

Big Flame

for Socialism

15p

Paper of the revolutionary socialist organisation Big Flame May 1980 No.86

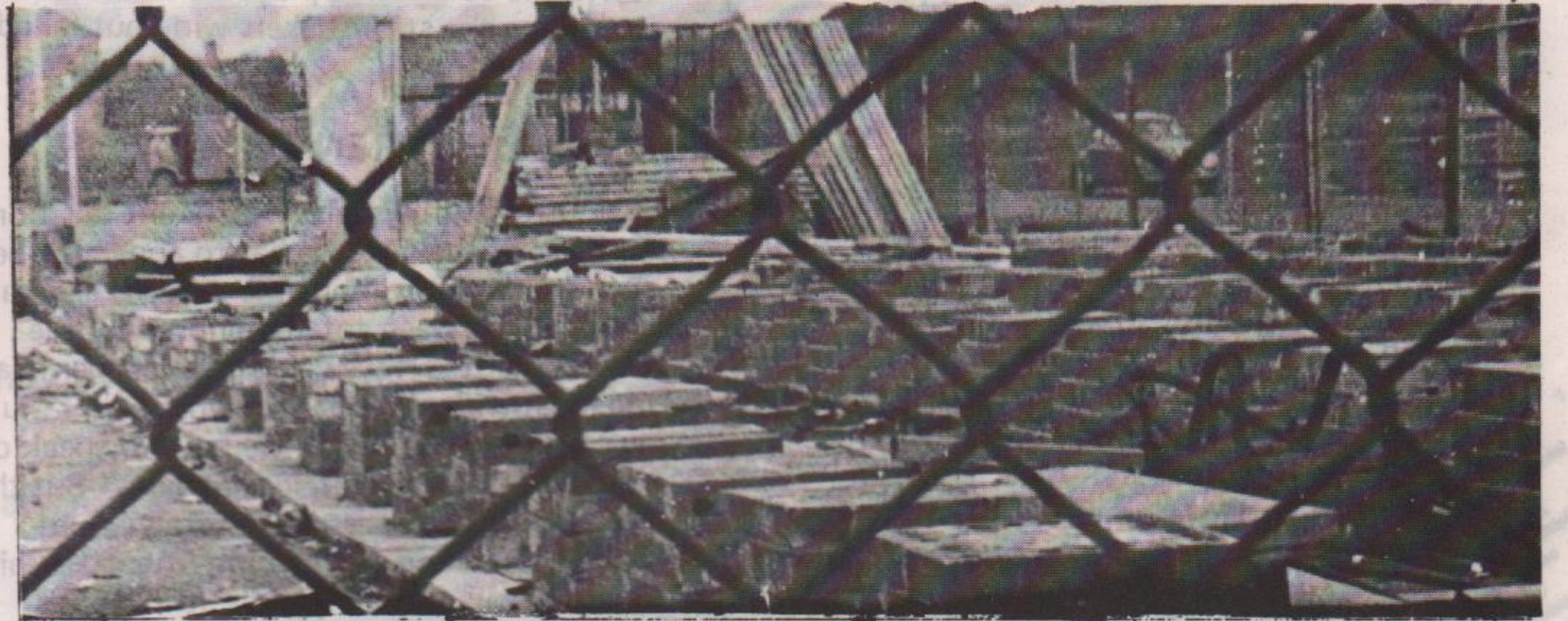
SIX REASONS WHY

ONE DAY OF ACTION

IS NOT ENOUGH!

- THE MONETARIST'S BLUEPRINT FOR BRITAIN
- FEMINISM IN THE USSR
- THE MPs WHO ARE REVOLUTIONARIES
- YOUNG GIRLS AND SEXUAL PLEASURE
- IRAN: THE REVOLUTION IS NOT OVER YET
- WHAT DOES WOMEN'S AUTONOMY MEAN IN NAC?

Inside



★ **HOUSING** Soon there'll be less protection for tenants, less aid for the homeless, more power to landlords and property speculators, and no finance for public housing.

★ **RACE**

More control and harassment of blacks. A new nationality act. More pressure. We're on the road to repatriation. Who needs the NF?



★ **CUTS**

Slashing the welfare state is a direct attack on women, children, and the very poor.

★ **WAR** £5 billion for new nukes. Cruise missiles in England. A belligerent, warmongering foreign policy. Are we being prepared for the ultimate confrontation?



★ **INFLATION**

The Tories are dedicated to stopping inflation—they doubled it since coming to power!



★ **UNEMPLOYMENT** This government is determined to put another million out of jobs, to push us back into the miseries of the 'thirties.

"May 14th. - Turn to and after" page 2

Editorial



and beyond

Frank Chapple, leader of the electricians and plumbers union (EETPU) has condemned the TUC's "Day of Action" on May 14th. He said it was 'unwise and untimely.' People could make a more effective protest, according to Chapple, by defeating the Tories in the local government elections. But whilst he thinks that May 14th will have no effect on Government policy, Chapple also criticised the 'Day of Action' for "pushing us closer to a general strike."

Len Murray of the T.U.C. has, meanwhile been falling over backwards in his efforts to reassure folk that the 'Day of Action' is non-political. The T.U.C., says Murray, has no intention of bringing down or even serious-

ly shifting the government through industrial action.

We think Chapple and Murray are both wrong. Of course May 14th on its own will not shift Thatcher. But for Frank Chapple, this is merely a convenient excuse for doing nothing at all to combat the Tories devastating policies. Chapple has scabbed on more strikes than he's had hot dinners (Quite a few!!) He could have played a crucial role in helping the steel strikers win—but failed miserably.

SHOW OF STRENGTH

Murray is in a slightly different position. As head of the TUC he has to appear to be doing something about the way his general council have been totally ignored by the Government. "If we can't get a proper hearing in Downing Street and Whitehall," Murray said recently, "Well, we have to speak out loud and clear in Trafalgar Square." But the point to recognise is that Murray would rather be talking in Downing Street (He said so at the big rally on March 9th). That's why he wants to limit May 14th to a 'Day of Action' rather than an all-out strike. He wants a show of strength—but he doesn't want that strength to show what it can really do.

Every trade unionist, unemployed person, housewife and student who demonstrates on May 14th will know they are taking part in a political protest. Murray wants to play down the political aspect because he's afraid that such limited actions may set off a process of classwide mobilisation which ends in the generalised strike action that he and Chapple are so opposed to. WE WANT TO HELP BUILD THAT MOBILISATION.

FIGHTBACK

There's little doubt that more and more people are getting angry about the Tories. A fightback has begun—in the hospital occupations in London and Derbyshire; in the anti-cuts campaigns in Avon and Nottingham; amongst the Chix strikers at Slough and the T.G.W.U. members at Leyland; amongst the tens of thousands of women who played the major part in defeating the Corrie Abortion Bill; in the steelworks of S. Yorkshire and S. Wales where 17,000 workers came out to enforce blacking again with in hours of returning after their 3 month national strike; at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast where 1200 NUPE members STRUCK against the presence of the British Army in the hospital.

ACTION

We believe in the use of industrial and community action to challenge the govern-

ment—real power does not lie in Parliament. The so-called 'mandate' of Thatcher's Government came from only 1/3 of the electorate. Big business and the banks use their economic power every day to influence government policies. Our power lies in industrial action and on the streets.

REJECT BOTH

But we have some way to go before we can force the Tories out of office; and prevent the likes of Chapple, Murray and Sirs from getting away with sell-outs. The best way to build our power is to see May 14th as the beginning of a general political movement which can reject both the Tory party and the Labour party in favour of the self-organisation of the working class.

- Solidarity with all workers in struggle.
- Defy the Employment Bill
- Support for all campaigns against the cuts (whoever implements them) and other Tory policies.
- Strengthen workplace, union, and community organisations, and build rank and file groups.

ALL OUT STRIKE ACTION, MAY 14th—JOIN YOUR LOCAL DEMONSTRATION.

Big Flame Speaking Tour

We are organising a tour in which Big Flame speakers will develop the ideas contained in the new pamphlet *The Past Against Our Future* (50p) and to discuss future directions for the anti-racist anti-fascist struggle.

Venues for this month are—
North London 30 April
Nottingham 1 May

Birmingham 7 May
Nelson 8 May
Sheffield 18 May
Manchester 22 May

More dates next month. For more details, contact the ARAF Convenor, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

paper money

There was a heartening response to our SOS last month: a total of £120.62. "I can't afford it", wrote a South London member who sent us £25, "but it would be a tragedy of major proportions...if Big Flame were to go under, especially with its ability to produce issues like the April one."

If branches pay their bills promptly, and organise regular fund-raisers, and we can increase and hold this latest level of donations, we'll be OK. But we want to do more than that. Our aim is to improve the paper drastically and that needs more cash.

Here are the details of the April donations:

Liverpool social £18.62
Durham supporter £15.00
Nottingham social £15.00
2 Sheffield members £15.00
Honourarium, Manchester £25.00
Sheffield supporters £5.00
S. London member £25.00
New standing order £2.00
Total £120.62

The best way of supporting the newspaper is by taking out a standing order. Make it out to Big Flame Newspaper, Lloyds Bank Ltd., India Buildings, Water St, Liverpool, L69 2 BT. Account no. 0008738. Bank code 30-95-11.



Big Flame Photo

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION — THE ONLY ANSWER

Capitalism means war, unemployment, poverty, sexual and racial oppression. Big Flame doesn't believe in patching it up with piece-meal reforms through parliament. Nothing less than the destruction of the capitalist state will pave the way for socialism.

Socialism means the end of all forms of exploitation and the creation of a free, equal, and classless society in which all human beings will be able to realise their potential.

SOCIALISM — A STRUGGLE OF THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS

There's no substitute for the mass involvement of the working class in the struggle for socialism. People must fight for their own freedom. Nobody can give it to them.

Unity cannot be imposed from above. It must grow out of the struggles of the working class. Socialists have a duty to recognise the differences that capitalism creates to hold back our unity — and to fight to overcome them. We support the struggle of women, black people, gays, and youth against their special oppression. We support their right to their own independent organisation.

Ultimately, Big Flame believes in the need for a new revolutionary party of the whole working class, which will play a leading role in the struggle for socialism. There is no short cut to the creation of a new party: thousands of independent socialists and militants must be won to the idea that we need it.

BIG FLAME AND WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

We are active in the women's movement and the socialist feminist tendency, where we fight for:

A Woman's Right to Choose on abortion, contraception and sexual relationships. Freedom to walk the streets without fear of sexual violence.

Refuges for battered women. An end to the division of labour between men and women, inside and outside the home.

AGAINST SEXISM AND RACISM

Big Flame supports the struggle of black people to live in equality and free from the fear of racist attacks. We support their right to form their own independent and self-

The international unity of the working class is crucial.

We are in solidarity with all socialist and republican movements fighting to free Ireland from British imperialism. We support the United Troops Out Movement and call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. A united, socialist Ireland will assist the liberation of the British working class.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Our aim is to build independent rank and file organisations opposed to the reformist leaders of the trade unions. We support the fight for higher wages, shorter hours, a lighter work load, and for full pay — work or no work. Differentials deepen the disunity and we want to see them narrowed. We oppose redundancies, incomes policies, and every device to increase exploitation.

IN THE COMMUNITY

We argue for closer links between the struggles in the community and those at work. We fight for better, community-controlled public services and for decent homes for all.

If you agree with us, why not find out more about us? We have branches or members in many cities throughout England and Wales. Send off the form if you want to find out more about Big Flame.

To Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7.

I would like more information about Big Flame. Please send me a copy of 'Introduction to Big Flame'. I enclose a postal order for 18p.

NAME

ADDRESS



defense organisations. We fight for the Anti-Nazi League to take an anti-racist stand against immigration controls and all forms of official harassment of black people.

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!

Capitalism is international. The struggle for socialism and national liberation abroad aids our fight against British capitalism.



RATS?

Who can fail to know about 'Rats', the dog adopted by troops in Crossmaglen, S. Armagh, and now safe in retirement in a British Army barracks. The story of Rats was in every newspaper, on TV and radio. You could practically see the Army Press Officers sighing with relief as they managed to spread a story designed to put the occupation army in a good light. (At least somebody loves

them, if only a lost dog). But nobody in Britain will have heard of Shane, a Labrador/Alsatian, from Lenadoon, in Belfast. A week ago, while walking with his owner 7-year old John O'Brien and 18 month old Lisa Clark he started barking at a group of armed men who appeared in the street. It was a British army patrol. Without hesitation the last soldier in the line shot the dog through the neck. After twitching for a few minutes, the dog finally died before the horrified gaze of the two children. Once again peace reigned in west Belfast!

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I want more information about Big Flame

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

Hardly a big strike in 25 years, so it had to be something big to get a stoppage at Rovers Solihull plant (To say nothing of the 300 AUEW workers at Jaguars who have defied their leader, Terry Duffy!) And this is it—Michael Edwardes' body-blow to shop floor organisation in BL. If this goes through, then the gains made by 30 years of struggle will have been wiped out overnight.

WHY BL EXPLODED



"We are in no shape to recover intact from this or any other strike. At the very best, it means that some plants may never re-open. Even those which appear to be secure may have to be reviewed. There are no safe places."

Statement to all employees of BL Cars Ltd., from Ray Horrocks, Managing Director—Cars.

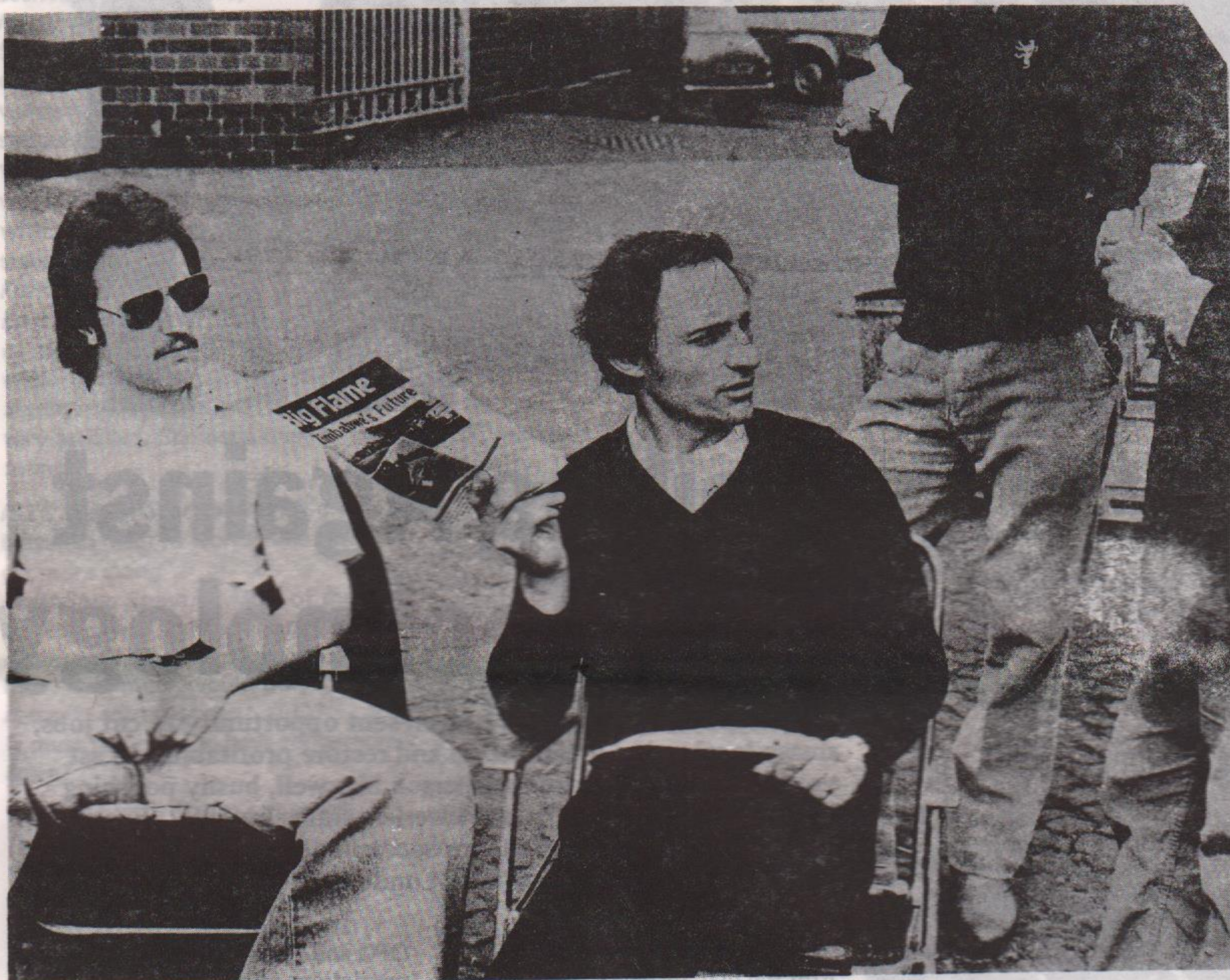


Photo: Big Flame Flasher

HOW TO FIGHT BACK

The strike at BL against Edwardes' latest move on pay and conditions has taken everybody by surprise. After the demoralising sacking of Convener Derek Robinson and the AUEW's refusal to challenge the company on this or the pay proposals, the walk out is a sure sign that BL workers have had as much as they can take.

