

# BIG FLAME

No 66 September 1978

Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

10p

## FOOD FIRMS COMPLAIN OF PROFIT STARVATION

# WHO'S GETTING FAT ON FOOD?

THE FOOD manufacturers are pleading poverty again. Sir Hector Laing, boss of United Biscuits, claims that profit margins are being squeezed so badly that for the industry to survive, food prices will have to rise. He wants a 3% rise at least, and "probably much more."

The truth is that food manufacturing and retailing is increasingly dominated by a few giant firms with profits to match. Rank Hovis McDougall produce nearly half our bread. Their profits have risen from £52.6m in 1975 to £64.5m in 1977.

Without the government's puny price controls — the same ones which Laing whines have "starved industry of profits" — the prices of basic food stuffs like bread, tea and butter would be in the luxury bracket. With the latest 1p rise, the price of bread has nearly doubled since 1974 — and the bakery workers still have to work nights in intolerable heat. Supermarkets make more profit out of bread than any other item on their shelves. The loaf you see is 75% air by volume and 40% water by weight.

The manufacturers are now campaigning for an end to price controls.

And behind the scenes, the manufacturers and retailers are pumping money into the Tory Party's election fund. They're banking on a price free for all if Mrs Thatcher gets to No. 10.

### 35 hours

EVEN CYNICS were beginning to think that this time they really meant business. Such was the flow of articles and speeches calling for the shorter working week flowing from the nimble fingers and lips of Len Murray, David Basnett and the other TUC worthies.

It might have taken centuries to win the ten hour day, decades to conquer the 40 hour week, but this time it looked as if the trade union movement was on the verge of storming the 35 hour week in record time.

But it wasn't to be . . .

The Post Office Engineers and the social workers (and now the Ford workers) all took the TUC at its word and began the struggle for a shorter week. The silence from Murray and Basnett resounded throughout the country.

It makes you wonder what the purpose of the TUC is if it won't fight for wages or shorter hours or even unionisation.

Now turn to back page.





# Brick Lane: More needs to be done

THOUSANDS OF anti-fascists marched unopposed through the East End of London on Sunday August 20th.

Starting from the junction of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road, the demonstration moved through Hoxton — long considered home ground for the National Front.

The demonstration passed the home of Derek Day — sometime NF candidate, British Movement associate and general thug. His only response was to play the national anthem! Is this a new Front tactic — music to soothe the savage breast?

## MYTH EXPLODED

Slightly further on into Hoxton we stopped for a brief rally. A Bengali speaker was cheered loudly when he said: "This demonstration will explode once and for all the myth that we can be prevented from going into certain areas."

And this is the important lesson for the whole Brick Lane campaign. To show the victims of fascist attacks that they are strong enough to stand up and defeat these thugs. To show the Front and British Movement that they can be and will be driven from the streets.

## STREET TERRORISM

The Bengali community in the East End has been the victim of a campaign of organised street terrorism with beatings and murders from the fascists of the NF and British Movement.

The police in this area are particularly racist and sympathetic to the fascists and have concentrated on arresting Bengalis and anti-fascists, who have been put under curfew by magistrates.

## FASCIST MORALE

So the events on Sunday; the failure of the Front to have a presence or to provide any opposition to the demonstration must be a blow to fascist morale. But they are attempting to cover their retreat.

Local stallholders, worried by falling takings, organised a petition to end all political meetings and demonstrations. The NF issued a statement that in consideration of this they would end their meetings.

They are, however, trying to establish a major presence in Chapel Market in Islington. But they have already met major opposition from the Islington Campaign against Racism and Fascism and this will continue with actions on Sunday mornings. The response from anti-fascists must be that *no* place is suitable for fascists.

## SELF-DEFENCE

The Bengali community of the East End is learning quickly that they can't rely on the police for defence.

They are discussing and taking steps for self-defence of the area. Anti-fascists should offer whatever support possible to the defence groups.

On the Brick Lane demonstrations the majority of people have been mobilised by the Anti-Nazi League. But it is still difficult or impossible in many areas for people to become involved in *ongoing* activity through the ANL. This is reflected in the loose nature of the demonstration and the weak organising and stewarding.

This could be crippling as the NF moves into a more violent pattern of action. To respond to this we will need a much more organised movement which means becoming involved in ongoing activity, discussion and decision making.

The fascists have suffered a setback at Brick Lane but we cannot rest content, there is still much to be done.

Billy Quinn



The March moves along Brick Lane (Photo Andrew Wiard (Report))

## POLICE BREAK INTO THE REMOVAL BUSINESS

AT 6 a.m. ON August 16th, 500 police and bailiffs led by ex bomb-squad chief Roy Habershon and a large contingent of Special Patrol Group (SPG), smashed down the barricades and doors of 52 occupied flats in Huntley Street near University College Hospital in Euston, using truncheons, riot shields, axes, sledgehammers, bulldozers and grappling hooks. In just 20 minutes the 160 adults and children who had been squatting there for the past 18 months were out of their beds and on the street. Thirteen of them were arrested and charged, mostly with offences under the Criminal Trespass Law.

The only cheer for the squatters came when the Under-Sheriff of London, Mr Michael Harris was soaked to the skin with a bucketful of cold water thrown from an upstairs window, though he was later able to describe the eviction as a "fabulous success" and to justify the absurdly large numbers of police in attendance by claiming that "there could have been considerable resistance."

One of the worst aspects of the eviction was that it took place at a time when alternative accommodation had already been found for the 17 families living in the community and in the middle of negotiations for the rehousing of all the single people. Just the night before, the Huntley Street squatters had met with local councillors and representatives of Camden Council, the GLC and the owners of the building, the Camden and Islington Area Health Authority and "had agreed to look for short-life housing for the single people in the squat" This would hardly present a major problem as there are estimated to be over 3,000 empty council properties in the borough.

## SPECULATORS

Even the national and London press seemed surprised at the massive scale of the police operation though their reports were full of the usual contradictions. One caption under the front page photograph of the Evening

Standard that day read "MOVING ON — a young squatter and her cat get (yes, you've guessed it!) a helping hand from the law at today's eviction" All of them presented the argument that the squatters were only being moved out in order to provide badly-needed accommodation for nurses and doctors, though few of them mentioned that the Health Authority was under pressure to evict as a direct result of the imminent closure of an even larger nurses hostel in nearby Grafton Way, or, in turn, that this hostel was being

Huntley Street squatters being evicted (photo Andrew Wiard (Report))



closed in order to return it to a group of property speculators. Not that local medical staff had any illusions about this — the EGA Campaign, Fightback and several local branches of NUPE and COHSE had consistently given the Huntley Street squatters' demands for rehousing their full backing.

For all the intransigence and callousness of the authorities, however, the squatters will not just go away. At the time of writing plans are afoot to occupy a large empty building in Fitzroy Square just down the road and it now seems likely that to save themselves any further embarrassment, that some sort of rehousing deal for the single people will be reached within the next week. Certainly the fighting spirit of the Huntley street squatters has not been extinguished. In the words of Suleyman Ali, one of their spokespersons, "We are now more determined than ever to continue militant action to force the authorities to provide decent housing for all."

Footnote: In the current absence of opportunities for trying out the new apparatus of State repression (riot shields etc.) on trade unionists it seems that the police have decided that the likes of squatters and anti-racist, anti-fascist demonstrators will do just as well as targets. Now, more than ever, with McNee demanding the sort of powers for the police that would turn this country into a West German style police state and with the imminent possibility of a Tory Government that would be only too happy to dish them out, it seems essential to identify and organise against the growing political independence of the police both locally and nationally in a way that isolated confrontations on the streets and outside the factories cannot alone ensure



Dear Comrades,

It was good to see an article in your August issue publicising the case of the East European 'dissident' Rudolf Baho, the defence of whom it is vitally necessary for the British labour movement to take up. Unfortunately, the article was marred by a major error on the question of Jews in the Soviet Union.

The article, in not mentioning Zionism, implies an equals sign between Zionism and the Jewish people, one the Zionists themselves wish to draw! Zionism, a pro-imperialist ideology, counterposes emigration to Israel to the struggle for democratic rights in the Soviet Union, as a solution to the Jewish Question. It therefore ends up accommodating both to imperialism and to the Soviet bureaucracy, just as it accommodated to fascism in the thirties. (The Revisionist Zionists, one of whose leaders was Menachem Begin, the present Israeli Prime Minister, were supported and trained by Italian fascists and were excluded from the Jewish Fighting Organisation, the main resistance group in the Warsaw ghetto rebellion, because of their extreme right-wing views!)

It is necessary therefore, for revolutionaries to fight in the Jewish community in the USSR against the Zionist non-solution and for a programme of democratic rights for the Jewish people. The fate of the Jewish people will be decided not in Israel, but in the USSR and USA where over two-thirds of world Jewry live.

In the absence of a revolutionary socialist alternative, however, Jews in the Soviet Union turn to emigration as a solution to their problems. These "Jewish dissidents" do so not "because they want a privileged solution for themselves" but because they see no other solution. Zionism feeds on this emigration, but is not the cause. In fact of the 12,545 Jewish emigrants in the first half of this year, more than half, 6,505, emigrated to the USA.

Communist greetings,  
Pete Evans, Stockport, Ches.

Dear Big Flame.

In 1951 when the new town was commenced a new hospital was designated for Hemel Hempstead. Building was due to start in 1975 but due to cuts in public expenditure the plans were scrapped.

Since then we have stopped the closure of one ward, reopened another and ultimately deferred the closure of the present hospital.

Without the mass involvement of

the community and in particular the enormous response of the industrial sector, the Trades Council and Trade Unions, the campaign would not have had this effect on the authorities.

Our activities have included two demonstrations which brought thousands of people out on the streets, many of whom had never taken part in this kind of action, and culminated in lobbying

the AHA and RHA and a packed train carrying over a thousand people to lobby Parliament and Downing Street - many of them losing a day's pay. In all this our M.P. Robin Corbett has given us active support.

We say Community and Unity= Victory!

Julie Smith and Betty Farrar,  
Hemel Hempstead

The fight for our new hospital (Hemel Hempstead Gazette)



Dear Big Flame,

At the summer camp some of us decided to revive the corpse of BF's community commission. Some London people will be meeting at the London office on Saturday September 16th at 1 o'clock to propose plans for such a commission, but we hope that people elsewhere will join us.

Lynne Segal,  
Islington.

Dear Big Flame,

I am unhappy about one aspect of the last two cover

stories in 'Big Flame' on the NHS (July) and the housing shortage (August). This is the accompanying of the stories with a shopping list of demands such as 'nationalise the drug companies', 'place health centres under community control', 'nationalise the building industry, land, banks and building societies' and so on.

I've always seen Big Flame's strategy as articulating existing working class demands in a way which generalises and unifies them, and thereby links realisable aims to revolutionary ways of fighting for them. The articles failed to explain

why the demands listed are the particular ones we should fight for. They should have shown how much these demands are already part of working class consciousness or what the chances are of winning support for them. They should also have argued why it is believed these demands can be won and presented a strategy for doing this. Instead, we have only the lists stuck there by themselves. As such they added little or nothing to the articles.

