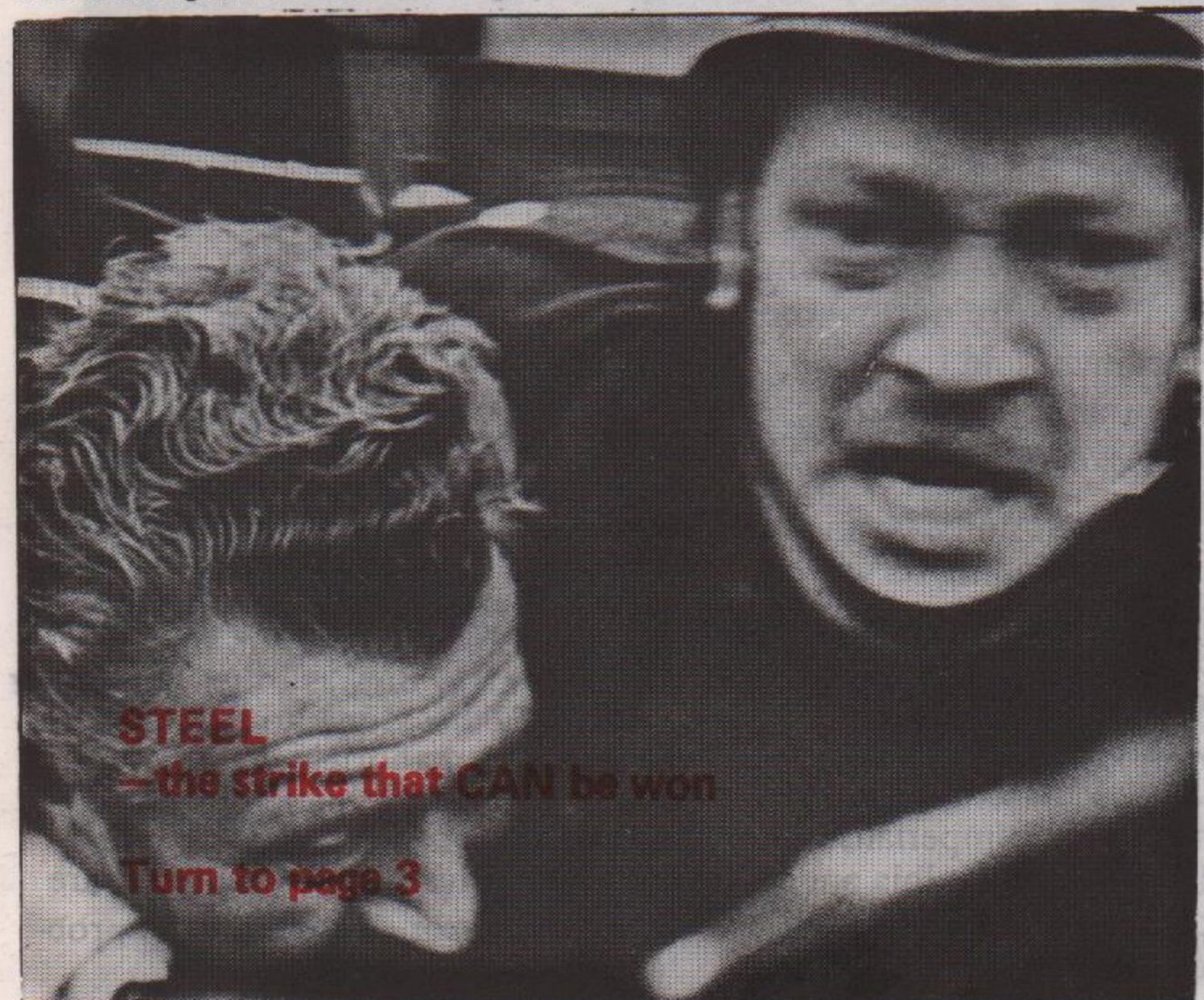


Big Flame

15p
for Socialism

Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame
no 85 April 1980



Union Place Collective



For 3 months the steelworkers have been drowning in sympathy from other unions. What they need and what they now need more than ever is practical *solidarity*—especially blacking. The TUC have done virtually nothing. Union leaders have given paper promises.

COULD BE OVER

It took Moss Evans 9 weeks to issue a national instruction to TGWU members not to cross steelworkers' picket lines. As a member of the Stockbridge Strike Committee told us, "The T&G decision has helped a lot, but not as much as it would have done 6 weeks ago. If that statement had been issued 6 weeks ago, the strike could have been over by now." Other reports suggest that Evans wants to keep it a paper promise, making life difficult for any of his members who put it into practice.

But it's not just the TGWU. And it's not just the national union leaderships who are at fault. In Sheffield, Shop Stewards in the Confederation of Ship Building and Engineering workers Unions took a decision not to cross picket lines—several firms closed as a result and thousands of workers were laid off. It was a great morale booster for the steel strikers in S. Yorks. But this action went virtually unreported. No other area took it up. The Sheffield engineers called off their action on March 14th.

BOSS'S RISE

The Daily Mirror reported on 20th March that the top six men in BSC—the same ones who insisted that BSC could offer only 2% plus productivity deals—are asking for 40%, or £240 extra a week (such a deal would give Villiers another £16,000 a year on top of his current salary of £41,000).

The determination of the strikers to stay out for 20% without strings has been remarkable. The more militant areas have made it quite clear they want nothing to do with the 14.4% offer which is riddled with strings and would mean thousands of lost jobs.

The strikers' bills and debts mount up—so do the stakes. The Tories want to have off large sections of B.S.C. Thousands of jobs are at risk, especially in Wales. The police are taking a much harder attitude towards pickets. But police action doesn't rule out the kid glove approach. If the steel bosses use arbitration and enquiries it will be because they know them to be a sure way to head off the struggle. The proposed enquiry leaves out the crucial issues—the performance of management and closures and redundancies. They want to divide the strike by threatening redundancies and offering productivity strings.

CLASS ISSUE

The Government is using the strike to toughen up the Employment Bill. *This strike is a class issue.* If we can help the steelworkers knock back BSC and the Tories it will be a tremendous boost to all the campaigns against the government.

- Support the pickets.
- Black all steel.
- Link up the steel strike with other actions against the Tory offensive.
- Raise funds for the strikers.
- Make May 14th into a one-day general strike against the Tories policies.

DANGER • FREE ENTERPRISE ZONE



THE TORIES plan to set up free enterprise zones — 'full-blooded capitalism' — in some run-down inner city areas.

VICTORIAN

These zones are designed to give employers a free hand to make profits — free, that is, from the usual restrictions like the employment protection act, and aided by low taxes and big grants. Low wages and Victorian sweatshop conditions are the price we're expected to pay to keep a diseased system alive.

PIGS

The inner areas of Liverpool, London and Tyneside are to be the first guinea-pigs, but the Tories' experiment won't stop there.

They aim to turn the whole of Britain into a free enterprise zone.

AND HERE'S HOW—

■ Never-ending cuts in public spending. Not content to slash millions from education and health, their latest ideas include plans to sever the link between short-term unemployment benefit and the cost-of-living index, not to mention ending earnings-related benefit! These cuts are not intended to get rid of the promised 'waste' but to dismantle whole sections of the welfare state. And so often it's women—the first to

be made redundant—who are expected to provide the same services: caring for the old, the young and the sick in the house. At the same time as all the talk of 'freedom of choice', women's options are being drastically reduced. And not only do they provide caring services free—they have to work doubly hard to try and make ends meet, and to keep their families cheerful. It's O.K. for the Tories and their well-off supporters; they

since September 1978. The Manpower Services Commission is assuming that 2 million will be out of work by 1981 and Sir Keith Joseph could not refute the Cambridge Economic Policy Group's even higher predictions on T.V. recently.

■ Soaring prices for us—gas, fares, school meals and many others—while banks, mortgage societies and oil companies make a fortune from their private education and health schemes and you can be sure they don't get made redundant!

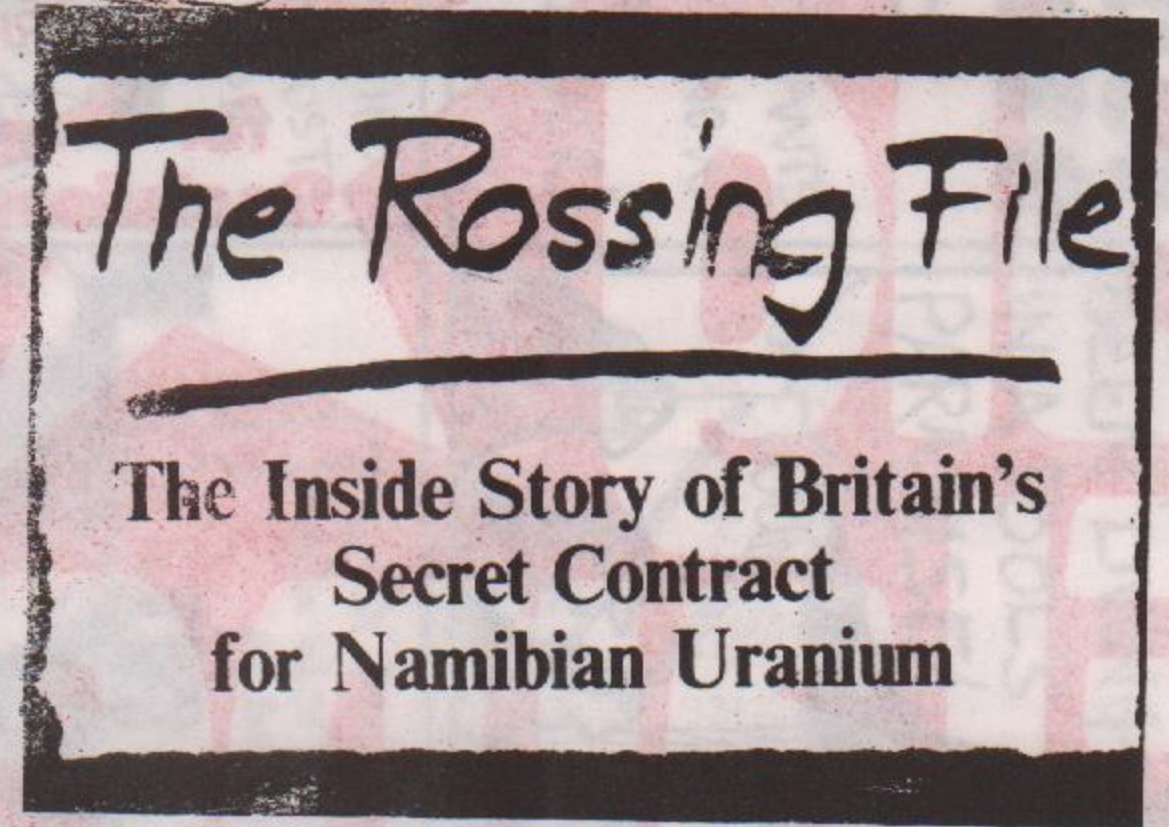
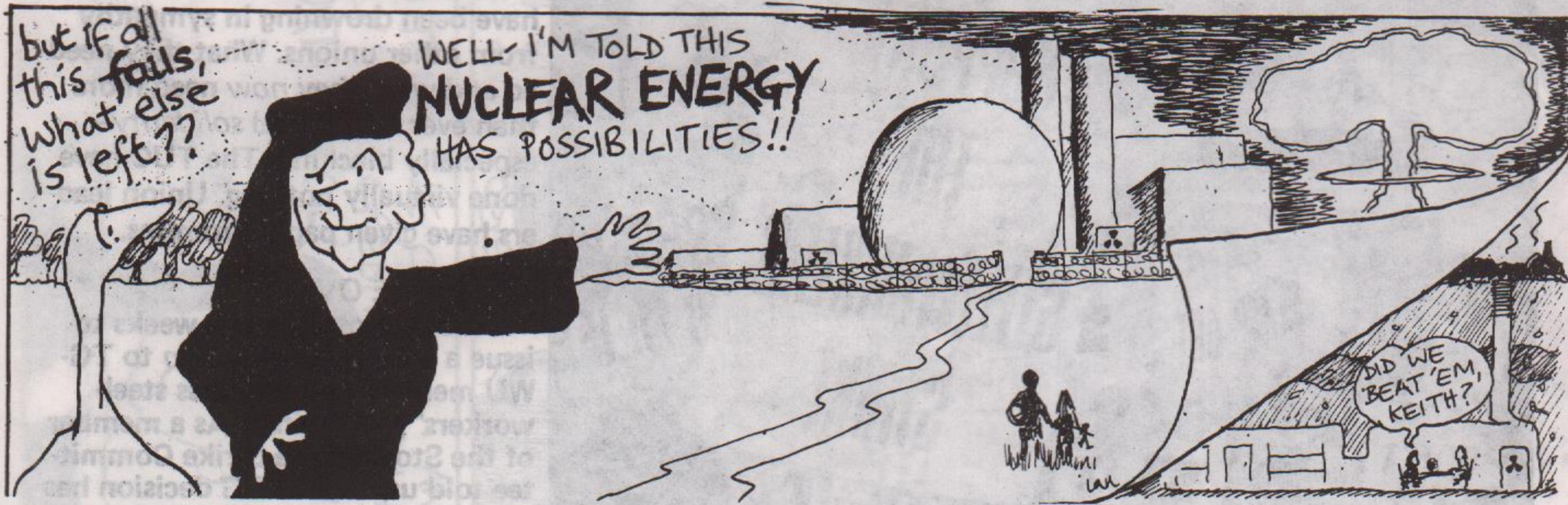
The Tories claim they are cutting benefits as an incentive to work. They have already suppressed their own Civil Servants' report that almost no-one is better off on the dole. But what kind of incentive to work is it, when a Government encourages the growth of unemployment with its monetarist policies? The 1½ million figure is already the highest

tune out of Government policies. The profits of Britain's biggest oil company BP, rose by 250% last year to £1,621 million after tax. The continued profits of BP, Shell and the four major banks come to £4,400 million. And the Government is still closing down the kidney units.

In Tory Britain, they make sure you can only fight back with one hand tied behind your back. They intend to cut benefits to the families of strikers by £12 a week. They say this is to encourage unions to pay strike funds. It's real purpose, as a strike busting exercise, is shown by the fact that the same deductions will be made to families where the striking workforce are not even in a union! Meanwhile the absurdly named Employment Bill reduces workers' rights in key areas of employment protection, maternity leave, picketing and too many others to mention.

ALL OUT STRIKE ACTION-14 MAY

Nuclear Imperialism : No Thanks !



THE THATCHER government has embarked on a massive nuclear power programme despite international disquiet at the safety of nuclear reactors. Despite the increased incidence of leaks, blow outs and near misses, typified by the potentially catastrophic 'accident' at Harrisburg in the USA, Britain thinks the Pressurised Water Reactors area good investment. Why is it that governments of the western world seem hell bent on accelerating the nuclear programme despite increasing evidence from many scientific bodies, including some involved directly in the industry that its high time everything was halted and the nuclear programme phased out?

The answer is, as always, that to them it makes economic sense... and a capitalist, as we know, doesn't need any other excuse.

The weakening of capitalism's grip on the world soil resources and their traumas over the last 10 years have forced a rethink on energy. Nuclear industry has all the makings of the ideal, capitalist energy source.

DEADLY

It is capital intensive... it is self fuelling (fast breeders)... and above all it is under their direct control. There is no need to rely on trouble some coal miners, 'upity' sheiks or unstable developing countries. There is no need for a large potentially disruptive workforce. The fact that Nuclear Power is so potentially deadly gives them the cast iron excuse for

a hard line on labour 'problems', private security armies, 'top secret' (unaccountable) activity etc.

STRONG STATE

Through this 'new' industry the capitalist state can help dismantle and restructure the industries which the working class has built strength in. Thatcher states clearly her intentions to weaken the position of the coal miners.

So the nuclear power programme fits clearly into the right-wing, international scheme of things along with the building of a further generation of nuclear weapons, technological restructuring (silicon) chip etc), strong police state and the technological control of the people (electronic surveillance) etc.

PROFIT

Nuclear power however is not just yet another capitalist ploy to keep us masses in abject fear and lowliness, not just another example of technology being used for profit rather than the general good. We oppose it because it is unbelievably dangerous to the whole of humanity.

The strength of the ANTI NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN is that it bridges the gap between the mainly, ecological, environment pressure groups, the trade unions, the labour movement and the revolutionary left.

It provides the hard information with which to argue with the pro-nuke press and media and help convince the majority of people that no nukes is good nukes.

The question of jobs is central to ANC. For every cancer ridden job in the nuclear industry 100s are disappearing elsewhere... jobs that could be guaranteed if the alternatives to nuclear power were taken up.

The ANC has a long way to go. Hopefully its emergence as a nationally coordinated movement will mean far more effective campaigning.

By Alun Roberts. Available from C.A.N.U.C. (Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contracts). 60 p plus postage from 188 Gower St., London NW1. An absolute must!

DIGGING INTO the Namibian desert, you may find copper, platinum, nickel, diamonds, or uranium. Digging into the history of how the British Government laid its hands on Namibian uranium, you will definitely find a can of worms.

Despite U.N. sanctions, Namibian Uranium has been finding its way to Europe since 1978; this was first exposed by Big Flame.

This new pamphlet, by Alun Roberts, is very carefully researched and well timed. After the Zimbabwean election, the focus of imperialism in the area will become Namibia and S. Africa itself. Leading the British side is Lord Carrington, a former director of the multinational mining giant Rio Tinto Zinc. RTZ are part owners in the Rossing uranium mine, which supplies 42% of Britain's uranium. The entire operation of RTZ and other Western mining companies is illegal, breaking a U.N. decree and international law.

How then did the British manage to build half of their nuclear power programme around cheap uranium mined under apartheid? The Rossing File answers this question with details of the lies told by Benn, Callaghan, RTZ, the Ministry of Technology.

Besides proving that Labour and Tory Governments have lied about Rossing, the pamphlet gives an insight into the working conditions of the 1700 African and Coloured miners. They have no routine medical checks or compensation scheme,

of politicians, Foreign Office Ministers, and Trade Union Officials. This is frighteningly similar to the relationship between the US Government and the companies like ITT, Kennecott, and Anaconda which had vital interests in Chile and pushed for Allende's overthrow.

Regretably the pamphlet is very careful not to rest its case on an opposition to nuclear power. Rather, it argues that Britain should shift its source of uranium to some other country. But, as other pamphlets reveal, RTZ has done no favours for the Australian aborigines - uranium milling at Rum Jungle had killed off the trees and fish for years to come. Native American uranium miners are dying of cancer... couldn't the problem be uranium mining itself?

Despite these criticisms, the pamphlet is definitely worth a read, and can be used to inform a trade union campaign.

At a recent public meeting in Preston (where the uranium is delivered to BNFL), trade unionists discussed how to raise the issue in the local labour movement, and eventually with BNFL workers. One issue is health and safety during transport (the other week a canister of

uranium oxide cracked at Manchester Airport). Another is the non-union firm, Edmunds of Morecombe, which hauls the ore to Britain from the Continent. Ultimately the issue is whether we want to generate electricity (or build nuclear warheads) using slave labour in Namibia. Although Edmunds is non-union, the case should be put to union branches (especially T&G) throughout the Northwest. French unions have already stopped the ore flying to Paris airports.

BIG FLAME INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION WEEKEND SCHOOL ON ORGANISING FOR RANK AND FILE POWER AT WORK (Organising to Win)

Political discussion and practical sessions on

- Organising in the workplace
- Building broad based rank and file organisation
- Rebuilding shop floor and T.U. organisation
- Building a mass base for socialist ideas at work

A chance to learn about writing and duplicating leaflets; laying out a paper; public speaking; organising a meeting; using and projecting films; organising a picket; occupation or strike; the politics of health and safety; fighting racism and sexism at work; developing a socialist feminist perspective in trade union work; organising the unemployed; new technology.

