contribution to the strike?

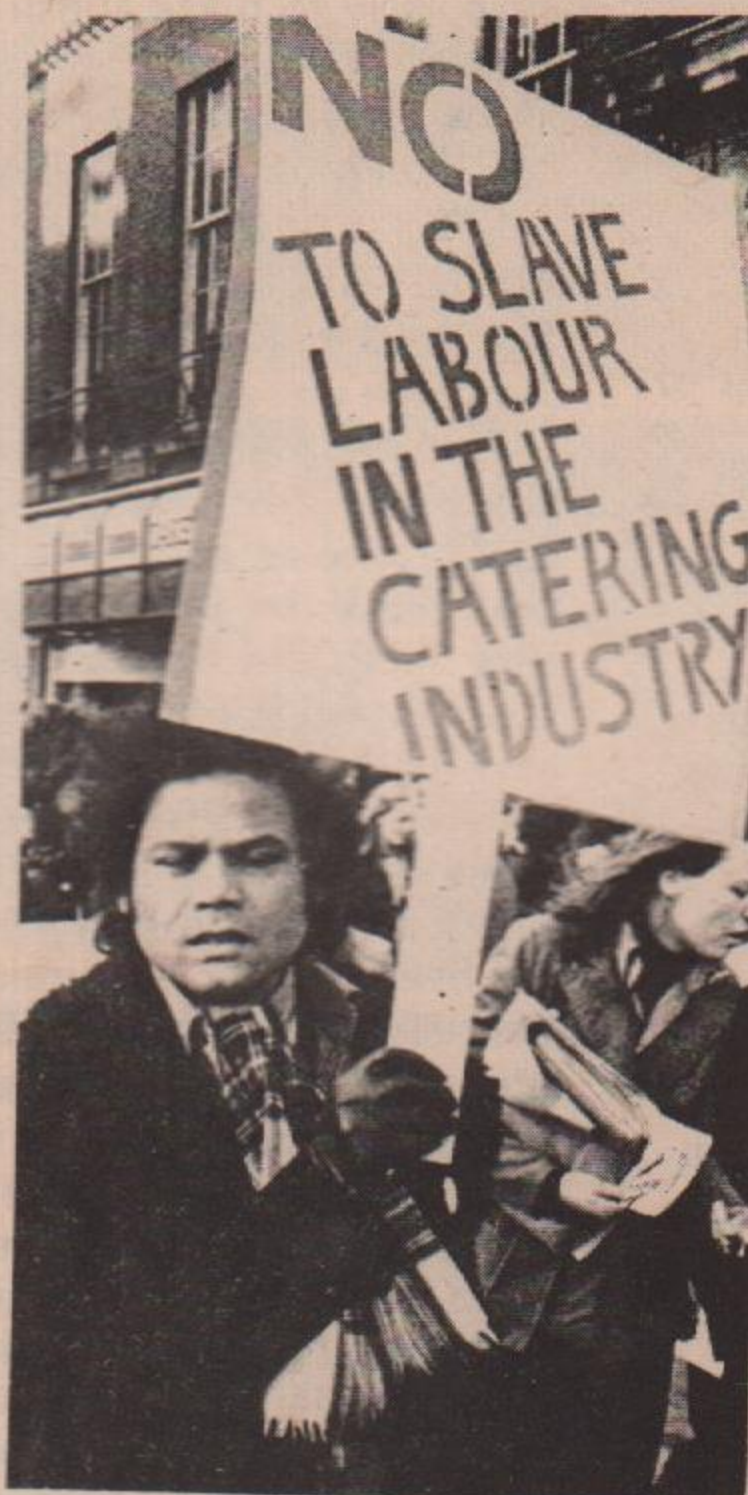
— Do you want to join the fund-raising support group? (Contact them at 01-240 1056)

### BLACKING IS CRUCIAL

— Contact your local trades council who will be co-ordinating this.

### PICKETING

— Any day 12-3 or 6-9 the strikers need support on the



picket line — it helps if your group can make a regular commitment to a particular time and branch... and...

— come to the major picket on Saturdays at 399 Oxford Street between 12 and 3.