In solidarity,  
John Chance,  
(East London BF)

# BIG FLAME ON SEA

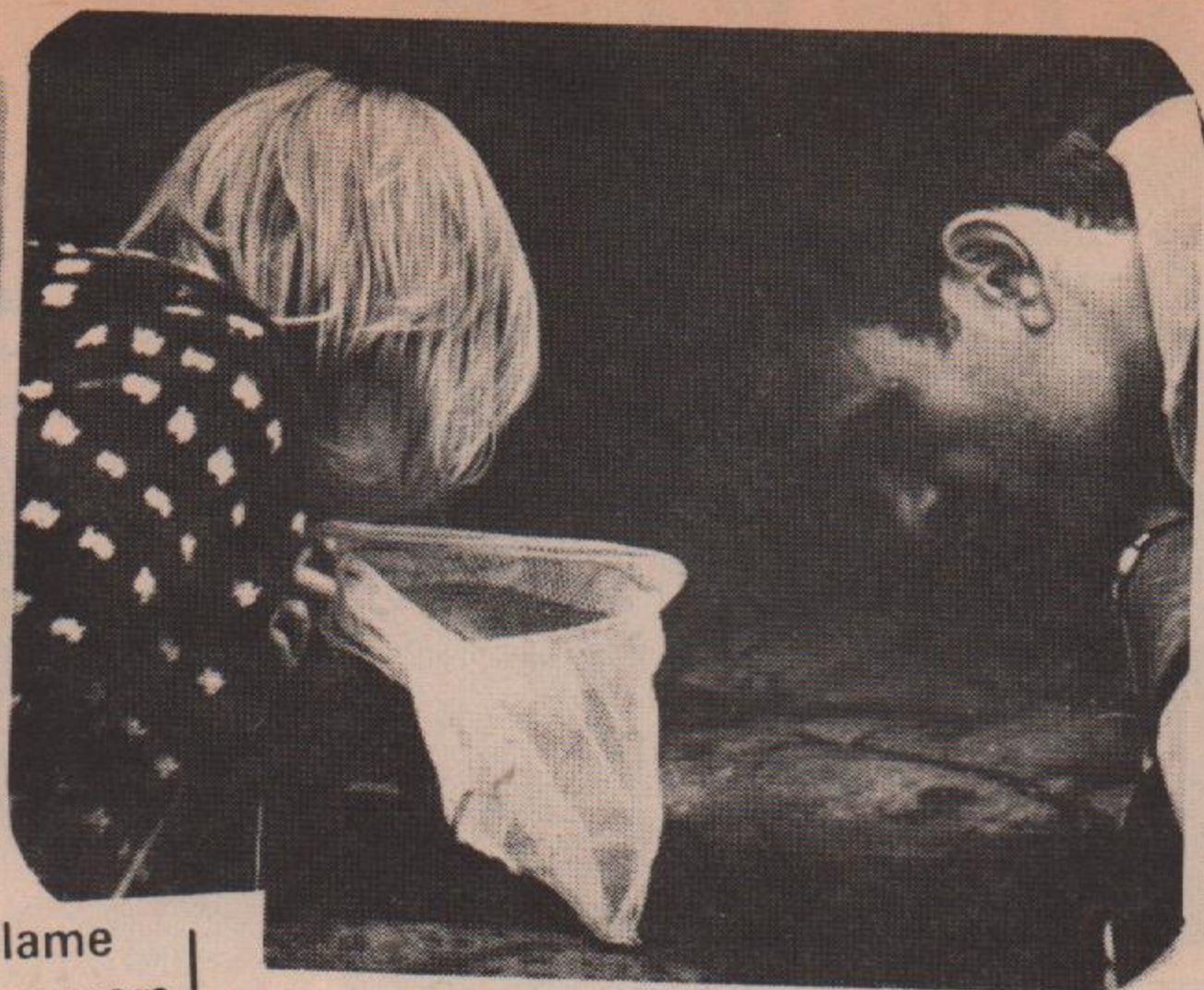
The search is on for the scene of next year's Big Flame Summer School. Rain and over-enthusiastic site managers threw a cloud over the early days of this year's, held on the North Yorkshire coast, near Whitby. Publicans visibly blanched at the sight of so many noisy commies (for the word gets around quickly in a village) in their lounges. But we overcame all this and settled down to enjoy each other's company, and the countryside.

Fresh fish and chips in Whitby, days out to the beach and the steam railway with the kids, days in with visiting speakers - Huw Beynon, Margaret Coulson, Ray Challinor, the Agri-capital Group - and nights in with films - Harlan County, the Rattle of Chile - and our own raucous home made entertainment into the early hours: these are some of the things that stand out. Here's the personal view of one woman on how the week went for her.

After two sleepless nights, a long journey from London and the initial shock of the weather, I settled down to enjoy the most incredible experience of my life. The first few days brought mixed feelings of apprehension and homesickness. I'll elaborate on this later. These feelings led me to seek the security of companions whom I already knew. The thought of going outside of my South London circle of comrades filled me with panic. Through the open

relationships formed by the children I soon became involved with some extraordinary and wonderful people.

During my twelve years of motherhood I have never been apart from my children except when their health has been so bad that they have been hospitalised. Under these circumstances I have not been able to benefit from the separation because of entrenched stress, strain and exhaustion. The week in



Yorkshire brought me emotional and physical freedom from my sons. For the first time in my life I was able to observe their behaviour and interaction with adults and children. It was an education.

The younger of my sons formed an intimate and inseparable relationship with another boy. This was another 'first' in the experience of our family. Peter has always found it very difficult to make friends until this event.

My eldest son Vernon thrived on the attention given to him by anyone who was involved in his 'child-care'. He took advantage of fresh pastures to graze on each day. In fact, Vernon never mentioned anyone unless he added the words "and they were really nice."

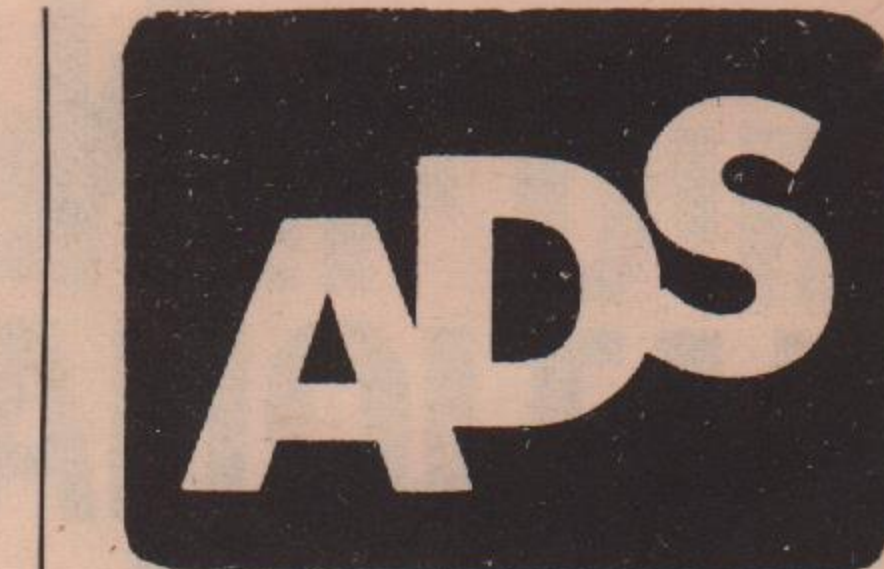
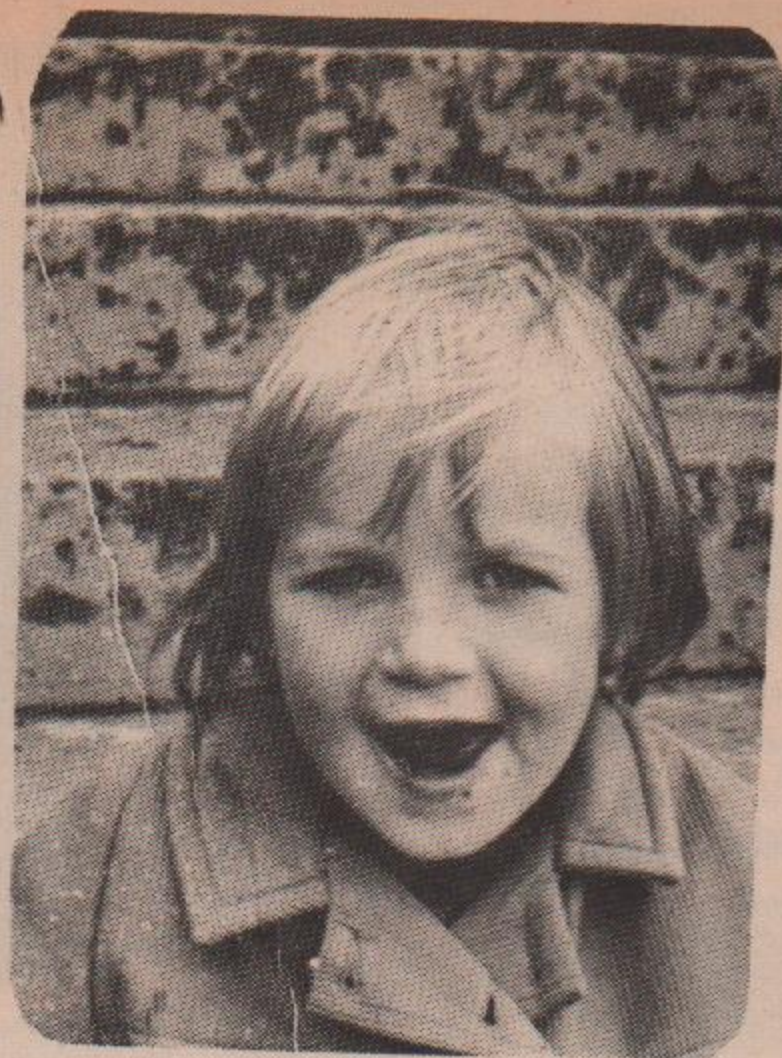
To return to my feelings of apprehension and homesickness. At first I was afraid of absolutely everything and everyone. I found myself trying too hard to be liked. As I unwound and relaxed (and did not feel guilty about someone else taking the responsibility for my children) my thoughts turned to my personal politics. I have spent many hours during and since the week in Yorkshire trying to explain to my children that I am a Socialist. This

was something I was afraid and ashamed to do before. This 'shame' has now turned to 'pride' because I now realise how important it is for me to live in a way which I adamantly believe in.

The films, discussions, workshops and singsongs gave me more than education, understanding and entertainment. They gave me a clearer line to follow now that the week is over and I am back in my four walls at Sydenham.

In my opinion the advantages of the Summer School were numerous. My only criticism was that I felt afraid to enter into conversation with the 'professional revolutionaries' I lacked the confidence to approach these members first. A feeling of elitism was, I felt, always present. As I understand it, the policy of Big Flame is to try to encompass and encourage the working class into the organisation. A little less austerity would be welcome. Please remember that it took a lot of courage, for me that is, to become politically involved. This could be the feeling that many others experience.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone concerned in making this holiday possible. Thank



BRIGHTON

TUC WEEK (Sept. 4-7th) FRINGE EVENTS

Sun. 3rd.