FOR: Industrial and public sector workers who are actively involved in organising at work and in their trade union organisations. For unemployed workers with similar experience.

WHEN: 10-11 May 1980

WHERE: Leeds - Beechwood Hall

PRICE: £11.50 adults £7.00 children and unemployed

DETAILS: Big Flame Industrial Commission, Room 265 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

BIG FLAME NATIONAL SPEAKING TOUR ON RACISM AND FACISM

Big Flame is organising a national speaking tour both to explain the ideas in "The Past Against Our Future" (50p) and to act as a forum for the much needed rethinking and renewed activity against racism and facism. For more details contact ARAF Convenor, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| Huddersfield | 25th March |
| S. London | 27th March |
| Nottingham | 17th April |
| W. London | 23rd April |
| Leeds | 24th April |
| N. London | 29th April |
| Birmingham | 7th May |
- also York, Bradford, Preston, Burnley, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Exeter and more.

paper money

We are in your hands now. The gap between income and expenditure has reached critical proportions. Without a major increase in donations and subscriptions, bankruptcy is staring us in the face.

The reason is simple.

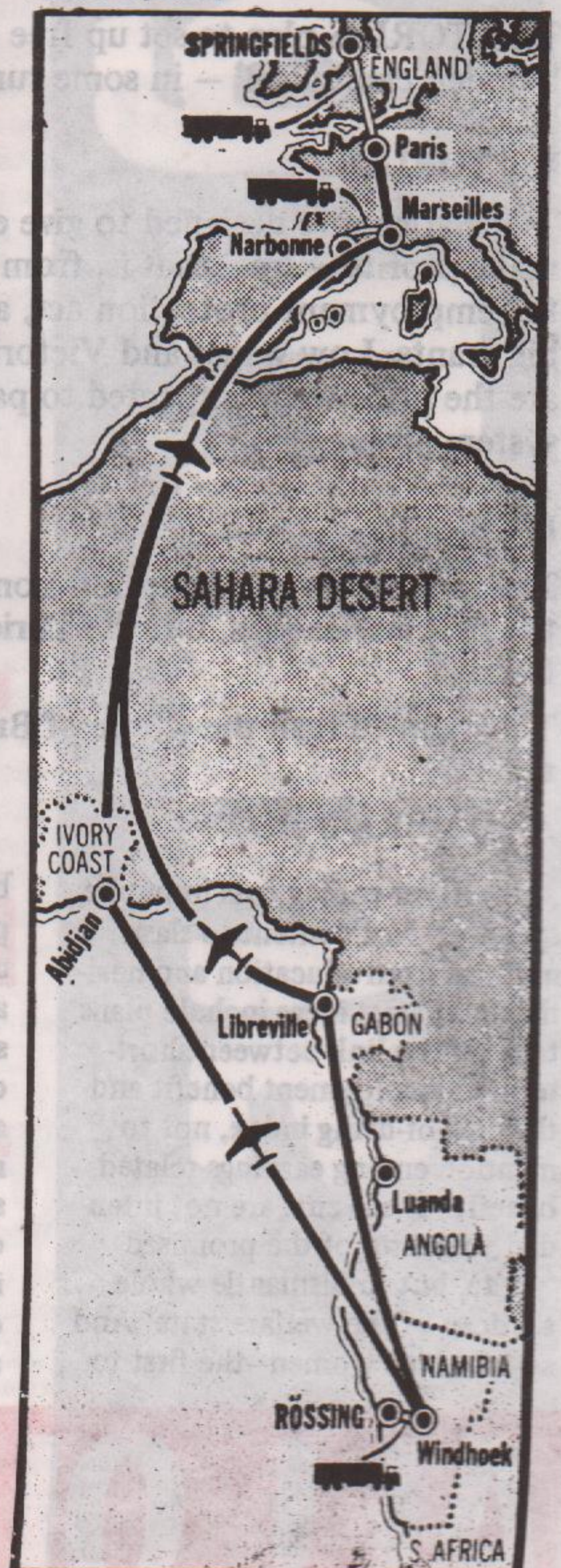
Production costs are outstripping the income from sales. In the long term, a vast rise in sales is the solution. More immediately, the next Big Flame may not appear unless there's an emergency transfusion of money.

We're not kidding.



despite exposure to dust containing radium, causing cancer of the respiratory tract.

The pamphlet concludes, not with an appeal to British workers to support the liberation struggle in Namibia by taking action against the imports of uranium, but with a challenge to Benn, Callaghan, and Carrington that they answer the questions raised by the pamphlet. Exposing the leaders is important but then what? Similarly, international law and U.N. decrees are good publicity, but have no power to stop companies like RTZ. For as the pamphlet states, RTZ manages to control governments, partly by recruiting into its board of directors a mixture



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Send to: BIG FLAME, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7

STEEL STRIKE SOLIDARITY CRUCIAL

The Steelworkers are still on strike. If the B.S.C. and the Tories expected a strike at all, when they offered 2%, they couldn't have expected a group of workers with no strike history to last out so long. But strikers, though still determined, are feeling the pinch of months without a pay packet. The short sharp action that Bill Sirs promised has drawn out for too long; had the Trade Union movement thrown its whole weight behind the strike

the steelworkers could have been back at work by now, with the full claim in their packets.

Instead, Union Leaders seem more frightened of bad publicity than of defeat. For Moss Evans solidarity is not about action but about fine words. On this page a Big Flame member at Fords tells how such fine words are worthless alone. But around the country, as at Fords, feelings of solidarity are growing, as is well illustrated by action at

Liverpool Docks. Such solidarity is the key to success. We can't wait for calls from our union leaders, we must bring all steel to a halt; solidarity means nothing less—and will only come from rank and file action, which includes both unofficial blacking and putting pressure on officials to stop steel moving. If we settle for token actions it will mean defeat for not just the steelworkers but for us all.

The steel strikers have faced enormous problems. Employers have organised elaborate 'swap-shop' arrangements and have brought in unmarked or falsely marked containers to avoid blacking at the docks. The national union leaderships have not helped by constantly hampering effective action. All the important initiatives have been organised by local strike committees. These are now being coordinated through a new multi-union coordinating committee. Big Flame spoke to a leading member of the Stocksbridge Strike Committee (Sheffield) which has played a key role in the extension of picketing and support—not just in this country, but in Europe too.

What's the state of morale after 11 weeks on strike?

The morale is good. We've lost a few pickets recently, but there's still more picketing now than what there was at the start. We've organised various activities to keep up morale, like a showing of the film 'Days of Hope'.

The joint multi-union committee has called for a withdrawal of safety-cover. Couldn't this mean permanent closures of blast furnaces?

The call came from N.U.B. (National Union of Blastfurnacemen) delegates. They know the implications. The decision's not been taken lightly. We're trying to force BSC's hand by proving what desperate measures we're prepared to take.

71 pickets were arrested at Hadfields. What does this imply about changing police attitudes?

It's the police from other areas who've been worse—they kick bloody hell out of you. Your local policemen don't seem to be so hard—perhaps they want to maintain better relations. But the police are not the main problem—it's the BSC and those who have returned to work in the private sector.

What did you find out from your trips to the continent? We've found out that people, especially in Germany, just don't know half of what's go-

ing on here—there's virtually no reporting there of the strike. At meetings we've been to people have been really amazed that the strike's continued for so long—the problem is that whilst we've raised money and got messages of solidarity it's very difficult for German shop stewards to black goods. The full time officials seem to have all the power. But we have made contacts who've said they'll inform us of any shipments of steel leaving for Britain. Sirs and company got paper pledges of support, but they have no real backing—we've been trying to get the message over to the rank and file German steelworkers and dockers that their steel is flooding in and it's undermining our strike.

What have you learned from the strike?

You must never be too big to admit you're wrong—we never supported anyone in the past. But things have changed now, we've learnt that we've got friends everywhere and we know we've a debt to pay when we get back to work. People will definitely get support from us in their struggles in the future. In Stockbridge we're planning a joint shop stewards committee of all the different unions—we've never been able or allowed to do this before. Management tried to keep us apart.



Photo: Steve Barnett/Alex Laing

First arrest at Hadfields Mass Picket on 12th March. "They kicked Bloody Hell out of us" said one of the pickets. For the Tories the steel strike is a chance to practice for their employment bill.

Solidarity From Dockers

Liverpool dockers have recently come out on strike in response to management's suspension of men who refused to load steel. Here we print an article from a docker who is also a member of Liverpool Big Flame.

During the last few weeks of the steel strike, many wagons have been turned away from the dock carrying steel. At the same time we have brought in steel products—boilers, generators, cars, tons of oil, prefabricated steel—it's hard to draw the line as to what is steel.

But as the steel men struggle on, dockers feel that not enough is being done and that all steel goods should be blacked. The Dock Board of Management have

been demanding that we load steel. When they suspended 100 men for refusing to do so, the rest of the port walked out—with no show of hands or vote. The way we feel about the situation we didn't need to vote. A lot of us would prefer a national dock strike to get the steelmen back as soon as possible, but with over 300 ports throughout the country, a lot unregistered and non-union, it would be impossible to check them all.

Whatever happens no steel will be moved in Liverpool. The steel workers and their families need their morale boosted. The scabs in the private sector who have stabbed their comrades in the back need to be humiliated.

Fordworkers Held Back

When the steelworkers came out on strike the convenor of the engine plant at Ford Dagenham blacked all steel. After 3 days he was ordered to reverse the decision by T&G officials. Since then the Steel Strike has had no effect on Fords production until the middle of March, when we thought it was about time something happened.

Soon after the T&G Executive issued a statement for all members to 'positively observe all steel pickets, a picket of ISTE militants from Warrington arrived outside the Dagenham plant, and at the same time we, the Ford Workers' Group(Combine) printed 12,000 leaflets calling for solidarity which were distributed to Ford workers throughout the country.

The arrival of the Warrington picket was answered by their own Union Officials in London who told them to 'Fuck Off', claiming that they had had top negotiations with the Fords unions and that no steel had moved between Dagenham and Halewood for two weeks.

When we informed the Warrington picket that this was a lie they were back, and the next day joined by a delegation of York-



Union Place Photo

Worker Solidarity conquers all so let's get on with it Moss Evans (Photo of March 9th TUC rally)

shire Craftsmen (T&G members) who succeeded in stopping all of Fords internal transport. But the pickets had to contend with an official ISTE picket who arrived to wave the trucks through!

Not satisfied with this sabotage, an agreement was drawn up between our T&G officials and ISTE in London to the effect that there would be 'token picketing' on the Dagenham press

shop—and nothing else.

At the time of writing the pickets have gone home for the weekend, but they're not giving up; the next step is to increase the picketing and persuade drivers to ignore the full time officials.

By a Ford Shop Steward and B.F. member

STEEL BANNED IN CONSETT!



Union Place Photo

Five days after the giant T.U.C. Employment Bill march in London, Consett steelworkers were on the march again, this time as part of a magnificent 4000 strong march in their home town.

The town of Consett is threatened with near death by closure of the steel plant and the sacking of its 4000 workers. British Steel is by far and away the biggest employer in the area and with the steelworks gone, thousands of other jobs in the mines, railways, haulage and service industries would disappear along with it. Speculative industrial developments are going ahead but are unlikely to profit anyone but the builders.

DETERMINED

Despite the somewhat grim message on their banner—'Consett in the Black, Faced with the Sack', the mood of the marchers was militant and determined. A good two-thirds of the Consett workforce, including some of the management who oppose the closure, made up the main body of the march and support came from many quarters.

STREAMLINING

The streets were lined with people who shouted and waved their support.

at the end, held simultaneously in the town's two cinemas, Bill Sirs from the I.S.T.C., and Hector Smith from the N.U.B. pledged the fullest support of their unions for the campaign to keep Consett open, though Sirs' suggestion that the profitability of the works had been achieved mainly as a result of the workforce's acceptance of 1500 redundancies in a 'streamlining exercise' just over a year ago, was not so well received.

REDUNDANCY PAY

Centring the arguments on profitability is something that the Consett steelworkers will have to be wary of in their need to build the fullest possible solidarity with other BSC workers around the country, and workers in other industries. Despite the militancy of the Corby community, for instance, the workforce was more or less successfully split there, partly by promises of new jobs. B.S.C. are already talking about selling the Consett plant off to a private concern which could cause similar splits—they have already, unsuccessfully, attempted to do this with tempting redundancy pay offers—but if the mood of the steelworkers on the march can be maintained along with appropriate tactics, management will find it a great deal more difficult to close.

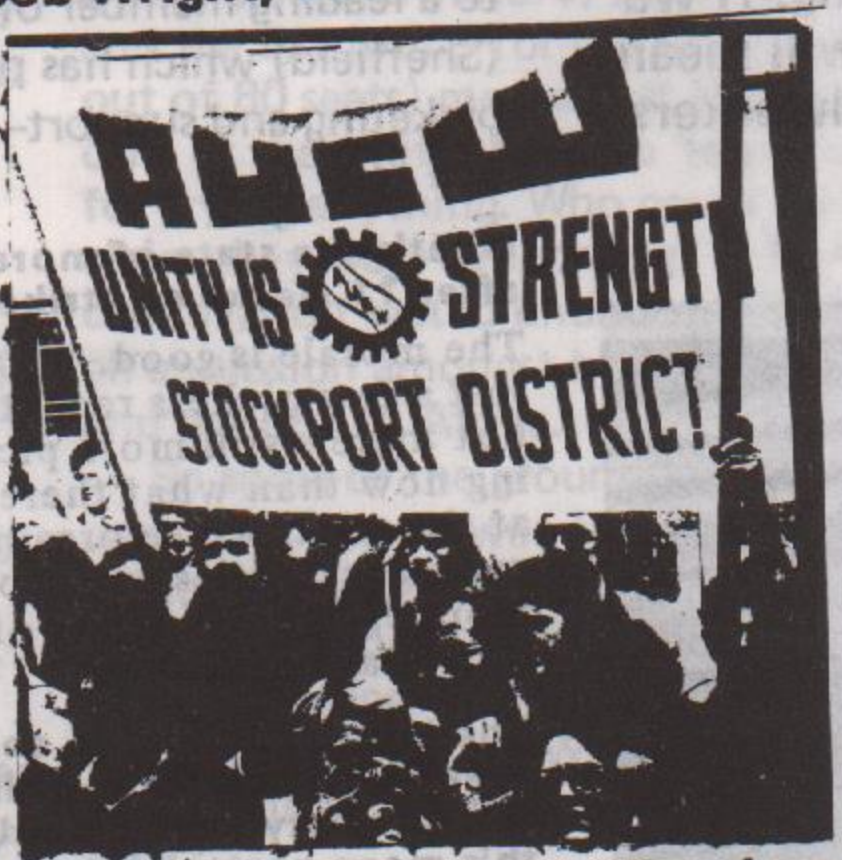
AUEW SACKS TWO

The election campaign for the presidency of the AUEW Engineering Section is off to a good start. Two AUEW employees have lost their jobs as a result of the right wing leadership's attempts to discredit the Broad Left candidate, Bob Wright, one of the union's two Assistant General Secretaries.

The widespread discontent which currently exists amongst the membership of the AUEW after the poor settlement achieved by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions in the 1979 wage negotiations and the failure of the AUEW Executive Council to defend sacked British Leyland convenor Derek Robinson, mean that Bob Wright stands an excellent chance of removing Duffy from office. This is the background to the sacking of two members of the union's staff at its headquarters in Peckham, South East London.

"MISCONDUCT"

At 2:30 pm on Tuesday 19th February, John Boyd, AUEW General Secretary, sacked on the spot Alan Hughes, AUEW Education Administrator, and Trevor Esward



Research and Technical Services Assistant, for "gross misconduct in participating in the production of literature calculated to discredit the democratically elected leadership of the Union in the eyes of the membership." They were told to leave the premises at 5:00 pm that evening and not to return. They received no money in lieu of notice.

Both Alan Hughes and Trevor Esward are members of the AUEW. Alan Hughes was chairman of the AUEW Salaried Staff Group, the internal union body which represents senior staff at AUEW headquarters. Trevor Esward is a former convenor who is currently secretary of the union's Peterborough No. 5 branch. John Boyd stated at the dismissal interview that the Executive Council's decision to dismiss instantly was unanimous. The General Secretary admitted that he had no facts to back his assertion that the 'literature' was for publication to the membership and that this was solely his own opinion.

Presidential Election Campaign: Early start

Tuesday 26th February it was unable to reach any decision on possible disciplinary action against him and announced that it intended to defer consideration of his case until some unspecified future date. Clearly the E.C. was worried that it would be seen to be guilty of undermining Bob Wright's candidacy in the forthcoming AUEW presidential elections.

Both Alan Hughes and Trevor Esward insist that they are completely innocent of the alleged 'gross misconduct' and have not contravened any disciplinary rules and regulations. No opportunity was given for Alan and Trevor to argue their side of the case beforehand, neither were they informed of their rights under any disciplinary procedures.

INDEPENDENT

For the past two years it has been a condition of employment at Peckham Road that new members of the salaried staff must join the AUEW, contrary to the rules of the union which require applicants for membership to be working in the engineering industry. Eighteen months ago a member of the research staff tried to join APEX in order to obtain independent trade union representation but he was also sacked on the spot by John Boyd who called the police to have him removed from the premises.

Alan Hughes and Trevor Esward have been publicising details of their sacking throughout the AUEW and have been successful in obtaining resolutions of support from shop stewards committee branches, and district committees. A leaflet setting out details of the case was distributed to AUEW members on the TUC Anti-Employment Bill march on Sunday 9th March.

Members of the union must ensure that this matter is raised in their branches and shop stewards committees and motions of censure passed on the AUEW Executive Council. Militant support from rank and file members will make it easier to build a campaign to win presidential support for Bob Wright and to remove Terry Duffy from office.

CRITICAL

The written material in question was produced privately for Bob Wright. He requested Alan Hughes and Trevor Esward to prepare from notes and press cuttings in his own possession critical papers on the 1979 national engineering dispute and the campaign against the Tories' Employment Bill. These were for his personal use. The work was carried out at home outside office hours and was returned to Bob Wright in handwritten form. The documents fell into the hands of John Boyd after Bob Wright had sent them to the office typing pool. Full responsibility for the production and typing of the papers was immediately accepted by Bob Wright and the General Secretary has his written statement to this effect, but the Executive Council took no account of this when they decided to sack the two employees.

WORRIED

When the Executive Council interviewed Bob Wright for over an hour on

MASSEY-FERGUSON

A FIGHT FOR EVERY WORKER !

10 YEARS ago, under pressure from Harold Wilson and with the aid of a government grant, Massey-Fergusons opened a factory in Knowsley, giving jobs to the workers made redundant from the GEC factory in the same district. Now, despite a management boast of record profits in 1979, Masseys are trying to close down the factory. Is it just a coincidence that the machinery the plant becomes theirs legally after 10 years? Once again Merseyside, with job losses running at nearly 10,000 a year, is the victim of a multi-national carrying out a policy of 'rationalisation' - a polite way of saying the sacrifice of jobs for higher profits.

Over a year ago Masseys tried to move work from the Knowsley plant to Coventry. However, the Coventry workers, recognising the need for unity to protect their own jobs as well as those at Knowsley, said no. Management backed down at the time but are now trying to move the work to the Manchester plants, which have spare capacity

M-F plants have been organised, with mixed results. At Coventry it led to a one-day stoppage in solidarity. In the Manchester plant at Barton, Dock Road, after initial support, the workers voted overwhelmingly at a mass meeting to accept work from Knowsley with no management guarantees. It will be only a matter of time before M-F decide to move the work from Manchester to Coventry and the Coventry workers are not likely to feel inclined to give their support to Manchester after this decision.