— Or contact Garners Steak Houses Strike Committee at Room 84, 12/13 Henrietta St. London WC 2.

## BETHNAL GREEN HOSPITAL

# The Green Must Stay!

Bethnal Green Hospital has been threatened with change of use to a geriatric hospital and eventual closure since last October. The consultation period ended in March. The hospital provides almost 300 acute beds (a third of all acute beds in the Tower Hamlets district) This is an area which has amongst the worst health conditions in the country. Already health services in East London and City area are stretched to breaking point — many hospitals have been on yellow alert over the winter. That means they are unable to admit patients off waiting lists, because they just cannot cope. Patients are having to wait until their 70's or 80's for replacement of joints operations. The fight to save Bethnal Green is not just the fight to save one hospital but also a struggle to stop the health services in East London from collapsing. If the Green closes all the other hospitals in the area will come under unbearable strain, trying to cope with the extra patients, and the fight against more hospitals being closed or rationalised in the area will be weakened.

The campaign to save the hospital has now moved into a new stage. The consultation period ended in March when a three month reprieve was granted by the AHA due to local protest. But if money isn't forthcoming from the Region by the end of June, they will attempt to close the hospital. A new action committee has been set up within the hospital which involved all sections of staff, and it has been decided to declare Bethnal Green a 'protected hospital'. Workers inside are on

the look-out for dirty tricks from management. The DMT are already trying to run down the hospital by closing wards, and offering the medical staff other jobs. One consultant is leaving and one retiring. Unless they are replaced there will be no cover for casualty work.

Pickets have been set up to tell people what is going on, and to build towards a 24 hour picket near the end of the reprieve. Ambulance service unions are committed to keep bringing patients. A lunch time stoppage is planned for the 10th of May, to march to the district management team's office. It is hoped that all local hospital workers and other trade unionists will support this stoppage, to prove to the area that we cannot allow this hospital to close as an acute general hospital. The nursing, medical, surgical, and administrative staff have taken casualty admissions out of the sole hands of management. This means the casualty can't be shut over our heads. Casualty is now open 24 hours a day, and it is hoped that it will stay that way. If casualty shuts it means waiting time of up to five hours in the next nearest local hospital — the London. Workers are now talking about 'working in' if it comes to that. All local medical opinion is even against turning the hospital into a geriatric hospital, where it would just become a geriatric workhouse.

There is plenty of local support. Patients prefer the Green, because it is friendly and local, and the staff don't just treat people like machines.