The spreading strike calls the bluff of BL management and their backers in the Tory Government. The workers have stuck two fingers at Edwardes' latest 'accept or else....' ultimatum.

His strategy has been simplicity itself. He has tried to restore BL profitability by slashing jobs and undermining trade union control over production. The closure of Standard Triumph, Speke, and the sacking of Derek Robinson were just two steps in that plan. All along, Edwardes has relied on the threat of a withdrawal of state finance and the total collapse of BL, to overwhelm opposition.

REACTIONARY

The election of a ruthless Tory government has lent credence to his warnings. At least as important as this, is the role of the trade unions. Under Terry Duffy, the engineering union has reverted to its bad old reactionary days under Cannon in the 50s and 60s. The T & G has scarcely done better.

So the only alternative to Edwardes—a determined fight to force the government to fund the re-equipping of BL on terms favourable to the shop floor—has lacked all credibility. So it's been every man for himself: plant against plant, craft against unskilled.

ENOUGH

But now some of the least militant plants in the whole Combine have said: enough's enough, faced with the prospect of losing all control over production and all for a measly 5% or 10% rise in wages—nullified in many cases by the company's proposal to withdraw the ½ hour a day kitting up allowance. The stakes are high. The future of workers organisation at BL is in the balance. Edwardes and the Tories as we have seen, are tough oppon-

ents. But they can be fought.

DEMANDS

The immediate demands must be:

- 1) a pay rise to beat inflation
- 2) withdraw the Edwardes' pay and conditions plan
- 3) stop the company's run-down: more investment in BL.

At the same time, BL workers have got to sort out their own organisation. Without a fighting combine set-up, directly responsible to and built up by the rank and file, there will be no effective leadership of the battle against Edwardes and no way of stopping a recurrence of the Duffy-Evans sell-outs.

SPLITTING

Only a genuine shop-floor organisation can fight the splitting tactic used by the union leaders and the company who exploit the differences between craft and line workers to the disadvantage of all the workers in BL.

The need is for a national strike committee now to replace the useless and undemocratic Joint Negotiating Committee and to organise to throw out Edwardes and his plan.

COMPANY PROPOSED DRAFT AGREEMENT ON BARGAINING, PAY, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS & PRODUCTIVITY.

Covering Hourly Rated Employees in BL Cars.

The BL Cars JNC agreed on 7th November that the company's proposals on Bargaining, Pay, Employee Benefits and Productivity should be given in full to all hourly rated employees in BL Cars. It is a fairly complicated and lengthy document but all employees are urged to study it carefully.

While the sections 3 to 8 cover the other itself the supporting appendices are important and should be read in conjunction with the offer.

It is planned that after the Trade Unions have carried out their consultations, negotiations will resume in the week beginning November 19.

Table: Rates of Pay (The full details of the proposed pay structures are given in section 6. But this table shows the proposed grade rates.)

Grade	DAYSHIFT EMPLOYEES		OVERTIME PREMIUM RATE		Hly Rate
	Std Hly Rate	40-Hr Rate	40-Hr Rate	Hly Rate	
Grade 1	2.45	98.00	73.00	1.825	
Grade 2	2.245	89.80	73.00	1.825	
Grade 3	2.20	88.00	61.68	1.542	
Grade 4	2.02/125	80.85	73.50	1.513	
Grade 5	1.8375				

Rates for other shift patterns, and pay structures for other categories of Employees, are listed in Appendix C.

BL CARS LIMITED AND UNIONS

- representing all hourly paid employees in BL Cars.
- Automated Society of Boilermakers and Allied Craftsmen (Engineering Section)
 - Automated Union of Engineering Workers (Foundry Section)
 - Association of Paternmakers and Allied Craftsmen (Electrical Union)
 - Association of Timber & Allied Trades Union
 - Furniture, Timber & Allied Workers' Union
 - The Furniture, Timber & Allied Workers' Union
 - General & Municipal Workers' Union
 - National Society of Metal Mechanics
 - National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, Coppermiths & Heating & Domestic Engineers, Transport & General Workers' Union.
 - Union of Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians.

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Main Points of the Draft Agreement

- 5% rise (10% for skilled workers)—15% below the rate of inflation.
- re-grading at Jaguars can mean workers finding themselves on lower rates of pay.
- all previous national agreements annulled. 'Mutuality' disappears: the company can impose any working conditions they like without gaining the stewards' agreement.
- workers can be shifted to any section or asked to do any job. Some could find themselves doing the job of a higher paid grade at their own lower rate. Strong sections could be broken up.
- everyone can be called on at short notice to do nights.
- kitting-up time, ½ hour daily, worth £20 a week, goes. Protective clothing will have to be put on in the workers' own time.
- lay-off pay rights are limited. Workers involved in strike action lose their entitlement to lay-off pay.
- a management-run bonus scheme—trade union involvement ended.



DECLINE AND FALL!

Some of the women clothing workers employed at Klein Bros. of Salford have been there for close on 15 years. They've watched the firm grow and prosper, but when they went out on strike in support of union recognition they were accused by management in their dismissal notices of 'irrational and unprovoked behaviour.'

The 60 women (and a handful of men) have now been on official strike since March, and although the union (National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers) has offered to take the dispute to arbitration the company has refused to accept any decision which goes against them.

Support for the dispute is growing, two mass pickets have already taken place and the Salford Trades Council has set up a strike support committee.

BENDYK

Although the Transport and General Workers Union has blacked all movement of the firm's clothes, which are marketed under the brand name of BENDYK, cloth is still getting in and out of the factory via the works lorry.

The strikers reckon that small workshops are supplying the cloth and making up the short-fall in the production of the finished garments (as yet no scabs have been recruited though the VACANCIES sign is up). Attempts have been made to trace these firms by following the lorry to its destinations, but so far with-

out success. (The van is a blue Commer, license plate HVR 676 N, with 'Bendyk' on the side).

RAGS IGNITE

The Rag Trade is a notoriously badly-organised industry and is renowned for having some employers whose attitudes are reminiscent of the 19th Century. It is therefore a significant event when a group of clothing workers decide to fight for the right to have their union recognised.

Please send messages of support and donations to:

Klein Dispute
c/o National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers,
409 Wilmslow Rd,
MANCHESTER M20 9NB

What are you doing on the May 14th Day of Action in Manchester? The strikers and the union are calling for mass support for The Klein Picket, Liverpool St., Salford.



Photo: Barry Furnace



Photo: Barry Furnace

Above: the blue Commer van and the scab driver talking to one of the strikers. Below: women strikers and their supporters outside Kleins.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
We the workers from Klein Bros, wish to thank you for the generous donation you made to our strike fund. The support we are receiving both financial and on the picket line, is a tremendous boost to our morale and is strengthening our determination to continue our struggle for Trade Union Recognition and Reinstatement.

The weather, in the early weeks of our dispute, tried to weaken our resolve. However, it has now conceded defeat and is being much kinder to us. We are confident that with the continued support of the Trade Union Movement, the Kleins will ultimately concede defeat and recognise our Union. Please continue to support us.

Yours fraternally,
R Hulmes
on behalf of the Klein Workers

Railing Against New Technology

The new technology is a heaven-sent opportunity to cut jobs, smash local union organization and restore profitability. Last year London Transport chairperson Maxwell, busily polishing his silver hammer, predicted driverless trains by 1992. For workers and passengers alike, the prospects look grim, as G. Stephenson, ASLEF member from east London, reports.

If the restructuring of industry with the help of micro-technology goes ahead, then the railways will be a very suitable case for shock treatment. BR has published a document 'The Challenge of the Eighties' which outlines a massive shake-up including remote control of locomotives, continental rostering schedules and the introduction of VDUs on the white-collar side.

OPO and the like without too many restrictions on spending.

NECK

In the midst of all this fun and games the users of public transport will get it in the neck. London has savoured the effects of OPO on the buses; this, coupled with the disastrous Bus Plan 78 and the high-rise prices has given transport users a taste of the future—standing in a bus queue is like auditioning for a part in the 'Life of Brian'. It's an indirect way of cutting people's access to work, friends and families if they haven't got cars. Women with children have trouble holding down part-time jobs when bus and train services are costly and inadequate; people on the dole have to walk everywhere or fiddle the fares.

CRYING

On London Transport the introduction of one person operated trains (OPOs) would mean the beginning of the end for the guards' grade on the whole combine; a heavier, riskier workload for drivers and a reduction in safety standards. On B.R. it would signal the erosion of all grades. So far these issues have been tackled forcefully only by union branches, district councils and the various unofficial groupings in the industry. In L.T.'s case one little thing that could affect these plans is the much-publicised cash-crisis: for 1980 investment finance will be only £103 m, £12 m less than planned. L.T. has told the Greater London Council that it is 'very concerned' about the long-term effects of cuts in future transport spending.

The top brass commuters on BR are a pretty vocal bunch and would welcome major changes in the name of efficiency, but where does that leave the rest of us who need a cheap and reliable service?

Management are crying into their gin and tonics over the fact that the Tory-controlled GLC wants them to stop playing trains and take heart from the likes of M. Edwardes. L.T. would probably not be too keen to gamble on provoking sustained strike action on the tubes without some sort of guarantee that a successful handling of the dispute would give them a free hand to press ahead with

Attempts have been made to set up transport workers/users groups but these have rarely made an impact or established a lasting presence. Despite this, local activity of this kind has to go on—either as part of anti-cuts campaigns or independently. Socialist militants both inside and outside the industry can have a go at encouraging democratic discussion of what sort of transport system we need—for instance, a real debate in the rail unions on new technology would have an unheard of effect on workers' confidence and willingness to organize.

Photo: Des Ferrate



Steel: The Strike is over, but the Struggle continues

Within hours of the national return to work after the Steel strike, thousands of workers had come out again at plants in S. Yorkshire and S. Wales. Management had taken disciplinary action against workers who refused to unload lorries on the strike committees' "blacklists" of firms who had broken picketlines. At Port Talbot, workers also besieged management offices demanding payment of the £50 they had been promised as part of the settlement but they had not received.

Although these new strikes quickly ended they showed that the workers were by no means completely defeated, despite the widespread feeling that they had been 'sold out' by their union leaders. A further conflict is already brewing over planned BSC redundancies in South Wales.

Your intrepid Big Flame correspondent visited Stocksbridge to do a frank and fearless story on what's been happening since the return to work.

Scene: A public house, **Place:** A small town just North of Sheffield, built on the steep slopes of the upper Don Valley. The valley is dominated by the vast sprawl of "Fox's" steelworks - the main employer in an area whose whole history has been associated with the development of iron and steel making.

Plot: Uncertain **Enter:** Members of strike committee, now reconstituted as a joint union committee. They've first held another meeting, but no-one seems very satisfied. Someone buys a round.

ISTC Branch Secretary: "We'd do better to meet in works time - we'd get more along".

Craft Shop Steward: Most of the craft stewards were at another meeting. We should produce a newsletter. How much would that cost? **Intrepid correspondent (I.C.):** It must feel good to have some money again?

Shop Steward: (turns out empty pockets).

Enter: More members of joint committee: various greetings exchanged - new conversations start up (sounding serious).

I.C.: What's been the impact of the strings attached to the deal?

ISTC Member: (looking tired after switching shifts to attend meeting) It's too early to give a complete picture. Management says we can't have committee meetings in work's

time, which we've always done, but if we tried to I'm not sure if we'd get the support. Quite a lot of us are not getting the full benefit of the 4½% (agreed as a 'lead-in' payment for local productivity deals - Ed), because it's based on the last 3 months of 1979 and we were on strike in December (over the sacking of an ISTC branch Secretary, Brian Molyneux - Ed) we've not had any of the 11% general increase yet.

I.C.: What's happened to Brian Molyneux? **Shop Steward:** He lost his appeal. He's out of a job now. But it's going to a "neutral committee" - 2 management, and 2 union officials. A lot depends on the attitude of Bill Sirs...

ISTC member: We've learnt about solidarity. There's been a firm at Huddersfield on strike and we're going to take a collection. People raised a lot of money for us - we need to repay them.

Shop Steward: (reminiscing) we got fantastic hospitality in Germany. (A group of workers went over during the strike to get support - Ed) I've been reading this book about Germany and the uprisings of the 1830's to the 1850's, but I can't make much sense of it. It's written by 2 Russians in the 1930's.

SWP member: Perhaps that's because it was written by 2 Russians in the 1930's (laughter).

Interlude - more drinking and various conversations...

Shop Steward: we can have the finest joint union committee and even national organisation, but without international support, they can al-

ways shift production elsewhere or import steel from another country, we need an international Steel Shop Stewards Committee.

I.C.: Is anything happening over May 14?

Shop Steward: I'm not very optimistic. What's the point of a 'Day of Action'? Now a strike would have been different... if the TUC had called a national strike we could have got them out - but now I'm not sure.

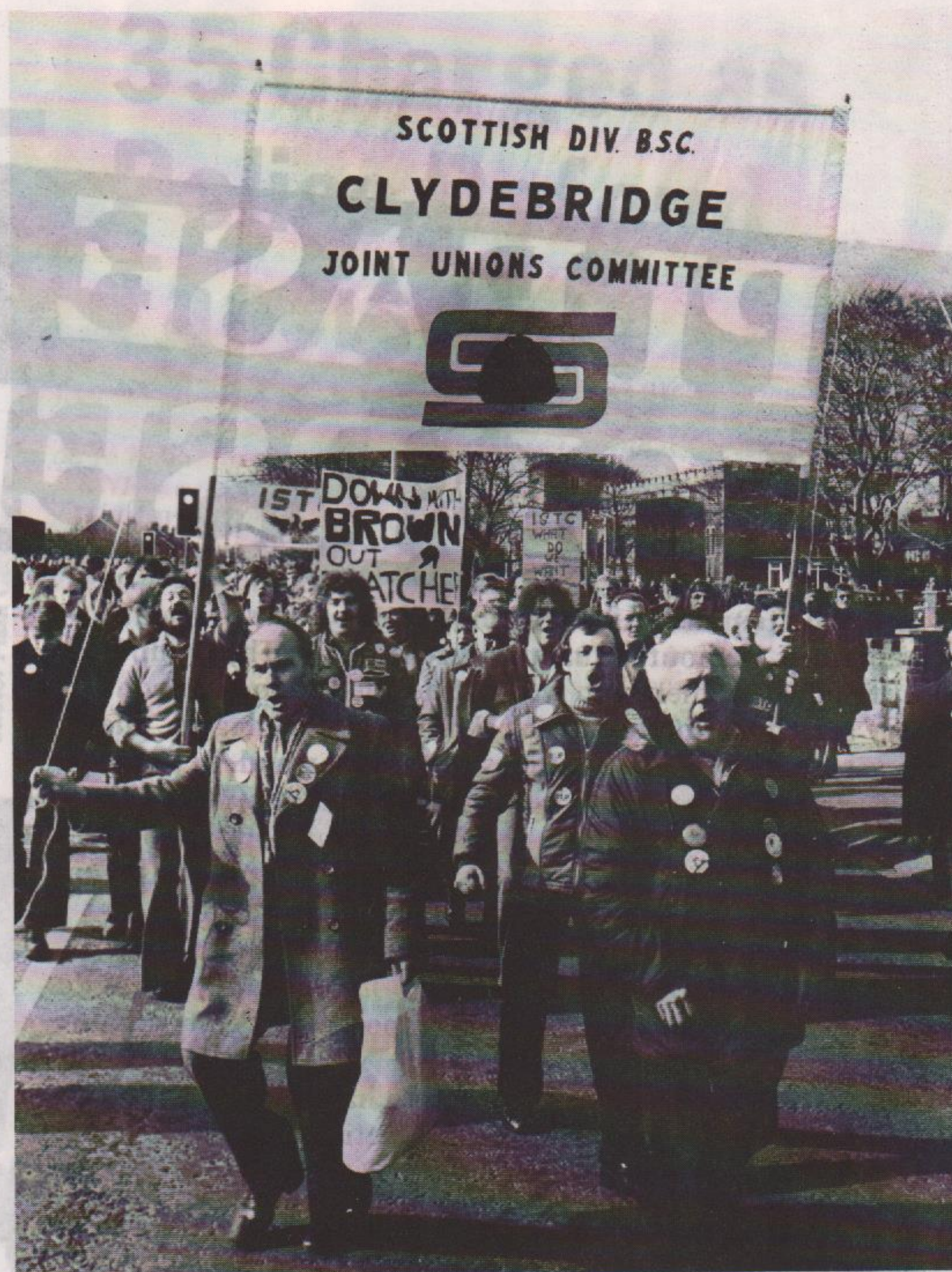
ISTC Branch Secretary (to shop steward) I didn't know you were into Big Flame?