The Manchester stewards bear a heavy responsibility for this. In Coventry the stewards leafleted the workforce to explain the issues involved and had collections for Knowsley. In Manchester this was not done, nor did the stewards take any recommendation to the mass meeting.

COMPETITION

Having successfully divided the workforce nationally the management are likely to move fairly rapidly to reclaim the £7m of TDLs held at Knowsley. With heavy competition on the international market they can't afford to wait very long. This gives the Knowsley workers a strong



after the closure of the Massey plant in Kilmarnock for which they did work.

EMBARGO

When the Massey-Ferguson workers at Knowsley heard of the closure threat a few weeks ago they placed an embargo on the movement of finished products out of the factory. Soon after a delegate conference of workers from Massey-Ferguson UK plants supported a resolution proposing no movement of work from Knowsley. When the first lay-offs were announced the immediate response of the workforce was occupation. Despite the withdrawal of support from the staff for the occupation, after supporting previous action, the stewards report that morale inside the plant is high and the workers determined to fight and win.

The stewards are aware of the need for the full support of the workforce and ensure they are informed of all

bargaining point if they are determined to fight. Where do they go from here?

There must be a mass picket at the Manchester plant giving out leaflets to the workforce explaining the need for unity and how Manchester are cutting their own throats in the long run. If necessary this plant must be closed by an effective picket. Locally preparation must be made to defend against any attempt to break the occupation. This is a fight for every worker on Merseyside.

Trades Councils, Trade Unions, factories, unemployed and the local community must support the occupation. Financial support, messages of solidarity and, if the Massey workers ask for it, mass pickets outside the gates to defend the occupation. After so many closures a halt has to be called somewhere; a determined fight to win at any cost is absolutely necessary.

Messages of support, donations and requests for speakers to Hayden Burns, 46 Kempton Park Road,

ABORTION - MIXED FEELINGS

MIXED FEELINGS. Brent Against Corrie Pamphlet Group. 80 pp. 30p. Available from NAC etc.

How do women feel when they are pregnant and decide to have an abortion? How do they feel afterwards? There are no single answers.

In this pamphlet ten women talk openly about how they felt and for each of them the situation and the experience is different. What they say is among the most moving description of the feelings involved that I have ever read.

They speak about how they became pregnant, how they came to their decision about having an abortion and their experience with doctors and clinics and their feelings throughout. Although each speaks from a different situation, all share a deep-rooted certainty that the decision whether or not to have an abortion must be their own.

Their experiences are probably very representative. Many of them were disappointed at how little even the men nearest to them understand their feelings and needs, strengthening a certainty that men, whether lovers, doctors, judges or MPs cannot be left to make the decisions.

Talking about the difficulties of deciding whether to have an abortion and of going through with

arity which the women felt strengthened them for the continuing struggle for the freedom to control their bodies and their lives. Read it, especially you men.

Abortion: Our Struggle For Control. (NAC, 1980) 32 pp. 25p. Illustrated with photos.

At last a much needed history of the National Abortion Campaign from its beginnings in 1975 to the present and a collection of clear and comprehensive articles on aspects of the struggle for abortion rights. They include a description of the work done by black women against fertility control, a study of abortion internationally, a run-down of abortion facilities provided by the NHS, thoughts on birth control and 'abortion and the cuts'.

The best thing about this pamphlet is that it is written in clear, accessible language and provides a vital assessment of the present perspectives of the Abortion Campaign (the last similar pamphlet was produced as long ago as 1976).

Through their writing, these women make it clear that there are no single political lines or directives that can be drawn out of such work, but a wealth of insights into the varied needs of women.

Recommended reading as a starting point for discussion and full of

"THE GOING RATE"



PIC' of the month

Photos and text by Susan Greenberg (Second Sight)

The block-shoe makers were highly skilled and have to make each shoe to individual measurements in many cases. (The company has a 'foot-file' of measurements of all its regular clients). One ballerina will order 100 pairs for one short tour, because they get worn through so quickly. The life of a point shoe is very brief. The block-shoe makers were all men ('It's strenuous work', said the manager. 'Although we haven't ever refused to employ a woman, none of them have come forward.') and like the women, they come from a whole range of ethnic groups. They work on piecework, at 50p per shoe, making about 40 shoes a day if they're good, that is about £100 per week. To reach that level, which is the highest paid in the factory, however, they worked at a furious pace, carrying out an intricate process for each shoe. Some dancers insist on having shoes from a particular shoemaker.



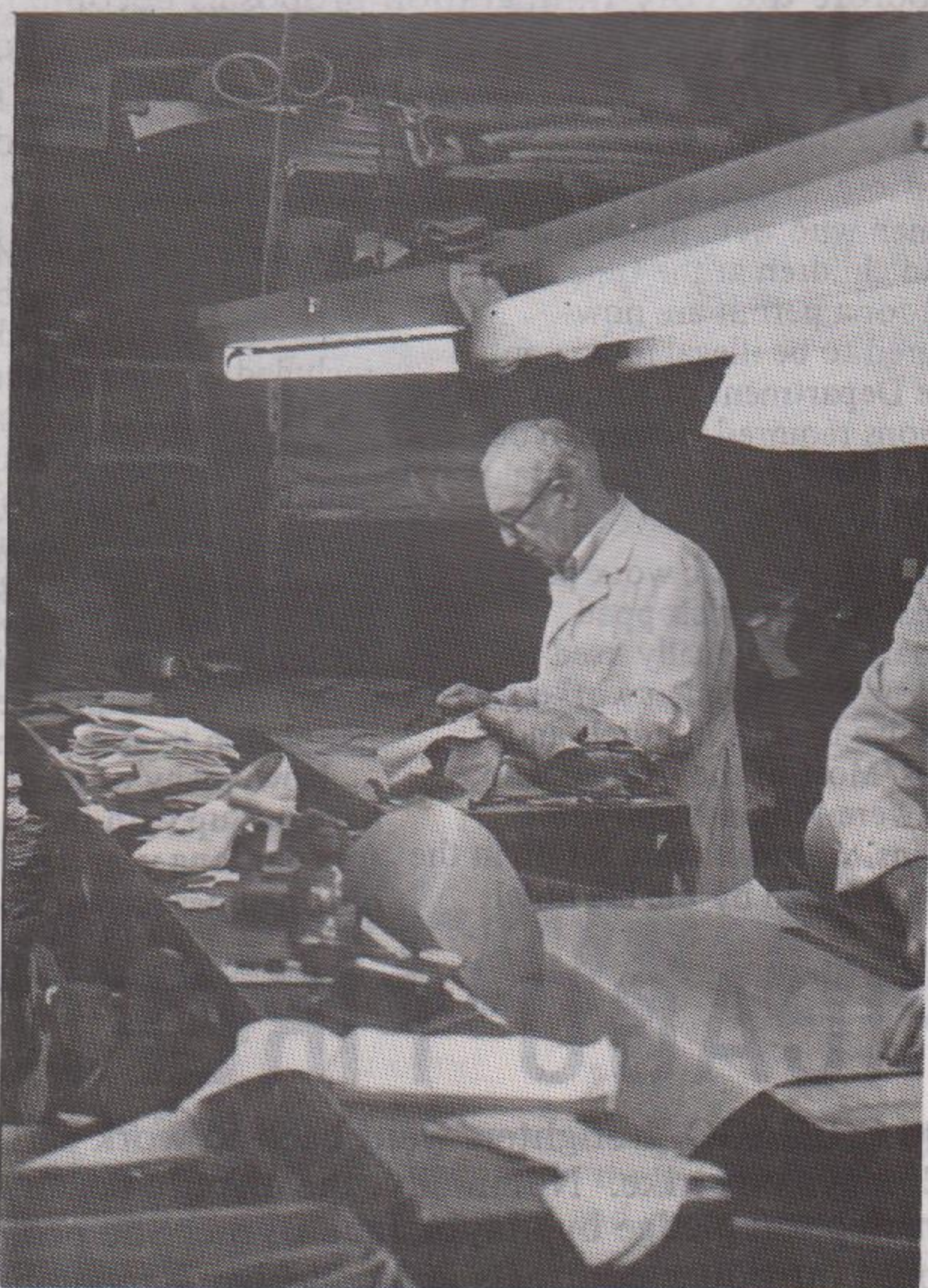
The beginnings of full automation in the factory.

I took these pictures for an exhibition that will be held on July 15th at the Geoffrey museum by the Hackney Arts Umbrella. The Umbrella's aim is to raise money for artists and craftsmen and women living and/or working in Hackney. I was curious to know why Frederick Freed's Ballet Shoe Factory was on the list of people who had asked to be photographed to publicise the Umbrella. I had images of grey-haired craftsmen carefully making each individual ballet shoe as a work of art. What I found was a strange combination of skilled and assembly line production in a small, family-based company which supplies some of the most famous ballerinas in the world. The eventual destination of the shoes seemed to be a million miles from the world they were made in.

I was accompanied around the factory by one of the managers, and then left to roam around on my own. I was very careful to explain what I was doing and why to the different groups of people. Most of them were extremely friendly to me and I felt shy about whizzing into the place and photographing them as if they were curious objects. But when I look back at the pictures their own warmth and personality makes a stronger connection.



Orders being checked. (There were an enormous amount of pin-ups and nudes on the walls everywhere, by the way).



This was the sort of picture I'd originally had in mind—grey-haired, etc. Cutting the leather for the ballroom dancing shoes.



Women who formed a good half of employees, worked on 'traditional' female jobs such as sewing ballroom shoes, ribbons on the ballet shoes, glueing soles, stamping soles, checking sizes and matches and so on. Everything was done by piecework, and the average take home was about £50, i.e. half the men's money. But the well-meaning manager (a local guy) was at pains to point out that wages weren't bad for the neighborhood—'We pay the going rate.'



Car Workers Call For General Strike

If Leyland sacked Raghieb Ahsan for working with Socialist Unity and the Birmingham Council wanted to move Handsworth to Coventry to make room for another spaghetti junction, would Leyland workers mobilise the community and call for a general strike? It's actually been happening, but not in Leyland, and not in Birmingham. It's Fords, in Port Elisabeth, South Africa. And the struggle—one of many—is a lesson in the importance of combining industrial, community, and political action.

The plant assembles Cortinas, using parts shipped out from Ford plants in Britain. The 700 African workers are organised in the Auto Workers' Union—affiliated to the Federation of S. African T. U.s (FOSATU), which has been active in opposing the Wiehahn Proposals (see Big Flame Nov. '79).

Botha refused, and when Ford sacked him in November, the entire African workforce struck to reinstate him. Ford gave Botha his job back in just 4 days. And paid the workers for the time lost. This angered the white workers, who struck for 2 days, and won overtime payments to make up for their lost time. When the Africans demanded equal opportunity to do overtime, all 700 were sacked.

REMOVAL

Many of the African workers live in Walmer Location, a black township (like Soweto) which faces forced removal, officially to make way for a new highway. Unofficially, Walmer is to be moved because it's too close to white residential areas.

At work, the whites also felt the blacks were coming too close when Ford integrated the toilets and canteen. The white Iron, Steel, and Allied Workers' Union threatened to strike unless Ford went back to separate toilets and ended strike pay for Africans! As a sop to the racists, management picked on Thozamile Botha, who is also a leader of the Port Elisabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO), active in Walmer. They told him to choose between his political activity and his job.

AUTONOMY

The Auto Workers' Union wanted to negotiate for them, but the workers insisted on the autonomy of their strike committee. Ford, meanwhile, started recruiting from the pool of unemployed and offering to reinstate selected individuals.

The workers insisted on group reinstatement and turned to PEBCO for support. But instead of the general strike and consumer boycott of white businesses which workers and Walmer youth proposed, various PEBCO leaders approached the S.A. Council of Churches and the US Consul - because Ford supposedly subscribes to a code of conduct (the "Sullivan Principles") for US business in South Africa. Their pressure led Ford to offer to re-instate all the strikers. "subject to availability of work". With PEBCO and Botha

recommending acceptance, the workers agreed to go back.

RIOTOUS

A few hours later, the Security Police arrested Botha and 3 others under the General Laws Amendment Act (allowing 14 days detention without trial). A mass meeting of 3000 PEBCO members decided that the general strike was on again unless the detainees were released.

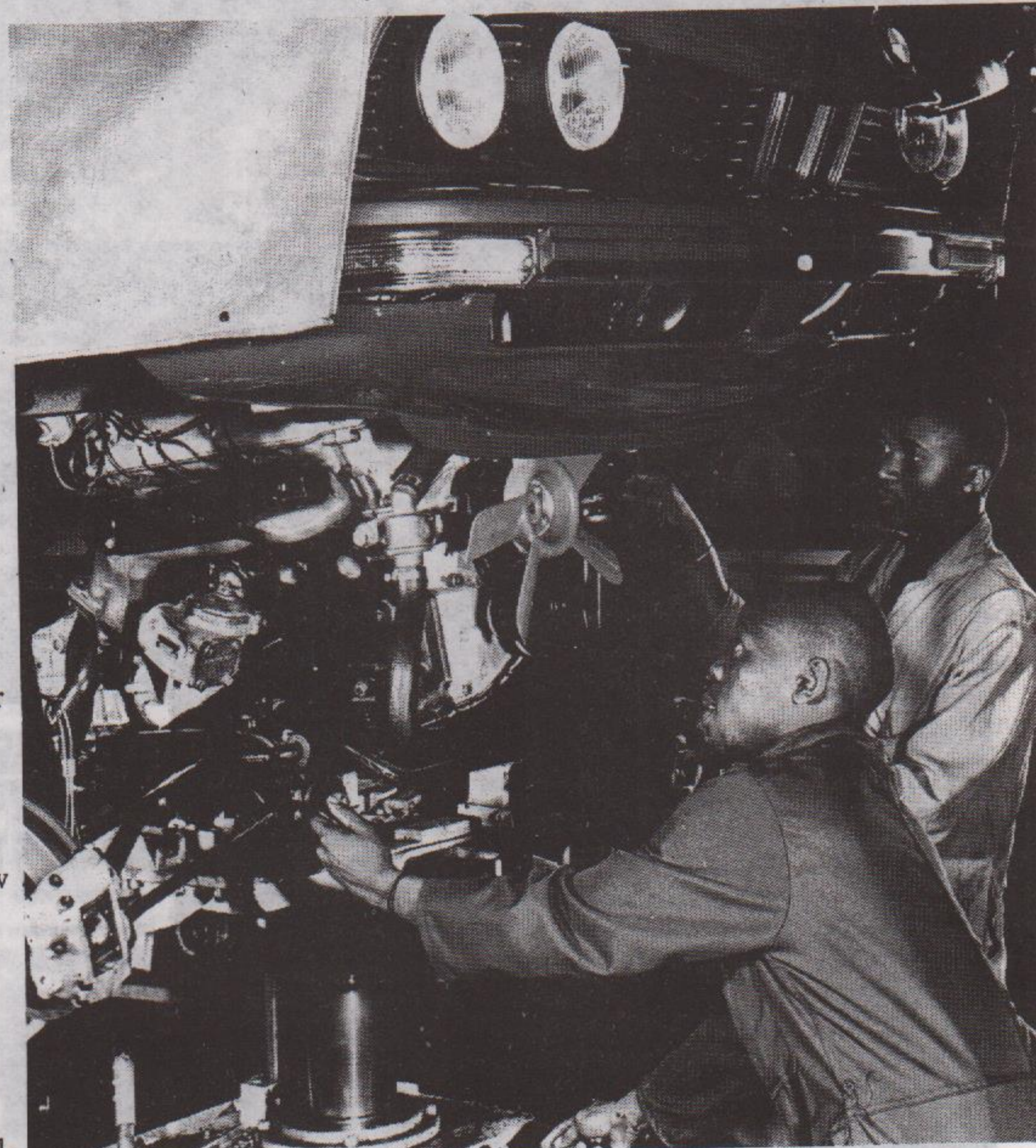
But the PEBCO leadership, mainly middle class, wanted to cement the deal with Ford. They managed, with difficulty, to call off the strike and boycott. But 24 Ford workers were charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act; Botha has been banned; and the government still plans to remove Walmer Location in June. So the story is not over.

SOLIDARITY

Ford workers in Britain already know the importance of international solidarity; it was vital in winning their claim in '78.

Support for Ford workers in S. Africa would strengthen the struggle of all black workers against apartheid. At the same time, it would weaken the ability of Ford management to play off one plant against another. Until Ford workers are fully organised on an international basis, there is nothing to stop management laying off workers in Britain and transferring production to S. Africa.

Such transfers do nothing for the African workers except to prop up the apartheid system. And these workers have consistently called for an economic boycott of South Africa.



RANK & FILE - REACHES PARTS OTHER FORMS OF UNIONISM CAN'T

At the end of March, the first international rank and file conference of brewery workers took place in Copenhagen. Organised by shop stewards from the Danish Tuborg and Carlsberg plants in Denmark, the conference was attended by brewery workers from Denmark, Ireland, France, Portugal, and England.

This interview with John Jensen, a Carlsberg steward, explains events leading up to the conference.

How did the idea of international rank and file links come about?

We first had the idea of international links in 1976. Since the beginning of the 1970's the percentage of Carlsberg and Tuborg production in Denmark has declined dramatically—it's now 40%. More and more they are going in for licensing arrangements, by which their beer is made in different countries under license. This is a potential threat for our jobs and the only way we can fight back is to build links with the workers in the plants that are making the beer under license. We were having difficulties establishing links but the very successful meeting of Ford workers in Copenhagen made us even more determined to get something going.

Has it been difficult to establish links?

It depends a lot on the plant. We have good links with the French and Portuguese plants— even though in Portugal the plant that makes Carlsberg is state-owned. I went to England and established good contacts in Runcorn, Burton-on-Trent, and Manchester. But the stewards at the large Carlsberg plant in Northampton were not at all friendly even though they have lost 50% of the workforce in the transfer to a new bottling plant—they seem to think that the remaining jobs are secure.

Has the union supported the stewards in your international campaign?

Our union is very left wing—in fact

of the Danish T.U.C. From the beginning, they have been convinced of the need for international links. The union has put a lot of funds at our disposal and is paying the fares of everyone attending the March conference!

What is the situation at the plants in Denmark?

Here as everywhere management is introducing new technology—which will mean less jobs. Tuborg workers have just had a 5 week strike which ended with management getting them to accept 1100 redundancies (20% of the workforce) over the next few years. It's especially difficult to fight redundancies given that workers made redundant get wages for 3.5 years. There are 2500 women working at the Tuborg brewery and many of the jobs they do are being automated. But the problem is that the women are in a separate union which is not part of the international co-ordination. They negotiate separately from us which makes for problems. Though it must be said that women workers at Carlsberg are amongst the highest paid women workers in Denmark.

How would you like things to proceed after the conference?

Well, we hope the international bulletin gets off the ground so that brewery workers all over Europe can keep in touch. Then we'll need to meet to sort out what strategy can be of best use to us. The brewery companies have had internationalism for a long time—the

Migrant Workers' Struggles

Even before the Tory Immigration proposals become law, the courts are using their powers to attack immigrants who are already freely resident in this country. A recent court judgement will make many women who came to Britain on a resident domestic work permit subject to deportation

Women who were married or who had children at the time they applied for a permit are now considered to be illegal immigrants because Department of Employment regulations required women to be unmarried and childless for obtaining a permit.

The resident domestic work permit, which has now been stopped altogether, was originally used to recruit low-wage women workers to work as live-in staff in hotels and hospitals. Most of the women who applied were Filipinos and some Moroccans. Agencies were set up in the Philippines, often by the big hotel

companies, eg Grand Metropolitan, to recruit staff. Exorbitant fees were charged for a package which included airfare and the work permits. The women were expected to be tied to their job for four years and could only change jobs with special permission and then only if they stayed within the category of resident domestics. They worked at difficult and low paid jobs, at the mercy of their employers for permission to stay in the country.

