

BIG FLAME

Merseyside Edition

July 75 Monthly Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame 28 5p

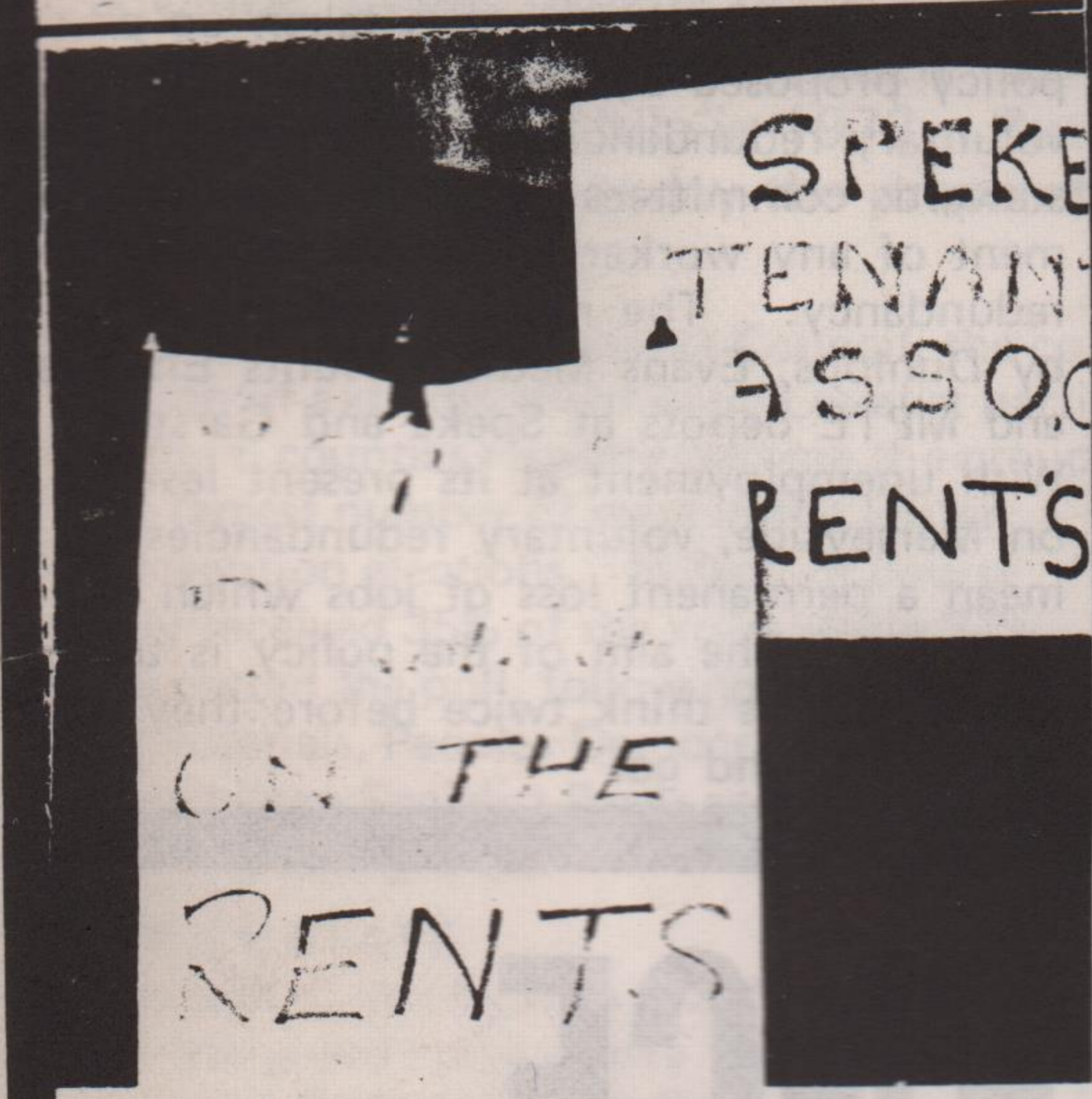
INSIDE



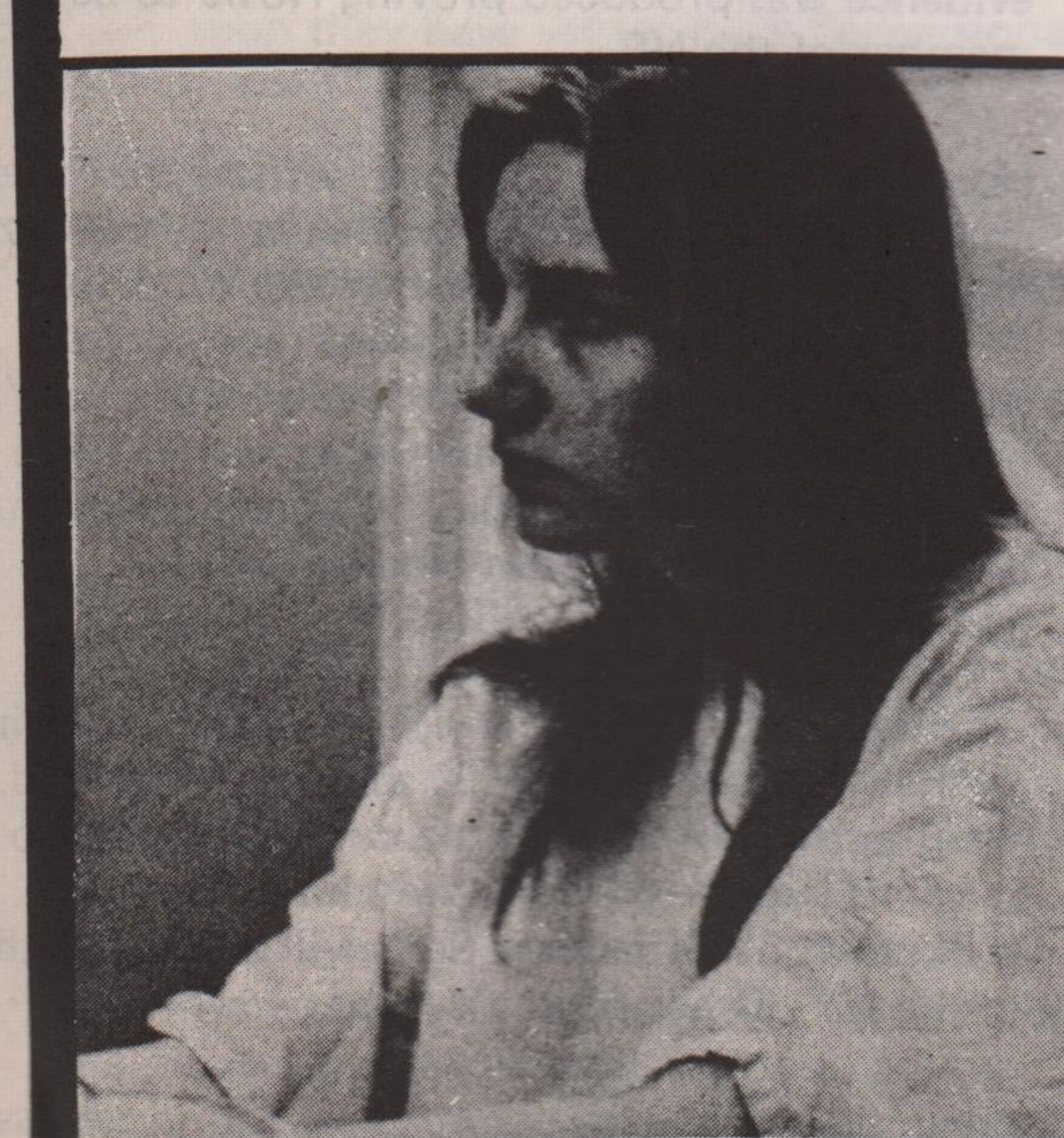
SUCCESSFUL STRIKE AT THOMPSON AND CAPPER PAGE 2



PORTUGUESE PRINTWORKER SPEAKS ABOUT EVENTS AT REPUBLICA NEWSPAPER Page 3



HOUSING; MORE ON THE RENT RISES Page 7



RAPE • A WOMANS NIGHTMARE Page 6

RENTS UP: 'WE CAN'T AND WE WON'T PAY

-Say Liverpool Tenants

This month, council tenants on Merseyside, and in other parts of Britain, are getting the biggest single rent rises they've ever had. Up to £2 a week increases. Next month the Corporation hope we'll start paying them. The question now is WILL WE PAY - OR RATHER, CAN WE AFFORD TO?