Shop Steward: I'm not - I thought they were a bunch of academics (looks to see if intrepid correspondent talks back)

I.C.: (frank and fearless) No we're not - just because some of us are college lecturers...

Shop Steward: Actually they're not bad. But there's been more people coming to us after the return to make films, write books and offer help than we ever saw in the strike... can I take a copy of your paper?

Exit, in several directions, committee members and intrepid correspondent. Lights and noises from the works indicate that the night shift is well under way...



(above) A Scottish contingent of steel workers marching through Scunthorpe on March 1st. (below) On the TUC demonstration of March 9th.



Building Rank & File Struggle

The SECOND National conference of Building Worker was held on 29/30 March in Birmingham.

40 or so delegates took part in discussion ranging from the present claim (UCATT have called for a substantial increase!) to the relationship between full time officials and rank and file (ie there isn't one!)

Some amendments to the Rank and File Building Worker Policy Statement were made.

Manchester Building Worker felt that to have, as a last point, on the statement "that BW is opposed to Racism and Facism and all attempts to split workers, Irish or English, men or women, unemployed and employed" is to assume these issues are understood and taken for granted by socialists in the building trade - which is not always the case - we suggested they be included in the introduction to the policy statement of building worker.

CRECHE ON SITE

The second amendment was the inclusion of - Positive encouragement for women who wish to enter the building industry, maternity/Paternity leave on full pay,

with a guaranteed return to the same work, and for the provision of creche facilities on site.

This was passed on a vote but only after some heckling was squashed by two strong speeches, insisting that these were essential socialist demands and not pieces of ultra-leftism.

The claim for £3 p.h. craft - £2.95 labour was changed to £3 per hour across the board, calling for the scrapping of the differentials.

ARGUMENT

The question of full-timers in the union caused a heated argument. Some members felt that rank and file groups could have a place for full-timers because of their relat-

ively powerful positions.

However, the majority there felt that rank and file organisations should be just that, and it would make a mockery of our politics to have full time union officials holding membership of a rank and file organisation.

PLATFORM

Bros. Dave Ayres of Durham UCATT will be standing for regional council (not a full time position) on a Building Worker/Socialist Workers Party, platform, which would include the new amendments, regarding women in the industry and our general political platform.

Tony Harper UCATT Manchester Building Worker

For further information contact: Building Worker, 30 Horton House, South Lambeth Estate, Meadow Road, London SW8

Next local meetings Manchester Building Worker Tuesday 29 April, Lass o'Gowrie Pub, off Oxford Rad, tel 061-224-3972 London Building Worker Tel 01-732-44-78

PLEASE YOURSELF

Sex

For Girls

At last some feminist sex education! *Please Yourself* as it states in its preface, is about sexual pleasure for girls. The group of socialist feminist women who wrote it decided to look at contemporary sex education books for children and teenagers. They became very critical of the attitudes towards sex and, in particular, towards female sexuality which they found in most of the books they read. Sex education books and courses in schools concentrate on reproduction rather than sexual pleasure. Sex is seen only in the context of having babies. So the importance of the clitoris and of masturbation for girls has always been ignored, or classified as 'unproductive'. What *Please Yourself* is aiming to do is to demonstrate a female-centred—as opposed to a male-dominated—sexuality and to provide girls of 13+ with as much information about their bodies to enable them to have more sexual pleasure and more equal, guilt-free sexual relationships.

The information is given in the booklet in a very straightforward way with clear drawings. It might have been useful to have had photographs of women's genitals. The photographs of a circumcised and an uncircumcised penis are useful in terms of demystification (though they might have been better to scale—or you might believe that a circumcised penis is always considerably smaller!). The illustrations do not quite overcome the problem of sexual organs being divorced from the rest of the body, being pictured in isolation without much idea of relative size. But there is a good page showing female pelvic organs which does give a clear context and shows how much better it is when that is done.

What is particularly useful in *Please Yourself* is the section on sexual pleasure where we are shown how to learn our own sexual responses and how to masturbate. It is a very full and supportive account of the different ways in which women masturbate and it describes the various sensations that women experience during orgasm. What is also very useful is the section on sexual fantasies. This is an aspect of sexuality which is never dealt with in traditional sex education and, as the booklet acknowledges, it is often a source of anxiety. *Please Yourself* explains that our sexual fantasies can be very enjoyable but they can also be disturbingly violent and alarming. Sexuality in our society is male-dominated and our fantasies reflect that domination. Our fantasies will change as society changes and our position within it. Certainly, too, the male domination

of sexuality comes out in the glossary of slang terms at the back of the booklet. It is really good to have these explanations—I'm sure many of us wondered about the meanings of certain words for years!

I've only two reservations about *Please Yourself*. Firstly, it's a slightly automatic attitude that if you became pregnant you would want an abortion. It does deal with the decision making process and the confused feelings that a young woman might experience on discovering she is pregnant. But I feel the emphasis is too readily on abortion and perhaps our limited right to choose to have children—particularly for young women—should be underlined. The other reservation is more serious and is to do with the lack of a separate section on lesbian sexuality. I imagine that the women writing *Please Yourself* believed it important to

stress a female-centred sexuality and for it to be unimportant whether a woman was having sex with another woman or with a man. However, given the traditional stress on reproductive sex as the only legitimate sexual activity it is surely crucial to explain the bases of anti-homosexual feeling. And also essential to emphasize very distinctly lesbian relationships as a real challenge to tradition-

al heterosexuality and as an assertion of a positive female sexuality. Lesbian relationships involve a very definite choice against all our conditioning into heterosexuality. *Please Yourself* would have been better if it had explicitly supported young women who are involved in lesbian relationships or who are making that choice.

Overall, *Please Yourself* should

be seen by as many girls as can get their hands on it! It would certainly have made a great difference to my own early sexual experiences.

By a Member of Brighton BF

Please Yourself, Sex for Girls. 40p. Coventry Women's Education Group Distributed by P.D.C.



Cartoon: Liz Mackie

IRELAND

TROOPS OUT STRIKE BY HOSPITAL WORKERS

The 'troops out' strike by 1,200 Belfast hospital workers has just ended. Few incidents could teach us more about how Northern Ireland - including the local trade unions - operates.

First, it was interesting how little attention it got in the media over here. Perhaps the papers and TV could not understand how over a thousand workers wanted British soldiers OUT of their hospital when every day they tell us how the Northern Irish want the troops to STAY!

The false idea was put over that the strikers were worried after a soldier accidentally fired a shot in a hospital corridor. As if the people of west Belfast are scared of a single shot after 10 years of war.

And a Senior NUPE official said on the radio that there were hardly any soldiers in the Royal Victoria Hospital anyway. Along with most other local union officials he was urging a return to work.

GENEVA CONVENTION

In actual fact there is an army base right inside the hospital grounds. Armed soldiers constantly patrol the corridors. And they use the massive building to spy on the surrounding - mainly Republican area. A few years ago it was even discovered that police photographers - hidden high up in the building - were using the hospital's own equipment

for developing!

In fact, for years the British Army has been breaking the Geneva Convention by using a hospital for military purposes.

SCARED

After years of appeals from the local NUPE branch nothing was done to remove the danger to patients and workers that comes from having an army post nearby.

No help came from Union officials.

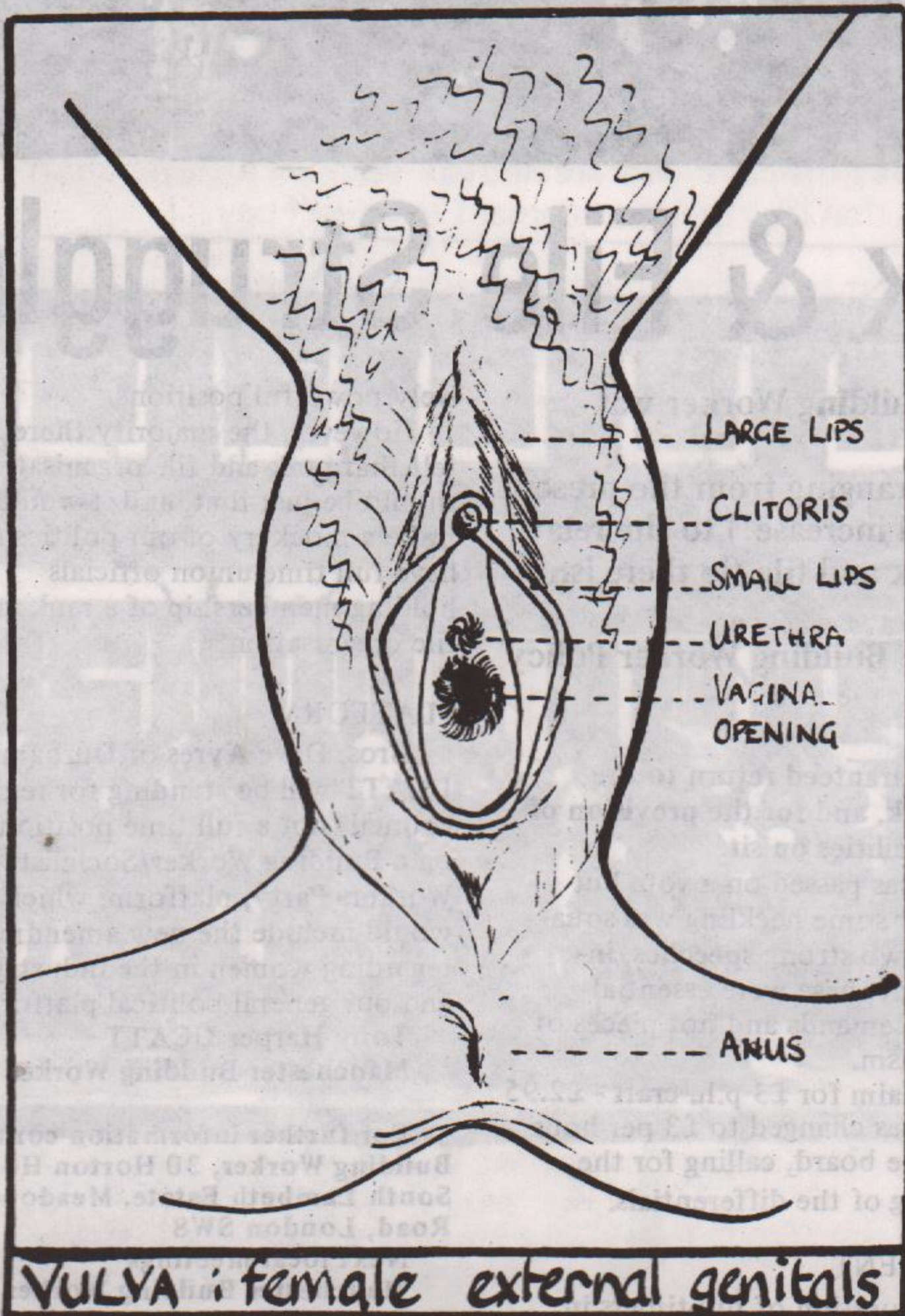
They are too busy 'keeping the peace'. In the Royal Victoria - as in the rest of the 6 counties - the Senior Admin. staff, senior doctors and nurses and the white-collars are drawn from the loyalist population. The dirtier, lower paid jobs - porters, cooks, cleaners - go to Catholics from the nearby Republican areas. So the management - as Loyalists - did not see any danger coming from the troops they supported. Local union officials were not prepared to stand up to the management. The whole issue scared them. The trade union leaders in Ireland have this strange idea of 'workers unity' in which no issue can be raised if it might divide the workers. Unfortunately, Catholic demands

for equal rights in jobs and housing - and for protection from army and police attacks - are highly unpopular with loyalist workers. So trade union leaders never protest against the conditions in the H-blocks of Long Kesh camp, or the torture in Castlereagh RUC station or the army post inside the local hospital. Such protests would divide the (already divided) workers. So they keep quiet - except when they travel to Britain to tell us how their 'Better Life for All Campaign' is the real way forward!?

WHO FEELS SECURE?

Perhaps what finally sparked off the strike was the slaughter in Northern Ireland in the previous fortnight. In that time British soldiers managed to shoot no less than 12 people. A man drinking in a British Legion Club, a woman returning from her silver wedding celebrations and a teenager joy-riding in a stolen car were all killed. No less than 9 other teenagers were shot and wounded while joy-riding in Belfast. Many of these victims would have ended up at the Royal Victoria. Clear evidence for the workers there that British soldiers do not bring security - only fear, injury and death.

by Alan Evans, BF Irish Commission.



VULVA: female external genitalia

Fight for Community Press

Since 1973 the Islington Community Press has been functioning as a non-profitmaking resource in North London.

The Press offers a variety of facilities ranging from space for meetings and band practices to typewriters, lay out materials, printing presses and darkrooms.

These facilities are in constant use. Community Press also teaches

people how the printing process works. It was because of this commitment to mass communications that the Press was originally funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

The first grant was in 1976 and has been renewed annually until April 1980. The Arts Council now say that the Press does too much service work and that it will not be funded for the coming year.

The grant, our sole source of

funding, enabled us to spend time teaching people', Community Press say. 'We are committed to maintaining an open access press and we are determined to carry on, though not without protest. We are contacting all the groups and individuals who have used the Press in the last year to ask them to write letters of protest to John Buston, the Regional Officer of the Arts Council'.

An example of one of the illustrations of female sexual organs in the *Please Yourself* pamphlet.

Oldham Fights Back - 35 Charged as Police Defend Fascists

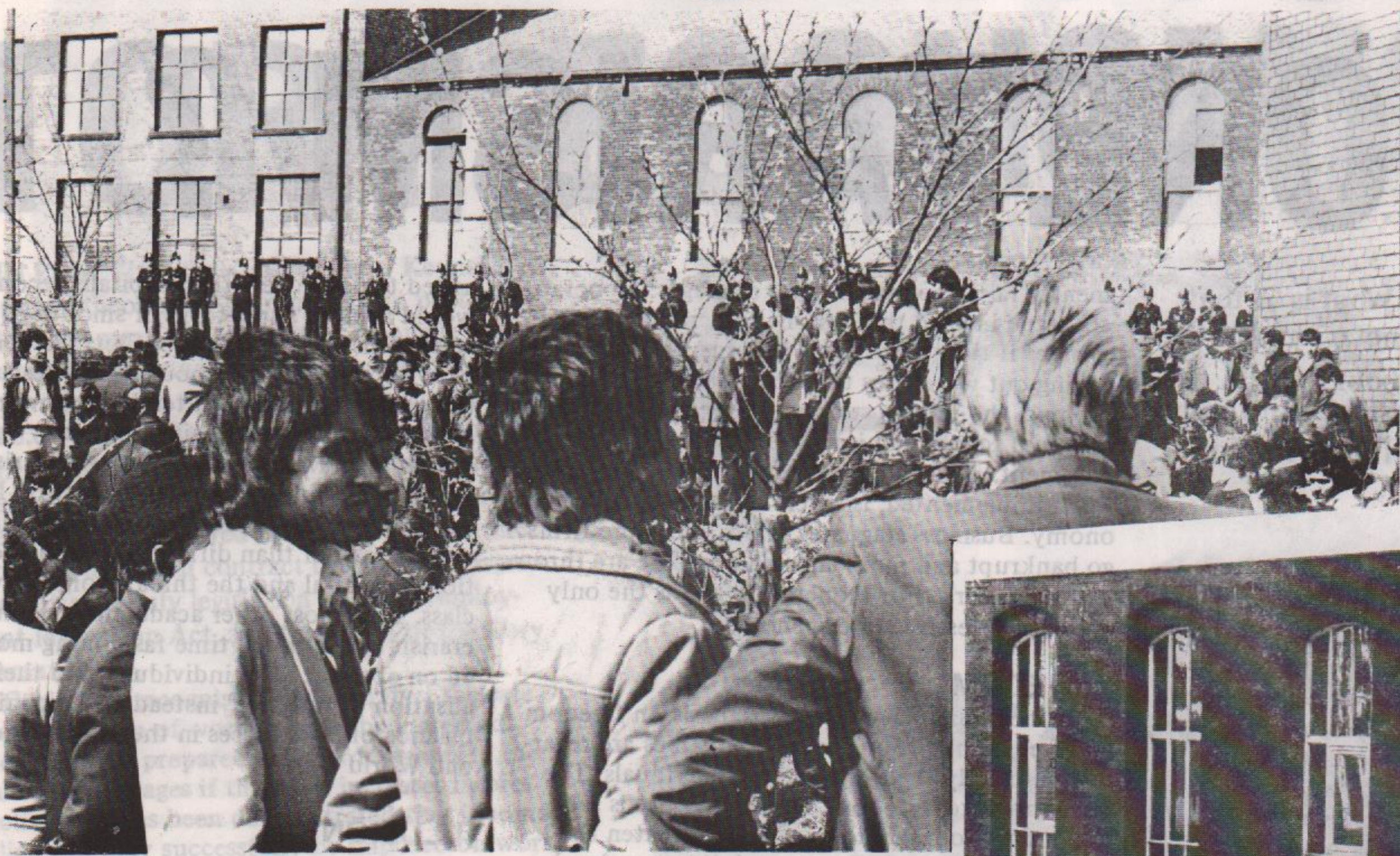


Photo: Flash Geordie

△ From the mainly Bengali area of Westwood over 500 marched, to be followed by hundreds more Pakistanis and Bengalis from Glodwick. Others from Werneth and Coppice converged to the town centre. They moved on to Union St. and towards Gas Street—the NF's assembly point, to deny the NF the right to march. On Union St. the police began to defend the fascists by violently attacking anti-fascists.