- \* ANL rally at the Level
- \* ABC Defence Committee Public Meeting. Speakers include Aubrey, Campbell and Berry and Denis McShane, NUJ Vice-President. At the Resource Centre. 7.00 p.m.

Mon. 4th

- \* Exhibitions put on by the National Museum of Labour History - Fascism, Resource Centre
- Women at Work, Resource Centre

These will be open all week from Monday ay 3.30 p.m. There will be two lectures arranged to coincide with these exhibitions. The one on fascism is still to be arranged.

- \* Lecture: Jean McGrindle 'Feminism and Socialism'. 7.30. Resource Centre
- \* Campaign Against Youth Unemployment Public Meeting. Speakers including Peter Hain, Jo Richardson, Bernard Dicks, Bob Boyson, 8.00 p.m. Resource Centre.

Tues. 5th

- \* Right To Work Campaign. Rally at Kingsweat Hall. Afternoon. Speakers hopefully to include Pat Crerand, Jimmy Pursey, Brian Clough.
- \* Lecture. Terry McCarthy 'Sinn Fein and the British Labour Movement, 1908-16'. Resource Centre, 7.30 p.m.
- \* Theatre (provisional) Counteract performing 'Party Games'. Resource Centre, 8.00 p.m.
- \* Right To Work/CAYU bop. Patrick Fitzgerald and the Piranhas at Brighton Corporation Bus Depot Social Club, Lewes Lewes Rd.
- \* CAYU. Discussion on Sus. 2.00 Resource Resource Centre.

Weds. 6th.

- \* CAYU film. It is hoped to get 'Blacks Britannica', a very recent film about racism in Britain. Resource Centre, 2.00 p.m.
- \* Garners Strike. Speaker Habib Rabman, Chairperson, Garners Strike Committee. Resource Centre 3.00 p.m.
- \* Photography. Speaker from Half Moon Photographic Workshop, Ed Barber. - Resource Centre 7.00 p.m.
- \* Brighton and Hove Anti-Fascist Committee. Rally with speakers to be arranged. Wagner Hall.
- \* Rock Against Racism. Major concert at the Kingswest. Groups still to be fixed.

Thurs. 7th.

- \* NHS Day of Action organised by the Sussex Movement Against Cuts in the Health Services.
- \* Resource Centre Benefit Bop. Piranhas, Nicky and the Dots, Devil's Dykes and the Dodgems. Brighton Corporation Bus Depot Social Club, Lewes Rd. 60p. entrance, 40p claimants.

SOUTH LONDON BIG FLAME OPEN WORKSHOPS

Weds. Sep. 27th - The lessons of the Garners Strike. (Alvaro Miranda - Westminster Trades Council) (To be confirmed)

Weds. Oct. 25th. - Chile Now and future perspectives. 2 films - 'Campamento' and 'To The People Of The World' - with two speakers from the MIR.

Weds. Nov. 29th. - Local Government and the Politics of the Community.

Weds. Dec. 20th. - Personal Politics and the Left.

All workshops will be held in Room 5, St. Matthew's Meeting Place, Brixton Hill, London SW2. Buses 2,3,109, 159, 95, 133, 172, 45, 35, 37. Tube - Brixton.

NORWICH

East Anglian Region's Women's Weekend - 7th-8th October.

Workshops on childcare, the family, women in waged work etc. and how we can fight together against our oppression. Dance and music sessions. Creche. Social Sat. night.

For registration/details contact Gill or Jo, 101 Shipfields, Norwich. Tel: 0603-413603.

INTERVENTION No.2 OUT NOW!

'Revolutionary Politics as a Hobby'. Jim Masters airs the unmentionables for the Left. An essay on the irrational in politics - the left as a subculture. Copies 62p. (inc. p&p) from Intervention, 539 Battersea Park Rd. London SW11.

SHEFFIELD

DAY OF SOLIDARITY AGAINST RACISM - Sat. 16th Sept. March, Rally and social. March assemblies 10.30 a.m., Carlyle St. Afternoon events start 1.30 p.m. University. Forums on trade unions, education and racism + films. Social 7.30 p.m. University Student Union.

LIVERPOOL

Merseyside Anti-Racist Alliance March and concert. 10th Sept. Assemble Shaw St. 10.30 a.m. for march to Walton Hall Park - local bands.

ABC Campaign Picket Old Bailey



# NF ECONOMIC POLICY: NATIONALISM DISGUISED AS ECONOMICS

IN ONE RESPECT, the National Front is on the run. It was humiliated in the May elections, and the tremendous growth of the anti-fascist movement spearheaded by the Anti-Nazi League is a daily slap in the face to the fascists. But these developments by no means spell death for fascism. The National Front has deliberately adopted — though it will never admit as much in public — a dramatic escalation of its policy of violence. For some time now it has been more open about its basic fascist creed, with its monthly magazine attempting to rehabilitate Hitler and taking clear anti-semitic stands.

The NF's present strategy is to harden its fascist cadre, to 'educate' them in fascist ideology, and to test them in physical combat. The present spate of violence is not just the wild thrashings of an angry, dying animal, but a deliberate policy. This policy is made more urgent for the NF by another important development on the far right — the rapid increase in numbers of the openly-Nazi British Movement. Many NF activists, disconcerted at the failure of the 'respectable' electoral strategy of the NF, are joining the British Movement, which has always condemned Tyndall's 'weak' policies and have never made any bones about their full fascist programme and methods.

*Big Flame* has never taken the view that fascism can be characterised as rats who have to be kicked back down the sewer. While we are completely committed to the political position of 'no platform for fascists', a position which we feel should be physically implemented wherever it is tactically possible, we believe that the anti-fascist militants must have a clear understanding of the nature of modern fascism. The fascist ideology builds on many elements of bourgeois thought, and militants must be equipped to argue and organise against any fascist tendencies amongst elements of the working class. In previous issues of *Big Flame* we have described the fascist position, in Nazi Germany and in the NF's programme, on women. In this new series of articles we will be examining the NF's economic views, its views on race and on youth.

## NATIONALISM MASQUERADING AS ECONOMICS

"Q. What would you describe as the central moving spirit behind your economic doctrines?"

Tyndall: *Our economic doctrines stem from the fact that we are basically a nationalist movement.*

(*The Economy*, 15 questions answered, John Tyndall)

For the National Front, like any other political movement, economic policies cannot be separated from its general political ideology. Whereas the Tory and Labour parties pretend that their economic policies stem from some timeless application of the 'science' of economics, the NF at least has the merit of making clear that economic policies rest on a particular way of understanding society. Because it looks at the whole of the organisation of society, and acknowledges that its economic policies require a complete upheaval in society, the NF can claim to be a party of radical change and make fundamental attacks on the Tories and socialists alike.

It is this 'radicalism' and critique of Tory economics which has led the National Association for Freedom to describe the NF as 'socialist'. The split from the NF of the National Party was widely understood as the departure of the 'socialist' faction, comparable to the split in Hitler's National Socialist Party of the Strasser faction. This strange alliance of 'socialism' and nationalism has long been a source of confusion in the left's analysis of fascism, and a close look at the NF's economic policies should help clear our minds.

## NF ECONOMIC POLICIES

Several of the NF's economic policies read like some of the policies of the Labour Party, the Tribune Group or the Communist Party. The NF calls for import controls, directed investment, control

of and possible nationalisation of the banking system, state intervention in industry, particularly in regional underdevelopment, withdrawal from the Common Market, a national fuel policy, rejection of the Tory counter inflation policy and of the Social Contract — a concern for conservation and ecological balance, low price housing, workers participation, profit sharing and curbs on monopolies. It is very simple for NAFF to put NF policies alongside Labour's policies, and to quote from NF publications alongside those of the far left in its coverage of the 'socialist' press, as it does in its newspaper 'The Free Nation'. And many of these policies will look attractive to the 'average worker', particularly those who feel betrayed by Labour.

In its attack on the NF's economic policies, the left has concentrated exclusively on the precedent of Hitler's destruction of the trade unions, and on the occasional anti-union remark by NF leaders. This is a strong point, but at the moment the NF policy documents are very careful to hide their anti-union views — concentrating their attacks on 'militants', 'reds', 'wreckers' etc. rather than attacking the unions as such — and they can quote some attitudes which seem favourable to workers in unions.

Nor can we rely on those NF policies which seem easily exposed as anti-working class in our efforts to discredit the fascists. The NF describes 'overmanning' as the 'national curse' and says the economy could be run with 5 million fewer workers. The threat involved in this policy is obvious, and little comfort can be taken from the statement that the NF would redirect the unemployed into new industries which would make the country self-sufficient in manufactured goods. All trade unionists know what the redirection of five million workers would mean.

The NF says it would restore the 'incentive to work' by cutting taxes,

removing social security payments from strikers and by cutting social welfare, because 'it is used to debase the whole value of hard work and self-reliance'. (Shades of the slogan over the gateway of Auschwitz concentration camp — 'Work makes you free'). Attractive to some of the petit bourgeoisie, perhaps, but not to most manual workers whose main effort is to avoid hard work. Nor will many workers welcome the pledge to include 'loss sharing' in the NF's 'profit sharing' proposals, since this would obviously involve drastic wage and savings cuts if your firm went to the wall.

## THE FASCIST PHILOSOPHY

It is useful to point out these obviously anti-working class elements in the NF's package in arguments on the shop floor and in the community. But we have to beware of the tendency to argue simply on the level of 'these policies aren't in your interests'. It's like playing the numbers game with immigration facts — sometimes they form part of the argument, but they are not enough. The important thing is for people to realise what *the whole of the NF's package represents*. We have to understand the way they understand society — their peculiarly fascist philosophy of the world.

The NF explains the economic crisis, not as a crisis of capitalism, but as a crisis of ideas and leadership. This crisis, they say, is due to the decline of the British Empire, which was itself due to the wrong economic policies of the Tories (free trade) and the domination of the world by international financial complexes (which they see inevitably as Jewish). This meant that Britain lost the economic and nationalist benefits of the white Commonwealth, which was composed of people of northern European race. The extreme emphasis on 'racial' solidarity as the basis for prosperity runs through all the NF's economic doctrines:

"The revival of British power is inextricably bound up with our regaining our lost influence in these three key areas." (Canada, Australasia and 'British Africa' — i.e. Zimbabwe and South Africa).

— Britain: World Power or Pauper State, John Tyndall.

This explicitly racist and nationalist view of history is made even more obvious when we recognise that Britain's problems, according to the NF, stem not only out of the inadequate policies and leadership of the Tory and Labour parties, but from 'international finance' and 'cosmopolitan influences'. As is the general trend in NF pronouncements, the attack on these elements is strongest in their most recent document, significantly titled 'Beyond Capitalism and Socialism'. The terms 'international finance' and 'cosmopolitan' are NF code for 'Jew' and in the 'World Power' pamphlet they let the cat out of the bag and openly admit this. They say that international finance has dominated the world through its control of all the world's media ("the 'free press' is in fact the voice of a small number of gigantic publishing corporations with international links and cosmopolitan loyalties".) Later they say that "almost unlimited financial power carries the Zionist message to Jews everywhere through its hold over every kind of medium of communication". In the more recent pamphlet the link with the Jews is better hidden but that is made up for by the openly anti-semitic articles in their other publications.