Meanwhile all the 300 tenants in Portland Gardens, off Scotland Rd, have already signed a petition to withhold the rent increase. They say they can't afford to pay and the accomodation isn't worth half the rent.

Meetings and petitions over the rent rises are being organised at present in different parts of the city, and a series of mass action meetings are planned over the next two weeks, by tenants from the Scotland Road area. Tenants from other parts of Liverpool will be invited to these meetings to discuss joint action.

BUT TENANTS ARE FIGHTING BACK
On Merseyside, the rent rises have arrived at a time when Corpy tenants are fighting their hardest battles on the 'home front' since the last rent strike.

* The north city Housing Dept. has been occupied TWICE in the last two months by angry demonstrations of tenants. In May tenants from Logan Towers demonstrated for compensation over loss of heating and hot water. In June 100 tenants from the Macbeth Street area sat in for five hours in their fight for rehousing.

THE CRISIS - WHAT WE SAY, page 5
MORE ON HOUSING BATTLE, page 7

* In Cantril Farm a tenants march took place over the fact that while Liverpool's rehousing policy continues at a snail's pace, scores of houses are standing empty and boarded up for months.

* Tenants from all over the city were present at a picket of the City Council when the rent rises were decided. Tenants were there from Speke, Gillmoss, Netherley, Haigh Heights, Scotland Road and Bootle.

* At a recent meeting of the council which was contemplating closing down washhouses all over the City, a deputation of tenants from Scotland Road were there to protest. One of their main arguments was that because of the lack of facilities in local tenements for washing, the washhouse was a basic necessity

And at a time when there are 182,000 unemployed in the building and related industries, a labour MP, Frank Allaun, claims that Treasury Officials have given brick making firms a warning to expect a 50% cutback in council house building starts next year. He says the warning has been passed on through the Brick Development Association by "nods and winks."

It's obvious that everyone is not sitting around like lambs for the slaughter while rents go up and the quality of housing and public services go down. When the Labour Housing Minister started the attack by cutting spending on public services - including housing - two months ago, he said "The party's over!" Well, he's right - and the fight is starting.



Liverpool tenants picket Town Hall about rent rises

...AND WE CAN DO WITHOUT JACK JONES' 'HELP' TOO!

Jack Jones' feat in getting his union, the Transport Workers, to agree to the Governments plan for statutory wage control is a windfall for the bosses, but bad news for us. It comes at a time when inflation has almost halved in a year the amount poor families can afford to spend on food. For the whole of the working class, flat rate rises can only be a gigantic wage cut. Prices are rising at 33% annually, and his scheme means something like a 10% "rise" with a bit more for the low paid. But any rise is taken away by tax. And as the Child Poverty Action Group has shown, people on benefits will be even worse off-

"For the first time since the depression, the Government is planning real cuts in the living standards of the poor...because the November increase will not make up for the rate of inflation between now and the end of the year."

Jones has done nothing more than surrender to the bosses demands that the working class should pay for their crisis. The Government has taken advantage of his kind offer of wage cuts on our behalf by putting more pressure on the TUC. On Monday, 30th June, he was talking about £8 rises for all. By the following Monday, the TUC was talking about a £6 figure. You don't have to be the world's greatest economist to calculate that at this rate, the TUC will be going for a five bob flat increase for all by the end of the month.

Meanwhile, the Liverpool Daily Post runs a feature showing that British company executives get the best perks in Europe - free cars, meals, holidays and flats. To say nothing of blocks of shares and the dividends therefrom. That's what we'd call a real hedge against inflation.

The best description of Jack Jones comes from the bosses' paper, The Financial Times, which showed its gratitude by making him their 'Man of the Week'
"A straight speaking man with few hobbies and little time for relaxation, there is very little phoney about him - except maybe the cloth cap he also has ready for donning above his smartly cut dark blue suit when he attends mass marches and demonstration, and his occasional habit of abandoning his large white Rover for his union's Ford delivery van."