□ The first arrest came when the police took a loudhailer from a Pakistani leader, in what was at the time a peaceful protest. They then proceeded to arrest many other march leaders, particularly picking on Asians. People on the rally were pushed into Gas St. (see photo, left) still denying the NF the possibility of assembling there—but more importantly denying the people their right to stop the NF march.



Photo: Flash Geordie

△ Pig with dog protects rats. The dogs were used even when people were retreating peacefully and silently. As many Asians commented, the NF were only able to march—and the fascists able to attack Asian homes—because the Police want their organisation to grow. Asians also spoke of the State's use of the Immigration Laws to attack the black community.

OLDHAM CAMPAIGN DEMANDS:

After the violent attacks in March on Asians in Oldham (see April issue of BF) the NF called a national demonstration on 12 April 'against Oldham's left wing Labour MPs'. They were met by a mass mobilisation of the Bengali, Pakistani, Indian, and West Indian communities supported by white anti-fascists. The 100 NF were outnumbered 10 to 1, but enjoyed the freedom of the city, marching through the town and holding a meeting next to the Civic Centre. This was only possible because hundreds and hundreds of police flanked the NF and used dogs to surround the counter demo, harassing, kicking, hitting, and arresting people at random.

TOMATOES

35 anti-fascists, mainly Asians, face charges like obstruction, or possession of an offensive weapon (one man is accused of carrying 6 tomatoes). The Defense Committee expect a high conviction rate, with fines and costs of up to £4000 in all.

But despite the NF march and the arrests, April 12 was a big step forward for the Anti-Racist/Anti-Fascist movement in Oldham. The Oldham Campaign Against Racist Laws is launching a massive campaign to:

- a) Demand all charges be dropped against those anti-fascists arrested, for it is not a crime to fight racism. A picket of Oldham Police Station is scheduled for 23rd April, to coincide with demonstrations around the country by the Southall Campaign. On May 7th there will be a picket of Oldham Magistrates Court, from 9:30 am, when those arrested stand trial. A financial appeal is being started.
- b) Continue organising against immigration laws, supporting those such as Munir Ahmed who face deportation. OCARL will support the Anwar Ditta national demonstration in Moss Side on April 26. And on June 28 an enormous rally will greet the Black Freedom March as it passes through Oldham.
- c) Support all those who organise to defend themselves against the NF. The police can not be relied on. The NF plan to stand candidates in two wards during the Council elections—OCARL intends to ensure they are unable to organise publicly for this.



Photo: Flash Geordie

△ When the NF had reached the Civic Centre, the counter demo broke out of Gas St. and surged up the hill. The photo, above, shows anti-fascists converging on the NF meeting. Andrew Brons told his faithful few that Callaghan and Healey were no different from the extreme left—this rabble, as he called us. Then he led a chorus of God Save the Queen, and the NF was escorted back to their coach. But they had to take the train—the coach windows had been demolished.

Oldham's "left wing Labour MPs" didn't bother to turn up to hear Brons or, more important, to support the Asian and West Indian mobilisation Michael Meacher MP, who was involved in defending Abdul Azad and Gas Uddin, said "The NF have the right to march if they so wish, it's not up to me to comment on that. Although the police should ban it on the day if it becomes a racist march."

Black Womens' Autonomy

Representatives from 14 organisations and many committed independents assembled in Bradford on April 13 for a national black conference to discuss the black freedom march (see April issue of Big Flame).

A statement from a group of black women who had discussed the march at the national black women's conference (29-30 March) called on the conference to recognize the right of black women to organize independently within the black movement. Several issues were outlined by them which will be added to the themes of the march:

Employment: the position of black women in the labour market is at the bottom of the scale in wages, hours, and conditions.

State racism and sexual oppression—the state attacks black women in specific ways which are both sexist and racist:

- a) the new immigration rules deny black women the right to bring their fiancées into the country and limit the entry of dependents and children.
- b) virginity tests are used by the state in a racist and sexually violent manner.
- c) surveillance, e.g. by demanding of passport identification by welfare state agencies, including schools, hospitals, DHSS.

d) use of dangerous contraceptives such as depo-provera which despite strict regulations for use in this country is widely prescribed for black women.

e) illnesses which specifically affect black people, rickets and sickle cell anemia, are not dealt with sufficiently, and are of concern to the whole of the black community.

The conference agreed to go ahead with the march and set up a national steering committee, half of them women, which will represent all the organisations present and others who join later. The main body of the march from Bradford to London will be all black, but the white community is being called on to support the march in each locality, escorting the march through towns on route, and raising finance.

There's a lot of work to be done in the next few months. Donations sent for the march will be forwarded to the organisers.

By a member of OWAAD and Sheffield Big Flame

FREE TO CHOOSE.. BUT SOMEWHAT WHAT IS MONETARISM ?

WHY IS Milton Friedman getting so much coverage in the mass media? What is it that these monetarists are saying anyway? What is the connection between monetarism and the policies of the Tory government? How different were those of the last Labour one? In the two articles on these pages *Feargal O'Hanlon* answers these and other questions for those who missed Friedman's television series 'Free to Choose' or who watched it and found themselves none the wiser.

THE LAST FEW years have seen a rapid growth in the influence of monetarism. However it is far from being a radically new departure in economic theory. An emphasis on the need for governments to carefully balance their budgets has been part of the orthodox approach ever since economics was founded. The exception to this has been the period from the Second World War up to the 1970s during which the approach originated by John Maynard Keynes succeeded in becoming the orthodox one. Therefore an examination of Keynesianism is a good place to begin if we want to understand monetarism.

It was Keynesianism, along with the Second World War, which provided capitalism with a way out of the crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. Keynes believed that in periods of crisis governments should increase their spending and thus increase the demand for goods. If consumption is high then more goods will be produced. State expenditure was financed by more taxation and more government borrowing. Associated with Keynesianism were the growth of the welfare state and the attempt to achieve full employment.

But Keynesian demand management could not remove the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist economy which stem from the inherent antagonism between capitalists and workers.

... ALSO, I MUST BE RIGHT OR THE BBC WOULDN'T HAVE PAID ME SO MUCH!

The contradictions became clearer in the 70s as profits fell and inflation increased. As this crisis developed Keynesian economists were thrown into a state of confusion and monetarism has come to the fore. First it was taken up by academic economists and economic journalists; later politicians seized on it as a new untried and politically acceptable method of tackling the crisis.

MONEY SUPPLY

The basic argument of the monetarists is that the price of things is determined by the amount of money available. If the number of goods is constant then if people have more money prices will be bid up. Monetarists deny that they believe that the relationship between the supply of money and inflation is precise or mechanical. But Milton Friedman, the most famous monetarist economist, has argued that changes in the money supply will be followed 6 to 9 months later by changes in income, and 6 to 9 months after that by changes in prices.

Friedman claims that corresponding to a particular state of the market for labour there is a 'natural level' of unemployment. To attempt to reduce unemployment below this natural level will lead in the long term to higher prices. He believes that full employment policies have led governments to overreact to temporary recessions by greatly increasing state expenditure. 'Pure' monetarists like Friedman believe that trade unions play no role in creating inflation. A union can improve the relative situation of one group of workers compared to others, but unions cannot perm-



anently raise the overall level of wages. Monetarists argue instead that unions can create unemployment if they drive firms into bankruptcy by paying out wage rises they cannot afford. By keeping the money supply tightly under control they aim to make unions 'responsible' for unemployment. Thus what monetarist policy means, when implemented, is severe deflation of the economy. Business stagnates, more and more firms go bankrupt and more and more people are thrown out of work. For monetarists this is the only cure for excessive state spending.

FREEDOM

Monetarism places great emphasis on freedom and free competition. Large companies are regarded in exactly the same way as individuals. The only threat to 'freedom' by monopolies is seen as coming from the unions. They threaten the 'free' flow of labour from one job to another by attempting to freeze existing patterns of employment and challenge the 'freedom' of employers to introduce new technology. For monetarists there is no place for unions in the natural order of things. They interpret the present reality of capitalist society in terms of an image of a world populated by small commodity producers who face each other on exactly equal terms in a free market.

The usual measure of the money supply (known as M3) includes not only the notes and coins in circulation but also the money contained in bank deposits. There are two ways in which it can be controlled. The first is by directly controlling the amount of notes printed to limit the increase in the money supply to a particular level. The second, about which monetarist economists express disapproval, aims to limit bank loans. This has been done both through increasing the Minimum Lending Rate for banks, thus keeping interest rates high, or through the now abandoned Supplementary Special Deposit Scheme (more commonly known as the 'corset') which allowed the Bank of England to impose penalties on banks which loaned too much.

INADEQUACIES

From a Marxist standpoint monetarist theory has a number of obvious inadequacies. An increase in the money supply is not a cause but a symptom of inflation. Monetarism is based on the dubious assumption that if governments only bal-

anced their budgets then capitalist economies would achieve some form of smooth equilibrium state. This ignores class conflict, the contradiction between capital and labour which lies at the heart of capitalism's inherent tendency towards crisis. Monetarists never explain adequately why state spending and the money supply have risen so dramatically in the twentieth century. It appears to be due to simple foolhardiness or misguided charity, rather than difficulties in the accumulation of capital and the threat from the working class. Like most other academic economists, monetarists spend much time fashioning models based on abstract ideal individuals and their maximisation of 'utilities' instead of examining the balance of class forces in the period since the Second World War.

ILLUSION

However it would be wrong to write off monetarism as based on illusion or myth. There are a number of reasons why it is useful to many capitalists at the present moment. The capitalist system has traditionally survived by periodic crises which wiped out inefficient and out-of-date firms and thereby made the system as a whole more efficient. Keynesianism had the effect of preventing crises developing to their full extent by covering over or delaying them. It prevented them from functioning as a 'cleansing mechanism' and 'shaking out' labour from unproductive and declining industries. This is clearly a major aim of monetarism.

ADVANTAGE

Another advantage of monetarism for capitalists is that it openly declares that unemployment is a major mechanism by which things can be put to right. Other economists are much more cagey about admitting that they regard unemployment as a good thing. Friedman sets out to challenge the view that the electorate votes on the basis of unemployment. He argues that inflation is much more crucial, claiming for example that it was because of this that Heath lost the election in 1970. Friedman even advances the astonishing theory that Allende lost his life in Chile because of the inflation his policies created. By supporting the deliberate production of unemployment, monetarism again shows itself to be in tune with the thinking of contemporary capitalists.

The Tories' Philosophy

The Thatcher government has now been in power for a year. With every bill that it presents to parliament, it is becoming clearer that it's policies in the different sectors form together a coherent whole. This article by *Pete Anderson* looks briefly at the whole range of Tory policies and the philosophy that lies behind them.

Monetarism is often seen in isolation as an economic theory. But its application in countries like Chile makes it clear that it is much more than that. Milton Friedman and other economic teachers at the University of Chicago ('the Chicago boys') are advisors to the Pinochet government in Chile, and there monetarism is being applied with a very heavy dose of repression. Independent trade unions are, of course, banned, and workplace militants frequently 'disappear'. Unemployment is over 25%— following Friedman's belief that there is a 'natural rate of unemployment' which is necessary to bring down wage demands and so, as he sees it, lessen the rate of inflation. Clearly, the Thatcher government sees connections between their monetarist policies and smashing trade union organisation. And it is in this context that the proposals in their Employment Bill must be seen. If they are able to roll back the closed shop, outlaw secondary picketing, enforce secret ballots— they will be well on the way to preparing the ground for a further attack on workers' rights. Added to

this there will be fast rising unemployment which the Tories hope will frighten workers into accepting smaller wage rises or even wage cuts.

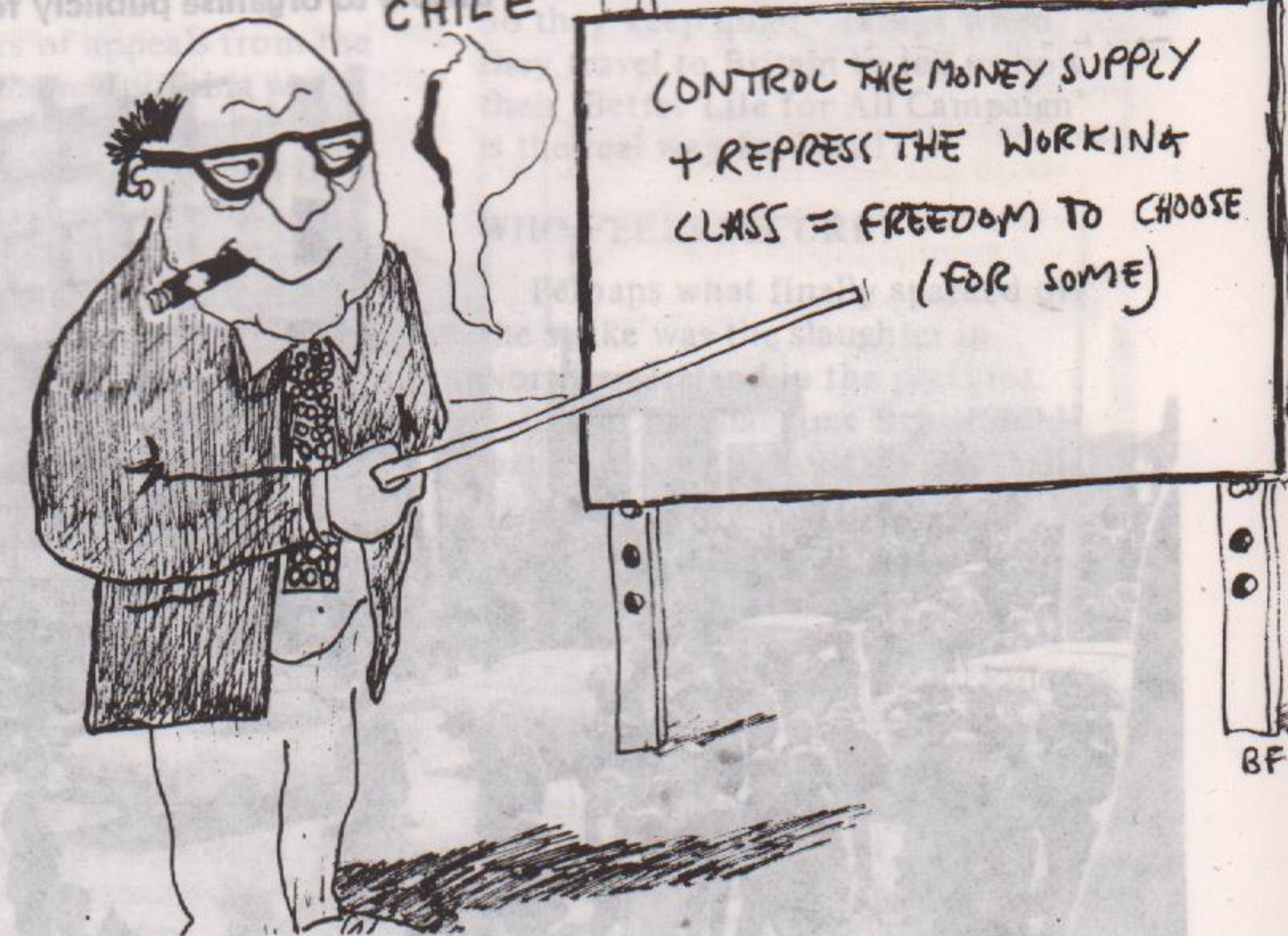
PLAYING ON DIVISIONS

An important part of the Tories' strategy is to play on the existing divisions in the working class. Many skilled workers voted for Thatcher and it is no accident that the current Leyland (the company is state owned) wage deal offers 5% to line workers but 10% to the skilled men. And at present Duffy is keeping the skilled men of the AEU at work— he is supporting the Thatcher policy of increasing differentials and 'incentives'. Women workers will be hit by the regressive proposals in the Employment Bill that erode maternity leave rights and, from all angles, the media is whipping up the 'a woman's place is in the home' idea— in an attempt to force women out of the job market. Black workers are threatened by the new restrictive immigration policies and by a forthcoming Nationality Act that, it is rumoured, will take away the right of residence of

some black men and women already settled here. And, of course, the unemployed got taken to the cleaners by the budget (e.g. earnings related benefits are going) as did strikers who will have £12 a week deducted from their unemployment benefit. By concentrating its fire on the weaker sectors of the class, the Thatcher government hopes to avoid a frontal confrontation with the labour movement that in the past has often failed to understand that an 'injury to one' really is 'an injury to all'.