Racism and nationalism, then, are the core of the NF's economics, just as they are of all fascist policies. All their other policies follow from these basic perspectives — import controls and directed investment are required to establish a trading bloc with the white Commonwealth; we should withdraw from the EEC because we would get our raw materials and food from the white countries (including Rhodesia and

South Africa): state intervention and regional policies to redirect labour and industry to make us self-sufficient in manufactured goods; financial control to remove international (Jewish) control of the money supply, which removes the need for Labour or Tory counter inflation policies since, without the deliberately created financial chaos of the 'cosmopolitans' we would have no inflation!

Finally their policies on the unions, presently cloaked in the call for greater union democracy (one union per industry, secret ballots, election of all officials, worker participation to stop the 'red agitators') are all required because the NF knows that the greatest and most effective resistance to their policies will come from the labour movement. But if the NF did ever come to power, they would very quickly set up a corporate state which would do away with unions as a form of independent representation of the working class.

## SOCIALIST POLICIES

It is not enough, then, to argue about the practicality of NF policies.

Revolutionary Marxists have to destroy the racist and nationalist ideas which permeate the working class. We have one enormous ideological advantage over the fascists — we can explain that these ideas stem from imperialism and exploitation, whereas the fascists have to resort to irrational, spiritual ideas like 'racial fraternity', 'common destiny' to 'explain' their assumptions. But since we know that racist and nationalist ideas have this material base, we cannot win by arguments alone. We have to develop revolutionary organisations which have the policies and strategies to totally transform the material base of society. So the fight against fascism has to be integrally linked to the struggle for socialism.



National Front provoking ANL demonstration at Ilford (photo: Carlos Augusto)





# Coming this autumn- Our new improved<sup>☆</sup> paper



## TOO BIG FOR OUR BOOTS

We know that some readers may think that we're getting too big for our boots. After all, there are plenty of other socialist papers. Why don't we merge with Socialist Challenge or Socialist Worker?

We believe that Big Flame has something distinctive to offer, and the increase in our sales and contributors tells us that it's worth producing the paper, even if it isn't quite into the big league yet.

What has Big Flame got to offer? First, it tries to present the struggles of the working class as true to the way the people involved see them -warts and all - as we can. Big Flame believes in the movement first, party second, because without a strong, united working class, there can be no revolutionary party. Too often the left puts its own slant on

This autumn *Big Flame* will be having a face lift. At one fell swoop, we will improve the design and make the contents more interesting. A lot depends on you. Apart from the greater financial support we'll need, especially if we increase the number of pages, we'll also be on the lookout for more sellers and more contributors.

Meanwhile, we'd like to hear your ideas about how *Big Flame* should be improved, and the kind of newspaper you want to see.

events for narrow party building purposes.

Second, *Big Flame* tries to present political issues and events in a popular accessible way, without patronising its readers, diluting its politics, or confounding its readers. We think that in a limited way, our newspaper shows how a socialist daily for a working class readership could present politics.

Third, although we are a small organisation, our traditional openness to ideas and non-sectarianism gives our pages a variety and breadth which is rare in left-wing papers. In the end, we'd like to see a daily

or at least weekly paper aimed at a working class readership. We see *Big Flame* as one very limited model of what that paper might be like. And, until it comes about, there's a continuing need for a paper which deals honestly with the struggle for socialism.

*Big Flame* has improved over the past year or so. Largely as a result of your contributions. The main change we want to make to the paper this autumn is to build into it a broader cross-section of the socialist movement in Britain and abroad. We'd like to hear your suggestions for improving it.

We're a small newspaper but, we're glad to say we are getting a rising number of contributions from our readers - almost enough photos, stories and articles to run to an edition every fortnight. So we thought you might like to hear from us about what we consider makes - or destroys - a good article.

## Some Hints for Budding Reporters

### A FEW DO'S

Remember that the people involved in the struggle often have the best things to say. Let them speak directly in your article, and it will be more vivid.

Provide illustrations - drawings, cartoons, photos.

Bear in mind that socialist newspaper stories need to be a combination of narrative and analysis. Readers want to understand what happened and its meaning for them.

Be brief. Then we are less likely to deal your article a mortal or mutilating blow with our red pencil. We occasionally print articles over 1,000 words ( a page long ), but generally stories should be no longer than 600 words, and features up to 800 words.

### AND DON'TS

Scribble articles on discarded ice-cream wrappers. Write - or type, if possible - on one side of the paper leaving double space between the lines and a 1 1/2 inch left-hand margin. That makes it much easier for us to edit and type it.

Use strange words or expressions, unless you explain their meaning.

Send us articles at the last minute, unless they deal with last minute events. The sooner material arrives, the more thought we can give it and its presentation.

Be afraid to be funny or satirical. A sense of humour is not incompatible with socialism.

Begin your articles ' There was a meeting on 23rd June 1978 about the rising cost of...' or similarly. This is an almost certain turn-off for readers.

#### NEXT EDITION

Publication Date:  
Thursday 5 October

Deadline:  
Wednesday 27 September

New, Articles, Letters  
and Photos to:  
The Editor  
Big Flame  
217 Wavertree Road  
Liverpool 7  
051-260 0305

Note: early posting is vital while post office censorship continues.

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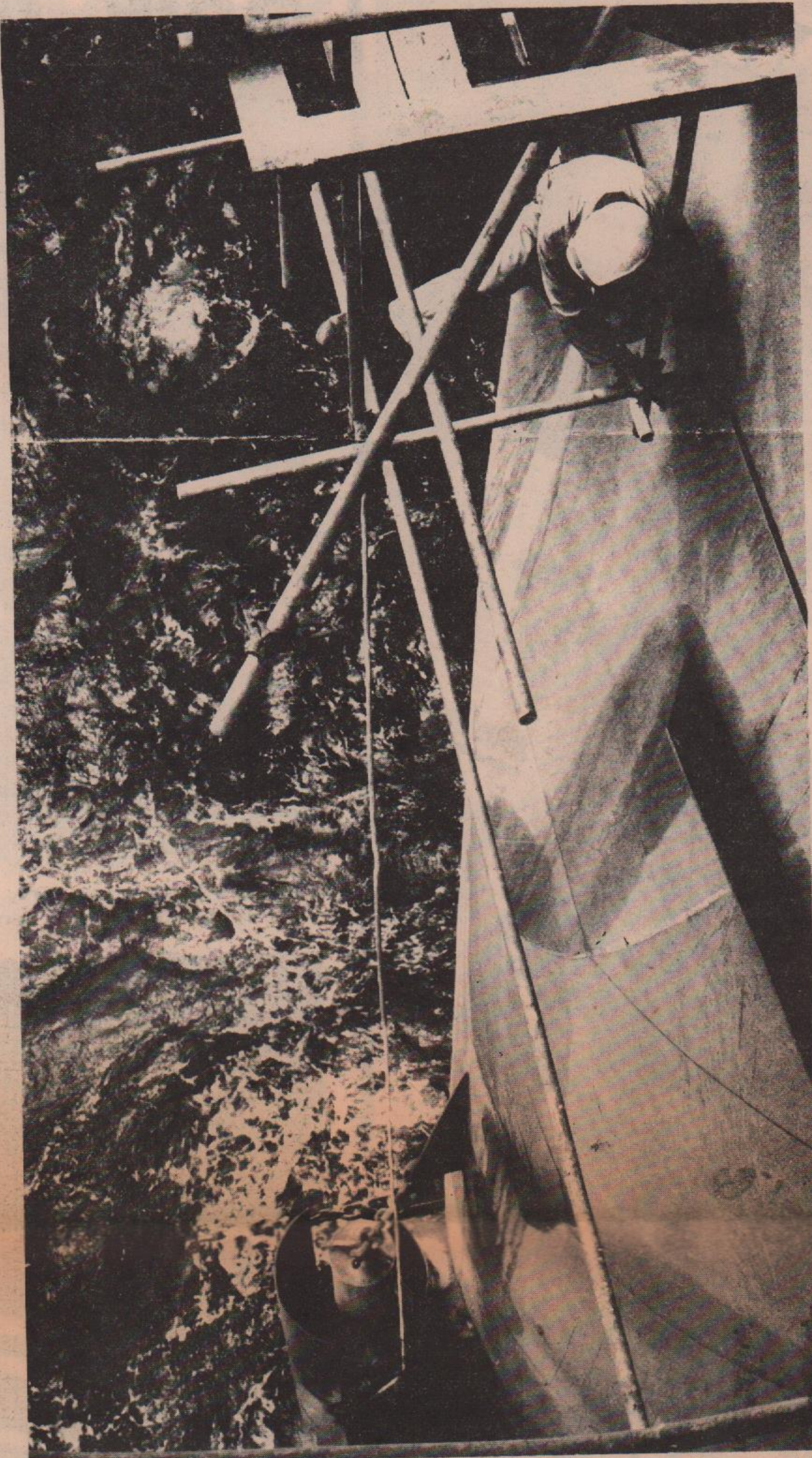
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# ENERGY... FUEL FOR PROFIT

## CONVI FLA

### NORTH SEA OIL RIGGED



Working over the sea without safety harness or life jacket. Don James (Camerawork)

IN THE 1964-73 period, government policy was to not get involved in the production of oil but only to get money through taxing oil companies' profits. Given this extreme generosity by the government, the oil companies naturally took advantage of the situation by declaring massive losses to the order of £1.5 billion, which they could offset against future profits from the North Sea. These losses were due to the working of the special transfer-price (posted price) system which was operated by the international oil industry in the early '70s.

This extremely generous policy was the product of the oil lobby on government. It is powerful because two of the seven leading oil companies (the 'seven sisters') are British - Shell and BP. This influence is clear from this government statement:

*"If the UK were to impose onerous financial terms with respect to oil concessions, it may incite OPEC countries to follow suit to the detriment of our overseas oil-interests and the Balance of Payments."*

The truth of the matter is that the British government has no 'overseas oil-interests' though the oil companies do - so it is quite clear from this statement that government policy was dictated by the interests of the oil companies.

#### STATE OIL

Since 1973, the relation of the government to North Sea oil has been changed by the creation of the British National Oil Corporation (BNOC) which is actively involved in the exploration and extraction of North Sea Oil - though its involvement is limited by the amount of funds the government will allocate it. In fact, the oil companies were well prepared for BNOC and its involvement in extraction. They have had to deal with this situation in Arab and South American oil producing countries. Their universal response is quite simple: to transfer the profits to other parts of the oil production cycle. Following

government involvement in 'upstream activities', oil companies transfer their domination (and profits) to 'downstream activities'. This means that profits are transferred from the extraction process to the refining process and to the petro-chemical industry which uses the oil. Not surprisingly two of the largest and most profitable chemical firms operating in this country are Shell Chemicals and BP Chemicals. A study of profitability in the oil industry done in 1975 by the investment analysts W. Greenwell shows that all of Shell's profits in North Sea oil come from its 'downstream' activities.

#### WHAT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DO?

It is obvious that if a government really wanted to take for itself the vast profits that are up for grabs in the North Sea, it would have to take over large sections of the refining and petro-chemical industries. There is no chance that a Labour or Tory government will do this since the interests they represent include those of the oil companies. It should also be pointed out that for the workers in the industry nationalisation would be worthless unless it was accompanied by measures of workers' control. At present, the whole of the oil industry in this country is being run with complete disregard for the health

and safety of the workers. Injury and death rates are exceptionally high.