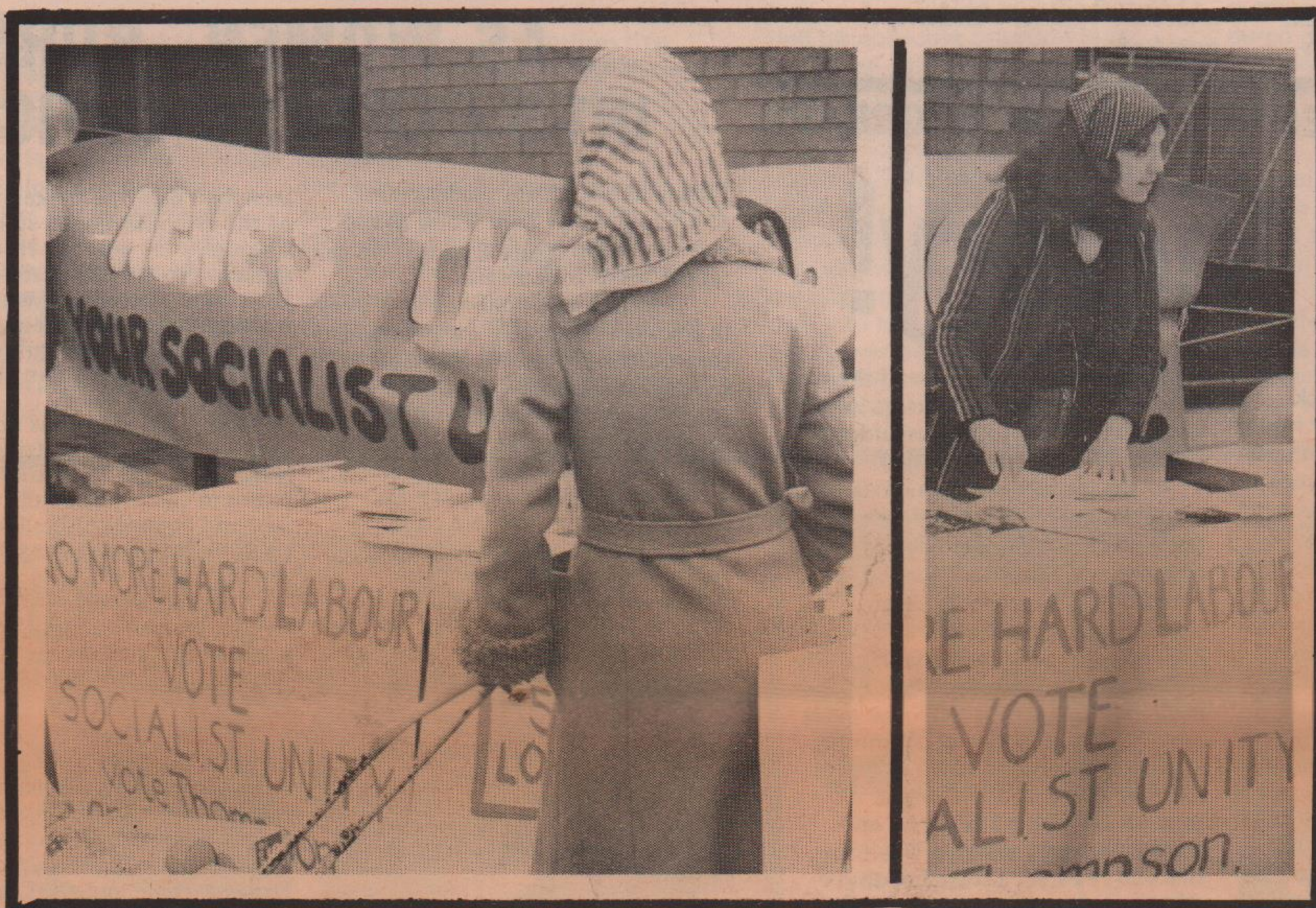


# BIG FLAME

REPORTS FROM BRIXTON  
AND AROUND THE COUNTRY

# socialist unity

The regular Saturday morning Socialist Unity Stall in Paddie's Market, Liverpool  
Inset: Agnes Thompson, the Vauxhall Sandhills candidate  
*Big Flame photo*



## LAMBETH SOUTH (BY-ELECTION)

*IF THERE'S one thing that characterises the vote in the by-election at Lambeth Central, it is the massive disillusionment with the established political parties, and in particular the Labour Party. In a turn-out of only 44% Labour lost a third of its 1974 General Election vote. The National Front vote, while disappointingly high, represented the same percentage of the poll as in the 1977 GLC elections, as did the Liberal vote.*

The total vote for left candidates of 888 (4.3%) was not insignificant, but considering the possibilities presented by the election, the chance of an important national impact was lost when the Socialist Workers Party/Flame refused to discuss seriously the question of coming to an agreement with Socialist Unity. A joint SU/SWP campaign would have had a far bigger effect locally, would have broken the log-jam of five left candidates, and would have started to challenge the NF vote.

It was significant that throughout the campaign Brixton Socialist Unity (BSU) received derisory

press coverage even compared to the other left candidates, this despite the fact that BSU had by far the most significant base in the black community, and had won support from different community and political organisations, including some socialist feminist groups. So BSU had to overcome the fact that, unlike even the SWP, the name was completely unknown in the area. Each vote had to be won through talking directly with the people. This is why it is crucially important for every SU supporter to canvass as much as possible.

### POSTAL WORKER

The key thrust of the campaign was determined at the outset by the decision of the Croydon and Brixton Collective (a black people's organisation) to involve themselves in the campaign and put forward a candidate, John Chase, who for the past five years has worked on the counter at Clapham Post Office, which is in the constituency.