RETURN TO THE MARKET

At the same time, the Tories are dismantling the welfare state and putting sectors of it back onto the market. So, for instance, they are encouraging council house sales, encouraging unions to enrol in private health schemes for their members, and are beginning a policy of state-assisted places in private schools— which attacks the foundations of comprehensive education. And, whether we like it or not, these moves are popular with many working people who have learnt from bitter experience to distrust anything run by the state and who believe that the only way forward lies in 'looking after number one'. And Labour by failing to argue for collective solutions (does it believe in them anymore?) has sold the pass to the naked individualism that is the backbone of Tory philosophy.



WHAT TO DO?

Clearly, there are important defensive struggles to be fought. The successful struggle against the Corrie Bill shows that reactionary legislation can be stopped. At the same time, we must realise that we will never get mass struggles to defend institutions like the NHS and council housing unless the fightback also includes a critique of these institutions as they existed under Labour. In particular we must break from Labour's vision of socialism as centralised state-planning and re-introduce a vision of socialism which is decentralised and where working people have control over the institutions which shape their lives. It is only by getting people to be involved in the process of saying what schools, housing, health care, jobs they want that we will develop the positive enthusiasm we need to roll back the advances the Tories have been making. For a while now, the Tories have been winning an increasing following for their ideas— this comes from their understanding that ideas are a material force in the class struggle. It's an understanding the Left neglects at its pe-

WE ARE FREER THAN OTHERS TORY ECONOMIC POLICY

IN PRACTICE the application of Keynesian economic theories by governments in post-war Britain has meant the attempt to reconcile the contradictions between capital and labour by incorporating trade union leaders into the state machine. From the 60s this attempt to contain class conflict has continued even without material concessions, such as steadily rising real wages and low unemployment, offered in the past. During the period of the social contract the Labour government offered only legislation like the Employment Protection Act, and the threat of the Tory alternative.

Capitalists recognise that to survive, the rate of exploitation of workers must be increased. They are only prepared to offer increases in the real value of wages if there are increases in productivity. It has been demonstrated that incomes policy can only successfully be imposed on workers temporarily (1948-50, 1966-69, 1975-79). Capitalists and the state have turned from a strategy of attempting to incorporate the working class to a more aggressive one, which at the same time confronts them in a much more indirect way than wages control.

CHANGE IN STRATEGY

This is where monetarist economic theory comes in as it gives support to such a change in strategy. Too often the dates of elections are given a much greater significance than they are due. Just as the crucial period for the adoption of Keynesianism was 1942-44 and not 1945, the crucial date as far as monetarism is concerned is not 1979 but 1976. It was in that year that the Labour government turned to the monetarist techniques of controls on the money supply and cash limits, although retaining other measures springing from very different approaches such as a wages policy and an interventionist industrial strategy. The fact that monetarism was already taken up by the previous Labour government explains why most Labour opposition to the last Tory budget was so muted and ritualistic. For many in the Labour party the differences at stake were questions of quantity and not quality.

There is no disputing the take up of monetarism by the Conservative party although in a recent interview in *The Observer* the Chancellor Geoffrey Howe was very coy about accepting the label of monetarist, saying that all reasonable people now agreed on the need to control the money supply. At the same time it would be wrong to imply that there has been a uniform swing to the right in the Tory party. Not only does there remain a Heathite wing (now apparently rechristened 'the wets'), but there is also a division between the pure monetarists (Joseph, Biffen) and the more pragmatic monetarists (Prior, Howe, St John-Stevan, Gilmour).

So far policy has been largely determined by the pragmatic monetarists. The cuts in public expenditure have been explained as much in traditional terms of reducing the tax burden and rewarding initiative as the new language of monetary targets. State support for industry has not been totally dismantled. For example the NEB and regional aid remain, although both have suffered cut backs. On the attitude towards the unions, Prior's strategy contained in the Employment Bill has won out. This avoids pushing the union leadership into such a corner that it will have no option but to put a major effort into a fightback.

OBSTACLES

What we have is far from the full scale monetarism advocated by economists such as Friedman. This should not surprise us. The collapse of one firm will hurt many others which make considerable profits through acting as suppliers. What monetarism means in practice is a series of bankruptcies and capitalists are liable to modify their perspective if they think it might be they who will suffer. Thus many are wary of taking monetarism too far. Also, while economists may conclude that unions have nothing to do with inflation, few politicians will accept the same position. Outside the universities there is a much greater awareness of the political obstacles to the implementation of a full scale monetarist policy.

Friedman has talked of the transitional period before the economy gets back on a sound basis being ten years, which is an undreamt of period



'There is every reason to suppose that the poor benefit from the wealth of others.' Sir Keith Joseph and Jonathon Sumption in their book: *Equality*

for a practical politician. In 1969 Richard Nixon in the USA committed his government to a monetarist strategy. Two years later he capitulated to growing pressures and introduced extensive wage and price controls. Already there is a great deal of speculation as to whether the Thatcher government will be forced to follow the example of the Heath one and make a U-turn.

BUDGETS

Monetarism has served as a valuable rallying cry and source of academic respectability for those arguing for cuts in public expenditure. The two budgets introduced so far by the Conservative government have been as significant for this as for the measures affecting the money supply. The June 1979 budget cut expenditure by £3,000 million (along with a sale of assets worth £1,000 million) and set a target for the growth of the money supply at 7-11%. The March 1980 budget cut spending by £4,700 million in 1981-1982 and £10,000 million in 1982-1983. State spending which has grown by 6.5% in the past three years faces a drop of 4.5% between now and 1983-1984. A progressive reduction of the money supply target has been laid out with it falling to 4-8% by 1983-84.

By themselves falls in the quantitative level of state spending only tell us so much about what is going on. We have to look at the specific changes in programmes to see the cuts as a process of restructuring of social relations in favour of capital (see the article in the February issue of *Big Flame*). Although it may seem that the present government is, in the name of monetarism, returning to the market the power to determine the course of the economy, it is introducing ever stricter control over the details of exactly what state expenditure goes on in every area.

The tight grip on the money supply over the next few years will mean that business will stagnate. It seems that the intention of the government is to use the oil revenue to prevent the recession developing too much in this period of extremely limited economic growth accompanied by more cuts and ever increasing unemployment. Then in 1982-83 as the next election approaches there will be more tax cuts to follow those contained in the June 1979 budget. This is a long way off and there is plenty of time before that for working class resistance to grow and force a change in course. However the prospects for at least the next few months, as cuts work their way through, can only be very gloomy.

The Film, The Govt., ...And Now The Book

You've seen the film (Milton Friedman on TV), experienced the government (Mrs. Thatcher's) now read the book—*Equality* by Sir Keith Joseph and Jonathon Sumption.*

'Men are so constituted that it is natural for them to pursue private rather than public ends.' Statements like these are an unmistakable warning that this latest attack on the equal society will be couched at the same folksy level as Friedman's recent tv series. Here's another example of Sir Keith's formidable intellectual brilliance:

'There is every reason to suppose that the poor benefit by the wealth of others. But even those who reject this view are hard put to it to discover any harm which inequality does to the poor.'

It may come as a shock to discover such a shaky basis for a philosophy, but it is so. Nonetheless, this slender work of political theory represents the thinking of the Prime Minister and her key Ministers. And from that point of view alone is it worth reading.

WRETCHED

The point made by the book is simple. 'Equal societies are not contented ones but wretched societies based on the frustrations of ordinary human instincts.' Inequality, conversely, does

the poor no harm, and indeed benefits them. Without the striving for personal gain, we would all be the poorer, for ambition is the motor of advance and the bedrock of liberty. You've heard it all before. In fact, any conservative politician could have said the same 50, 100, or even 150 years ago. But not 30 years ago. *Equality* reflects the break with the post-war consensus-style Tory politics and reading it, it becomes easier to understand the determination of this government to carry through its policies regardless of the social consequences.

SKINS

The plain fact is that Joseph and Sumption do not accept that inequality is bad or that it's the job of the state to eradicate it. There's just one exception:

'It may be that the rich recognise that their interests are served by political stability and that political stability can only be had if the differences between rich and poor are kept within bounds.'

The message is clear: don't expect any mercy from the Tories under Thatcher and Joseph. They will give way only to save their political skins.

Ernie Doe

**Equality* by Sir Keith Joseph and Jonathon Sumption; John Murray £4.95.



'No illusions about parliaments importance'

A Revolutionary MP in Denmark talks to Big Flame.

For most revolutionary groups the prospect of getting any of their members elected to parliament is a remote one. But VS (Left Socialist), the Danish group in the European revolutionary co-ordination, has 6 MPs (out of 160) in the Danish parliament and sees their presence in parliament as an integral part of their political activity. On a holiday in Copenhagen, two members of *Big Flame* went to the Danish parliament to interview Thio Tyroll, one of VS's members of parliament.

BF: You must find being in Parliament a very alienating business. Not many MPs are working class.

It was very difficult at first. I've been an engineering worker all my life and found it difficult to deal with the mountains of paper you have to go through every day. Many of the issues that come up are issues which have not been discussed in VS—and those of us in parliament have to take a position on them quickly; it can be very difficult.

I'm used to speaking in labour movement meetings where people are in sympathy with what you are saying—in parliament we are talking in front of an incredulous audience who often doesn't even bother to listen to what we are saying—that can be very undermining. I expected personal relations with bourgeois politicians to be very bad—I thought they would spit at us. In fact, they are very polite to us, though after an appearance on television I am always told 'you were too aggressive'—which I interpret to mean that I have done a good job.

BF: What about your relation with Social-Democracy and its members (who now lead a minority government)?

Well, of course, at a personal level we have much more in common with the social democrat MPs—many of them have roots in the working class. But politically, relations are quite antagonistic—they don't appreciate the presence of VS because it reminds them of the days when they were on the side of the working class. Our response is that we will support all reforms that improve the living conditions of working people but we will not support social-democracy when, for instance, it carries through a programme of cuts in public expenditure.

BF: Presumably, Social-Democracy is at the centre of politics in Denmark?

In 1978-79, they governed in a coalition with bourgeois parties that pushed forward very fast the process of incorporating the trade unions into the machinery of government. Together with the employers and the state the unions were brought into tri-part-

ite structures at both national and local levels. We saw this move towards the corporate state as very dangerous and we were very critical of social democracy for having promoted it.

BF: How does VS attack politically this tendency to corporatism?

Our position is to always stress the need for the working class to act directly rather than through the institutions of parliamentary democracy. For instance, recently the government brought out a bill in favour of an occupational health service that would have been administered by the state. VS did not support the proposal—our view is that workers should fight to get money to run occupational health services themselves. And in our plan for the health service we want health centres under local popular control with an orientation towards preventative medicine. At present, only 5% of the health budget goes on preventative medicine.

BF: Does having members in parliament pose any political problems for VS?

It does in the sense that most people come first into contact with VS through the appearances of our MPs in the media and through our election campaigns—so this conditions how they see the organisation. Also it is true that it is easier to argue for overall political solutions than to prioritise grass roots labour movement work. We are currently having a debate in VS about the role we should give to reform plans. My own feeling is that there is always a danger for the MPs of VS to get cut off from the rest of the organisation—politically as well as organisationally. The key to preventing this happening is to make sure that the branches and the commissions of the party are in constant contact with the MPs. I am not in parliament because I have any illusions about its importance. I am here as a tribune to represent working class activity and struggle that is going on outside parliament.

Fortunately, VS has a constitutional rule that its members cannot be MP for longer than 7 years—so there's no danger of my becoming a regular in this place!

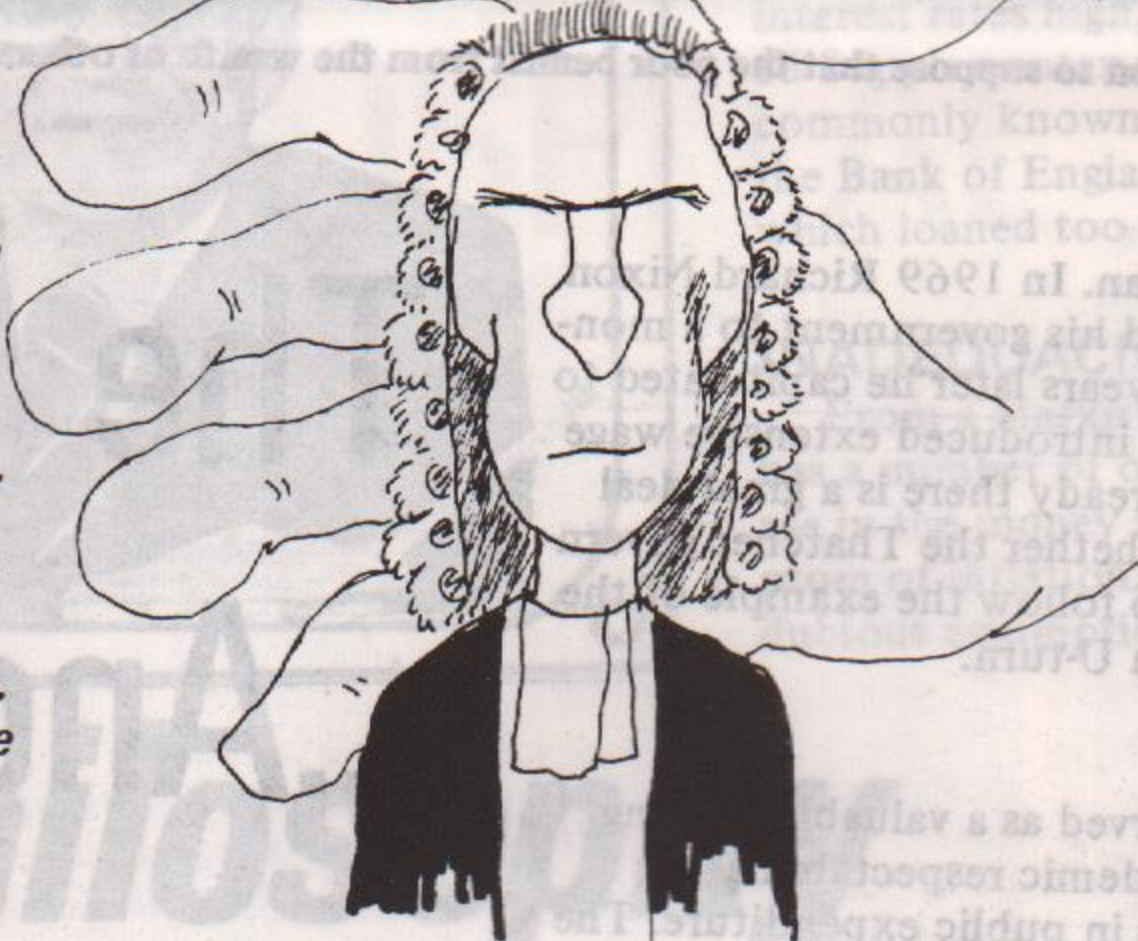
A WONDERFUL INSTITUTION... THE JUDICIARY...



OF INDEPENDANT MIND... SAFEGUARD OF OUR LIBERTY...



BASTION OF OUR ANCIENT RIGHTS A FREE NATION



PRIOR WARNING

JIM PRIOR is NO clown at the Thatcher circus. He is a cunning and desperately ambitious Tory politician.

He has skillfully used the public squabble in the pro-Tory press, casting him as a softly-softly underdog, soft on the unions and out of step with the hardline Thatcher cabinet.