The perspective for socialists on North Sea oil must be two-pronged. Firstly to argue for the nationalisation of those sectors of the industry that are the money spinners.

Secondly to support the bitter fight for union recognition and health and safety regulations going on at present in the North Sea.

(article written with thanks for information provided by the CSE Energy group and Peter Nore's pamphlet 'Six Myths of British Oil Policies.')

AN INQUIRY is now going on the tanker 'Amoco Cadiz', res French and English coasts. The flag which is known in the tra the shipowners pay nothing fo this article we look at the effe what should be done about th

In international law, there is only one limitation on the right of countries to register ships. There should be a 'genuine link' between a country and any ship that uses that country's flag. In practice this 'genuine link' is purely administrative and not economic. This very weak interpretation of 'genuine link' has led to the very fast growth of flags of convenience in the post-war period.

#### CONVENIENT FOR WHOM?

It's no surprise that the convenience is all for the owners of the ships. You don't have to be a resident in the countries in which you are registering your ship. In some of the 'convenience' countries like Panama you have to set up a company that costs £800 and you don't even have to go to Panama to do it! It's also "convenience" that the profits ships make are tax-free. It's "convenience" that in hiring crew you do not have to respect any of the conditions laid down by the I.L.O. (International Labour Organisation); that applies to wages as well as to qualifications. Hong Kong, for instance, has a school for pilots that is known to be worthless - its degrees are only recognised by convenience countries. Liberia the country of the 'Amoco Cadiz' has no school for its pilots. And, of course, the choice of pilot can be extremely important economically - the thrifty ship-owner will want one who is not too

## Ireland Get the troops out now!



THERE'S NO doubt that the Daily Mirror's call for a phased withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland has met with the approval of many politicians and policemen, as well as ordinary people. The new bombing campaign against British Army bases on the Rhine has underlined the urgency for British imperialism of reaching a settlement in the North.

There are increasing signs of desperation in the British government's cover-up of opposition to the Army's role in the North and

"The Legion Hall Bombing" (the author's own openly sympathetic title was Willie Boy) shows that journalists are now increasingly in



A recent demonstration in Manchester for political status.

film on Derry and the cancellation of an edition of ITV's 'This Week'.

#### WILLIE BOY

The Mirror has joined the quality press in increasingly outspoken criticism of British rule in the North.

conditions and the Prevention of Terrorism Act continues to provide the legal basis for the harassment of critics of British rule in Ireland.

The father of "Willie Boy" is just one of the most recent cases of detention under an Act which prod-

the highest number of arrests under the PTA, simply because it's the departure port for both Dublin and Belfast. Not one conviction for terrorist activity has been made in the past year despite dozens of arrests on the two ferries. Worst of all, in a period without any bombings on the



# OR FOR USE

## ENIENT AGS

into what caused the accident of possible for vast oil slicks on the 'Amoco Cadiz' flew the Liberian flag as a 'flag of convenience' — since the registration of the ship. In the case of flags of convenience and

dockers discovered that the crew had not been allowed off the ship for three years and that wages and overtime payments owed added up to £11,000 per crew member. They insisted that this sum be paid up before they let the ship out of the harbour.

### WHO OWNS THE SHIPS?

In many cases it is very difficult to know who owns ships flying flags of convenience — often there is one company for each ship. The information that exists shows us that most owners come from the U.S. and Greece, with the transnational oil companies (in particular Texaco, Getty Exxon, Shell, BP and Mobil) accounting for a large chunk of the tonnage. Liberia which is responsible for 75% of all tonnage registered under flags of convenience has 30% of the world's oil-tankers!

### POLITICAL CONTROL OF SHIP-OWNERS

The countries that dish out flags of convenience become economically very dependent on the small revenue they get from the trade. Panama, which was separated from Columbia by the military force of U.S. imperialism in 1903, relies on income from the canal and flags of convenience to survive. Its main customer is the United Brands fruit company which ruined the economy of Honduras when it transferred its flags of convenience to Panama. Another financial advantage to the owners is that they get their ships built wherever it is cheapest (usually in Japan). Whereas American registered companies have to build their ships in U.S. yards and run their ships according to U.S. law for 25 years. It was the oil lobby in the U.S. congress that defeated Carter's attempt to get a law through that would have limited the amount of oil brought to the U.S. in convenience tankers.

### A VERY HIGH ACCIDENT RATE

A recent study by the O.E.C.D. makes it quite clear that ships from flags of convenience countries have a much higher accident rate. This is less true in the case of oil-tankers where the oil companies have a financial interest in keeping the ships in good nick than with Cyprus-registered bulk-carriers which are now so old as to have little more than scrap

value. The figures of the report are striking — the loss rate is as follows:

World average	=1
Liberia	2.05
Panama	4.55
Singapore	2.72
Cyprus	5.54
Somalia	7.3

(The particularly high figures for Cyprus come from the fact that 95% of its ships are over ten years old, whereas the world average is 35%. It is quite clear that Cyprus and Somalia are prepared to register as sea-worthy ships that would not make the grade in other countries.)

### A NEW ECONOMIC ORDER

There is no doubt that the rapid development of the flags of convenience business must be understood in the context of a new world economic order. Flags of convenience are issued by countries whose economy is dependent on transnational corporations. The free registration of ships enables ship-owners of the developed capitalist countries to exploit a cheap work-force without having to share the profits either with the country from which the workers come or the country issuing the flag of convenience.

### HOW FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE CAN BE FOUGHT?

The action of dockers has pointed the way forward. It is also true that some of the traditional maritime shipping nations want to take action on the threat flags of convenience pose to their shipping industry and to the pollution of their beaches. It would not be difficult for the British government to enforce international standards on all ships using British ports. But there are also considerable financial interests, including the international oil cartel, who want to make sure no limitations are placed on the flags of convenience trade. Given the influence of this oil cartel, it is not surprising that the Greek and British governments are resisting any investigation into the economic advantages of flags of convenience.

Until progressive forces, including the labour movement, take up the issue, there will be a constant recurrence of disasters like that of the 'Amoco Cadiz'. And we will continue to be presented with spectacles like the current farce of a Liberian inquiry into the crash of a ship that has nothing to do with Liberia — except its flag.

## N.C.B. PLAN UNDERMINED

IN PUBLIC the national Coal Board (NCB) is sticking to the figures quoted in its *Plan for Coal 1974* which put coal at the centre of the country's energy policy and forecast an annual need for 135million tons of coal by 1985 — which would mean an investment programme of £3,000 million and many more jobs for miners.

In private, the NCB is beginning to realise the optimism of these projected figures — they know that coal can only be sold if it is competitively priced in comparison with oil and gas and that this can only be achieved if they can get the NUM to accept a policy that accepts wage restraint, the quick closure of mines especially in Wales and Scotland, and the heavy concentration of investment in a small number of high technology mines in the central Midlands and Yorkshire.

A recent study by the Sussex University Science Policy Research Unit claims that, given the slow growth in the economy, coal consumption in the year 2000, may be as low as 84 million tons. The study points out that the biggest customer for coal is the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) and that the demand

for electricity only grows in an expanding economy. The CEGB take 60% of coal mined and they have made clear their desire to cut back on coal consumption — they have even said how it would save them money to buy coal from Australia which is cheaper. The CEGB plan to build 23 nuclear power stations before the end of the century — recently Benn gave the go ahead for the building of two Advanced Gas Cooled Nuclear Reactors. The development of nuclear power takes place at the expense of coal.

If the CEGB is allowed to get away with these policies, it will mean redundancies in the mines on the scale of the 50's and 60's. What is urgently needed is an alternative energy policy that can bring together in struggle the NUM, the anti-nuclear movement and the revolutionary left.



### SYSTEMATIC CLAMP-DOWN

The press silence on the Army's systematic clamp-down on political opposition in the North continues, despite the complaints of a growing number of journalists. The entire Derry committee of Sinn Fein has been detained and both the Workers Resource Centre and the offices of People's Democracy/Movement for a Socialist Republic have been brought to a standstill by searches and arrests.

No mention at all of opposition in Britain — that can be relied on too. Neither the United Troops Out Movement picket of the BBC after the Willy Boy censorship or the 2,000 strong march by Sinn Fein in London on 12th August, protesting the start of internment without trial.

### PHONE—INS

Still, the Daily Mirror has given us an indication of the mounting wave of disillusionment with the results of the British presence in Ireland. Now is the time to pick up the phone and join in a phone in. Even if it's only about jam-making you will probably manage to make yourselves heard for a minute or two. And with the General Election just over the horizon, this could be a suitable time to canvass your MPs views on Ireland and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

## REVOLUTIONARIES: NO SHORT CUTS FOR UNITY



Since Big Flame took a decision to investigate the possibilities of helping to create a new revolutionary organisation, we have taken part in a number of discussions with other political organisations and militants. Recently we have been discussing with the IMG (International Marxist Group) and ISA (International Socialist Alliance) their proposals to launch a campaign for a new organisation. But at its last meeting, the National Committee of Big Flame decided that it was unable to participate in their initiative. Here we explain why. In a future edition of this newspaper Big Flame will be setting out its political plans in the light of this decision.

The starting point of the IMG-ISA campaign for a new organisation is their common statement. This begins from the assumption that the main problem of organisation today is how to separate revolutionaries from reformists. Other political differences amongst revolutionaries are then to be settled democratically within a new organisation. Big Flame sees this as a seriously defective basis for creating a new organisation.

The distinction between revolutionaries and reformists is useful for creating agreement on joint activity, but it isn't sufficient to face some of the main problems of building a new and radically different kind of organisation in today's conditions.

differences between revolutionaries, and not simply disagreements between revolutionaries and reformists.

We pinpoint three other problems:

■ Why so many many independent and working class militants have been alienated from or passed through socialist organisations. How to ensure that any new organisation involves many of these comrades.

■ Political differences are often hidden by agreement on demands and programmes. These differences arise from historical tradition and the theory and practice of the various political currents. How do we ensure that a new organisation is a genuine combination of political currents and not a majority with a series of democratically outvoted minorities.

■ The relationship between the revolutionary organisation and the working class and its autonomous movements. How will a new organisation create a political practice that is mass-based, aimed at the whole class and which avoids political manipulation.

We would argue that the proposed campaign by the IMG-ISA for a new organisation prejudices an adequate understanding of these and other questions. Big Flame, however, does not rule out in principle being in the same organisation as IMG or ISA or, indeed, other political forces. Therefore, we are keen to continue joint activity and discussions. These will help us to assess the existing differences, while maintaining the unity of



# Rank and File Organising in the States

WORKPLACE ORGANISING is at a low ebb in the United States the percentage of workers unionised is down to 23% and more and more companies are moving from the North East, where unionisation is comparatively strong to the South and South-West where unions are less than welcome and union organisers still run out of town. And for the minority of workers who are union members there are still many problems — link-ups between full-time officials and the 'mob' are frequent. Inside most unions democracy is non-existent. Huge distances between militants and their physical repression by mobsters and police make independent organisation in the unions very difficult. In this respect the Teamsters, whose membership includes lorry drivers, van drivers, and warehouse workers, is almost unique.