Now, many of these women who have put up with these conditions for four long years and have obtained permanent resident status

are to be deported, without right of appeal, because they applied to bring their husband and/or children to Britain, without realising the implications.

CHILDLESS

It is imperative that all resident domestics who are in this situation, whether or not they have applied for their children and/or husband to join them, get immediate advice—and contact the relevant trade union for support. A campaign is being organised by the Migrants Action Group to get the Home Secretary to reconsider his ruling.

For further information and advice advice contact:

Migrants Action Group,
c/o Migrant Services Unit,
54 Chalton St, London NW1.
Tel: 01-388 0241.

CHICAGO FIREFIGHTERS STRIKE

4000 CHICAGO firefighters went back to work early in March after 23 days on strike. Nominally, the dispute began over a broken election pledge by Mayor Jane Byrne. She promised that she would introduce contracts and collective bargaining for city employees replacing the existing patronage system whereby employees campaign for politicians in return for plum jobs, promotion etc. when they are elected.

"It all gets down to politics", one striker said, "She's (Byrne) afraid she'll lose a lot of door-bell ringers. You're not forced to do it, but if you want to get ahead you have to. One phone call to the chief and he can transfer you". But before you start taking sides, read this report from our Chicago correspondent, Noel Ignatin.

I can understand how, based on the experience of the firefighters' strike in England, you would be interested in news of this one, but the cases are very different.

The firemen in Chicago barely, if at all, deserve to be called workers, although what they do resembles what workers do. They are patronage employees, owing their jobs to favours from various officials in the local Democratic Party apparatus. They

are interested in their job, passing it on to their sons. And it is one sweet job. They make a good salary, with good insurance and pension benefits—+ absolute job security. The real plum is the work schedule: one day on and two off, which makes it possible for many, perhaps the majority of them, to work another full-time job.

The firemen are ninety percent white—in a city with close to a majority of people of colour. Until

they were brought on the force in small numbers only following a violent black rebellion in 1964 (to which I was an eyewitness) that began when a white-manned fire truck ran over a black teenager in the ghetto. Various interviews with black firemen during the strike indicated that they did not feel accepted by their white 'fellow workers' and that they were less than fully enthusiastic about a strike in a city where the overwhelming majority of fire victims are black.

It should also be noted that the first female fire fighter was hired as one of the replacement workers during the strike. I don't know what will become of her now that the strike is settled.

I recognize another side to the question: the dispute is situated in a context of attacks on city services generally (the schools, the public hospital) and on city workers (the bus drivers), but I think this fact does not fundamentally alter the character of this conflict as one "within

COST OF THE HOUSING BILL

A new Housing Bill is going through Parliament. Having reached the Committee Stage, it seems destined to become law in a few months. Apart from the clauses affecting the sale of council houses, it has received remarkably little publicity. However, as this article by Drew Gill shows, it will have a profound effect on all forms of housing tenure.

CHANGES

The main proposals in the Bill are:

- Council tenants will have the right to buy after 3 years. The three years don't have to have been spent in the same place or even the same borough. The effect will be to reduce further the numbers being housed off council waiting lists and to make transfers, even on medical grounds, a thing of the past.
- Some security of tenure will be given to public sector tenants, but far short of the 'tenant's charter' they have campaigned for. There will be extra grounds for eviction compared to private tenants, such as making false statements when the tenancy was app-

lied for or underoccupation after the tenancy has been passed on to another member of the family after the original tenant's death. Distraint, or the seizing of property to cover arrears, will continue for public sector tenants.

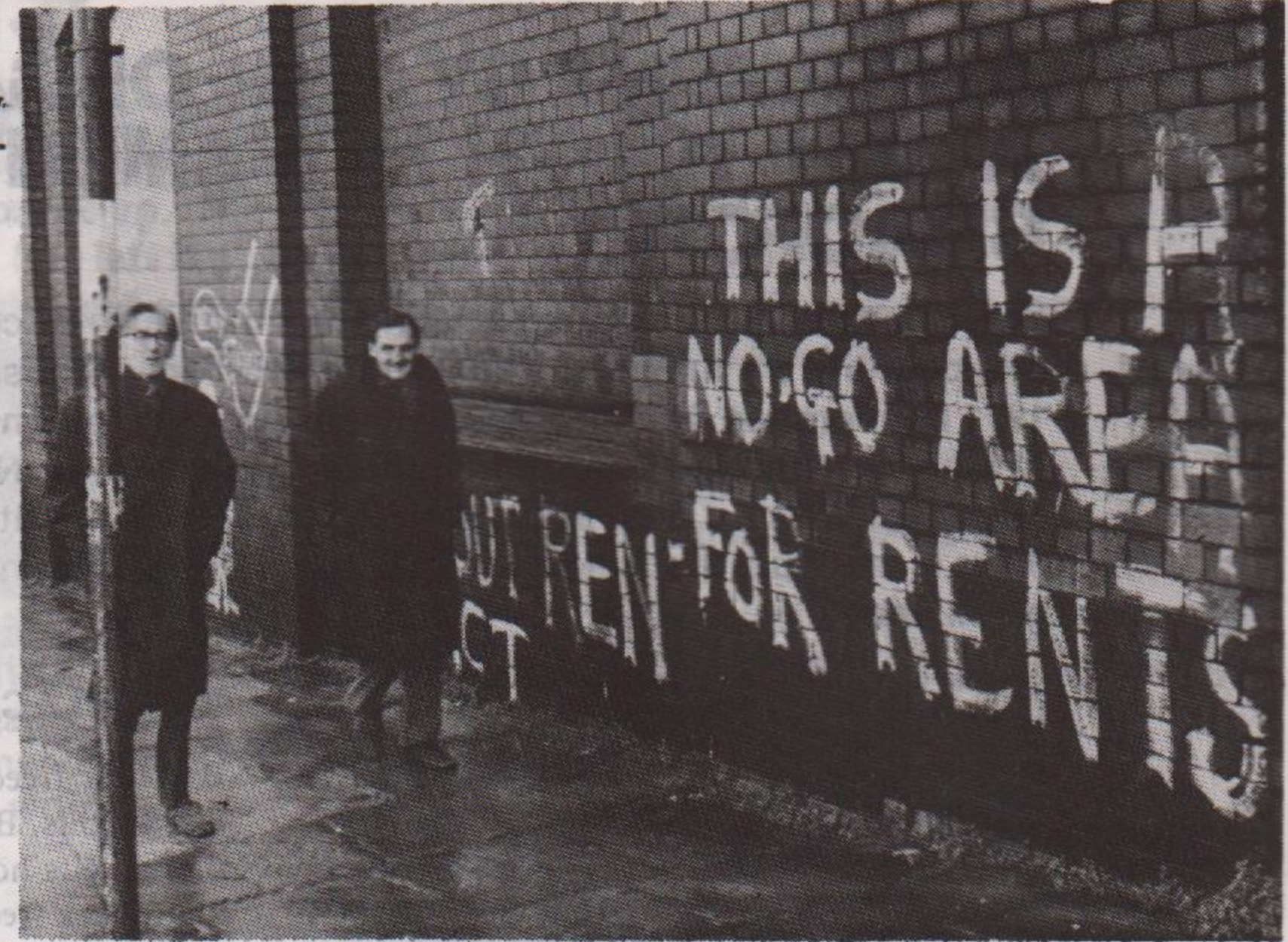
- There will be a new form of tenure for private rented accommodation outside the protection of the present Rent Acts. These are shortholds which will last from 1 to 5 years. After then the landlord/landlady will be able to regain possession. It is almost certain that the result will be the same as followed a previous move to reduce tenants' security—the 1957 Rent Act. Not more rented accommodation becoming available, but tenants being displaced and property sold to owner occupiers. The Bill also reduces the powers of Rent Tribunals and reduces the period given in court possession orders.

- Changes in the housing subsidy system will greatly increase central government control over the rents and services provided by local authorities in council housing

IDEOLOGY

These measures affecting housing vividly illustrate the underlying ideology of the present Conservative government, which it is applying in all areas. Owner occupation is being promoted as something inherently valuable, which should be encouraged even if in the long term council house sales mean losses in public expenditure. Owner occupiers are seen as embodying the virtues of self reliance and thrift. The solution to housing problems is to be achieved through private enterprise. Relaxing the Rent Acts will lead to more private rented accommodation. Selling land and reducing planning controls will encourage private companies to build more.

Public sector housing is viewed as wasteful and inefficient. It is only appropriate for the elderly and groups with special needs. The Tories have been aided by the way the tower block and the rundown inner city estate have become associated with public housing. The starving of re-



Flashback to the struggle against the Housing Finance Act.

sources over the last few years has contributed to this image. In the measures affecting the powers of council tenants all forms of collective participation schemes have been dropped in favour of individual rights, such as the right to buy. By focusing on individual rights, the Tories have been able to build on and exploit the divisions between people in different forms of tenure and between those in the better and worse estates.

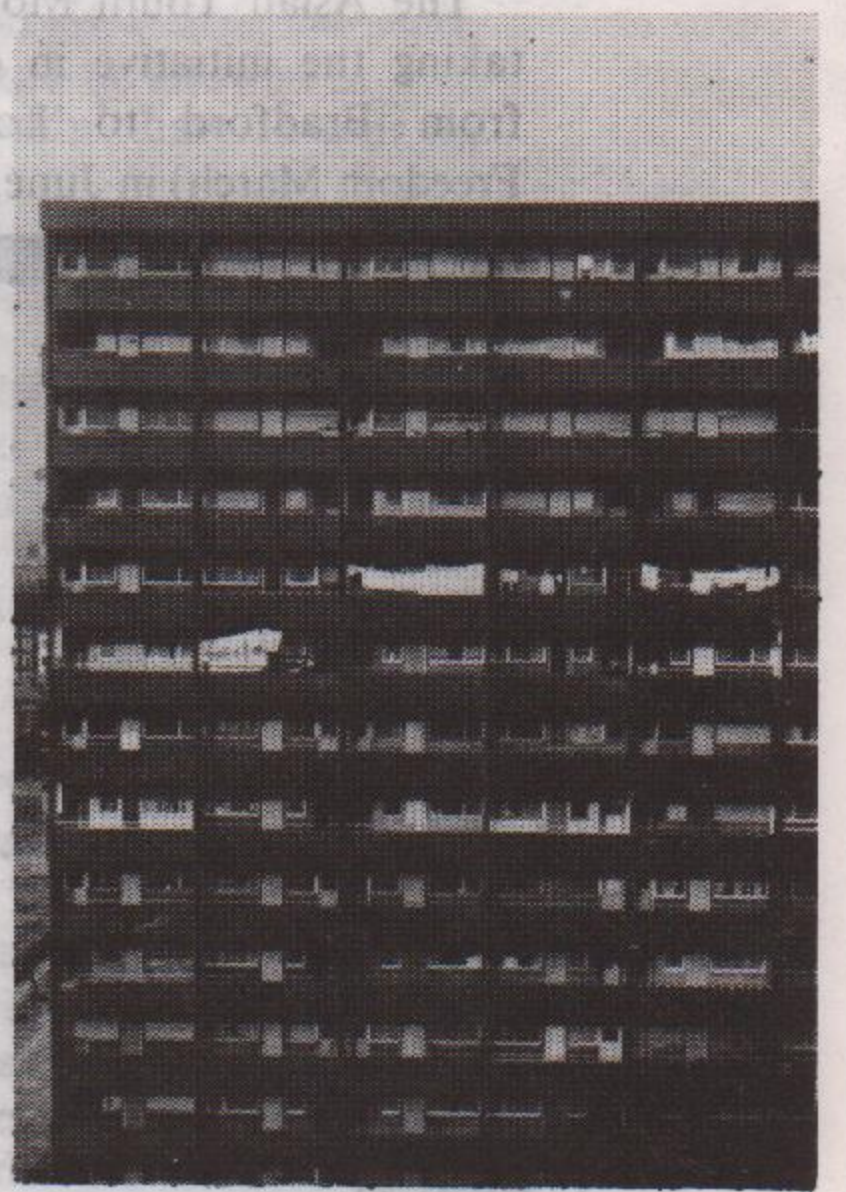
LABOUR

The way the Housing Bill has aroused so little opposition and the lack of response to Michael Heseltine's announcement of massive cuts in the money going to council house building and housing associations, shows how much the climate of opinion has changed in the last decade. In the 1960s and early 70s thinking was dominated by visions of Rachedmanite landlords/landladies and 'Cathy Come Home.' The changes that have occurred are due to Labour as much as the Tories. They began the cuts in public expenditure on housing, did their best to encourage owner occupation and introduced the Housing Investment Plans which gave central government much more control over the local authorities.

The present outlook is a gloomy one. The next piece of legislation to be threatened is the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act of 1977. This enforced on local authorities the duty to house certain categories of homeless people, e.g. those with dependent children. Already there has been one attempt to introduce a racist Bill excluding those from overseas.

However this is not the only reason that many local authorities oppose the Act. If they could get rid of it not only would their obligation to provide housing be greatly reduced, but they could begin massive evictions of those in council housing who are in arrears. At the moment, they only have to rehouse most of them again.

So far there has been little resistance to the Tories housing policy. Much more effort has to be put in to the work of bringing together different types of tenants and workers in the relevant unions, as well as ensuring that Anti-Cuts campaigns are giving housing a very high priority. There is a long way to go if we are to recapture the confidence which gave rise to the struggles in the early 1970s around the Housing Finance Act.



Liverpool Hospitals Cut

LIVERPOOL, TOGETHER with London, is said to have too many hospital beds, and so is experiencing some of the worst health cuts. The irony is that although 200 beds were lost when five local hospitals, casualty departments and a maternity unit were closed down, to be replaced by the new Royal Liverpool Teaching Hospital, the giant hospital has drained the resources of the Health Authority.

A recent report on pediatric care in Liverpool by Hull University researchers shows how the policy of the 50's, taken up in the 1962 Government Hospital Plan, of centralisation to reduce costs, was completely wrong, and simply increases the power and status of consultants. The Liverpool teaching hospital costs £1.2 million a year more to run than the hospitals it replaced.

CUTBACKS

This, combined with the cash limits on health spending, has meant that the new hospital cannot be fully used, and more services are now

being cut back. An outpatient radio therapy clinic has been closed, so people with cancer will have a long journey for treatment, or will have to go into hospital. The 'fringe areas' of health care are being eroded. A 400 bed geriatric section at one hospital is due to be virtually phased out, two Liverpool Childrens Hospitals are under threat of closure, and psychiatric wards are chronically understaffed. An abortion day care centre is unlikely to open, after years of campaigning by women's groups.

MISSING

The new hospital itself has become a kind of myth of centralisation gone mad. The opening was so rushed that

some services were disrupted for months in the transfer from the old hospitals and waiting lists increased. The problems and costs of getting to hospital for treatment or for visiting have multiplied. A three to four hour wait in casualty is a common experience, and astonishing numbers of patients records go missing.

The Royal is also unpopular with the nurses and ancillary workers, and the management's attempts to bring the ancillary workers into line has caused disputes from the beginning.

SWEETS

When the Royal opened, the staff from the five old hospitals were offered jobs there, which made acceptance of the closures smoother. The catering senior Shop Steward Dennis Ingham describes the promises made as 'sweets and ice cream all day' - free transport to work, flexible hours, and recognition of the existing rota systems worked.

Most of these soon disappeared once the staff began work at the new hospital.

The situation was chaotic during the first few weeks. Once Dennis Ingham met with a domestic who wanted to leave because no one ever spoke to her. When she pointed to where she worked, it became clear that she had been misdirected at the start, and had been cleaning for six weeks in a building belonging to the university, not the hospital.

FLEXIBILITY

The ancillaries carried on working their old rotas. This was important because they were used to working certain hours and organising home life around them. But the hospital management decided to introduce new rotas and 'flexibility' starting with the catering workers. Shift hours were to be changed to get rid of overtime without taking on more workers. People who preferred to have weekends off for the children might now have to do weekend work, and women working part time mornings to fit in with school hours might now be working afternoons.

The flexibility principle meant that the catering workers could be moved onto different jobs, with a warning if they refused. This would make it easier to keep sections run-

ing with insufficient workers, and make future cuts possible.

CONTROL

The stewards suspected that if the new practices were to be brought in, it would create a precedent, and spread through other hospitals. The catering workers began overtime bans and lightening strikes - so wages weren't lost - and these continued for months. The management had obviously decided to have it out and get the work force under control, and have refused the union's request for arbitration. The section was fairly isolated, NUPE did not put out enough publicity, explaining the reasons and drawing wider support, so the workers were constantly open to press attacks.

The hospital has finally given in on one point and agreed to move the Catering Manager - but the staff feel this will happen only on condition that the two stewards, Dennis Ingham and Jimmy Cameron agree to move to other hospitals which they obviously will not do. At the moment, the stewards feel that the rota systems may be worked out with less disruption to the staff, but they feel that if management can get away with moving them, they will feel more confident about slipping new schedules and flexibility agreements through, with more 'sweets and ice cream'.

BLACK FREEDOM MARCH

STATEMENT BY THE ORGANISERS ASIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT BRADFORD

Black people in Britain are suffering one of the worst crises in their history in this country. On the Immigration front the Tory proposals have tightened the 1971 Immigration Act, an act which itself is a fundamental attack on the rights of black people nationally and internationally. A new Nationality Bill is being prepared. We can only speculate as to its contents at the moment however there is no doubt that whatever it contains will be detrimental to the position of black people.

On the economic front the position is equally as disastrous. Unemployment is rising rapidly, manufacturing industries, especially the older ones, are in decline (in Bradford for example the textile industry is in a virtual state of collapse). Black workers are the first in line for unemployment. As jobs become scarcer open and overt discrimination increases as the available jobs are given to white workers.

The state has made its intentions clear as to what it holds in store for black people if they dare to protest. The events of Southall and the subsequent show trials are a direct warning to the black community.

The present situation is bad but the future holds a massive increase in racism. Already the rate of black youth unemployment is running far higher than that for white youth. The prospect of black workers being unemployed and subject to increasing racist attacks and state harassment is by no means a far fetched idea.

The fightback by the black community has been and still is fragmented. A major political weakness of black people in this country is the lack of a national militant black organisation. Notwithstanding this the fightback has to be continued and escalated and a national black organisation has to be fought for.

The Asian Youth Movement Bradford is taking the initiative in organising a march from Bradford to London (The Black Freedom March) in June/July 1980.

WHY BLACK FREEDOM

By black freedom we mean more than just black rights. Black freedom does incorporate these rights however it is more general than that. Black freedom to us refers to the general exploitation of black people and the whole concept of our dignity as black people. In general agitational terms it means freedom from immigration restrictions, freedom from police harassment, freedom from racist attacks, freedom from racism, freedom to organise ourselves and the freedom to live with dignity.

WHY A MARCH

What is needed in the present situation is anti-racist activity on a national scale. Isolated demonstrations have not proved adequate weapons as means of fighting back. We feel it necessary that an action takes place which focuses the attentions of the black community nationally, an action which brings to the surface a national fight back against racism.

ISSUES TO BE RAISED BY THE BLACK FREEDOM MARCH

The march itself is a march against racism in general. However that generalisation will be broken down to tackle specific areas of racism.

1 The primary objective of the march is opposition to the Immigration Laws. We feel that these laws are of overriding importance to us as they threaten the whole basis of our existence in this country. If we do not act with determination now we will probably be laying the basis for increased harassment and possible expulsion in the coming years. We hope to make it known through this march that **We are Here To Stay, Here To Fight**. Our position in principle is quite clear on these laws and is summed up by the slogan **End Racist Immigration Laws, All Immigration Laws are Racist**. However from this general position we will be fighting for concrete demands:

Stop detention without trial

No arrest without warrant

Release all the deportees

Stop all deportations

End sexist and racist laws

From this primary and overriding issue there will be other issues to be taken up.