THE MONTH ON Merseyside

Office workers, drivers and warehouse staff of L & G Fire Appliances, Vauxhall Rd, had a successful one day strike over victimisation of a workmate by management. The boss had tried to sack the man as part of a campaign against the workforce's recent unionisation drive. Many of the 80 ASTMS union members picketed the firm all morning, turning away mail and deliveries, and by mid-afternoon the man had been re-instated after negotiations.

During negotiations, the boss is reported to have spoken on these lines "Can't you see it from my point of view. These people will soon be getting power and making demands"! The L & G workers' next fight is for wage increases; sample wage at present: invoice typist £19 a week.

The oil sheikh decided to celebrate his birthday by offering each of his three sons any present they desired.

The eldest asked for an airplane. The sheikh presented him with Concorde.

The second wanted an island he could go scuba diving from, so his father gave him Australia.

'And what would you like, my child', asked the sheikh of his youngest. 'Just a cowboy outfit,' he replied. And his father gave him Kirkby Council.

Management at Ward and Goldstone's Knowsley factory recently threatened to close it down. The claimed that their products, mainly car components, had been hit by the slump in the car industry. The workers, mainly women, had other ideas. They immediately got in touch with nearby Massey Ferguson workers. They also went along to the founding meeting of the Kirkby Trade Union Action Committee. There they talked with workers from other Kirkby factories about the best way to fight against any more redundancies and loss of jobs in Kirkby. The Committee agreed to organise support for any fight against the closure of Ward and Goldstone.

The women took leaflets about the Action Committee into work to pass them around and leave them lying around for management to see.

The boss quickly cottoned on that the workers were going to fight, and had the organised support of other factories. The closure was cancelled. This was after management told a union official that the workers had just one month's reprieve.

This has boosted the confidence of the Action Committee. Now firms may think twice about redundancies in Kirkby when they can't dish out the cards and rely on that factory being isolated.

This month mothers and children from St Domingo Vale, Everton, slept outside their Corpy houses, on the pavement in protest against living conditions.

They say the flats aren't fit to live in and are a fire hazard, following the second fire in 2 weeks, which ended in the deaths of a mother and her son.

Thompson & Capper workers' win 'THE FLYING PICKET DID IT!'

"If we can't take on a little scabby place like Thompson and Capper and win, what chance has the Committee got. We had to win it for their sake and ours" says Tommy Healey whose Speke Trade Union Committee got involved at Thompson and Capper when the management replied to a wage claim by threatening to close the place down. As it turned out, the strike was a great victory for the Committee and the workers.

"It was the flying picket that finally won the strike" according to Tommy, "because until then management was refusing to bring the pay rise forward" The Company had agreed to a 23% rise across the board, but was refusing to pay it for a month. Finally they broke off talks, withdrew their offer, sent the clerical workers home and closed the factory down. That was Friday.

The following Monday, a minibus load of Thompson and Capper workers went down to picket the combine's Sanitas plant in London where they believed, rightly, the company was producing some of the Liverpool lines. Management at Sanitas closed the gates on their workers, but the Liverpool workers picketed the factory with a megaphone, handing out leaflets. They met some Sanitas workers who agreed to block all the work transferred from Speke.

"Two days later, the Liverpool management said, 'we'll talk, but what's this demonstration you've got planned for Friday, can't you call it off?'"

The Trade Union Committee had planned a demonstration around the industrial estate, but when the news came that the bosses had agreed to pay the agreed increase immediately, the march was called off.

Thompson and Capper, manufacturers of familiar domestic items like Gumption, Aquasan Toilet Flush and Goddard's Embrocation, are renowned for the size of their wage packets — about £25 for a man for 40 hours, £7 per week less for women, and even worse for the under 18's. The average take home before the new rise was £23.



Women at Thompson and Capper: "we can't afford not to strike."

One woman on the picket explained that after she'd paid for the nursery, bus fares (about to go up again here in November and April) and extravagant canteen charges, "I couldn't afford not to go on strike". Why weren't the women asking for equal pay, we wanted to know. It hadn't occurred to them when they put in the claim but, "after we've won this one, we'll put in a demand for equal pay."