Since 1976, Teamsters for a Democratic Contract (TDC) has existed as a rank and file organisation inside the teamsters union. One of its founder members was recently in England and gave us this interview.

*We have little knowledge in this country of rank and file organisation in the States — are there many groups like TDC?*

"TDC is pretty unique. In some unions, like the mine-workers, there is what can be seen as a left-wing bureaucracy, but nowhere is there a left-wing rank and file like TDC. In fact, in many unions, the rank and file is moving to the right."

TDC started in 1976 to organise a fight around the National Freight Agreement, a contract that covered 450,000 drivers. Previous national agreements had sold away our right to strike over grievance procedures and work conditions were getting steadily worse. In our first national meeting, there were representatives from more than 15 chapters (branches) — we drew up a programme to fight the contract and started the publication of 'Convoy', which now has a circulation of 60,000.

## TWO DAY STRIKE

During the fight for a better contract, TDC groups were set up in every major city and the union executive decided to call a two day national strike to draw the anger of the rank and file. In Detroit, which is our strongest base, we managed to keep the strike going for seven days and got concessions from the companies that included no reprisals for strike action and a wage increase that was 50% higher than the bosses' first offer. At the same time, teamster workers who work in UPS, the parcel delivery company, started their own newspaper 'Upsurge': they are now very well organised.

When the contract was signed, we realised that changing the union was not a one-shot deal and that what was needed was an ongoing rank and file organisation that could reach out to the 2.5 million members of the Teamsters. TDC now has over 3,000 paid-up members centred around 25 chapters.

*Do you put up TDC candidates in local union elections?*

Yes, sometimes. There is disagreement in the organisation over this point. For instance, in Wisconsin we recently got all our candidates elected — they had led a wildcat strike and were very popular locally. We find that we often have problems with our members when they get elected. The fact is that contracts are negotiated and implemented on a national and regional scale, so local officials have no say in what happens, even the grievance procedure is administered regionally. And it is no accident that it is only local officials that are elected — all others are appointed by head office, which has close contacts with organised crime.

*You said that the distribution of 'Convoy' was 60,000, that seems a very high figure.*

We distribute it free and get the money back in shop-floor collections. This way we get rid of many

more than if we sold them individually and at the same time, it encourages shop-floor organisation. Since many of our members are drivers, we have immediate access to many work-places where there are teamster members.

Our strategy has always been to be as open as possible about what we are doing. The more publicity we get, the more difficult it is for the union officials to lean on us — in fact TDC members are not often physically harassed. They have often tried to expel us from the union, but with little success.

*What are the conditions in the industry?*

Over the last ten years, there has been a tremendous productivity drive — weight and length limits of trucks have been increased and the legal maximum of 70 hours driving every eight days has become the norm for long distance drivers. For city drivers, the bosses' offensive has taken the form of casualisation — drivers are taken on for 29 days and then laid off — that was way they get none of the better deal that comes with seniority. Casualisation is also spreading in the docks. The pressure is so great on drivers that management can force them to drive unsafe trucks. Sometimes the trucks we have to drive are so bad that we wreck them to get them fixed — but a driver can't do that too often, it gives him a bad record. And the timing of the runs are so tight that we have to break the speed limit to do them on time. A great help in this are the citizens band (CB) radios and transmitters that all truckers have which enables us to keep in touch with one another and give warnings about where the speed traps are.

## OUR PRIORITIES

Right now, there is another contract coming up and TDC will be making a priority of the following demands —

No forced overtime over a 40 hour week. At present much overtime is compulsory.

The right to strike over grievance procedures, over productivity deals and casualisation.

Rank and file control over our pension programme. (Recently TDC made public the fact that the general secretary of the union and other officials were involved in a 700 million dollar rip-off of the Central States pension fund; of course, they are unlikely to be arrested).



STRIKERS ON THE PICKET AT THE ESSEX GROUP PLANT

STRIKERS, 85% of whom are women, have been on the picket line of this plant for over a year. Essex Group is a subsidiary of United Technologies which pays its president £880,000 a year. The pickets have been attacked by scabs, armed private security guards, sheriff's police and state

police. As the strike developed, the way the women saw themselves rapidly changed: "I don't think until the strike we thought much about women's rights or women's liberation. We were raised in the wrong generation. We believed a woman got

married, had kids, and if she worked, it was on the side. I never talked up for anything in my life before. I know now that I have rights, that I am a person and I am worthwhile.

"We were in a cocoon before. We got out of that cocoon kind of roughly, but we are butterflies now." (from "In These Times")

## Western Armies to Intervene?

THE CRISIS in Rhodesia becomes more dramatic every week. As it does so, the Western powers become more and more worried and the prospect of a Western military intervention grows. It is increasingly this latter, and not the prospect of talks, or Rhodesian forces, which poses the main threat to an anti-imperialist victory.

The crisis of the internal settlement is everywhere apparent:

The Patriotic Front, predominantly the Z.A.N.U. faction, controls three to four fifths of the rural areas. Attacks are beginning to be made on the urban areas. Political strikes are developing, notably the big miners' strike last month.

The whites are panicking. Many are loth to fight for what they perceive as a black regime. 1,000 whites are leaving the country each week. Capital is being smuggled out of the country by any means possible. Scandals over Government bribery and corruption lower morale still further. The economy is in tatters.

Smith wavers. Too many concessions and there will be a white putsch. Too few concessions (and how can it be otherwise?) and the Patriotic Front continue their forward march. For the time being, then, he concedes to talks and attacks the

Muzorewa is losing support, mainly to Z.A.N.U. He expels Byron Hove — the former Government minister — from the party, rejects talks, and his supporters cheer him. The selected few that are left. But he can only stand his ground, even though it is sliding from under him, because he knows that Anglo-American talks spell disaster for him. The internal settlement is his baby.

## THE WAY THE WIND BLOWS

The other two members of the 'Gang of Four', Chirau and Sithole, are willing to engage in talks. They will play no more than a second fiddle role, whatever the outcome. They move the way the wind blows.

But how important are the talks? Certainly they bring the imperialist powers, U.S. and U.K. back into the picture. They give them a role to play. And maybe these powers can, as they so desperately hope, split the

Nkomo, and bring him over to their side. The new Kenyatta!

But over the last four or five years the onset of the rainy season has almost invariably meant talks. Yet the struggle continues and intensifies and the Patriotic Front are apparently more unified than ever.

So what are the imperialist planning? *The Economist* (Aug 5th) assesses the diplomatic chances of the U.K. and the U.S. as follows:

"At best those chances may involve trying to mobilise an international force to help organise an accepted settlement in Rhodesia; at worst they will descend to a military scramble to evacuate whites (and blacks on the losing side)"

At best a military intervention at worst...a military intervention. This is what is in store for Zimbabwe, if the West has its way. After all, they are only Africans. There will be tribal conflict. Cubans will come in. The leaders are power-hungry. And the West knows best. It is vital that the left begin to prepare. There is a real prospect of U.K., U.S., Canadian, Nigerian, German and French forces intervening in Zimbabwe to keep the people there within the imperialist



## SOUTH AFRICA:

# The West Hangs On

BRITISH FIRMS continue to prop up South Africa's apartheid dictatorship. Their refusal to recognise black unions has helped to widen the wage gap between whites and blacks. The South African Congress of Trade Unions wants the influx of foreign capital stopped. And so do we.

## UNION RECOGNITION DISPUTES WITH BRITISH OWNED COMPANIES

On July 28th, under a headline "Union Dilemma for Firm", the 'Guardian' reported that a subsidiary of Associated Engineering of the UK, Glacier Bearings of Pinetown, Durban, South Africa, has refused to recognise a black trade union. The union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union, which was formed after a wave of strikes in Natal in 1973, has been seeking recognition for some months, but despite support from the African Liaison Committee at Glacier — which does not have wage negotiating rights — the company remains intransigent.

Apart from Glacier, workers in several other British owned companies have been involved in similar disputes about union recognition for some years now. The most notable example is that of the same union, MAWU, which has been trying to gain recognition from Leyland (SA). One British owned company, Smith and Nephew which in 1974, agreed to recognise the multiracial National Union of Textile Workers, announced in 1977 that it would not renew the agreement. It later said that it would honour the agreement but refused

to commit this to writing. Meanwhile it refused to abolish the stooge works council which it set up in an attempt to undermine the union.

## BRITISH COMPANIES' HYPOCRISY

There is at present about £6,000 million of foreign investment in South Africa, of which over half comes from Britain. Yet not a single British company recognises an African trade union. The favourite argument used by British companies against their critics in Britain is that recognition of black unions is illegal. This is simply not true. Although black unions are 'unregistered' and thus do not have legal standing, this in no way stops companies from recognising them and negotiating with them. Refusal to recognise black unions for this reason is simply to collude with the government in its victimisation of trade unionists who can be sacked and arrested for union activity. Meanwhile they have no control over productivity, wages, redundancy, etc.

British companies' refusal to recognise unions comes despite the British government's endorse-

## THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



Living quarters

ment of an EEC Code of Conduct for companies operating in South Africa, which gives some emphasis to union recognition. Since 1974 the British government has had its own Code of Conduct, the object of which was to monitor British companies in South Africa following the expose of appallingly low wages paid to their black workers. Although the effect of the enquiry which led to the adoption of the code, was to raise wages in some companies above an arbitrary Poverty Datum Line, by 1977, only 189 of 300 companies had reported, and of these, 49, employing over 20,000 people, were still paying wages below the PDL. As a recent report comments "Black wages and conditions in the companies that failed to report are completely unknown". (Buying Time in South Africa, CIS)

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND LIVING STANDARDS

What we do know, though, is that there has been a decline in real wages in South Africa during the 1970's, and that average African wages are still below the PDL, and that the absolute gap between the earnings of black and white workers has continued to rise. In mining and quarrying, for instance, the average earnings of Africans are over eight times less than those of whites, and the absolute gap between their wages is R78.34 (£43.52) per year.

At the same time, South Africa's economy, despite massive foreign investment, has been facing serious problems caused by partly by world recession and inflation, and partly by political uncertainty since the Soweto uprisings of 1976. Like other capitalist governments, the South African government has used the recession to enforce severe cuts in living standards and other measures hostile to the working class. In this case they hit particularly the black working class whose opportunities for resistance are already limited by a repressive set of laws which prevent strike action, limit work opportunities through job reservation and pass laws, and prevent any form of political organisation. Companies

collusion with the apartheid regime is very useful for them in such a situation. According to the Coventry Workshop Pamphlet, "British Leyland in Britain and South Africa." "Last year (1976) motor manufacturers in South Africa lost over £9 million and the prospect for this year looks even worse. Given these conditions it is vital for the company to be able to lay off or fire workers, speed up the line, shut down sections of the plant etc., whenever it wishes to. Clearly recognition of MAWU would impede this as the union would fight for the jobs and conditions of employment of its members."