2 On the economic front we will take up the issue of **unemployment**, especially unemployment of black youth, which at this moment in time is far higher than for white equivalents. It is also an important issue because the present Tory Government policies are designed to increase unemployment and black workers will take the major brunt of this in proportional terms as the old manufacturing industries requiring unskilled labour decline.

3 **Southall**. Southall is an issue which cannot be left on one side and forgotten about. The Southall community was amazed by the police in a situation of virtual civil war in an attack unprecedented before in England. The facts of what happened in Southall will be brought up in all meetings that are attended during the march.

We say:

Unite to defend Southall

Release the political prisoners of Southall

Barnett Trials are Show Trials

Disband the SPG

SPG murdered Blair Peach

4 **Police Harassment & Sus Laws**: Police harassment of black people and especially

black youth is increasing and bound to increase even more. The Sus Laws are one of the main weapons legitimising this harassment. The initial fightback against sus laws has receded but we hope to bring it back to prominence.

We call for:

End the Sus Laws Now

No imprisonment under these laws

5 **Bussing**: Bussing of black children from the areas they live in to schools in white areas continues. This practice is a racist practice, depriving them of hours of education, forcing them to travel long distances, and taking away their dignity as black children. The only justification for this is that they will learn English better from a school predominantly white. However it is an excuse not to put resources into black areas and build schools there. The question of resources is even more vital now under the present cuts.

We say:

End Bussing of Black Children Now

More resources for Black Areas

We demand that schools are built in black areas to cater for the needs of black children, needs which have been so badly neglected.

6 **The 1981 Census**: We are entirely opposed to the questions on race in the census and we call on black people to boycott them. We will not be catalogued like cattle.

DETAILS OF THE MARCH

The march will leave Bradford on the 28th of June and culminate in London on the 19th of July with a demonstration and rally.

The March will take 22 days in all. Between 50-100 Marchers will take part passing through, where possible, major areas where black people live.

A demonstration and public meeting must be organised in every town with the possibility of marchers joining us in the towns we pass through.

BLACK FREEDOM MARCH SUPPORT COMMITTEES

It will be necessary for the march to succeed to



N.F. demo in Southwark, 2nd March, 1980. In the duffelcoat is Andrew Brons, who recently emerged as the new leader of the N.F. Brons is a long standing supporter of Tyndall, and his victory represents a compromise

Bengali Fightback in Oldham

THE CONTINUAL harassment of the local Bengali Community in Oldham reached a new height when a gang of 20 or 30 racist thugs started beating up Bengalis in the streets and attacking their homes.

The attacks all took place in the Feathersall Road area of Oldham. The gang shouting British Movement and other fascist slogans rampaged through the streets attacking anyone black who happened to be there with sticks and iron bars. They hurled bricks and stones at anyone trying to stop them breaking windows, frightening men, women and children.

The Bengali community know that this attack, the biggest of its kind for about four years was organised and planned in advance.

"These are not just odd incidents, it's a planned gang action. They are going from Street to street looking for people to attack."

Mr. Mabaswir Khan, of Mars Street, dodged a brick that was hurled at him. The brick missed him, but smashed his front door.

The next night he opened his door to find a gang of about 15 white youths carrying sticks and iron bars.

"Within a second they reached my doorstep and attacked me. They were hitting me with the sticks. I received about five blows. I managed to close my door because if they had got inside they could have got to my wife and three children".

They then smashed his windows - one youth hurled a 15in long iron bar through one window.

Mr Khan, who is president of the Oldham Bangladesh Association, said: "This is racial, we are all extremely worried"

"But I've advised everyone not to take the law into their own hands. But we are all angry and frightened. If action is not taken no one knows what will happen"

ATTACKED

Because some of the attacks and outbreaks of vandalism have taken place at the same time in different parts of Westwood, he believes the total size of the gang could be as many as 50 people.

Millworker Akhla Sur Rahman encountered a gang of over 20 youths shouting "bastard" and "get out".

"They were in an aggressive mood. They had sticks, and bars and iron rods. They were smashing windows and kicking walls as they walked along.

"They attacked me with the sticks, they attempted to kill me. I managed to run home" He was treated in hospital for bruising and cuts on his face, back and arms.

Mr Suab Ali, a millworker, opened his door to find 20 youths armed with sticks.

"They were screaming and shouting and started hitting me with their sticks. But some people came out of nearby houses and they fled."

He was treated for bruising on both his hands at hospital and allowed home.

Another man Mr Abdul Hannan was also attacked on his doorstep. He received a shoulder injury, but did not need hospital treatment.

POLICE INDIFFERENCE

The Bengali Community know that they must rely on themselves and other anti-fascist to defend their families and homes. Dozens of previous complaints to the Police about harassment, abuse and window-breaking have been ignored by the Police.

Fighting Immigration Controls

ANWAR DITTA is fighting for her children to join her in England. Anwar was born in Birmingham, lived in Rochdale until she was 9, and was then sent to Pakistan by her father after his marriage broke up. She married Shuja Ud Din and had 3 children before returning her in 1975. She left her children with their grandparents whilst she and her husband found jobs ~~and a house~~ in Rochdale. If she had known how her family were going to be tortured by the immigration authorities she would never have left them

When Anwar applied for her children to join her and her husband, the immigration officials in Pakistan refused, claiming that they might be Anwar's sister-in-law's or that there might have been two separate Anwar Sultana Dittas married to the same man!! If Anwar had been a white woman born here but married abroad, she would have had no difficulties.

IGNORE EVIDENCE

Anwar is very capable of expressing her own case, speaks English fluently, and has an overwhelming amount of evidence to prove that the children are hers. Yet despite this and despite the fact that she was born here, the British State and its racist immigration laws have successfully kept her and her family separate for 5 years.

If the laws and the authorities can treat Anwar in this way, just imagine how thousands of other families and individuals are treated who aren't in the same position and haven't had the same publicity as Anwar. In Rochdale alone there have been cases like Ibrahim Ali who has recently lost his appeal to bring over his family. The process took 9 years and during that time one of his sons died. When Mohammed Ghalib heard that he and his family couldn't join their father he shot himself.

Said Bibi an 80 year old partly blind and partly deaf widow has just been deported despite sick notes and her appeal being due on May 9th! These are just a small sample of cases in Rochdale and the scale of the problem nationally is horrific.

THE ANWAR DITTA DEFENCE COMMITTEE

This was set up in December to help Anwar with her fight and to show up the racist nature of immigration controls. A very active campaign has been organised involving leafletting, picketing, petitioning both in the streets and door to door to raise over 3000 signatories, public meetings, street meetings, the circulation of organisations locally and nationally, the pressuring of MP's and the Home Office, and a demonstration on March 1 in Rochdale.

DEMONSTRATIONS

At the rally before the demo Anwar spoke about her case and others and pointed out very strongly that the treatment she and her family received was because she was black.

The Bradford Asian Youth Movement speaker stressed the need to support Anwar, as did all the speakers, and stated that both Labour and Tory Governments had attacked blacks in the same way.

The speaker from the Rochdale Asian Womens Movement stressed the need to oppose all immigration control and the new nationality legislation which were particularly vicious attacks on black women in particular.

Nasira Begum has recently been sent a 'Notice to Deport'; she has put in an appeal, but no date has been set for it. A free pamphlet about her case is available from 595 Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester.



FINANCE

We estimate that it may take up to £15,000 to finance the march. We may have to financially compensate some marchers for severe financial hardship during the march. The Central Fund raising body will be the AYM. However, the funds must also be raised by every support committee as well as from sympathetic organisations and individuals. Organisations sending marchers must try to sponsor them fully or to some extent.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE MARCH

It is hoped that when the march culminates in London there will be international pickets and demonstrations in various parts of the world outside British Embassies in support of the Black Freedom March.

If you can help and wish to participate or want further information, contact:

**ASIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT
BRADFORD
266 LUMB LANE
BRADFORD 8**

Telephone: Bradford 499310

N.B. Send all cheques and P.O.s payable to The Black Freedom March account at the above address.

PART 2 OF STATEMENT

What do we hope to achieve by the March?

It has already been stated that the March will become a national focus against racism in this country. The raising of the political consciousness of the Black Community is a central point of the March. Although the march itself will not harm the British State, the march will publicise racism in Britain abroad.

However, the most important net result of the March is expected to be the formation of a National Black Organisation in Britain. The basis for this will be laid down because of the unity in action that will be necessary from so many black organisations if this march is to succeed.

Secondly the Black Freedom March support committees it is hoped will remain as coordinators of black organisations involved in them and will become immediately the rudimentary framework of this National organisation albeit purely on the basis of their support for this one action.

After the march discussions will take place with those black organisations in order to call a conference to establish a National Black Organisations. The whole ideological basis of that organisation will be decided then.

ve these support committees organised in every town we pass through and even those we not pass through.

tasks of the Support Committees:

- To collect finance
- To arrange accommodation and food
- To arrange a demonstration and public meeting or rally
- To undertake propaganda work preceding the march against racism. One of the most important aspects of the march is that an opportunity will be given for anti-racists to have a major campaign against racism in their locality based on local issues and where appropriate based on the issues raised by the march.
- To provide marchers.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEES

These committees must be on a delegate basis and their sole purpose is to work for the march and to do anti-racist work. We do not expect these committees to become split because of any particular group trying to dominate and push its own 'line' to the detriment of the march by sowing discord. We hope that the committees will become living examples of Unity in Action.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEES

The Committees will be linked to and registered under the central organising body the Asian Youth Movement Bradford. The Committees will be expected to be under the political discipline of the organising body whilst they endure.

STRUCTURE & DISCIPLINE OF THE MARCH

The march will be organised on a tightly disciplined structure for reasons of security. People who wish to march must inform us as soon as possible. All marchers must accept the discipline of the organising body. Marchers wishing to join the main march en route must inform us well in advance. People who have not informed us will not be allowed to join the main march once it is in progress although when we are passing through towns people will be allowed to march with us.

WHO CAN MARCH?

All black organisations who accept the aims and discipline of the march are welcome. White organisations who wish to send marchers as an act of solidarity will not only have to accept the structure but also certain other conditions. They will not be allowed to distribute their literature, leaflets, sell their papers to the main body of the march. They will not be allowed to recruit or promote their organisations on the main body of the march.

The provisional route so far:

Day 1 Sat. 28th June—Bradford—Huddersfield

Day 2 Sun 29th June—Huddersfield—Rochdale

Day 3 Mon 30th June—Rochdale—Oldham—Manchester

*It might be necessary for a group of marchers to come from Rochdale—Manchester—Sheffield instead of the main body of marchers crossing the Pennines.

Day 4 Tues 1st July—Manchester—Sheffield

Day 5 Wednesday 2nd July—Sheffield—Alfreton

Day 6 Thursday 3rd July—Alfreton—Derby—Burton-on-Trent

Day 7 Friday 4th July—Burton-on-Trent—Walsall

Day 8 Saturday 5th July—Walsall—Birmingham

Day 9 Sunday 6th July—Birmingham—Coventry

Day 10 Monday 7th July—Coventry—Leicester

Day 11 Tuesday 8th July—Rest Day

Day 12 & 13 Wed & Thursday 9th & 10th July—Leicester—Market

Harborough—Northampton

Day 14 Saturday 12th July—Bedford—Luton

Mr Khan said "I don't think the police are doing enough - they are not taking it seriously. When called it takes a long time before a police patrol bothers to come.

The Police attitude is summed up in their statement to the local paper.

"Obviously we will make inquiries, but it could be that the claims are exaggerated".

BENGALIS FIGHT BACK

The Bengali Community is preparing to defend itself against more attacks. At a huge meeting following the attacks the Bangladesh Association issued secret instructions on how Bengalis can defend themselves.

It is no coincidence that these attacks have started now. They follow on directly from the Tory's Government attacks on Blacks and Asians with the changes in Immigration Laws and the proposals for a new Nationality Act.

The State Racism of successive Governments and the Home Office who administer the new racist and sexist rules about dependants, fiancées etc sets the climate for this kind of street fascism to flourish.

STOP PRESS

Further proof that the Tory Immigration Policies and the gang who are beating up Bengalis are linked became clear when the National Front announced its intention to demonstrate in Oldham next month, supposedly in opposition to Oldham's two "left-wing" MP's

When the date is known local Bengalis will be joining other Asians and anti-fascists to make sure they are forced off the streets. The people of Oldham will be calling for mass support to smash the Front's demonstration of Nazism!

WATCH FOR DETAILS

IRELAND 1916-80 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DAN BREEN, a leading IRA officer in the Irish War of Independence, recalled one of his earliest political influences in his book "My fight for Irish Freedom." Working in Dublin in 1913 he described how he instinctively sympathised with the workers during the bitter General Strike of that year, even though he was not involved and had only recently arrived in the city from his home in deepest rural Tipperary.

He was not alone. Many leading members of then obscure Irish nationalist movements gave support to the strike led by Larkin and Connolly. Republicans like Pearse and McDonagh (later shot by the British) argued the workers' case within nationalist circles. Sir Roger Casement (later hanged) gave holidays to strikers' children on his Co. Antrim estate. And Lady Constance de Markiewicz (later jailed) organised soup kitchens for the striking families.

UPRISING

When rebellion erupted in Dublin in Easter 1916 it was Irish nationalists like these who joined with the trade union leader James Connolly and his Irish Citizens' Army to win independence for their country. That uprising was crushed. The leaders were executed. But it provoked a massive wave of feeling against British occupation that eventually broke into guerrilla warfare between the IRA and British troops.

The Easter Rising was the first of a

series of rebellions throughout Europe. Only a year later came the October revolution in Russia. Later came workers revolts in Germany, Spain, Hungary, and Italy.

Most of these were defeated. But in Ireland the movement re-organised and the war of 1918 to 1920 saw not just the growth of Irish republicanism but the seizure of Cork docks under a form of workers' control, a rash of Soviets as workers took over rural creameries and bacon-curing plants and the virtual running of Limerick by local trade unions.

TEMPORARY HALT

The Irish revolution was abruptly halted when the British did a deal with certain right-wing nationalist leaders. The country was divided with Britain still occupying the northern 6 Counties. Land, docks, and factories were returned to their previous owners. Ireland became safe for business again. That is the situation today. An unfinished revolution.



Every year the Easter Rising is commemorated by those who see it as a symbol of what might have been...and still could be. The war for Irish freedom and socialism is still being fought. We urge readers to attend either of the two Easter Rising marches in London on:

Easter Sunday 6th April

Sinn Fein: 2pm from Speakers' Corner to Kilburn Square.

IRSP: Galtymore, Cricklewood.

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE

Belfast: Tenants Demolish Empty Flats

The conditions in the Divis Flats complex at the city centre end of the Falls Road, Belfast are well known: nearly 6,000 people living in 740 flats that have been totally devastated by neglect, decay, damp, structural defects, rat-infestation and constant attacks by the army - adding up to probably the worst housing conditions in Western Europe.

The residents, after numerous half-hearted government attempts at cosmetic schemes, have had enough. They're now fighting for nothing less than the total demolition of the area, and they've even started the job themselves. Big Flame talked to Sean Stitt, a leading activist in the Divis Demolition Committee.

"The campaign was initiated in October last year when the people decided that they wanted a Housing Action Group, but only if its resources were channelled solely towards a complete demolition of the flats - thus the birth of the Divis Demolition Committee.

CONTROVERSIAL

A lot of our protests and actions are very controversial - especially our policy of demolishing vacated flats - which ended in myself and our treasurer (Frank Gillan) being arrested and prosecuted for criminal damage: £25,000. It could well be that some members of the committee may have to go to jail - but the way we look at it, Crumlin Road prison is a hell of a lot cleaner than Divis Flats.

We try and make each form of protest more dramatic than the previous one.

TOTAL DEMOLITION

In their latest proposals, the Housing Executive have openly admitted that Divis is not fit for human habitation by advocating partial demolition. We are now saying to the Housing Executive 'there won't be any partial demolition, there won't be any £8 million cosmetic schemes, and there won't be any ring-road anywhere near Divis.' We can give an unconditional guarantee of that.

The policy of demolishing vacated flats was very much in the fore in the early days of the campaign, but the people of Divis now see our campaign as inevitably successful and are sticking their ground waiting to get a house so no-one has moved out recently. We therefore haven't had a chance since our prosecution to put the demolition policy into operation.

100% SUPPORT

We had a very detailed questionnaire circulated amongst the residents - the last question being "Do you give the Divis Demolition Committee your full, unreserved support?" and out of 800 replies, only one answered no. A desperate situation calls for desperate action. We are only administrators for the people of Divis - if any policy decisions have to be taken, we call a public meeting and ask the people.

We estimate that it will take £15 million to demolish Divis and rehouse the people in it. The government says that that sort of money isn't available, yet at the same time they have reserved £200 million for a ring-road that nobody wants. So far as we see, there is no problem at all to the financial aspects of it. Money shouldn't enter into it when you're talking about a decent home for people which they're entitled to.

RING ROAD

Another argument put forward is that they cannot rehouse people in the immediate area, but we can show from an architect's report, that if Divis was demolished and the ring-road was shelved, the space that would then be available could rehouse 600 families, leaving only 200 families to be rehoused elsewhere.

The obvious answer to that is the housing scheme which was initially designed for 4,000 houses, but due to sectarian bigotry on the Lisburn District Council this was halved to 2,000 houses. So if they fully implemented the housing scheme they could easily cater for the Divis residents and the overspill from bad housing in West Belfast as a whole.

COLD WAR HOTS UP

SINCE THE Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, US foreign policy has become much more hawkish towards the USSR. Is this a short term response, linked to the presidential election campaign, or does it mark a more permanent shift back to confrontation policies between the super powers? That was the question we put to Barry Cohen, a member of the editorial collective of *Issues*, an independent, radical magazine of world affairs launched in March.

You have to see the U. S. defeat in Vietnam as crucial. Before Vietnam, American foreign policy as interpreted by Nixon and Kissinger was conservative, arrogant and interventionist. The defeat in Vietnam was a defeat for this policy - which was already under a lot of pressure since the U.S. was in the process of losing its economic ascendancy over other capitalist nations. It was no longer financially able to pay for an imperial army abroad. Kissinger's response to this was to encourage certain countries like Iran, South Africa, Indonesia and Brazil to act as sub-imperial centres - to act as policemen of the United States. The Americans would arm these countries to the teeth and they would police their areas. But because of Vietnam and Watergate, Nixon and Kissinger were not given the opportunity to develop this policy and Carter was elected - pledged to carry out a more liberal foreign policy. At the beginning of his presidency, Carter talked a lot about human rights, put Andy Young in charge of policy towards the third-world and took up a more open attitude towards the type of governments the U.S. would recognise and trade with. For instance, in Africa the U.S. was prepared to trade with countries (e.g. Angola) that were openly committed to an anti-imperialist position. This rhetoric was convincing enough for Carter to win the support of quite a few former radicals.

However, through all of this period, the needs of the U.S. economy did not change and the fall of the Shah of Iran sharply reminded the U.S. administration of their strategic dependence on certain areas (e.g. the Middle East) for materials. During this time, the U.S. had run down its conventional military forces - all they had was the nuclear deterrent which was of little use in facing a situation

like Iran or in dealing with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

So the U.S. government returned to a belief that it was necessary to be able to intervene militarily - though on a less vast scale than in Vietnam?

WEAPONS

Yes, that's the thinking behind the current policy - the need for a 100,000 strong highly mobile force that can be brought to fight in any area of conflict. At the same time, the 'human rights' talk is dropped and certain countries that support the U.S. like Pakistan are being given all the weapons they want. Young is out of government, Vance has said he's leaving and the hard line of people like Brezhnev is in control. At the same time, many of Carter's economic advisors are saying that he can only pull out of the economic recession by massive spending on armaments. U.S. strategists expect the Egypt-Israel alliance to hold the Middle East for them and naval bases like Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and Berbera on the coast of Somalia are being developed to support a build up of the U.S. fleet in the area. This is to block the dominance of the Soviet fleet which has had the Indian Ocean to itself in recent years.