Common as Muck



This month we begin the first of a regular column from our parliamentary correspondent, Phil Trator

TACTICS

Although Prior, as Employment Secretary, has differences about timing and tactics on his Employment Bill, the Cabinet is firmly united to curb effective trade union action, whether official or unofficial.

His public humiliation by Thatcher on TV, his theatrical threats of resignation, have helped to take the spotlight off the Employment Bill and trivialise the real issues into a clash of personalities.

VISION

Prior is more than a crude Tory union basher. He has a long term vision. It is not just turning the clock back, but aims step by step to abolish eventually all legal immunities for trade unions, and have a system of legally enforceable contracts of employment.

Right wing die hards in the Tory party may yet force Thatcher to dump Prior. If the bill, expected to be law by the summer, proves unworkable in its present form, the target may change from individuals to trade union funds, coupled with a complete ban on secondary action.

FRIGHTENING

Prior gave a frightening preview of his Tory dream under searching cross examination, when he gave evidence to the back bench employment Select Committee of MPs (20.2.80).

'I think in an ideal world and if one could show over a period of time that the measures we are taking are fair and just and produce greater prosperity for the workforce and for union members...

That it would be perfectly reasonable to move on, and to say that there is really no need in a modern society for immunities because what could happen is completely enforceable contracts and those contracts should be enforced, as much on employers to keep them to their contracts as it should be on trade unionists.'

HEEL

The achilles heel of the bill, which Thatcher and Prior fully realise, is that defiance will have to be matched by punishment. At the end of the line it will be a human being punished, whether a general secretary of a trade union or an individual striker.

That fear of martyrs was dramatically rekindled by Yorkshire miners president Arthur Scargill, when he told MPs he was ready to go to prison if necessary to resist the bill:

Throughout history, there have been innumerable examples of workers refusing to abide by laws which were undemocratic. Parliament itself would not exist in its present form had people not defied the law. Women would not have won the right to vote had it not been for extra-parliamentary action and their determination to struggle and defy the law.

I cannot, in conscience, agree to abide by the provisions of the Employment Bill. I will oppose the Bill, if and when it becomes law, in the same way that the trade union movement opposed the 1971 Industrial Relations Act.

sub advertisements

CHARTIST

Magazine of Socialist Analysis for Labour and the Left Spring 1980 (No.79) Out Now!
Focus on the Cuts; Hounslow Hospital; Ted Knight interview and counter-strategy. Survey: South Africa; Euro-communism. Also: State repression; Tory Racism Plus: Reviews, Marcuse. 60 Loughborough Road, London SW
Available from Left Bookshops or 50p plus 15p p&p from Chartist Publications 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9. Five issues pa-Subscription \$3

NORTH LONDON BIG FLAME PUBLIC MEETING: 7:30 pm Wednesday 30th April: 'Fighting Racism and Fascism: What Now?' Speakers from Big Flame and CAIL. Hemingford Arms, Hemingford Rd., NI

BIRMINGHAM BIG FLAME Discussion meeting on our new anti-racist and anti-fascist pamphlet 'The Past Against Our Future'. Monday 19, 7.45 pm at the White Lion, Bristol Street (opposite Night Out).

Sheffield Big Flame Public Meeting Sunday 18 May, 'Fighting Racism' 7.30 pm Prince of Wales Pub, Division Street.

Sheffield 14 May, TUC Day of Action March, Assemble 10.30am Carlyle Street to City Hall

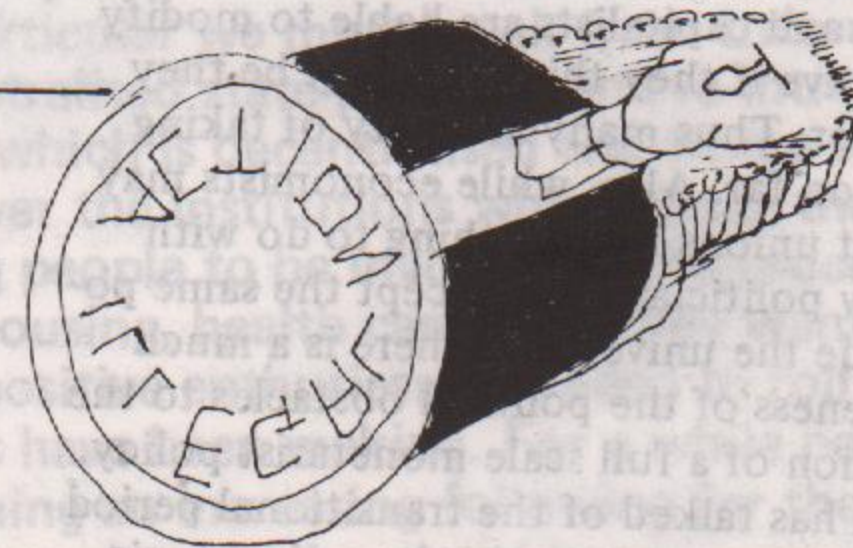
INFORMATION MEETING ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN EUROPE. With speakers from the groups attending the European Co-ordination - VS (Denmark), OCT (France), MC (Spain), DP (Italy) etc. Friday May 2, Small Hall Conway Hall, Red Lion Square 7.30 pm. (Meeting organised jointly by SWP and Big Flame)

A Nurseries Action Conference will be held in Nottingham on Saturday, 17th May. The all-day action workshop, in the Portland Building, Nottingham University, has been called by the Save Our Nurseries Campaign.

It is intended to bring together all groups and individuals involved in the struggle for nursery provision, to collate information and enable them to make a united stand. The emphasis of the conference will be on practical exchange of ideas.

A creche will be provided and all trains to Nottingham on 17th May will be met between 9-10am.

Further info: S.O.N., phone (0602)-410437 (Day) and (0602)-583706 (Evening);



SOVIET UNION TODAY Flicker of Feminism



Photo: Comintern, Vostok on Page 14

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE

Article and photos by Bridget Foster

The *Almanac* is by no means a final, or a definitive statement on the part of the women who wrote it. On the contrary, it represents the first tentative exploration of their own experience of oppression. Importantly, the editorial urges women to write in and contribute their own experiences. The aim is to develop a women's movement. *'We can be sure that no-one but ourselves will help us. It is by coming together to talk about our bitterness and suffering, by understanding and exchanging our own experiences, that we shall be able to find a solution'*, the editorial writes.

The contributions to the *Almanac* are quite various. They include poems, short stories and personal histories. Some deal with quite practical problems, others with broader questions of women's future. Some are religious. What is remarkable for Western feminists is their use of concepts such as 'sexism', and 'patriarchy', since Western feminist texts are generally unheard of in the S.U., even in intellectual circles.

HUMILIATING

A major theme running through all of the *'Almanac'* is the gap between the official line on women and the reality of women's lives. The values of society are male-defined, explain the Soviet women, and the 'women's question' is generally thought to be settled or insignificant. However, what rights to choose have Soviet women? Mothers of ten may get a medal for their services to the community, but they don't necessarily get decent housing or a nursery place. Creches are not community controlled and it is women who have to take time off when their children are sick. Abortion is on demand, but women are often treated in a brutal and humiliating way, as in the Archangelsk 'meat mincer' abortion clinic described in the *Almanac*.

DRUNK

Other contributions to the *Almanac* point out the sexual division of labour inside the home with men specifying which jobs they will do or 'help' with. Housework is still considered a 'female task'. In one article men's behaviour on their return from work is categorized in two ways: either they go out and get drunk and get into fights. Or they lounge about on the sofa reading the newspaper or watching TV. In bringing home a wage men believe they have fulfilled their obligations. This is in sharp contrast to the amount of effort required by women to run a Soviet home with shortages and literally hours spent queuing for food and household goods, on top of a full time job, and perhaps the creche being some distance from home.

COLLECTIVE

Other contributions to the *Almanac* point out the sexual division of labour outside the home, in particular to the predominance of men in positions of political power. Moreover, the solution that is being sought in the *'Almanac'* is by no means simply an economic one. What the women are demanding is a total redefinition of what is valued in society: that is

A feminist, underground publication called *Almanac: Women and Russia* has just appeared in Leningrad. It's the first flicker of feminism in the Soviet Union since the 20s. There were women then such as Alexandra Kollantai who were fighting explicitly against women's oppression and demanding for Soviet women the real opportunity to participate fully in society. That *real* opportunity has never been theirs. Instead, women have borne a double

burden: unpaid domestic work in the home *plus* full time paid work outside. Patriarchy—the entire system by which women are kept in submission, both in practical ways and through the images we are offered of ourselves—has never been recognized in the Soviet Union, let alone consistently tackled. But now, in the feminist *Almanac* women in the Soviet Union are recognizing their oppression and joining together to fight against it.



Photo: Comintern, Vostok on Page 14

they do not want to simply do well in male defined terms, but to create an alternative, feminist culture in which women can inject their capacity to love and create caring relationships. The editorial asserts that in the S.U. up until now women have pursued only individual solutions—normally by not having children. But what the *Almanac* is calling for is a *collective* response on the part of Soviet women, and ultimately a collective solution.

The *Almanac* is at present being translated for publication in Britain

Europe'. As feminists and socialists in the group we believe that it is very important to look at the position of women in Eastern Europe, so as to demonstrate that the oppression of women is integral to the political systems in the East as it is in the West.

Our experience and knowledge of Eastern Europe will, we hope, help to inform the women's movement in the West.

The *Almanac* for the first time has provided the 'Women in Eastern Europe' group with something very

formation always makes solidarity work with Eastern Europe very difficult. Also given the ritualized use of socialist language in Eastern Europe it can be difficult to distinguish from what perspective criticisms are being made and whether, as feminists and socialists, we can support them. We may have individual reservations about the *Almanac* (in particular the religious aspects), but clearly this first call from Soviet women must be supported by our publishing the *Almanac* and by defending the women who are being harassed.

HYPOCRISY

At this stage in the new cold war a socialist feminist perspective can be an extremely useful way of cutting through bourgeois hypocrisy towards the East, on the one hand, and also through the dogmatic, de-personalized analyses of the S.U. on the part of the Left. Crucially, a society is not socialist that is based on the subordination of women. East and West both depend on the oppression of women. By joining together as feminists, women in both can give each

EL SALVADOR - UNCLE SAM UNMASKS

The murder of Archbishop Oscar Amulfo Romero in March, and the deaths that accompanied his massively attended funeral on 2 April, points to a serious conclusion: El Salvador is facing outright civil war. Clashes between the popular organizations and the military and paramilitary forces continue to grow, repression in the countryside is so great that thousands of peasants are reported to be fleeing to neighbouring countries, and US moral and material intervention on the side of the present government is now totally undisguised.

REFORM WITH REPRESSION

It cannot be denied that the 'liberal' coup of October 1979 which overthrew the dictator Humberto Romero was a step forward. But the Christian Democrat-backed military/civilian government then set up (with enthusiastic US support) has proved unable, or unwilling, to make the structural changes necessary to fulfill its promises of reform, or to control the extreme right—the old oligarchy of '14 families'—and its terrorist methods.

SIEGE

Two successive juntas have slid further and further into what is now an official policy of 'reform with repression'—repression being the price to be paid for reform. On the very day the government's agrarian reform programme was announced, so was a state of siege. Now the military are occupying farms, ostensibly to secure them for popular ownership, but really as a cover for wholesale peasant massacres.

MASSIVE MILITARY AID

Throughout all this, US presence has become increasingly clear. Its support of the original reformist line last October was in the hope of preventing another Nicaragua. Finding that the growth and strength of the popular revolutionary organizations could not be stopped by half-hearted reforms, it has turned to tougher methods, and is now pouring in military aid in the form of money, arms, and advisors. This month Congress has voted \$5.7 million in immediate military aid to El Salvador. In addition a large military aid package will go to next-door Honduras

DISILLUSION AND UNITY

As the masks fall from both the Salvadorean regime and its big backer, right and left within the country have become polarized. Most of the government have resigned, and though the Christian Democratic party is still officially part of the government, many CDs, disillusioned with the government's failure to implement the agrarian reform or to control the repressive forces of the right, have moved sharply to the left. Archbishop Romero's death, coming after a week of peasant massacres and his denunciation of them, was the last straw for many.

In January the three revolutionary left groups (FAPU—Popular Unified Front for Action; BPR—Revolutionary Popular Bloc; LP-28—Popular Leagues of 28 February) and the Communist party (UDN—Democratic Nationalist Union) signed a joint call for unity; this led to the formation of the Revolutionary Co-ordination of the Masses, which is now the largest and most representative force on the left. Social Democrats, including the disaffected left Christian Democrats, have formed a Social Democratic Front, which supports the RCM.

ARMED

There is tighter coordination between the armed wings of the FAPU, BPR, and LP-28, and between them and their civilian wings. Growing numbers of people are taking up arms but although the armed groups declared themselves on a war footing after Archbishop Romero's death, it's not at all clear whether they could muster the forces for a full-scale battle.

It is too early yet to say whether El Salvador will be another Nicaragua or whether the popular forces will succeed in their struggle. But it can be said that out of wildly escalating violence and massive, calculated repression, the Salvadorean people are forging a revolutionary unity that deserves and needs our solidarity.

Amanda A.



Secondary school students from the student sector of FAPU.



February 1980: a group of ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) militants set up a banner in a district of San Salvador. Over loudhailers they speak for 10-15 minutes, explaining the situation in the country and urging the people to join them in the struggle.

Portuguese Sentence Shock

Even the prosecution was taken aback by the severity of the sentences pronounced in a trial of Portuguese left-wingers. Isobel do Carmo and Carlos Antunes, prominent members of the PRP, were given 11 and 15 years for what one judge called 'totally political' crimes.

They had been charged with moral responsibility, as party leaders, for a bank robbery and other activities supposedly carried out by other PRP-ers. A total of 66 years of imprisonment were imposed on 6 militants.

The severity of the sentences is in marked contrast to the light penalties handed out to right-wingers convicted of bombing offences and attacks on socialists.

FRAGMENTED

The trial has come at a bad time for the Portuguese workers movement. A right-wing government is systematically dismantling the gains following the overthrow of fascism in April 1974. In the south, the collective farms are being handed

back to their previous owners, under the supervision of the machine guns and armoured cars of the National Republican Guard. Only recently a rally to protest against the government's agricultural policies and called by the Communist Party attracted up to 100,000 in the Southern town of Evora. But opposition to the growing strength and confidence of the right is highly fragmented.

MURDER

A farmworker, who was absolved five years ago by a people's court of the killing of his former employee—the court convicted the dead man instead—has just been sentenced to four years for murder. Right-wing judges—many of them staunch supporters of the pre-74 regime—are losing no time in putting their opponents behind bars.



Women demonstrating under the FAPU banner.

Photo: Contemporary Archive on Latin America

Photo: Jose Lavanderos

Photo: Contemporary Archive on Latin America

IRAN: THE REALITY IS MUCH MORE

COMPLEX THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE

In coverage of Iran in the West—including Left coverage—the emphasis is placed on the reactionary aspects of the revolution. But there is another side, a side that immediately strikes a visitor to the country. This involves both a remarkable level of politicisation amongst ordinary people and a world of new possibilities for the left.

Countless demonstrations, pickets, and other forms of street protest; slogans on every wall, door, bank, hotel and monument; a plethora of newspapers, leaflets and posters; political meetings in even the smallest towns and villages; regular elections...

These forms of mass political expression are part of day-to-day life in Iran today. They are the clearest sign that a revolution has taken place. They act as a barometer of popular support for the Government. And, at the same time, they provide considerable grounds for optimism that the revolution will continue. The revolution may have given birth to a weird and whimsical creature (the new regime), but it had other babies too, and they are a lot healthier than their original frailty suggested.

DILEMMA

So the days are past when political activity was stifled in the extreme, and gone is most of the apparatus that achieved this. With the revolution people have, on a massive scale, seen popular protest work. It's a lesson that no-one can easily forget, and it's a lesson that works, both for the regime (when hundreds of thousands of people respond to Government calls for street protest) and against it (when any kind of displeasure or hardship can spark a protest).

The new regime's dilemma was apparent from the outset. In response to one of Khomeini's first pronouncements—regarding the chador, or body-length veil—thousands of women came out on the streets to insist on the right to choose what they should wear. A concession was won.

Initially, such anti-Government protests were the exception, but with two massive Left-wing organisations, and several smaller ones, emerging out of the revolution; with unemployment at 20-30% and inflation higher; and with all the social conditions of the Shah's regime continuing if not worsening, protests were bound to grow.