What were the gains of the campaign? First, the Croydon and Brixton Collective (CBC) were able to utilise their extensive experience, gained through several years of consistent work on a

revolutionary socialist programme, to mobilise and reach important sections of the black community. Secondly, the campaign distinguished itself from all the other campaigns by focussing on a concrete issue of immediate concern, particularly to black and Irish people. This issue is the question of the possibility of a new Nationality Law which the Labour government is thinking of bringing in.

### SOUND BASE

The third major aspect of the campaign was its effect on the left in the area. Although it was not possible to involve all the 150-200 people who attended the three open meetings to set up the campaign, very important political gains were made by a left which previously had very little contact between its different parts, and indeed comparatively few roots in the constituency. There is no doubt that a sound base has been laid for continuing and permanent joint activity on the ground in the localities between the various organisations and community groups, and many independent socialists. It was extremely fruitful for a great many people to have the opportunity to talk politics in ways ordinary people can relate to, and to find out much more about what issues people are concerned about. This work must continue around such issues as the nationality Green Paper, the campaign against the Sus Laws, and provision of nursery facilities. Brixton Socialist Unity provides an effective framework for doing this, whilst maintaining the political independence of its different groupings — unlike the SWP approach, which can only offer people the prospect

## NEW WAYS OF CAMPAIGNING ROUND-UP

Hundreds of socialists are looking towards May 4th. Then many cities go to the polls in the local elections and afterwards some of us are going to take a well-earned if short rest. But the thousands of leaflets, posters and scores of meetings are far from a wasteful chore. They are bringing socialist politics to many more people and teaching us many lessons about how to put our ideas and actions across.

**LIVERPOOL** - All three Socialist Unity campaigns are running stalls in local markets and shopping centres, giving out leaflets and selling literature. Factory leaflets in each area have gone out to mobilise for a combined meeting on unemployment.

**BRADFORD** - The Socialist Unity campaign in Bradford Moor Ward has printed 30,000 copies of a broadsheet manifesto in English and Urdu. Their candidate Reuben Goldberg, is a leading anti-racist, and secretary of the Committee against Fascism. They are also prioritising the battle against housing cuts and against 24% bus fare increases.

**MANCHESTER** - Socialist Unity are standing a local candidate Bob Crossman in the Hulme area. The main issue is housing, with long waiting lists for repairs and improvements. The council is cutting the Direct Works Department. But they are also taking up the issue of democratic rights, so enthusiastically being

trampled on by arch-reactionary Chief Constable Anderton. **LONDON** - Many Socialist Unity candidates are standing, including six in Islington alone. The local unemployment rate of 15%, twice national average, is a major issue. But also important are the local cuts in hospitals and housing. One negative feature has been the decision of the Socialist Workers Party to contest the Spitalfield ward where Hilda Kean polled 20% of the votes for Socialist Unity in a recent by-election, beating the combined vote of the Tories and National Front.

### THE PROGRAMME

A good feature of the campaign has been the variation in election addresses and leaflets. This really shows that local Socialist Unity activists are taking seriously adapting the programme to local conditions. Demands and policies must be made relevant to the needs of people in different situations, involving local people and organisations in discussion. Even after the event, it's still necessary to learn new things. At a local public meeting in the Liverpool Fairfield ward a number of people commented that they thought the different idea of democracy, holding ourselves accountable to regular local meetings was the most important thing about Socialist Unity. Yet it was hardly mentioned in the election address. In Lambeth a local working class woman presented her own programme to the meeting.



Some of the few anti-racists who managed to get into the National Front's supposedly public meeting in Brixton during last month's by-election campaign.

### WHAT THE NATIONALITY LAW WOULD MEAN

Last year, the Labour Government published a Green Paper on nationality (Green Papers make proposals for legislation for public discussion). Under the terms of this Green Paper, which has been the subject of much investigation by the CBC and other members of the local community, including church people and teachers, the government proposes

The Green Paper is a logical extension of the racist 1971 Immigration Act. It proposes to create two types of citizenship: British citizens (mainly white and non-Irish) and "British Overseas Citizens" (mainly black). People with "British Overseas Citizenship" would have, in effect, no basic rights in this country: right to vote, right to leave the country and get back in, right to have a job

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