Are the U.S. allies supporting this new policy or do they hope to go on 'slip streaming' U.S. military might?

PRESSURISED

Well, the Japanese are certainly being pressurised to spend more on defence - in the past they spent relatively less than the U.S. The English speaking countries have all pledged support. The U.K. is leading the call for European re-arming and Australia and Canada have gone along with the U.S. boycott of grain to the U.S.S.R. - though this will be a severe drain on their economies. The French as usual are going it alone and maintain their own private detente with

Interview by Pete Anderson

the Soviet Union. As for Germany, it remains a special case because of the U.S.S.R.'s obsessive fear of German militarism.

Will this process develop?

Certainly, there is talk of expanding NATO. Already Greece and Turkey are on the verge of re-joining. And it is also being suggested that NATO should have a greater presence in Africa.

Presumably, the rapprochement with China fits in with this strategy of surrounding the Soviet Union with enemies?

Sure, the Americans have very recently agreed to let the Chinese have satellites and advanced technology. They reckon that, for a good many years, the main preoccupation of the Chinese will be with modernising the economy. They are not worried about China using the arms it is given as an aggressor since they have assessed China to be very backward from a military point of view.

REPRESSION

Do you think we are in for another Cold War period?

The days of detente as we have recently known them are over. The capitalist economies are in crisis and they have traditionally used expenditure on arms to get the economy going again. At the same time as they develop more aggressive international policies, capitalist countries will be pursuing much more authoritarian internal policies - we are witnessing a very rapid escalation of state repression. Recently, Italy passed a new law that allows the state to keep someone in jail for up to 12 years without a trial on suspicion of terrorism! I think we should be looking to what is happening in countries like West Germany and Italy for an idea of the repression that awaits us.

issues

Issues will bring to its coverage of international affairs a mixture of factual accuracy and interpretative analysis. Copies (at 50 p) can be obtained from Issues, 96 Gillespie Rd. London N.5

Solidarity With Our Irish Sisters

On International Women's Day, over 350 women from Britain attended a picket of Armagh Jail in Northern Ireland, in support of the 33 women republicans locked up for 21 hours a day because of their demand for political status. This support resulted from the efforts of a small number of women who travelled around the country speaking to women.

It is the first time that the Women's Movement here has been approached so directly by Irish feminists and has responded in such a mass way. From this it is hoped that many more women will become more informed, involved, and active in the campaign to end Britain's imperialist role in Ireland.

HARASSMENT

In a series of meetings around the country Women Against Imperialism speakers gave graphic accounts of the harassment and intimidation that women face daily in Northern Ireland. In the Catholic ghettos the streetlights are smashed by the British Army so that snipers cannot see foot patrols—so the streets are dark and menacing for women. The groups of men hanging round the street corners making obscene, sexist comments are not only foreign, but armed and powerful. Sexual intimidation and the harassment of women are central (but rarely spoken about) weapons of the British armoury.

PICKET

We have received accounts of the experience of joining the picket of Armagh jail from three women. We print extracts of their accounts here.

What made you go on the picket?
I think it was my background—my dad being Irish and hating the British troops, and my mum not wanting the troops to be in N. Ireland but at the same time supporting them. Also, my brother is a soldier and has done 6 months service there. I thought it would help me over the confused feelings I had.

Were you scared to go?

I was really frightened of being shot. The coach to the jail turned up half an hour late and I was frightened because we were standing about in the street. I couldn't keep still. There seemed to be a really low profile played by the army and the RUC. But at the jail there was a fantastic amount of RUC—they formed a complete wall across the front of the jail. There was no trouble—just one woman lifted but let go after her camera film was confiscated.

What happened at Armagh Jail?

At the jail we congregated like a mass crowd and the atmosphere was electric—so many people. There were about 5 or 6 hundred women from England, Scotland, and Wales, and there were about 15 French women. We couldn't see anyone and were told that the heating boilers inside had been turned up so that the women couldn't hear us—but they could hear us and there was loads of banging from the jail. Every time there was a bang there was a big cheer.

Did you have any problems with travelling?

Going over we were very wary because of the squaddies on the boat, and kept ourselves to ourselves. Coming back was a different story; we had survived a weekend in Northern Ireland and we gave them some stick. In the bar we spread ourselves out. One soldier was arguing with the only black woman on the demonstration and everything flared up. We sang "The Women's Army is Marching". It all upset me with my brother being a soldier—quite a few of the soldiers were really scared about going over to Ireland.

Are you glad you went?

It's been the experience of a lifetime. I really enjoyed myself. That common bond between all the women outside the prison—it was very emotional.

On March 7th I set out for Belfast with a delegation of 11 women from Manchester Poly plus my son. I was filled with both trepidation and excitement, but I thought that it was important that we should at least try and get to N. Ireland and show our solidarity with our Irish sisters.

Also I decided to take my son, because I wanted to make him aware of the War in Ireland and the intimidation suffered by the Irish people from British troops. He glorifies the British Army and believes that the Trouble in Ireland is only caused by "You Lot" and the "I.R.A.", and does not believe that ordinary people and kids are harassed and intimidated.

TROOP CARRIER

We found out that our ferry also acted as a Troop carrier and was swarming with squaddies; some looked only like kids, probably joined the Army due to the unemployment, whilst others looked really heavy and aggressive.

We arrived in Belfast to be greeted off the boat by the Women Against Imperialism; it was an amazing sight seeing the English women filing off the boat

and standing side by side with the Irish women. We were then taken to the houses where we were to stay for the weekend.

SINGING

We eventually set off from the Falls Road at 12:45 in Convoy, singing Irish and Women's songs; the first coach got stopped by Brits, but when they saw a 10 coach convoy and as they appeared to be keeping a low profile, they let us through.

When we arrived the feeling was tremendous and women from England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Holland, and Norway all piling out of coaches and although it was a mixed picket the women's numbers trebled the number of men on the picket.

MESSAGES

The Screws, anticipating the picket, had moved the convicted women away from the side of the prison that we were picketing, but our chanting and singing was heard by the remand prisoners and prisoners with visitors, who replied by banging their cell doors and their feet. We found out later that the remand prisoners were relaying our messages across

to the Block where the convicted women were; at one stage when there was a lull, women's voices could be heard, shouting back, and some women noticed a piece of green material flying through a cracked window.

About 150 women attended the conference on Sunday 9th March at Ballymurphy community centre. Because of the relative poverty of political development around women's issues in Ireland, and the poor response from the English feminist movement in the past, many of the women who had spent months organising the weekend were amazed at the response, not just from England, but from Ireland itself. At last International Women's Day picket, 11 women were arrested and now face imprisonment. The campaign for the Armagh 11 has served to crystallize the support of many women and women's groups in Ireland who have not till now been actively involved.

The Armagh 11 are planning to boycott their trial on April 9 to organize a tribunal on the conditions of the women political prisoners in Armagh. We have to ensure that the debate carries on over here.

Chilean Women Defy Demo Ban

While 300 of us were marching cold and bedraggled through S. London on 8th March, women and men in Chile were defying a government ban on the celebration of International Women's Day, which despite recognition by the United Nations, is considered by Pinochet and his National Women's Assembly to be inspired by Marxism and to form part of an "international communist strategy"

He has named another day as National Women's Day in Chile—2nd December, the 'day of the pots', that is, the day on which the middle class women of Santiago took to the streets with their saucepans in 1972 to protest at food shortages (which they blamed on the Allende government although such shortages were deliberately provoked by opponents of the regime to bring about its downfall).

This year, however, the Women's Section of the illegal National Trade Union Coordinating Committee called for a demonstration in Santiago on 8th March and despite the ban 1,000 women and men, together with many in Valparaiso and elsewhere, attempted to assemble. About 140 people were detained, including relatives of political prisoners, students, trades unionists and one journalist. They were held under the Law of Internal State Security and were kept incommunicado for several days. About 40 of those held in one of Santiago's main police stations went on hunger strike.

EXILE

At the time of writing, most have been released although 2 are still held in Santiago and 20 in Valparaiso. 12 people have been sent into internal exile in remote towns for a maximum of 3 months, according to a new decree law that applies to anyone participating in or encouraging political activity.

It is not known whether any women are among those still detained. Some of those arrested were trying to organize a meeting in honour of Gabriela Mistral, Chile's wellknown poetess.

TORTURE

Torture of political prisoners, especially within the first few days of detention when they are often held incommunicado in the hands of the CNI (the secret police), is still systematic in Chile, and last August one man died as a result of severe torture received while in detention. The bodies of many of those who disappeared during the first three years of the junta's rule are gradually turning up in unmarked graves all over the country, and a recent UN report alleges that many bodies were flown out to sea and dumped. Several of the women who "disappeared" were pregnant at the time of arrest and nothing has ever been heard either of them or their offspring, if in fact they were born.

INCONSISTENT

The recent return of the British Ambassador to Chile (he was withdrawn in 1976 in protest at the human rights situation) would appear to be inconsistent with the attitude taken to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (which, of course, should not be condoned). However, if we consider the monetarist economic policies pursued by both countries, we might be forgiven for thinking that there are more than a few similarities between the situation in Chile and the direction this country is heading in under the Tories. Just look at the way the wives and girlfriends of the Sheerness "scabs" took to the streets with their saucepans, not to mention Long Kesh and the Diplock juries!

Protests against the arrests and the internal banishment should be made to: Israel Borquez, Presidente de la Corte Suprema Justicia Plaza Monti Varas Santiago, CHILE and Sergio Fernandez, Ministro del Interior Edificio Diego Portales, Santiago, CHILE and letters and telegrams of support to the relatives of political and disappeared prisoners: Plaza de Armas 444



Chilean women began organizing during the Popular Unity period. Although Pinochet is out to crush them, he has not succeeded.



BLACK AFRICA REJOICES

Mugabe's landslide election victory has left Africa sharply divided. Black Africa rejoices: the Zimbabweans because 100 years of settler rule are at an end; Mozambique and Zambia because now they can rebuild their war-damaged economies. But what of Zimbabwe's future?

A decade of civil war is over. Thousands of prisoners will go free, the refugees will come home, the hundreds of thousands in the 'protected villages' will be able to farm their land again. Perhaps most important, the destruction of crops and herds by the Rhodesian Security Forces and the deliberate withholding of food (Operation Turkey) which was causing mass starvation in the countryside, will now end. There is much indeed to celebrate.

But what of the longer term future? Here we need to make a more sober assessment. First we must recall Lancaster House where the Patriotic Front, under intense pressure from the mass starvation and from the Front Line States (whose economies couldn't support the war any longer), caved in and signed a totally reactionary agreement. The constitution gave 20% of the Parliamentary seats to the Whites, left the existing state largely intact and gave it almost draconian powers to suppress dissent, and guaranteed that adequate compensation would be paid for the acquisition of any property, land or business. And the bulk of the constitution can't be changed for 10 years without the agreement of all MP's.

RISKS

They also agreed to an electoral process which they knew would be heavily weighted against them including a considerable risk of their guerrillas being

massacred in the assembly camps, or of a S. African military intervention or white settler coup. But now, the size of the electoral victory, both for ZANU and the Patriotic Front in general (77 out of 80 seats) means that the S. Africans or the whites have no 'legitimacy' for trying anything. Who could they claim they were supporting? A S. African invasion would undoubtedly cause an explosion amongst black S. Africans and the rest of Africa.

So some of the ground lost at Lancaster has been rewon but enormous difficulties face the new government. Peter Walls—head of the Rhodesian Security Forces—told the whites after the election results: 'We're with you, we're still the greatest power in the land.'

REASONABLE

Many mines and industries are owned by S. Africans or Western multinationals. The West has no intention of seeing this go by the board. Having seen its attempts to block ZANU in the election thwarted, the West has suddenly discovered Mugabe—the "reasonable man". Overnight the main strategy (it's always been one option) seems to have become to ingratiate itself with ZANU offering loans, grants and advisors, all of course dependent on a ZANU government not doing anything too radical. And the foreign capital which eagerly rushed in when the ceasefire began is quite prepared to work with the new government. As a leading Rhodesian businessman recently stated:

"Whatever government gets in is going to find that they've inherited a very sophisticated and diverse economy. They will find a momentum that will be difficult to divert in terms of imposing completely radical policies."

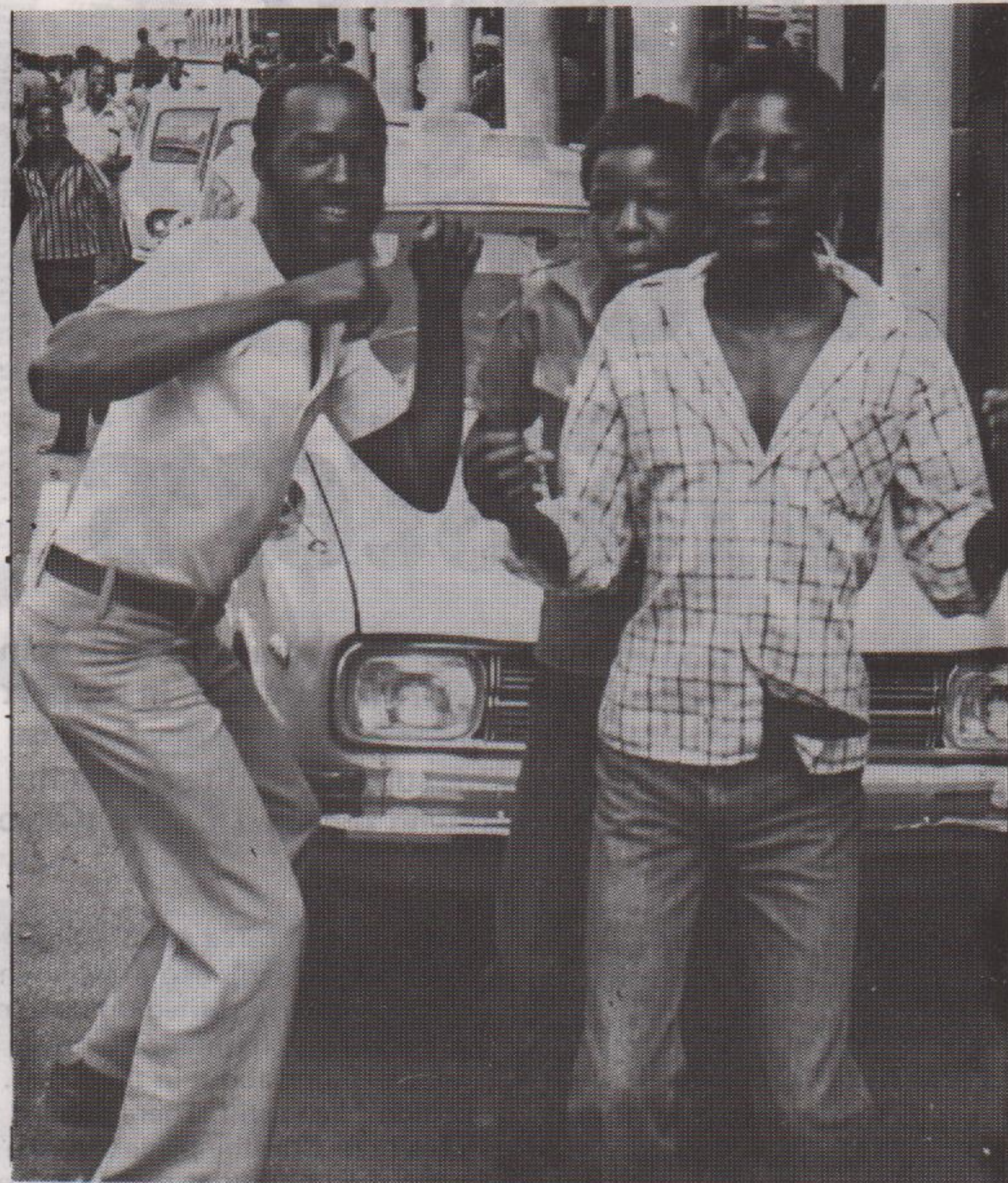
The economy, although it has a lot of potential in agriculture and mining, has suffered through the war running up major debts with S. Africa (will ZANU honour them?) and losing much agricultural production.

RADICALISED

The West hopes and believes that Mugabe and ZANU will be forced into being a moderately progressive but essentially pro capitalist government. They may be proved right but there are other possibilities. The war has radicalised many people and the election created a lot of aspirations. The coming months and years will see much debate inside a party which contains both aspiring nationalist technocrats and revolutionaries, with a mainstream, including Mugabe, which wouldn't be much out of place in the Tribune group, whose commitment to socialism is genuine but vague and ill thought out.

Tactical concessions to S. Africa, to Western business and to the Rhodesian whites, they will have to make but when the crunch comes, perhaps over land redistribution, will they be prepared to use a popular mobilisation to go beyond the constitution and risk a reaction? Or will they use the formidable state power to dampen down popular pressure? We must wait and see.

Big Flame Southern Africa Commission



Eyewitness Account

Some of the non-Governmental observers who went to Zimbabwe just before the elections, have just returned. Their experiences were frightening and give a vivid insight into the intimidation that we heard so much of in the press.

Near a polling station, the people had gathered in excitement at the ZANU car. The Police Reserve officer, a white farmer, angrily arrested ZANU for holding an illegal meeting. While no cars were allowed within 100 metres of the polling station, the Bishops helicopters were often allowed to hover 100 metres up, dropping T-shirts and electioneering by megaphone.

At another station, we asked the election supervisor, an ex-Colonial Rhodesian Army officer, if he had any problems. 'Yes, 1/3 of them are illiterate. Did he speak Shona?' 'No, I just show them where to vote.'

Our most frightening night was at a Mission where refugees, returned from Mozambique, were staying. We stayed in the dormitory, a separate building from the Father's residence. At about 1:30 am, there was a loud knock at the front, and voices: 'Let us in, we are comrades. We want to see the Father.' We could see their reflections in a window, there were 3 men. We kept very still and said nothing. At 4 am they returned. We went out the back to see the Father. He wasn't sure, but suspected they were Auxiliaries. He knew that other Missionaries had been killed by the Auxiliaries. He told us to have a woman speak to them. We went back, and asked them who they were. 'Guerrillas who have escaped from our assembly point because we heard on the radio that some camps had been bombed (this was false, we knew). We walked from there today.' Which assembly point? After a silence, they named one. It was around 100 miles away. We told them it was very late and they should come back in the morning. They asked who we were. When we said 'Observers' they left. The next few hours, till dawn, were the worst. We knew that if they came back, and if they weren't guerrillas, we'd be killed. . .

WHY DID ZANU WIN?

In the Tribal Trust Lands of Mashonaland Central and East, Manicaland, and Victoria, ZANU had already established a system of base committees in the kraals (villages) and district committees. The central committee was outside the country.

In the white farm areas, the labourers were migrants and they were in touch with the politics of their homelands. And in the cities there were many refugees from the countryside (All told there are an estimated 1 million war refugees). The State never succeeded in cutting the lines of communication between ZANU and the masses.

On the other hand, the Bishop lost because the electorate was getting more sophisticated with each election, and they remembered his promises in '79 to stop the war, raise wages and lower prices and unemployment, and provide more facilities. None of it happened. There were blacks at the top of the State, but all the District Commissioners were white. And to top it off, the Bishop was seen to rely on a private army of thugs. Intimidation was increasing because of the auxiliaries, and everyone knew it.