ARBITRARY

The regime has taken most of the mass protests in its stride to-date, partly by treating the Left with a relatively arbitrary mixture of cooption, demagoguery, manipulation and repression; partly through its own ability to bring out hundreds of thousands of supporters at the drop of a hat; and partly because it has made concessions in face of the most threatening pressures. All of which poses a number of dilemmas for the Left:

- the Left organisations have freedoms and opportunities undreamt of under the Shah. At the same time, the potential for a renewed wave of repression is very real.

- there is a plethora of radical newspapers, which are widely available despite the official ban imposed on most of them. But newspaper sellers, public meetings and demonstrations are often subject to attack by the more militant supporters of the regime.

- members of Left organisations, even semi-legal ones, can stand for election to Parliament. But elections are rigged with impunity, to prevent a meaningful Left presence in Parliament. Thus the most recent elections produced only 4 Left 'MPs', when 5 were expected in Tehran alone.

- leading members of the Left have had the opportunity to debate on TV with Bani-Sadr, the President, and thus present their views directly to millions of people. But, for the most part, TV and radio act as a propaganda machine for the Government.



LEFT ATTACKED

A recent example of the latter came a day after the Iranian New Year, in mid-March. With early election results indicating a substantial vote for anti-Government forces, especially the large 'Islamic Marxist' Mujahedeen organisation, Khomeini devoted a long speech to attacking the Left—especially those who tried to 'combine Islam with foreign ideologies'!

Meanwhile the Left continues to grow, especially in more secular areas like Tehran (its South excluded) and

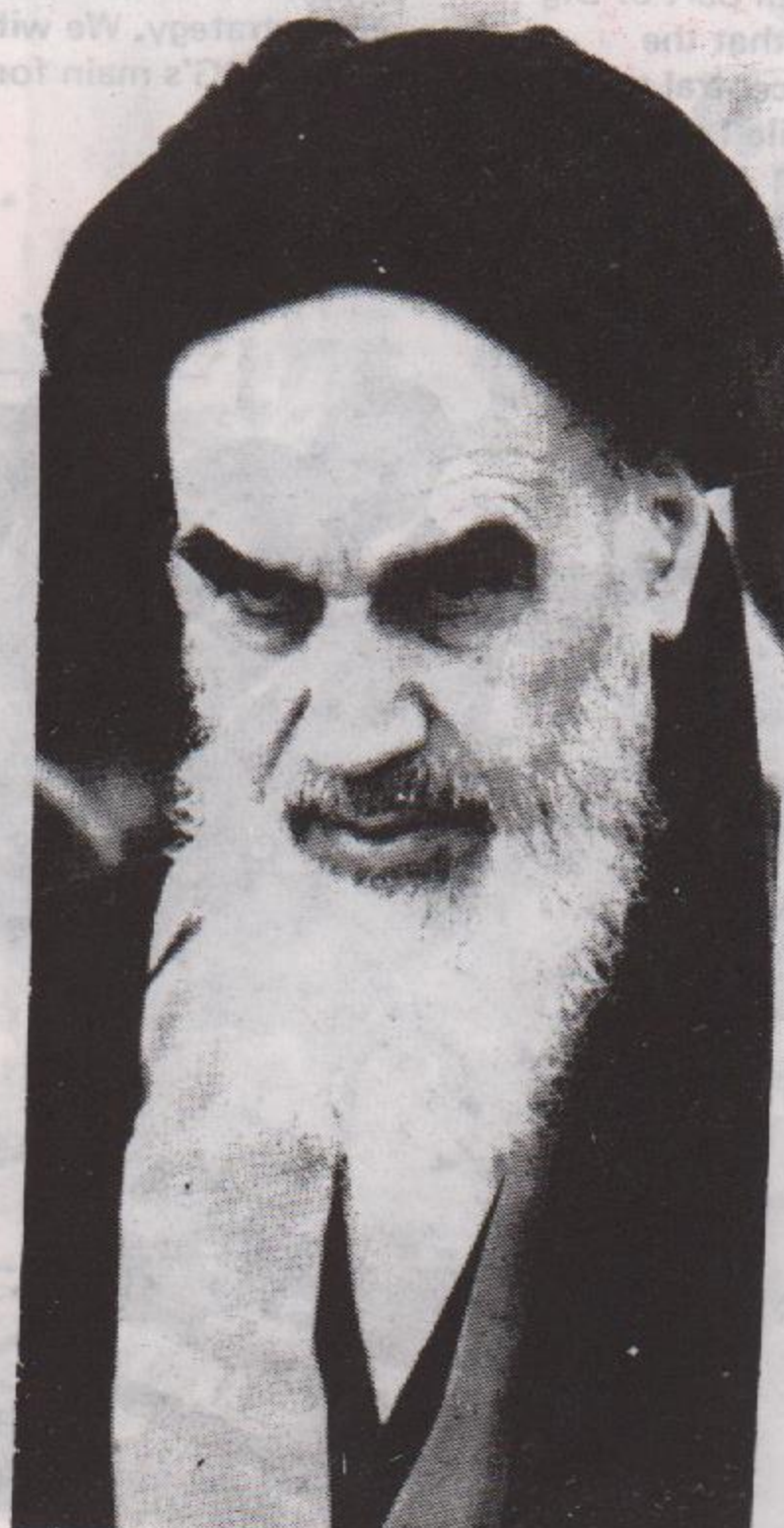
the provinces around the Caspian Sea. I heard it suggested that the weekly paper of the Mujahedeen has a distribution of up to one million copies, and that the other large organisation, the Fedayeen (independent Marxist-Leninist) has a million or more sympathisers around the country—and this with an adult population of 16-18 million. Slight exaggeration perhaps, but certainly there are areas where they have a bookstall or bookshop in even the smallest villages, and they have both demonstrated their ability to attract huge numbers to meetings.

STEREOTYPES

The stereotyped views of Iran in the West do not match the more complex reality. While there is much brutal truth in the general picture of reaction and repression, there is much more besides. Women's oppression is the most obvious and most deeply embedded, but socialist women are beginning to get organised and already have one or two minor successes to their credit. Kurdish nationalists remain strong and are increasingly coming under the influence of the Left—many people say that it is the Kurds who have opened up all the Left's opportunities, and that their growing strength is a positive sign for all progressive forces.

And considerable optimism surrounds the revival of workers' councils, or shura, which seem to be recovering from a period when Islamic forces held sway. These shura, along with the women's organisations, are two of the key areas in which progress has to be achieved if the revolution is to be taken further.

By Ben Johnson



Bolivian Death Squad Strikes

It looks as though Argentine methods of right wing terror have begun to spread to the neighbouring country of Bolivia. At the end of March the body of a respected Jesuit journalist and film critic Luis Espinal, was found on the road to La Paz airport. He had been kidnapped by extreme right wing forces on Saturday evening, tortured and shot.

At once the central Bolivian labour federation (COB) strongly condemned the act as that of 'fascism trying to produce an atmosphere of chaos which will justify calling for a military takeover'. The Church demanded an immediate investigation into the murder and the president, Lydia Gueiler called for a full police enquiry. The journalists' union called a 24-hour stoppage on Tuesday.

ATMOSPHERE

Army high command and the right are claiming that the left killed Espinal to discredit the armed forces. On the other hand recently retired interior minister, Jorge Selum Vaca Diez claims that a terrorist group is being organised to support the next coup.

The atmosphere of terror remains. Several Bolivian journalists have expressed fear for their lives. The following week...

bombs exploded in two local radio stations.

AQUI

Luis Espinal was founder and editor of the left wing weekly, *Aqui*. His paper had in February revealed the existence of a secret document from the army's intelligence service listing journalists and media workers classified as 'enemies of the armed forces' and 'left extremists' and naming *Aqui* and its staff. His death marks a sudden escalation in the struggle for a free press in Bolivia and a sinister new departure in the activities of the extreme right in a country where acts of terror of this kind have been rare.

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM THE BOLIVIA COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, c/o 1 Cambridge...

DEATH OF THE THINKER REVOLUTIONARY

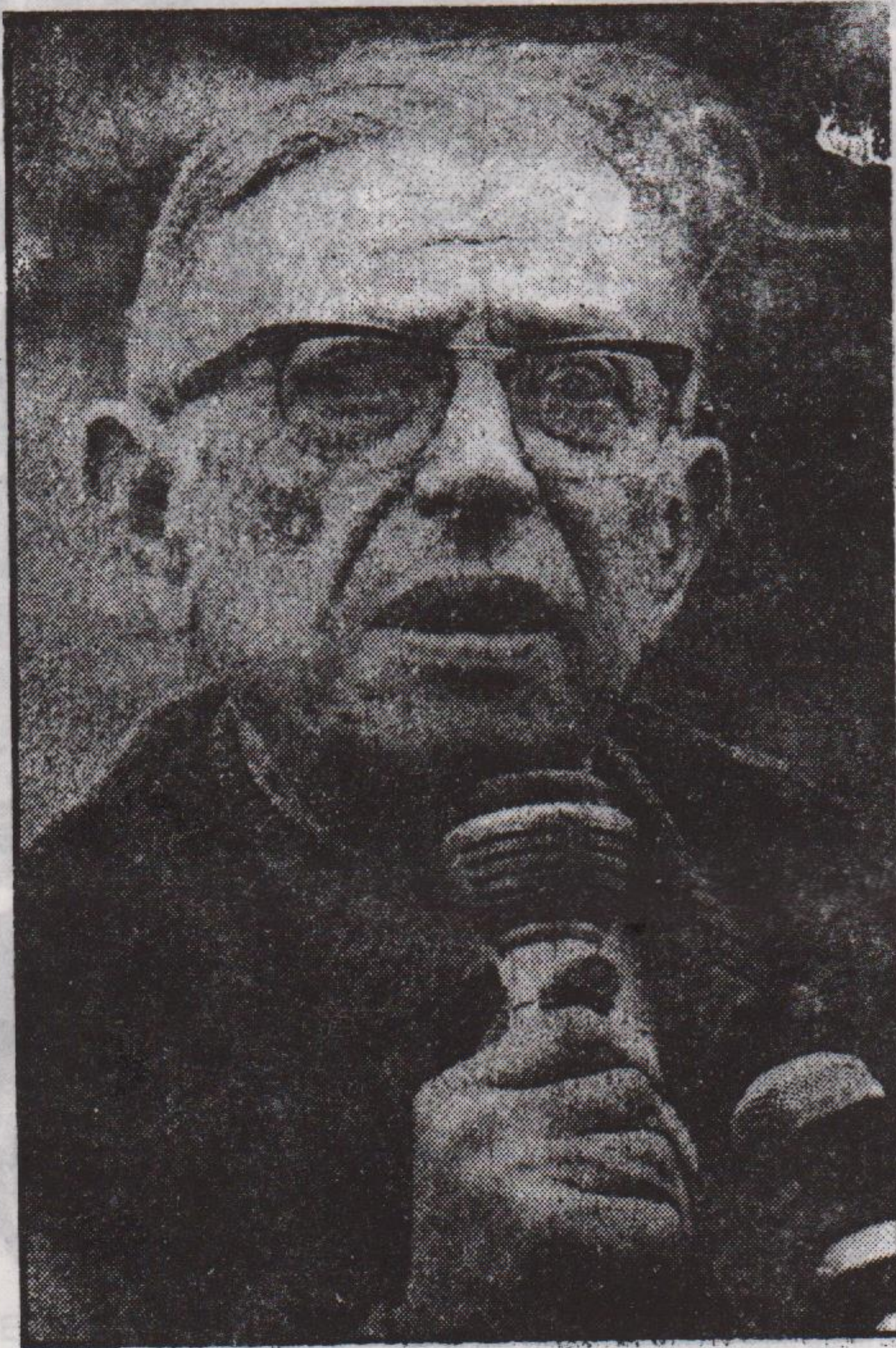
SARTRE ISN'T

Bourgeois newspapers and their readers are all falling over backwards to remind us what a great writer Jean Paul Sartre was, not that they praised him much when he was alive.

But our memory of Sartre is different—for us on the revolutionary left, he was a friend and an inspiration. His inspiration was in reminding two generations of socialists that it is possible to be both an intellectual and committed to revolutionary politics. And Sartre's

commitment was magnificent: he was active in the French resistance against the Germans in World War 2, supplied arms to the Algerian liberation movement in the 1950's and took over the editorship of many revolutionary newspapers when it became clear that the French government would not arrest someone of his eminence—other editors had gone to jail. And his commitment extended to the personal support he and Simone de Beauvoir (his friend, comrade, and lover during 50 years) gave to so

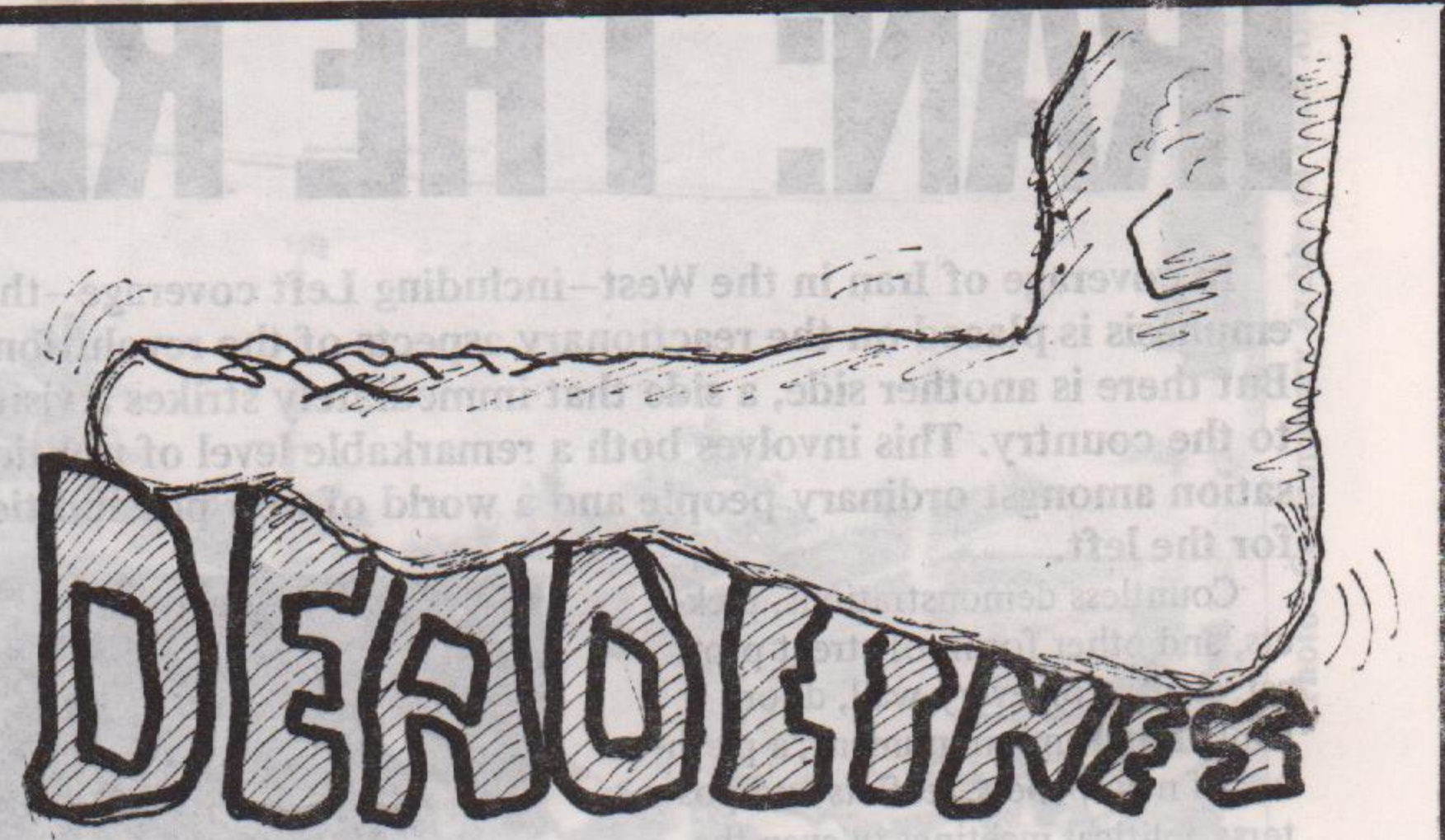
Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980)



many French comrades—their table at a Paris restaurant was always a gathering point for political discussion and support.