Black unemployment is now estimated at around two million, and thousands of Africans risk arrest and imprisonment under pass law offences by seeking jobs in town. Under a new law which recently went through Parliament in Pretoria, black workers who had been unemployed for more than four months in the past twelve, referred to as 'idle Bantu', were liable to be deported to forced labour camps in the Bantustans, or to farm colonies in white areas. To be black and unemployed in South Africa is to be a criminal. Thus by a 'judicial' sleight of hand, the South African government shifts the blame for unemployment onto its victims, providing itself with an opportunity to further increase its repressive powers.

## A DILEMMA FOR IMPERIALISM

The repressive measures of the South African state against unemployed black workers are part and parcel of their systematic efforts to maintain African workers in a permanent state of subservience. The stability and future of white supremacy depends on this. And the maintenance of the economy on which white supremacy is founded, depends on the continued support of international capital, whose funds are needed to sustain South African industry, and to provide technology for its

huge police and defence forces. The rewards it receives are the huge profits it makes out of apartheid, and it has never asked too many questions about the conditions in which those profits are made. Its dilemma has not been and is not whether to recognise African trade unions, but whether, in the face of mounting international opposition and increasing internal resistance to apartheid, it can continue to make its profits out of apartheid, or whether it should seek for them elsewhere in the imperialist dominated world.

This is the "dilemma" of the British Foreign Secretary, David Owen, when he said in a speech on March 17th, "In investment and in trade this country faces a painful dilemma in its relationship with South Africa." But it is a dilemma easily solved for Dr. Owen who piously believes that "The Code of Conduct of the Nine...is an important step towards ensuring that British companies operating in South Africa understand the potentially positive role they could play in that society." Not potentially, Dr Owen, actually positive — in ensuring the strength of the apartheid regime against internal and external resistance, while the Code of Conduct remains a hollow weapon, operating on a purely voluntary basis, and designed "to give respectability to the operations of British companies in South Africa." (Anti-Apartheid News, July/Aug '78)

For opponents of imperialism especially in one of its most vicious forms, there is no dilemma whatsoever. We do not support token gestures of appeasement to liberal opinion. We support all efforts to intensify the campaign to stop all British investment in South Africa. An end to all investment in South Africa is the demand made by South African liberation movements and the South African Congress of Trade Unions. We also support a total embargo on all sales of equipment which could be used for military or police purposes, and is so used against those struggling for the liberation of their country from oppressive, racist rule.







Hackney and Islington Music Workshop play at the Garners picket in London (Music Workshop Photo)

# New Songs - HACKNEY & ISLINGTON New Times MUSIC WORKSHOP



We are familiar with the struggle for socialism taking place on picket lines, marches and through strikes. What we are less familiar with is the theatre, songs and music that are also an essential part of the struggle. But socialist music is not just music with socialist words, it is an attempt to establish a new relationship between performer and audience - a relationship which does away with the barrier. For a few years now, the Music Workshop has been keeping alight the torch of socialist music in deepest Hackney and Islington. With their regular sing-songs in a local pub, their song-books and their cassettes, they are an important part of our movement to repossess a culture that has been taken from us by the media and the entertainment industry.

can be enjoyed by the majority of people. One example of that was the Yellow Submarine song. We were producing a broadsheet for the march against the cuts in Nov. '76. One of our members was trying to write a song at work when one of the shop stewards said 'I could write a better song than that', and dashed off a song to the tune of 'Yellow Submarine' called 'We're all sick of the public spending cuts', which was the most successful song on the broadsheet. On the other hand it means making socialist and feminist songs available - trying to collect and distribute a body of songs from those perspectives. This was the reason for publishing the two songbooks 'New Songs New Times' and 'Stand Together'. We also sing on picket lines, and on marches and demonstrations.



A monthly sing-song for the Music Workshop (Music Workshop Photo)

*Big Flame*: Can you explain what the Music Workshop is and what you do?

Music Workshop: We're a group of four men and five women involved in writing, singing, collecting and distributing socialist and feminist songs. The workshop grew out of a series of discussions about popular music that a couple of us were involved in organising for the Hackney WEA in 1975. We appear at benefits and socials for left wing groups and organisations, but don't consider that to be our main area of activity. I suppose the main aims of the Music Workshop are to contribute to the building of a socialist music culture, one in which people see themselves more as producers of the culture rather than just consumers. This means on the one hand, trying to encourage more people to be involved in making music, writing songs about their own struggles - saying that music doesn't have to be the preserve of a small gifted elite, but is an activity that

Have you written songs about these struggles?

Yes, what we try and do is to use a well known song, a pop song, music-hall song or a song from the labour movement, and change the words so that it's about that particular struggle. This can also be a way of keeping alive the tradition of radical songs in this country. For example, we used the tune of 'The Blackleg Miner', a nineteenth century song from the north of England, and re-wrote the words, calling it 'The Blackleg Diner' about the Garners strike.

One thing that I've always thought was important was how strong the feminist influence is in the songs you sing.

Yes, the Womens Movement has been an important influence on the Music Workshop, one of our main reference points. It's not just that a large proportion of the songs we sing are feminist, but its also influenced our whole approach. The

Womens Movement has been an important force in redefining politics to include not only struggles that take place at the point of production, but struggles that affect every aspect of our lives, ones that were in the past dismissed as 'personal' and not 'political', and this is reflected in the kind of songs we sing. We've always considered it important to have equal numbers of men and women in the workshop and to struggle against things like men always playing the instruments while women sing by trying to share the singing and playing as much as possible, sometimes at the expense of a more 'polished' performance.

Can you explain your attitude to performing. I've always found it confusing.

That's hardly surprising, we find it confusing too. When the Music Workshop started we wanted to

question the relationship that existed between audiences and performers that often placed the audience in a very passive role of just receiving the product presented to them by performers, often in an elitist fashion. What we've tried to do is to produce song sheets of the songs we were going to sing to try and encourage people to join in and sing them with us (and take them away and sing them to their friends in other situations). It's also to do with being musical socialists rather than socialist musicians. This can lead to a tendency to substitute bad music with good politics, which is something we've slipped into in the past.

The two song-books 'New Songs, New Times' (75p) and 'Stand Together' (£1) and a cassette (£1.50) are all available post-free from the Music Workshop, 2a St. Paul's Rd., London N1!

## THE BLACKLEG DINER

It's through the picket in Oxford Street  
That the blackleg diner goes to eat  
He wastes his money on Garners meat  
The dirty blackleg diner.

It's in the evening after dark  
That the blackleg waiter goes to work  
With his old bow tie and his threadbare  
The dirty blackleg waiter. shirt

He grabs his tray and down he goes  
To serve the food that's cooked below.  
He can't afford to eat it though  
The dirty blackleg waiter.

So come and join the picket line  
And make Margolis change his mind  
A thousand comrades you will find  
To win the strike at Garners.

And don't go eating Garners steak  
To swell the profits that they make.  
The boss's power will surely break  
We'll win the strike at Garners.



# ONE HAND TIED BEHIND US

by  
Jill Liddington & Jill Norris

The untold story of  
the Rise of the  
Women's Suffrage Movement  
in the North

'NO CAUSE CAN BE WON BETWEEN DINNER AND TEA, AND MOST OF US WHO WERE MARRIED HAD TO WORK WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND US, SO TO SPEAK. PUBLIC DISAPPROVAL CAN BE FACED AND BORNE, BUT DOMESTIC UNHAPPINESS, THE PRICE MANY OF US PAID FOR OUR OPINIONS AND ACTIVITIES, WAS A VERY BITTER THING.'

In this interview with Jill Liddington, we asked her about some of the issues raised by the book and her plans for the future.

*In the book, it is clear that the Lancashire and Cheshire suffragists saw getting the vote as an integral part of the overall struggle for socialism - how important was it for them?*

It was very important for them. One of the suffragists we talked to said that she thought that with the vote 'the kingdom of heaven would come'. They associated the growing power of the trade unions with the extension of male suffrage and they wanted the vote to politicise the growing strength of women trade-unionists. They saw the vote as a lever to obtain the widespread social change they were fighting for. And it is important to remember that in this period, parliament was being used to deliver crippling blows to the trade union movement. For instance, in 1901 the House of Lords awarded the Taff Vale Railway Company £20,000

damages against the workers who had gone on strike.

*'The family is like a chain-gang. Its members may be kind to one another, may share experiences and the feelings they arouse, but the chain forces a unity and agreement based on force.'*

*In your book, it is quite clear that the women who became politically active did so at the cost of great personal strain - many of them continue to work in the mills, bring up kids and do the housework. Do you think things have changed much in this respect?*

Well, it's important to remember that in those days mill-workers worked a 55 hour week. And housework took up a tremendous amount of time - their double-shift was a very long one. And still there was a tremendous involvement of women in the suffrage movement.

*'A man came into one of these clubrooms, with a child in his arms. "Come, lass" said he, addressing one of the women. "Come home, for I cannot keep this bairn quiet and the other I have left crying at home." "I won't go home, idle devil" she replied, "I have thee to keep and the bairns too, and if I can't have a pint of ale quietly, it is tiresome.'*

*Most of the women you write about worked at one time of their lives in the mills - what were conditions like?*

Work in the mills was the best paid job open to women at the time. Conditions were very hard, but wages comparatively high. Many of the best paid jobs like mule spinning were for men only and so were all supervisory functions - women never became overlookers. In most parts of the mill, male trade-unionists jealously guarded their privileges and it was only in weaving that equal pay

was approached. Not surprisingly it was the women weavers who were the backbone of the movement.

*'Though one cannot open a newspaper without seeing what all sorts and conditions of men are constantly agitating for and slowly but surely obtaining - as in the miners' eight hour bill - only very vague mention if ever is made of the underpaid, over-worked factory girl....The rates paid for the work done by us are so fearfully low as to be totally inadequate...A living wage! Ours is a lingering dying wage... I am, sir, yours sincerely,'*  
Letter from a Crewe factory girl to the Crewe Chronicle, May 1st 1894.

*Why do you think that bourgeois historians have concentrated so much on the Pankhursts and the middle class suffragettes and not the working class suffragists that your book is about?*

Well, one reason is that they want to play down the role of working class militancy. Also there is the fact that the suffragettes who were centered in London had much better access to the media and their actions were clearly done with newspaper coverage in mind. Their middle classness comes out clearly when war is declared - the suffragettes rallied round the militarist cause, whereas many of the suffragists became pacifists.

Robert Roberts remembered that his father 'in his cups was wont to boast that, at the lathe, he had to manipulate a micrometer and work to limits of one thousandth of an inch. We were much impressed, until one evening in 1917 a teenage sister running a capstan in the iron works remarked indifferently that she, too, used a 'mike' to even finer limits. There was, she said, 'nothing to it'. The old man fell silent. Thus did status crumble!'

*Did the working class suffrage movement that you write about in your book only exist in Lancashire and Cheshire?*

That is difficult to say since so little research has been done on the working class part of the movement. From the research I know about it would seem that there were in this period important movements in Yorkshire and Glasgow, though I doubt whether they were as large as the movement in Lancashire.

*'Now, a lot of women in the rank and file, they didn't go to prison. We did quite a lot of things that we should have gone to prison for, had we been found out, but they - the trouble was in their own homes. So you can understand it. Their husbands didn't agree with them, in nine cases out of ten.'*

*'One Hand Tied Behind Us' has opened up a whole new perspective on women's history. What will your next book be about?*

What I want to do is to show that after the vote was won (in 1928), the women involved in the movement continued in radical politics. For instance, Selina Cooper was involved in the 'more looms' strikes in the 1930's. I want to show the continuation between the suffrage movement and the struggles of today.