ERITREA : New Stage Reached

IN THE September 1979 issue of Big Flame we published an extended article on the 18 years war of liberation waged by the Eritrean people against Ethiopia. In this struggle, most of the people are united under the banner of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). In late 1978, following a massive Soviet intervention on the side of Ethiopia, the EPLF made a strategic retreat from the major towns that they had held. The situation has changed in this important and heroic struggle. This interview is with two members of the Eritrean Students' Association. Since 1978 they have fought 6 major Ethiopian offensives to a standstill. In December of last and January of this year, the EPLF broke out of the situation of stalemate and counterattacked.

BF: How do you evaluate the current military situation in Eritrea?

ESA: The balance has changed in our favour. After 6 failed offensives the Ethiopians are now more on the defensive. EPLF guerrilla action is now generalised throughout the country. We have cleared the Ethiopian army from Sahel province (EPLF base area) BF) except for at Afabet and at Marsa Gulub on the Red Sea. Ethiopian control is now exercised from isolated strongpoints which we encircle. We can't yet speak of a new all-out offensive by the EPLF. For that we must further weaken the enemy and consolidate our forces. This needs careful consideration.

BF: Are your organisations intact in the areas occupied by Ethiopia?

ESA: Many people left with us during the strategic withdrawal. In places where there is still a nucleus of the mass organisations it is clandestine. We use radio broadcasts in the field to prepare and politicise the people.

BF: What is the state of the Ethiopian forces?

ESA: There is a lot of desertion and some of them come over to the EPLF.

There is a major difference between the army and the militia. The militia are recruited from the poor peasantry. The army is paid and the militia is not, the army is professional and the militia is not.

BF: How stable do you think the Dergue (Ethiopian military junta) is?

ESA: Many factors are involved here. The Eritrean struggle is very important in weakening the Dergue. The failure of their 6 offensives makes it clear that they can't win. The Dergue itself is contradictory. It is not and cannot be socialist. Its alliance with the Soviet Union is just self-interest. There are elements within the Dergue who would like to align with the Western powers. There is conflict within the leadership. On the other hand this gives the Dergue some room for manoeuvre in the struggle between the superpowers. If the Soviet Union was to withdraw support, the US could step in immediately. We have no illusions about immediate collapse.

BF: Many people in this country have been surprised that you consider the USSR a progressive country. Could you explain this?

ESA: The Soviet Union and Cuba are maintaining the Dergue. We totally condemn their presence. We want them to correct their errors. But there are two camps in the world: the socialist camp and the imperialist camp. You cannot compare countries like the Soviet Union with the US. The Soviet Union is a potentially socialist country. We remember October-1917 and hope that it will live up to its potential. We are involved in solving contradictions with the socialist camp. We speak of 'strategic alliance' with these countries as something for the future, meaning that in the future we will be part of the socialist camp.

BF: What is your response to Soviet moves in Afghanistan?

ESA: This increases tension in the area. It provides new possibilities for US imperialism. As far as our own situation goes, it provides an invitation for our enemies to surround us. The US will soon have bases in Somalia, Oman and Kenya.

BF: What were the results of the 1979 National Congress, particularly as regards the election of women to the Central Committee?

ESA: Because of the objective military situation the Congress has not yet taken place. But it is not a matter of expectation but a right that women will be elected.

BF: How is the unity between the EPLF and the ELF progressing?

ESA: Progress has been very rapid. Since the Soviet intervention in 1978 the differences between us have become less relevant. Now we share a radio station; we have joint operations against the enemy; we have joint political education at grass roots level. Starting at the bottom is the way to build real unity. Of course, we still have differences, but this creates a struggle within unity, not an antagonism. We have agreed on a minimum programme and want to create a unified organisation. 18 years of struggle have eliminated tribal and regional differences and given us a sense of nationalism. Even class differences have been reduced among the fighters. People drawn from the petty bourgeoisie commit class suicide in the course of becoming fighters.

BF: How do you characterise the politics of your struggle?

ESA: Our movement is both national and democratic. That answers every question. As far as the nation is concerned, every Eritrean is interested in gaining freedom. As far as democracy is concerned, 95% of the people are workers or peasants. It is the 95% which will promote its own interests. If it is democratic and if it is for the interests of the people, it is not hard to see that the movement is socialist. In short, victory is ours.

OUR BODIES, OUR HEALTH

Fight the cuts - but fight for a better welfare state, more sensitive to our needs and democratically controlled. That's a message we never fail to print in this paper. The problem is finding ways of putting the alternatives into practice.

In Levenshulme, in Manch-

ester a campaign for a 'well women' clinic, as part of the NHS, is attracting a lot of support locally (a public meeting of 150, for example), as a supporter reports.

We were a group of women who had been campaigning to get a woman doctor at the new health centre

which was opening in the area. We hoped the survey would show what specific health needs women had and whether they were being met by the NHS. Clearly they weren't.

The group ran an eight week course on 'Women and Health' and drew in women of different ages and classes and this probably contributed to its success. What came out of the discussions was the experiences

of many women who put up with ill-health and low standards of health care without ever really questioning why.

Many women don't feel they can approach a busy doctor with what they feel are 'minor' complaints. So they put up with thrush, cystitis, pre-menstrual tension and menopausal problems. Women are also often unwilling to go to a male doctor to discuss personal or emotional matters.

"ILLNESS ORIENTATED"

Also coming out of the discussion was a criticism of the way in which the medical profession is "illness orientated" - making perfectly natural conditions such as childbirth into medical conditions. But perhaps most important was how many women have such limited access to the Health Service. Older women and lesbians often are not screened for breast and cervical cancer as they do not attend the family planning clinics at which this regular screening usually takes place.

Women from ethnic minorities often have language difficulties and may have specific cultural needs, which the NHS is slow to recognise. Asian women, for example, like to be seen by a woman doctor.

POSITIVE

All this made the need for a well-woman clinic quite clear. We felt it should be based on a much wider definition of health, recognising that many factors influence our mental and physical well-being - conditions at work and in the home, the food we eat, our living standards, our personal lives. In calling for a positive attitude to health we decided to see preventative health-care, self-help and community

health education as the main focus of our campaign.

Some of our proposals for a well-woman clinic were:-

- * the staff should all be women, committed to providing services for women patients in such a way that good health care and practice is encouraged;
- * childcare facilities should be available at every session;
- * the clinic should be funded by NHS and staffed by NHS employees;
- * the clinic should be democratically run and accountable to the women who use it;
- * hand in hand with the services offered at the clinic should go a community based health worker attached to the clinic to fulfil this

THREATENING

We have submitted these proposals to the Area Health Authority who have so far made non-committal noises. They are worried about cost and duplicating services.

In reply we would say that existing services are fragmented, inadequate, not available to some women and many women just don't know about them.

We also say that well-women clinics need involve little initial expenditure and would not be costly to run.

But that's not the point. The main opposition is that well-women clinics pose a radically different approach to health care and that's what the AHA finds threatening.

Further information can be obtained from:-

Hilary Geard,
7, Buckhurst Rd, Levenshulme,
Manchester 19.
Tel: 061-225 9782



SUPPORT NEEDED

ETWALL HOSPITAL is a 90 bed hospital for the elderly in a little village in S. Derbyshire. In December the Area Health Authority (AHA) decided to close it indefinitely as part of a £1.5 million package of emergency cuts. On December 10 the staff of nurses and ancillaries voted almost unanimously to start a work-in which has now been going for 3 months. Their motivation was primarily to maintain an important service since the AHA has promised to provide other jobs for all the staff - though for many who

live in the village that would mean a 5 mile journey to Derby.

Much support has developed locally - a meeting in the village got 100 people to it and on March 15 250 people marched through the centre of Derby. Derby Trades Council has been active in going round local factories raising money and support for the 24 hour picket outside the hospital. It's a picket that is essential - one morning at 5.30am hospital administrators, police and a scab driver got in to remove the occupational therapy equip-

ment. But so far attempts to move the patients (most of whom have signed a statement that they don't want to be moved) have failed, with the ambulance drivers being solid in their refusal to cross the picket line - a welcome example of inter-union cooperation in the health service.

Messages of support or donations to: Sister M. Roome, Etwall Hospital Action Committee, Etwall 2444

Or if you live in the area just turn up on the picket line.

'UNITE AGAINST CUTS-DEFEAT CASH CONTROLS'

'No cuts and no rate rises'-- that's the line many are fighting for on the left, inside and outside the Labour Party as the local elections draw closer. Put like that, as Liverpool Big Flame Cuts Group argues, the result could be a big split in our ranks.

Anti-cuts campaigners in Liverpool could get the worst of both worlds. Local government unions aren't keen on the no rates rises platform because they fear that in a showdown with the State the council will lose and their jobs will go. So they're pressing for a 5% rates rise to make sure that there'll be no Cuts.

REDUNDANCY

But who will support them? Council tenants aren't known for taking a stand over the rates, but they might well take exception to an unprecedented 5% rise. Unless (as is quite unlikely) the rate rises are heavily planted towards industrial properties, council tenants could join forces with owner-occupiers in the local elections to cheat Labour of the vital seats it needs to win control of the Council. In that case, the council workers

would still be facing the redundancy threat.

UNITED

So is there any way of uniting the two wings of the potential anti-cuts movement: consumers and council workers? We believe there is.

The only way to defeat the cuts is to defeat the Tories cash controls on council spending. They must be forced to rescind the cuts in rate support grants, in the same way that the Steel workers are compelling them to change their hard line on British Steel wages and jobs.

Mass pressure is the only way to do it. It's the only language the Tories understand.

PROMISES

What does this mean practically?

1) We have to explain to council workers and councillor alike that big rate rises are suicidal, unless imposed on industrial and commercial properties only. They will cause an electoral backlash that will hand control of the cities over to the Tory cuts merchants.

CLASH

Yes, we support the view that there has to be a clash with the Government over the cuts and council spending, but the shock troops have got to be the mass-based local campaigns not the weak-kneed Labour Councillors. Put pressure on Labour but don't let them lead us into defeat, as they did over the 1972 Tory Housing Finance Act.

OUR TERMS!

Here's a quick guide to the terms used in this latest Tory attack on our living standards.

■ **Rates.** A tax on property (houses, factories, etc), used to finance local government expenditure. It is paid directly by property owners and indirectly by tenants. Contrary to what many people think, council tenants do pay rates--it is included in the rent, so when the rates go up, so do council rents.

■ **Rate Support Grant (RSG).**

The rates do not raise enough money to pay for all local government expenditure, so the Rate Support Grant is paid by the central government at Westminster to all council. We still end up paying, of course, because the central government gets its money from income tax and V.A.T. This year the Tories want to cut the RSG and transfer a larger part of it to the rural areas (where Tory councils dominate). So in the cities, the cuts are even greater than for councils in general. The Tories want big cuts in Council spending so that rates can be held down in spite of the fall in the RSG. Councils are already in a difficult position because high interest rates (another aspect of Tory policy) have increased the cost of borrowing money.

■ **Monetarism.** At its simplest, this is the theory that says 'inflation is caused by too much money being let loose in the economy! Therefore, the solution is, so the Tories say, to cut back the supply of money, which is done by reducing the amount of money the government has to borrow to finance its own debts.

■ **Cash Limits.** One way of cutting back government spending is to impose rigid limits on how much departments can spend. If these limits are raised by less than the rate of inflation, the departments are forced to make cuts. So, if a limit of a 10% increase for 1980/81 is put on the NHS, a wage increase of more than 10% will mean redundancies because there is no money to pay everyone's wages.

■ **Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. (PSBR).** This is the amount the government needs to borrow each year to cover the gap between its income and its expenditure--the difference between taxation and government spending. Since the Tories want to keep taxation constant--or even reduce it (income tax at least)--the way to reduce the PSBR is to cut expenditure. That is why the RSG is being cut, why education is being slashed.

The Tory policy may be idiotic--inflation is being increased by their policies, and industry is being led to a near collapse--but there is method in their madness. The ideology of monetarism gives a justification for a savage attack on the working class..The Tories hope that unemployment and cuts will weaken the working class so much that we will accept lower wages and worse working conditions. It is capitalism's way of solving the current crisis at our expense. The steelworkers have shown the way to fight Tory policy, now it's up to all of us to carry the struggle on.

Liverpool B.F..Cuts Group

DEBATING GENERAL STRIKE

Dear Big Flame,

I would like to take up the issue of a general strike, as raised by your article in last month's paper - 'Mass Action Leads the Way'.

It was refreshing to see that Big Flame argued for support for "preparing for a general strike" and went on to oppose token actions. Certainly there are no reasons for socialists to oppose a general strike, but to simply proclaim "for a general strike", as at least one left paper did across its front page, fails to understand that a lot of work has to be done to create the conditions for a general strike.

This is not simply a question of propaganda but also of creating a militancy within which working class solidarity is second nature, and where there is mass support for a general strike.

This is no mean task: at present demands for a general strike will only sell papers to those who already agree. I should add that agitation is not only essential for a general strike to come about but is also crucial to its success.

This raises another question, WHY a general strike? Militancy for its own sake is no reason. No doubt some organisations anticipate the familiar scenario within which they can expose the leaders, put forward the usual "correct" demands and, by doing so, overnight become the party to lead us all to our

salvation. Or perhaps their intentions are more modest? To bring down the Tories, and hail a battle won when Labour returns to the seat of 'open government'. Neither scenario in itself justifies the demand. The first is laughable (though sadly I have not invented it), and rests on the all too common assumption that capitalism is on its last legs.

I believe we should define our tasks as creating the conditions whereby a socialist/feminist revolution is really possible. If we do well we might see it in our lifetime.

Anticipating and calling for the return of a Labour Government is not enough to drum up a great deal of enthusiasm, although it may be the outcome of such action as a general strike.

With this in mind we should be raising issues and organising in such a way that develops a strong socialist consciousness. Failing this we cannot hope for anti-capitalist activity to be a strong force when that government returns. A general strike may be a good way of developing such a consciousness, and it is on this basis that I believe we should consider the possibility. To see a general strike as a way of simply winning a series of limited concessions is no reason in itself, and such gains will be short lived.

In Solidarity,
Tony Pearce, North London
North London.

Dear Big Flame,

Many comrades in BF would reject the political approach behind the headlines calling for a General Strike to bring down the Tories. However, we may all disagree over the alternatives.

These are many reasons why we should reject the approach which calls for a General Strike to bring down the Tories. 1. Many such calls at present eg by the TUC would serve only to delay immediate action. The revolutionary left should be arguing for action now, as their priority. For example strike action now in support of the steel workers (as the Liverpool dockers have done). 2. The rev. left is too weak to issue calls to 'action' from the spectator stands.

We shouldn't reject the

General Strike because of the weakness of the working class at the present, although this weakness may be real. This approach underestimates the possibilities for consciousness and activity to increase greatly in a situation like a G.S. Taken to extremes this approach would lead us to step back from any activity because the workers 'aren't ready', look at the steel workers!

We should support calls for a G.S. whether they come from rank and file struggles or are called for by the TUC. If the left were stronger we might oppose a G.S. in certain circumstances BUT WE ARE NOT! We cannot ignore the issue, because, whether we like it or not, many workers will be considering the issue. Not to support such calls would iso-

late us further.

So what are we left with? BF doesn't call for a G.S. and yet we would support a call by the TUC, even though it may be a diversion from immediate struggles, or even if it came off, the TUC might sell it out.

We also know that a G.S. would unleash powerful resources in ingenuity, activity and consciousness - BUT that at the moment the working class is ill prepared.

BF as an organisation and through its newspaper should show the possibilities and dangers of a G.S. and discuss the steps needed to be prepared for such a strike.

This alone leads to passivity; equally important we should take up immediate issues that are necessary to take the class struggle forward. (not

a call for a G.S.) eg support for the steelworkers. This should be the main theme of our headlines.

Even this is one-sided, as a minor theme we should be outlining the necessary steps for preparing for a G.S. in our articles on present struggles. These steps are preparation, but would be as equally important for developing immediate struggles as for laying the basis for a G.S. Several important points are not taken up here.

* detailed examples of what is meant by 'preparation for a G.S.'
* The issue of Regional General Strikes.
* The slogan 'GS to bring down the Tories' which I reject.

Danton, Liverpool BF

'Jumping on the bandwagon'

Dear Comrades,

As soon as the Tories came to power and especially after the first signs of resistance with the steel strike, many on the Left immediately began to call for a 'general strike to bring down the Tories.' This has continued despite the failure of strike calls at Leyland, the Welsh miners and other situations. Now, it's possible to get round this, as the WRP does for instance, by saying that workers are only interested in 'an all out fight against the Tories'. I tend towards the opposite view, that if workers are unwilling to defend a sacked convenor or act in solidarity then they are not in the position to launch a general str-

ike that would pose the question of power.

Many on the Left are simply shutting their eyes to the crisis of working class politics and shop floor organisation. Of course we are in favour of a general strike. But tactics are not merely based on what we would like, but on what corresponds to a realistic assessment of the state of class consciousness and organisation. And this means the majority, not just advanced militants. The use of the general strike demand at this stage devalues it as a tactic and shows contempt for the real problems of rebuilding the working class movement. That's why I was sorry to

see the last issue of Big Flame jumping on the general strike bandwagon. Okay it only said 'prepare for a general strike'.

But it still avoided most of the problems. For instance you put the Robinson defeat down to 'his record of heavy handed authoritarianism that alienated the rank and file.' This ducks the issue. I was a Trades Council delegate to the 'Defend Robinson' conference and from talking to Leyland militants there, know that despite Robinson's inadequate past practice, the lack of support had a lot more to do with the inability of the unions and the Left to convince the workforce of an alternative

to Edwardes' plans. 'We can't afford Robinson' was the attitude of many workers.

The best preparation in the existing period is to fight for the more realistic limited actions (one day strikes, solidarity actions etc) which can set off a process of classwide mobilisation that in the longer term can put us in the position to take on the Tories and win. The newspaper should be running articles on current problems of organising and political perspectives. Within this, articles on the problems of organising to win a general strike would be welcome.

Paul Thompson
Liverpool.

write on

(but not too much!)



Dear Big Flame,

Will Savage's letter on Sexism at the Liverpool ANL gig raises many thorny questions which need a thorough airing. Not that they're restricted to Liverpool or the ANL. Only last week the *New Musical Express* made an interesting comparison between the Beat's verbal (and almost physical) opposition to NF hecklers at one of their gigs and on the other hand the title of their new single: "HANDS OFF, SHE'S MINE."

I think Will's right to slam the complacency of many socialists who fail to confront sexism in everyday life, including ANL and RAR gigs. However if we're to be really honest there must be few socialists and indeed socialist feminists who can own up to never bopping to music with sexist lyrics. I can't plead innocent. And how many Big Flamers have criticized sexist bands at ANL and RAR gigs and then gone to a late night party to bop to the Stones "Honky Tonk Woman" or similar stuff. Maybe the sheer quantity of such drivel

wears even the most determined anti-sexist down at times, especially when one wants a bop and the DJ plays nowt else; or maybe we can't recognise our own mental blocks when it comes to the sounds we identify as part of our heyday (or youth). This isn't meant as a more subtle cop out either, but rather an attempt at facing up to the extent to which sexism creeps into all our lives.

Now I agree wholeheartedly with Will's call for confronting sexism at ANL and RAR gigs—not only verbally but on occasions physically. But just as copping out isn't the answer, I'm also wary that anti-Racists and anti-Sexists often in understandable emotion simply castigate or ostracize a culprit without making any attempt to either confront politically the person's racism or sexism or even less to try and uncover the sentiments that often underpin such views so that they can be confronted (e.g. the attitude that "Women's Libbers just want to stop us (i.e. men) hav-

ing fun") Similarly the many bands like the Beat who apparently feel that sexism can somehow coexist with anti-Racism need to be confronted in a way that clearly shows the hypocrisy of opposing on the one hand the exploitation and oppression of black people while at the same time fuelling sexist prejudices against women. Racism and sexism are unfortunately deeply embedded within the working class—unity will only be possible when both are openly confronted and challenged on every occasion. But like those anti-fascists who throw the tag "Fascist" at anyone who holds racist views we must make sure we are confronting not simply excommunicating potential supporters—potential anti-racists and anti-sexists. Otherwise we'll find ourselves up Shit Creek without a paddle!