Sartre's writings show a continuous move towards Marxism and the class struggle. In the 1950s he broke with the Existentialist ideas that he had helped to develop in the post-war period. But his trajectory towards Marxism was a difficult and painful intellectual process as Sartre sought to reconcile the needs of the collective (the class) with the freedom of the individual that remained a corner-stone of his thinking. Many times Sartre contemplated joining the French Communist Party but events like the Soviet invasion of Hungary (in 1956) and Czechoslovakia (in 1968), which the party supported, were unacceptable to a libertarian socialist like Sartre. The events of May 1968 in France convinced Sartre that socialism and freedom were compatible. And in the early 1970s, he became very involved in the French Maoist movement whose paper (La Cause du Peuple) he edited. But events in China since the death of Mao and the war between Cambodia and Vietnam seriously troubled Sartre and once again he began to question the relationship between Marxism, socialism, and freedom of the individual. Through all his periods of doubts and questioning, Sartre's support for the comrades never wavered. Last year, almost totally blind and 74 years of age, he gave a press conference with Simone de Beauvoir in Rome in support of the Italian autonomists who had been arrested by an Italian state desperate to show that it was 'doing something about terrorism'.

For most of Sartre's life, the choice facing intellectuals was to be either an apologist of capitalism or a lackey of Stalinism. Together with a few others like Marcuse, Nizan and Korsch, Sartre kept alive a tradition of left-wing intellectuals who put the ideals of socialism before the dictates of organisations. The best way we can express our gratitude to them is by using the intellectual freedom they fought for us to have.



This month the layout team has decided to put its collective foot down and make sure copy dates are kept to next time. We have to take a hard line to preserve our sanity and health. So from next time the copy dates will be the Wednesday before the paper for news and the Wednesday before that for features. If anything arrives after that IT WILL NOT GO IN. Remember mail is slow and sometimes opened before it gets to us so allow time for that—if you have a news story which may need an update you can ring that through after you've sent the article in.

Newspaper Collective Meeting	Deadlines for next edition—
10 May	Features: 28 May
Meeting with branch delegates	News: 11 June
11 May	Lay-out: 14/15 June

YOU WILL have seen, from the deadline dates, that no newspaper will be produced next month. The gap is to give the newspaper collective and the organisation time to think.

Unlike most of the left press, Big Flame has no paid, full-time journalists. The demands of producing an edition every month, living, and other political activity, spare us almost no time to think about what we're doing.

And we feel we can't put off any longer the pressing need for a serious discussion about the future of our paper. The last Big Flame conference charged the collective with assessing the possibilities for a fortnightly and, whatever happened, to prepare plans to improve the paper. Several documents have been written by members of the collective and we would

like to get together to formulate a common view about how the paper should develop. In addition, we are anxious to resolve the problems that have recently arisen over production and sales.

So we won't be taking the next production weekend off. We'll be meeting on the Saturday and on Sunday we would like to discuss our plans with our readers. Then, we hope to present some clear proposals to the organisation. We are writing to Big Flame branches at greater length to explain the reasons for our decision and to ask them to send delegates to our meeting on Sunday, 11th May, in Liverpool. Please ensure that your branch arranges a discussion about our letter and sends one or two people to our meeting.

write on



Dear Big Flame,

In the last Big Flame, there was a letter from 'A Sympathiser' of Sheffield, criticising an article by Feargal O'Hanlon in the February issue. While the writer of the letter may see her/his politics as sympathetic to those of Big Flame, the contents of the letter reminded me much more of those of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG).

Firstly there is the style of the letter. Instead of accepting that O'Hanlon has chosen a different theory and arguing the case for his/her own approach, the letter writer gives us a whole series of terms like 'distortion', 'inaccura-

cies', 'vulgarisations', 'errors', etc which imply that the problem is merely one of Feargal's ignorance of the correct position. This duplicates what the RCG like to see as their imitation of Lenin's polemical style.

Secondly the analysis of the crisis in terms of the rising organic composition of capital which is presented in the letter is very reminiscent of the RCG. The writer does an admirable job of attempting to summarise the discussion of this tendency in Marx's Capital (although if we want an example of a genuine error the writer does confuse the categor-

ies of constant and fixed capital). However, there is more than this in Marx' work which is relevant for a theory of crisis and to understand what is happening in Britain today it is just not good enough to reproduce undigested chunks of a book written a century ago. Capitalism has changed much since then.

Why I prefer Feargal's approach to that of the letter writer is that with the former, crises are not simply derived from the nature of capital in abstraction from class struggle. It has always been part of Big Flame's politics that the working class is central to the analysis. While I agree that

there is a real tendency for profits to fall because of a rising organic composition, this does not lead to any inevitable collapse, but provides a framework which moulds class struggle. I do not accept the letter writer's somewhat offhand dismissal of the role of counter tendencies to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. What usually happens in periods of crisis is that such counter tendencies are successfully brought into play.

The third way in which the letter resembles the RCG's approach is in its remarks on political strategy. We will all remember the RCG's main form of activity

seems to be going round to meetings giving ten minute potted summaries of their analysis. The letter writer also identifies as the main problem the inability of the working class to see through the capitalist charade and implies that what is needed is an analysis that will reveal this to them. I would say that most working people are well aware already of the effects of capitalism on their lives. The problem is that they can see no alternative. That is why what the letter calls 'bauble of alternative provision' is vital if support for socialism is ever to spread.

Solidarity,
John South.

NO SOCIALISM FOR ZIMBABWE?

Dear Big Flame

Last month's 'sober' assessment of the prospects for Zimbabwe was objective and useful but a bit negative. You point out the obstacles to the implementation of socialism in Zimbabwe and, I agree, they are substantial.

Underlying this and previous articles has been the assumption that even if Mugabe didn't sell-out at Lancaster House, the

chances were that he would once in power. Am I the only reader to find this attitude patronising? After all, when we talk about the problems of building socialism in Britain, we may well dismiss Mugabe's equivalents here (are they really Tribune?), but at the same time we will have something to say about a strategy to overcome the obstacles.

Rather than give the thumbs down to Zimbabwe, wouldn't a serious consideration of how a government like Mugabe's could develop OR BE PUSHED by the radicalised sections of the masses towards socialism be useful? Or, are you saying that revolutionary socialism isn't on the African agenda?

Yours,
Ben Stowell

NO COMMENT!

Dear Big Flame

Last month's Pic of the Month, The Going Rate, told us a lot about how the photos were taken and, as someone who takes photos, I found that useful.

But I couldn't help feeling that the text was more apt for a colour supp than for Big Flame. Susan Greenberg points out that the women workers in the shoe

factory did traditionally female jobs and quotes the manager without comment: (he) was at pains to point out that wages weren't bad for the neighbourhood.

Another caption records, again without comment, 'The beginnings of full automation in the factory'.

Coincidentally, in the same edition, in a review of Photography Politics, Sue Gaffly quotes Robert Golden: 'There is a tendency on the left to isolate underlying social analysis from personal life'.

Yours,
Les Cannon



Some of the Patriotic Front delegation at the Lancaster House Conference

NAC & WOMEN'S AUTONOMY

We defeated Corrie. But we'd hardly had a moment's breathing space before David Alton came up with his own 10 minute bill and the DHSS stepped up its harrassment of the charities.

The Alton 10-minute bill is up for its First Reading on Tuesday the 22nd of April, its second on the 9th of May. As far as we know, it lowers the time limit for abortion from 28 weeks to 24. Since a 4 week margin of error is always given in determining length of pregnancy, this would mean in practice that abortion would be available only up to 20 weeks. This may affect very few women—only 1% of abortion is carried out after 20 weeks now—but any restriction on our abortion rights must be actively opposed. Especially in the light of cuts

in the NHS which can only make access to early abortion more and more difficult.

RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Time limits on abortion is a contentious issue and much of the more liberal opposition to Corrie in fact supported the clause in the Bill which lowered the time limit to 24 weeks. The B.M.A. for example favours 24 weeks. However, we must be clear that what we are fighting for is a woman's right to choose, and that means the right to choose without legal or medical restrictions, at any point during the pregnancy. It's important to write (yet again!) to MPs and make them quite aware of our opinion of Alton's Bill.

The DHSS is meanwhile harrass-

ing the charities. London's Pregnancy Advisory Service (PAS) have had a particularly difficult time all this year with the licensing of their new clinic being held up, just long enough to seriously endanger their financial status, and licensing for day-care on the new premises being initially refused. Now PAS have been told to remove their ads from the London underground. Although the ads have been up for 3 years the DHSS claim not to have been aware of their existence. They now want PAS to revert to wording which does not specify abortion. This would inevitably

lead to confusion with 'Life' anti-abortion ads.

NAC CONFERENCE

So there's no let-up in the abortion struggle. And it's hard to find the space to re-evaluate how and where we are going. But it's obviously crucial that we do, so that we can fightback as effectively as possible. The NAC Conference is taking place in Leeds on the 17th and 18th of May. We will be discussing important issues such as our orientation towards the labour movement, pos-

itive legislation, the involvement of men in NAC.

Women's autonomy in NAC and the involvement of men has been a particularly thorny question during the Corrie Campaign. At present NAC is a mixed campaign—open to all men and women who support NAC's aims. Here we print 2 articles on what women's autonomy should mean in regard to NAC. We would welcome further contributions.

Member of Liverpool BF

GETTING WIDER SUPPORT

WOMEN'S AUTONOMY within NAC has been raised for discussion at this year's conference. NAC is open to both men and women so that political, trade union, student and other groups can affiliate and give financial support and so that political support through resolutions and action during campaigns gets the person power needed to be effective.

Very few men are actually active inside NAC, particularly when there is not a mass campaign against a Parliamentary bill in full swing. Men never seem to come to steering committee in London. A solitary man came and said nothing at the last national planning meeting and several men have helped out in the office irregularly with donkey work like stuffing envelopes or by the telephone during demos. Locally we know a few men who campaigned as hard as any women in the group we were in.

DISTORTION OF REALITY

If the issue of men being excluded from NAC is being raised, it implies men dominate—or are attempting to dominate—at some level and we see this as a distortion of what the reality is and of what the important questions around autonomy are. We would like to see women's autonomy discussed on a number of levels:

When should specific events and meetings be for women only? There are clearly times when they should. At a meeting in October last year in London on the feelings behind NAC's slogans, women spoke about personal experiences in a way we could not have done in front of men(yet). The Torchlight Demo on Feb 8 was strong and successful because it was a women-only march. As part of the Women's Movement we feel a need to organise separately whenever it is appropriate. We are not sure it is possible to say before the fact when that should be, but we expect to be supported in such decisions when they are made.

Should decision making be women only? Women active in NAC are often also active in other mixed groups. In most cases, when these groups send people to NAC meetings, they rightly send women, not men. What we see at issue here is not the gender of the representatives but on what basis proposals and decisions on NAC policies, aims, and activities, are made, i.e. are they feminist or not? We see it as a priority for everyone in NAC to ensure that they are feminist. We do not believe that having women-only decision-making will ensure this.

Letting TUC men lead the Oct 28 demo was wrong from this point of view. Perhaps setting up the Campa-

ign against Corrie separately from NAC—believing we could get support that NAC's feminist demands do not yet get—was also wrong. The political compromise made in these two cases is questionable—can we stand firm on our feminism in an anti-feminist society and expect to

win anything? And what will we win in the long run if we don't? It's the contradiction between the two political positions here that is central to the discussion for us—how to get support for NAC's feminist policies outside the WLM and the smaller circle of NAC activists and how to take decisions and act from within the Campaign and the WLM to bring us closer to the reality that 'A Woman's Right to Choose' embodies.

Two members of NAC and North London BF



NAC's slogans and those of the TUC march



Union Place Collective

Building Our Power

SOCIALISM AND Feminism will be coming together in an explosive way at the NAC National conference this month. Perhaps the most contentious of all issues facing the conference is that of Women's autonomy.

In practice most local groups are women only and men are not encouraged to join. This informal discrimination plus the arguments about the women who rushed to the front of the TUC march, women only demos, the women's assembly and direct action have meant that many of us in NAC want a clear and consistent principle adopted at conference.

The debate over women's autonomy is often very confused obscuring what are real political differences. The BF Women's Commission is debating this question and we want to take this opportunity of opening up the debate to the rest of our organisation and readership.

WOMEN'S SPECIFIC DEMANDS.

Women's autonomy, women organising together on our own terms, is the only strategy by which women will develop the power we need to realise our liberation. The oppression of women is reproduced in every mixed political party or organisation and any political organisation that claims to take women's liberation seriously must confront this within its own 'ranks'. Women's autonomy is a strategy for building women's power. It is not simply a question of tactics. Nor is women's autonomy necessarily a question of separatism.

We do not organise autonomously because we see men as the enemy and refuse to work with them in any situation. Women have specific demands in the here and now that many men do not recognise or see as a priority. In fact, many of them challenge the authority and power of all men - particularly those demands around fertility control and violence against women. So we don't need autonomy to build just our confidence but to formulate our own demands and to develop our own ways of organising. In the fight against the Corrie bill we have dis-proved the caricature of the 'inefficient women's movement'. We mobilised tens of thousands.

JUMPING ON THE BANDWAGON

The creation of CAC bears out my argument for the need for women's autonomy. The watered down politics of CAC resulted in the standing ovation of David Steel at the CAC lobby and the fact that NAC speakers with their feminist and revolutionary politics were pushed out of the lime light.

There have been innumerable accounts of women's experiences at

demos, when they found themselves walking next to men who were screaming 'Thatcher Out' or 'What do we want? - abortion! when do we want it? NOW!' These attitudes represent jumping on the band wagon (even Benn gave NAC the thumbs up at the debate of the century!) and gross insensitivity. We have seen men be the 'spokeswomen' at the TUC demo and the CAC lobby, answering press questions when they were surrounded by thousands of articulate women who should have been interviewed. These examples of male domination, the often overt and hostile refusal to accept the struggle for fertility control on women's terms, have enraged many thousands of women. On tactical grounds, alone, the women's assembly, 'storming' of parliament and torch light demo showed us that women can in fact be more effective and militant in our action, more revolutionary in our demands when we're out together, in force.

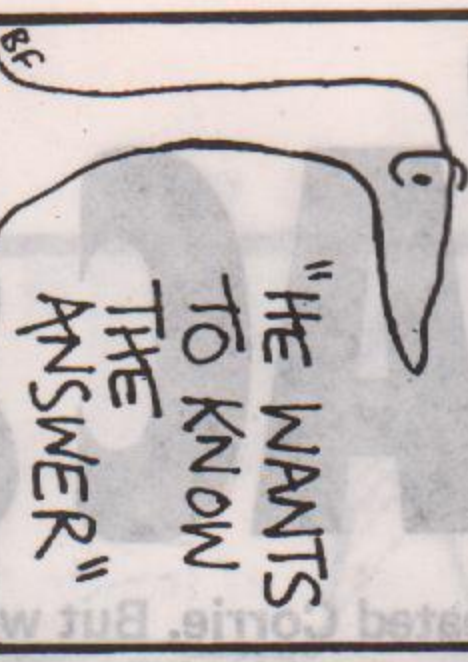
MEN'S INVOLVEMENT

Having said this it is essential that the relationship of men to a feminist campaign like NAC is spelt out. NAC as an organisation should be women only. But we do want men to be involved in the struggle - men should be arguing with the men in their work place, in their unions, in their doctors surgeries, arguing their support of a woman's right to choose. Men must also be involved with leafletting, petitioning, writing to MPs and demonstrating on occasions. We will not win our right to choose without the active support of men any more than we will achieve socialism without men. It is a question of who dictates the terms, who defines the politics and policies of the issue. We do want unity with men but only on the basis of our own independent strength.

Over the Black Freedom March the far left at last seems to have accepted Black Autonomy and are accepting the terms laid down by the AYM. How much longer will it be before the men on the left, and elsewhere show that same political respect for women?

Member of Leeds NAC and BF Women's Commission

brother goose



"HE WANTS TO KNOW THE ANSWER"

IF YOU GO ON STRIKE, ALL YOUR JOBS WILL BE LOST!!

i don't suppose fiat have to say that to their workforce!

gotta caggle, bud?

alienation

IF WE DON'T SPEND MORE ON CHEMICAL-WARFARE... THE RUSSIANS WILL ATTACK US!!

I thought wed got enough dioxin already

IF WE DON'T HAVE NUCLEAR POWER... THERE'LL BE NO ELECTRICITY IN 2010

IF WE DON'T STRENGTHEN THE POLICE FORCE....

"if you can keep your head while all about are losing it, blame it on you"

...THERE'LL BE RIOTS IN THE STREETS!!!

if... if... if... if... if... if...

IF WOMEN GO OUT TO WORK... SOCIETY WILL COLLAPSE!!

why do you always frighten people...

...into doing what you want?

IT'S FOR THEIR OWN GOOD!

BESIDES... WE MUST MAKE THINGS BETTER....

...FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS!

have we nothing nice to look forward to?

oh yes THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER - LUCANDA RIVER PRIMER!!!

Big Flame

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we answer the
monetarist
blueprint

NEITHER MILTON NOR KEYNES

Photo: Chile - the other face of the monetarist coin. Insert: Milton Friedman