*'Imagine the scene....A table with at least fifty girls on and round it. Lay a dozen garments, probably not worth more than 7s in all to us. These girls all clamouring, with arms outstretched, for a share of it, say a shilling's worth....When the season was very slack indeed I have seen the youngest hands literally fight and scramble for garments, for which 2d each is paid.'*

*Quotations in the article are taken from "One Hand Tied Behind Us" by Jill Liddington and Jill Norris. Virago Press, £8.95. Hardback.*



9. Ada Nield Chew campaigning at the Crewe by-election, 1913.





# BIG FLAME

# THE SHORTER WORKING WEEK

## POST OFFICE ENGINEERS...

"THE FIRST step towards socialism," said Karl Marx over 100 years go, "is the shortening of the working week." But progress has been slow. It's 60 years (1919) since engineers on Clydeside and in Belfast struck for 40 hours. It wasn't until 1965 that they got it.

The demand for a 35 hour week is nothing new either. The engineering unions have been demanding it for seven years - likewise the Post Office engineers. They've watched as management and staff negotiated 35 and 37 hour weeks, flexitime and various other perks, but their own claims have got nowhere. That is until they started saying it with action instead of words. Suddenly, in 7 weeks they achieved what they'd been asking for for seven years - an offer of a shorter working week. Amazing how managements say something's not negotiable and out of the question, and then, as the repairs mount up, as the Stock Exchange shakes for fear of a fault, and the multinational bosses complain because they can't get through to the Eurodollar markets .....all of a sudden, come up with an offer.

### MODERATE UNION

The POEU prides itself on being a "moderate" union. Only ever organised one strike in its history, and that was just for one day. But last year its members started getting very worried....and angry. The introduction of all electronic exchanges was threatening their jobs - apprentice intake had been cut back from 1000 to less than 100 a year. And to add insult to injury, the GPO came up with a productivity deal which offered just £1.23 a week. That was when the demand for 35 hours became a serious one. First, the conference voted to refuse to commission new equipment. Earlier this year, the action was stepped up - an overtime ban and then a work to rule. In several areas there were strikes in response to the GPO sending home engineers. The POEU, mindful no doubt of the Grunwick experience, had been against an intervention by the Government arbitration service, ACAS. So, with the GPO refusing to talk, the Government tried for an "independent" enquiry, chaired by Lord McCarthy. McCarthy came up with the possibility of a phased introduction of a 37½

hour week. But by this time the mood of the membership was getting understandably bitter - even the union executive couldn't accept that. But now the GPO was talking, and through informal negotiations, an offer was hatched - 37½ hours starting Dec 1st. At the time of writing it's not clear whether the membership will accept this or hang on for more.

### 50,000 JOBS LOST

Whatever the final outcome, it's already clear that the Post Office engineers militant stand has brought results. To win a reduction in the working week, even if only 2½ rather than five hours, in the current climate of wage restraint and mass unemployment is an important victory. But if its to be a permanent one, and if other workers are to reap the same benefits, then the final deal must go through without productivity strings. The GPO has an appalling history of productivity dealing - at an estimated cost of 50,000 jobs in the last ten years. Healey and Callaghan would gladly talk about 35 hours if the unions gave productivity guarantees. But for the 1¼ million unemployed and the school leavers, the only lasting gain is from a shorter week creating new jobs.

In conclusion, two points can be made. Firstly, the PO engineers action has raised the question of how to tackle the introduction of new technology. As a delegate to the last POEU conference said: "We're not against technological change....but the change must benefit all the people involved. It should not be used just for the profit motive." The fight for 35 hours was their response. But finally, the engineers have rightly asked - where was the TUC support for our struggle? All the union leaders talk about 35 hours - when a group of workers actually takes action, they mysteriously have nothing to offer. There is only one way around the silence of Murray, Jones and Scanlon - and that's for all workers to follow the example of the post office engineers and organise their own action for 35 hours.



Social workers canvassing public support in Southwark, South London

## SOCIAL WORKERS...

ABOUT TWO weeks ago, social workers in Southwark (South London) and Newcastle went on all out strike - a radical and politically difficult move for social workers. On August 14th there was a one day strike in Lewisham, which was one of the signs that the strike was spreading. The demands - for regrading, a fixed 36 hour week instead of the present 36 hour minimum with no automatic overtime pay and a new wage claim - have the lukewarm support of their union, NALGO, which also backs the social workers demand for local negotiations. It's the local authorities insistence on national talks through the Whitley Council which looks likely to spread the strikes to other parts of London, Liverpool and Manchester. Big Flame talked to one of the activists in Lewisham, who we shall call John.

**B.F.** Why the strike?

**John** They're pissed off. Pissed off, some of them, with being used as a sponge for society's problems and not getting a decent rate for it. Pissed off with lower wages than others. And envious. Pissed off with the Whitley Council and the conspiracy of national management and national Union bureaucracy that ignores the needs of local areas.

**B.F.** And with the 10% limit? The Labour Government?

**John** No. Not most of the strikers. They don't want to challenge the 10% limit. They want to be regraded. They've been re-evaluated by management and they want management to stick to that re-evaluation.

**B.F.** So why is management stalling?

**John** Management are being right bastards. They reckon that they can't lose. Politically, financially, they benefit from a strike. What they're worried about is the struggle for local autonomy because obviously the Whitley Council set-up suits them fine. And that's why they're fighting.

**John** It's management and the Union bureaucracy. The NALGO and the TUC hacks. It goes back decades, back to about 1917 I think. They agree on a settlement at national and provincial levels and impose this upon the individual local areas. This time they've used the 1974 Lambeth settlement as a guideline. They claim it is progressive. It was, four years ago.

**B.F.** So really it's the management that are responsible for the strike?

**John** A lot of the workers didn't want to strike. Not even for a day. Now they might be forced into an all-out strike because management simply refuses to sit down and talk. Of course a lot of social workers, me included care a lot for their clients. It's not easy to abandon them, even for a few days.

**B.F.** So there is a low level of politicisation involved?

**John** There was. It was hard work all the way. But the level of anger grew the more management stalled. And then Southwark was an inspiration too. In the end, we got almost total support for the strike, and excellent attendance at strike

**B.F.** But will it last beyond the strike?

**John** That's what worries me. Some of my mates, some of the women, have begun to think much more about the nature of social work, what it means, the contradictions involved, the special kind of exploitation. Others though, will just go back to work.

**B.F.** The exploitation being the way the state uses you....

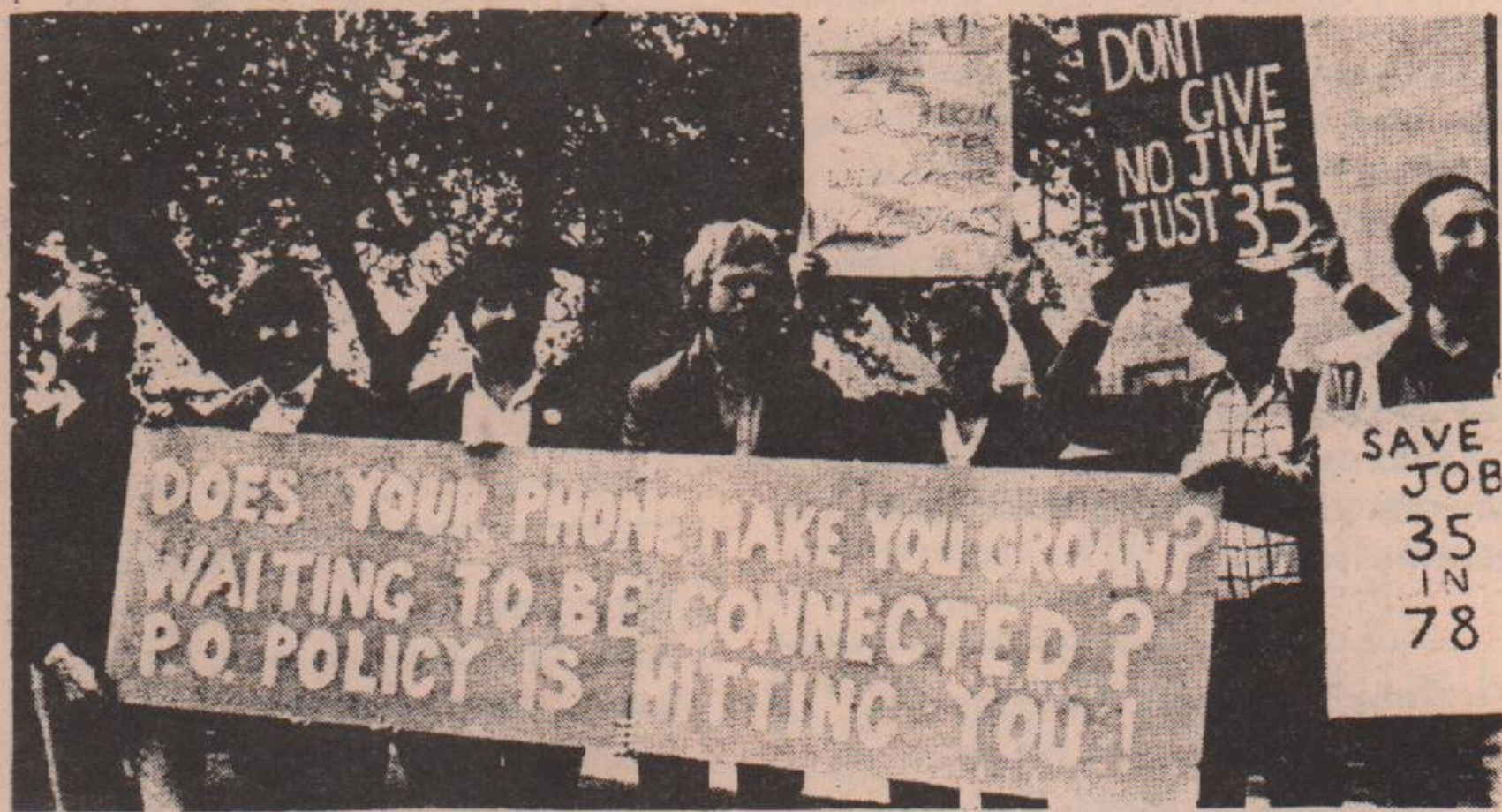
**John** The way the state uses us. Yes, as a sponge to cater for, to stifle people that it's also using. So that it can carry on using them sort of like that.

**B.F.** Is Southwark more political?

**John** Yes definitely. It had to be to lead the rest. Southwark workers are challenging the Labour Government, they're going for a shorter working week, they're leading the way. They've got some good people there, they can do things that we can't.

**B.F.** But it's a problem, striking in the public sector. You don't necessarily hit management financially (you don't in private industry either, necessarily, but it's a much bigger problem in the public sector). Some workers, especially hospital workers, have gone for occupation which involves its own problems, but is politically a much more powerful tactic than striking. How do you feel about this?

**John** I agree. Striking is not generally a good tactic in the public sector. You can easily alienate potential support. But while occupation is probably a better tactic, I don't think that social



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