With Love and Solidarity,
E. Dumpertruck
(B'ham)

Dear Derek Robinson, or Robbo to his so called mates,

I was a Shop Convenor at Shaws' for some years for GMWU and our rule book states that before any person can be a Shop Steward or Convenor the person has to say he or she will take the responsibility. The Union then writes to the Firm asking them will they accept that Person. Now the firm must put in writing if at any time that Steward is not capable in their eyes to do the job—in other words being a nuisance to them. The Union then removes the Steward or Convenor and he or she goes back to the work he was doing. That is procedure.

If the Union you represented have had a letter to remove you from your Convenor's job at your work and haven't done so

they are liable, so in my opinion you can sue either the firm or the union. Read your rule book and you can't lose in a law suit. I am sorry I can't get Mr. Derek Robinson's address so I am asking your brilliant Working Man's paper to publish it to help all Stewards and Convenors all over the country and get this government down to size. If you will publish this letter and direct it to his address any expense incurred I am sure Robbo will pay if not I will pay.

From Sid and Connie Jackson
Beswick, Manchester

p.s. We are both old age pensioners and we don't get much to live on but will try and send your paper a Contribution later.

Thank You.

Dear Big Flame,

Feargal O'Hanlon's article in the February BF expressed not only a significant distortion of Marxist theory but at the same time a defeatist and mystified strategy for political work: precisely in fact the failings which he detected in others. It would be tedious to cite all the trivial inaccuracies and vulgarisations in his article—for example the theoretical adequacy of the term 'people' in his last sentence—but some really important errors should be identified.

Firstly, O'Hanlon clearly does not understand a Marxist theory of laws of capitalism. For Marx and for Marxists, there is a necessary development of the economy which does not depend on the whims of individual capitalists or workers or even of the whole working class—so long as the working class does not actually abolish capitalism. Capitalists survive and get fat, individually and collectively, through their struggle first with the working class and then with each other; with the workers they struggle to steal the product of the workers' labour (Surplus Value); with each other they struggle to secure markets for this stolen product. In both struggles it is in the interests of the capitalist to raise the productivity of his employees labour. The only significant way that this can be done is mechanization

and increasingly capital-intensive production. In this process large capitalists kill off small ones and capital becomes more and more concentrated and centralised, and the rate of profit—the ratio of stolen product (Surplus Value) to wages (Variable capital and raw materials and machinery and plant (fixed capital)—declines. In other words, there is an equation SV/variable capital + fixed capital, and the bottom line of the equation is increasing faster than the top. Now Marx anticipated various counter tendencies but the fundamental tendency reasserts itself giving rise to periodic crises. What can the capitalists do? They can't go back to unproductive labour intensive techniques; and to increase the Surplus they would have to invest even more or they would have to lower the amount of their product that the workers receive as their wages. This is what crises are all about: they are 'functional' not as O'Hanlon suggests to sort out efficient and non efficient capitalists (although they have this effect) but as means of reducing the workers' share in the product and of writing off capital and commodities which cannot be disposed of in glutted markets. This then is the first error: crises are not fortuitous or accidental or 'functional'.

Finally, and in some ways this is the most damning criticism of all,

O'Hanlon completes his metamorphosis of materialism into idealism in his programme of action at the end of his article. What we must do, he cries, is to raise 'questions of alternative forms of state provision which do more to meet people's real needs.' In fact, he has given the game away at this point. Instead of talking about the needs of 'real people' we must talk about the ideal needs of his ideal people, who allegedly feel 'very ambiguous (ambivalent?) about present state benefits because of the oppressive capitalist social relations bound up in them.' Well landakes! The reasons the working class remains confused about what the hell is going on at the moment are many and complex. This article because it refuses to analyse the nature of the present crisis and of the cuts ignorantly reinforces this confusion. Only when the working class sees through the whole capitalist charade, not when its attention is diverted by some new bauble of 'alternative provision', will this misery and oppression cease.

Yours in Solidarity,
A Sympathiser, Sheffield.

note: this excessively long letter has been cut. We cannot undertake to print in full anything over 400 words long.

Two letters about theory of the Cuts

Dear Big Flame,

I would like to respond to P. Frown's letter in your last issue. What I was trying to do was to introduce discussions about 'the cuts' taking place in forums like the Conference of Socialist Economists to a wider readership. This is not an easy task and I acknowledge that my effort in the February Big Flame was far from totally successful. Nevertheless the quote she/he gave from my article was a particularly dense one and not representative of it as a whole. Taking the quote out of the context necessarily ignores the fact that most of the words used were explained more, elsewhere in the article.

I believe that there are certain words used by Marxists such as alienation, imperialism, capital

accumulation, surplus value, which are not merely pretentious jargon, but which express ideas not contained in words in more everyday use. One of the aims of my article was to introduce two terms "restructuring" and "social relations", arguing that previous Marxists accounts of crisis were inadequate because they have not used them.

The concept of "Restructuring" is important because it draws attention to the active role of capitalists and the state in periods of crisis in changing the arrangement of production, the wages system, etc. The concept of "social relations" indicates that the crisis does not just affect "the economy" and that the state is not simply an institution. Both affect all aspects of our lives and the way we

relate to each other.

There are undoubtedly many Marxists who unnecessarily use extremely difficult language. However, if using these two terms makes me an 'academic Marxologist' then I am unapologetic for the fact. Unfortunately the problem is that most of the coverage of 'the cuts' in the left press, Big Flame included, while free of such terms fails to provide any adequate analysis of what is going on. Therefore they fall back on such simplistic accounts as arguing that expenditure on the social services is being cut to allow increases for the armed forces and the police, and so on.

Solidarity,
Feargal O'Hanlon.

PHOTOGRAPHY POLITICS



Photographic images are everywhere in our lives, and they influence us in many ways. "Photography" normally stands for the finely executed print which demonstrates the unique sensibility of the artist. But most working photographers make their living in advertising or photojournalism, where they meet the different but equally limiting expectations. We reap the benefits, so to speak, in the millions of images which construct reality for us in distinct and oppressive ways.

In our own lives, 'amateur photography' is obsessed with 'tit n' bum' and technique for its own sake, and we give no authority to our own 'snapshots', which usually allow only certain subjects or occasions to become potential photographs. We often need to take a big leap in perception and political understanding to realise that it can mean a good deal more.

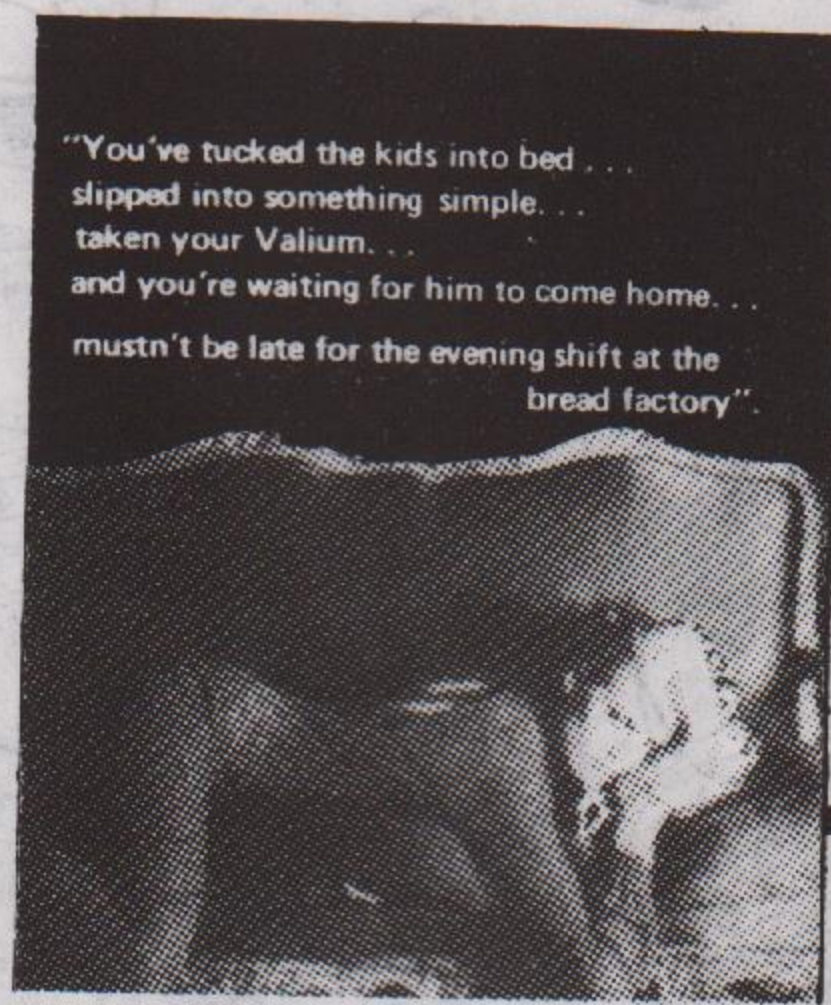
When I first saw "Photography/Politics: One", a new journal, put together by the Photography Workshop in Islington, I felt like a child who has found a package of theoretical goodies. I have not been disappointed, although I hold a number of

important reservations about the work.

Photography Workshop is the brainchild of Jo Spence and Terry Dennett, who feel it crucial, "as socialists, to call into question various institutional practices, and to do everything possible to engage in the widest possible debate on the politics of visual imagery". The journal is divided into three sections: Against the Dominant Ideology, Left Photography Between the Wars, and Left Photography Today.

ASSAULTS

Contributions differ greatly, but they share the basic assumption that the photograph does not represent a self-evident 'reality', deriving meaning instead from its context and relationship with the viewer. The radical image is one which "assaults



common belief, which confronts the accepted." Eckhard Siepmann's article on John Heartfield's famous montage posters against Hitler's Germany analyses the appeal of fascist ideology on the level of unconscious myths. He shows how Heartfield used form as well as content to attack these myths, making visible social and power relations, by "quoting" visual meanings such as the Hitler salute in a new montage context.

MONTAGE

Liz Heron charts the development of the feminist Hackney Flashers from working around straightforward 'documentary' and 'alternative' images to the use of juxtaposition and montage, to throw light on the relationship between sexual and class oppression. MINDA describe their use of "strong photographic images" to bring anti-racist and fascist politics to the streets in the first issues of CARF.

Robert Golden makes a number of important criticisms of left-wing photographic practice in an article

entitled 'Why Socialist Photography?' "There is a tendency on the Left to isolate underlying social analysis from personal life," says Golden. "We see an appeal to either the intellect or the emotions, but usually not both at once."

I noticed a number of yawning



gaps and deficiencies in the journal. Some of the contributors use an amount of jargon uncalled for even with complex ideas. The theoretical article on 'Base and Superstructure' by Sylvia Harvey, which was obviously meant to set the tone, made an indecent reliance on Althusser. My own reading has led me to suspect that anything said by the 'Big A' was said earlier or better by somebody else. I also don't think her representation of Marx's own ideas was very accurate.

WORKERIST

Most importantly, the journal didn't do justice to the relationship between class, sex and race, or sufficiently acknowledge the way in which many new areas of cultural

critique have been opened up by the women's movement. The section on Left Photography between the Wars was meant to 'rescue' its history, but it didn't make it clear what lessons we could learn from these groups, or the role of the Communist Party in their rise and fall. It sometimes resorted to a rather 'workerist' reliance on the 'obvious' importance of the worker-photographer.

All the same, I look forward to the next bag of goodies from the workshop, which hopefully will try to resolve these problems.

Sue Gadfly

(Photography/Politics: One; Photography Workshop; available from alternative bookshops at £4.95)



Men on the Move ?

A CRITICISM levelled at the recent anti-sexist men's national conference in Bristol was that there had been no sense of direction in the ten months since the last one.

Crucial issues—such as anti-sexist men's public stance, whether the diverse activities anti-sexist men are involved in (from therapy to campaigning for A Woman's Right to Choose) constitute a 'movement', or whether women should be excluded from men's groups and conferences—were not given priority in Bristol. A superficial impression could be what one man called an 'emotional Disneyland' of gentle, affectionate men playing, dancing, and massaging one another.

DEFINITION

That such a direction was felt to be needed was reflected by the wholehearted acceptance of the 300 men at the conference of a working written proposal of a minimum self-definition of an 'anti-sexist men's movement' for discussion and propaganda, and a recommendation that all groups

locally and nationally discuss among themselves, with women and gay men the need to make their positions on sexism public, and what action they are prepared to take.

The conference organised round workshops, affinity and random home groups drew on men from local groups around the country. Topics taken up in workshops were rape, male sexuality, vasectomy and male responsibility for contraception, men and children, and gay issues amongst others.

POWER

The emphasis was very much on the personal approach to consciousness raising. At times an understanding of the institutional bases of sexism could be lost in the subjective experience of its personal effects.

One of the most successful workshops to bridge this gap was the one on 'Men and Work' initiated by the 'Achilles Heel' collective where links were made between men's feelings of power and powerlessness within and without employment and their

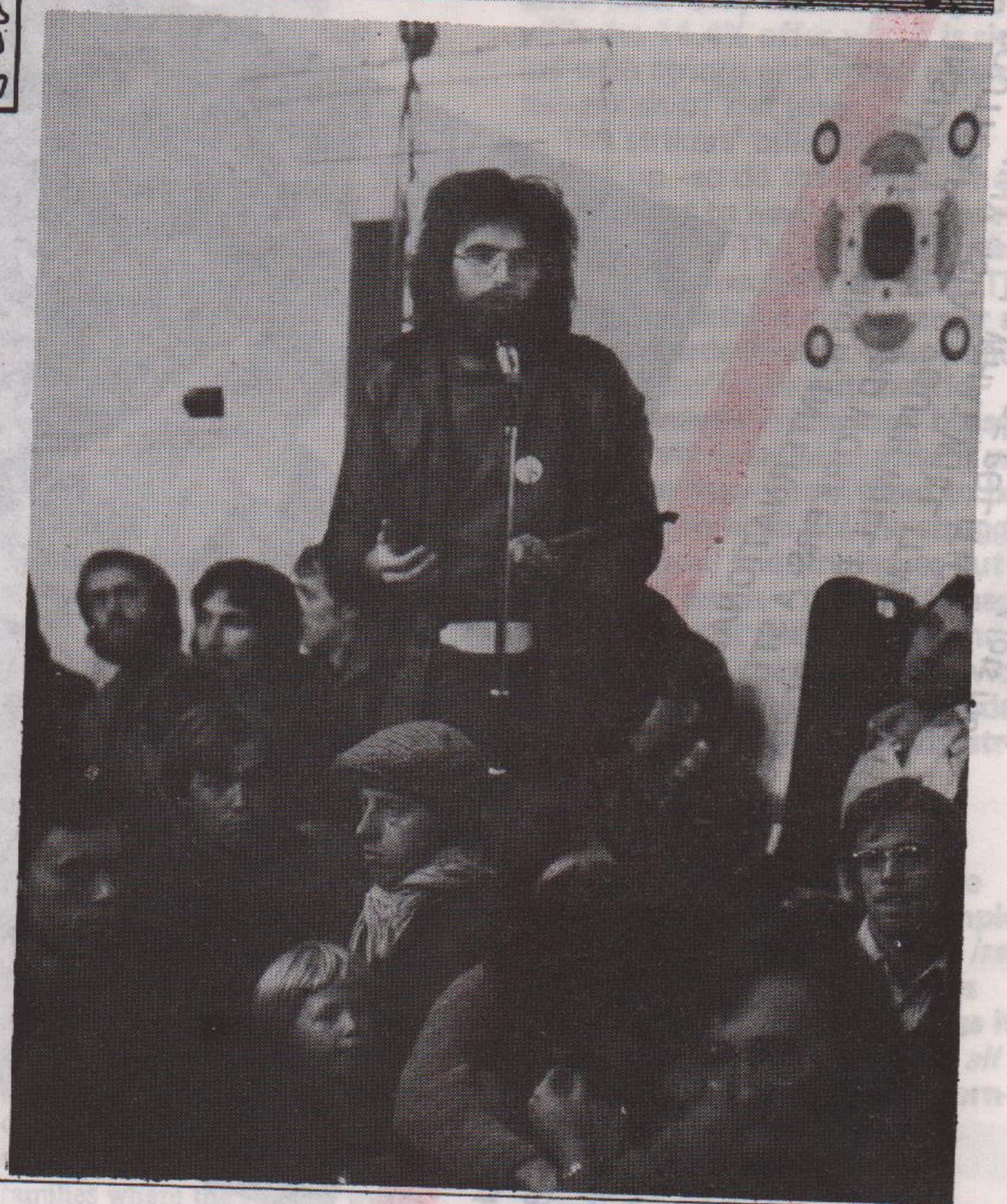
power over women and children in the family.

SUPPORTING

Dangers for anti-sexist men lie in not facing conflict and contradiction in their daily lives and smoothing them over in an atmosphere of assumed brotherly love and affection which, alone, is potentially masculinist. However the experience of being with men in a supportive and non-competitive environment is a liberating and necessary one for us to develop sufficient trust in one another to confront our own and other men's sexism.

If anyone is suspicious of the need for anti-sexist men's politics and culture, they should read Chris Knight's pamphlet: 'My Sex Life' for a revolutionary socialist man's account of his struggle to confront how his power over the woman he loves oppresses her.

○ 'Achilles Heel', a magazine of men's politics. 50 p. Forthcoming issues: Men and Work, Male Violence, and Men and Sexuality. (subs) Men's Free Press, 7 St. Mark's Rise, London E.8
○ 'My Sex Life'. Chris Knight. 50p. Women and Labour Collective in association with the 'Chartists'. c/o Ann Flowers 158 Thorold Rd., Ilford, Essex.



sub advertisements

Merseyside in Crisis. A new pamphlet by Merseyside Socialist Research Group traces the decline of the local economy, highlights the role of working class struggle and concludes that what is needed is the development of alternative economic and political strategies between and within the regions. Copies 95p + 20p (P&P) from 23 Glover St., Birkenhead, Merseyside.

While fighting the Corrie Bill. Leeds NAC has tried not to forget all the other wider issues around 'the right to choose'. We have produced 3 posters as general, consciousness raising propaganda. Available at 2 for 50p, 10 for £1.20 (group rate) from Leeds NAC c/o Flat 1 Bellevue House, Bellevue Road, Leeds 3.

FIGHTBACK. the national campaign against cuts in the NHS, is looking for a new co-ordinator to work in our London office. Previous trade-union or campaign experience useful. Office skills also useful but not essential. Must have commitment to fighting cuts. For further details contact Fightback at 30 Camden Rd., London NW1, Tel 01-485 8610

IMMIGRATION. The next Big Flame day school, for members and close sympathisers, is on 19 April. It will deal with the immigration laws and the struggle against them. Write for details - 217, Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

Birmingham Big Flame Public Meeting: 'Local and National Organisations'. Speakers Dave McKay (Union Place Collective and Big Flame) and Geoff Green (Saltley Left activist). Tuesday 22 April 7.30 pm, White Lion, Bristol St., (opposite Night Out).

Sheffield Big Flame Public Meeting. Friday 11th April on Beyond the Fragments followed by social, 7.30 in the 'Royal' Pub, London Rd. With Hilary Wainwright and a woman speaker from Big Flame.

Anwar Ditta demonstration. Manchester, 26th April. 12.00 noon, Chichester Way, Moss Side/Hulme.

Sheffield Big Flame Educational on Monetarism and Tory Economic Policy. Wed. 2nd April, 7.30 pm, Hare and Hounds, Nursery St.