But our guess is that the women probably didn't have much to do with the original claim. Although they are a majority of the workforce, the women's stewards weren't even on the strike committee at first.

A member of the Speke TU Committee told us

"Some of the strike committee didn't want them involved. But we argued with them, you've got to get them involved on picket duty, get them going around the factories"

At that time, there was about 10 lads on the strike committee, doing all the running around, burning themselves out."

In the end, the two women stewards got onto the strike committee and organised a picketing rota for the women. The Sanitas flying picket had a majority of women on it, most of them young girls.

The strike showed the difficulties women have of getting involved in a struggle at work when they have a second job to do, as housewives. And knowing your fighting for a rise much smaller than the men's doesn't help. Nor does the attitude of one local nursery, which refused to take in the child of one of the women. They said that since she was on strike, she would have plenty of time to look after it! If this had gone on a bit longer, we'd have had to go down there and sort them out! one of the women said.

SPEKE JOBS COMMITTEE

Set up to fight redundancies on the industrial estate, Speke Trade Union Committee's biggest victory to date — at Thompson and Capper — was over pay.

The Committee's secretary and co-founder, Tom Healey, told us how it came to be formed.

"It was the probable closure of the Bear Brand factory that started it off. 20 of the girls from Bear Brand turned up to a meeting we organised in a pub to talk about how to fight the closure."

In the end, Bear Brand stayed in business, but that was the spark. A meeting of estate delegates was called in Speke. All the big factories like Dunlops, Evans Medical, Standards, Fords and Dista sent a representative.

"The first meeting was the best. The discussion was ranging from the strikes in Italy where the busmen's trade unions organised the printing of bus tickets at the old price when they put the fares up."

There was talk of organising in Speke if they put up the electricity to put out leaflets and a petition to go on paying at the old rate."

Tommy's feeling is that if it comes to a rent strike in Speke "we'll have to fully support it". That the Committee takes seriously the question of links with the Community is clear from their invitation to local tenants associations to attend their 6 weekly meetings. The local community paper, *Speke Now*, devoted the centre pages of its last issue to the Committee and the Thompson and Capper strike.

But the main task of the Committee is to defend the 20,000 jobs on the estate. They are prepared to assist workers threatened with the sack — financially and physically. The Committee has taken up a policy proposed by the Dunlops delegates on voluntary redundancies. It urges shop stewards committees to oppose the employment of any worker who accepts voluntary redundancy. The resolution is supported by Dunlops, Evans Medical, Hunts Engineers and MPTE depots at Speke and Garston. With unemployment at its present level on Merseyside, voluntary redundancies mean a permanent loss of jobs which is madness. The aim of the policy is to make workers think twice before they take the money and go.

NEW WAVE OF FASCIST VIOLENCE

The attempt by the so-called 'populists' in the National Directorate of the National Front to brighten up their public image by deposing long-time 'Leader' John Tyndall has been set-back by events. Leading NF members like J Kingsley Read had hoped they could whitewash the Front's reputation as a band of fascist thugs by relieving the old-guard Nazi, Tyndall, of his post as deputy-chairman.

'JOIN YOUR LOCAL GUN CLUB'

At a rally after a 1000-strong demonstration through Bradford on 26 April, Walter Barton,, the NF 'trade union organiser', issued this threat to anti-fascist demonstrators,

When you see the people marching down the street, you see the rabble outside. If they try to beat us by these means, we will not be looking down the barrel of a gun — they will!

In the June edition of the NF newspaper, Britain First, editor Richard Lawson had this to say about the possibility that the British Government may one day ratify the United Nations' anti-genocide convention,

If that day ever comes, all good nationalists who wish to continue their struggle will be forced to join their local gun club.

And if they live in Blackburn, Kingsley Read's family connections with the nearby rifle club will prove useful 'when the day comes'.

But for the moment, the Front seem content with lesser weapons to attack their opponents. Some months ago they announced the formation of an 'Honour Guard' - a military unit to defend NF demonstrations. The Honour Guard appeared in full force in Oxford on May 12.

Among the weapons they carried were iron bars, chains, knuckledusters and bill-hook, with which they attacked picketers outside their meeting hall. As in Bradford, the police refused to do more than disarm the occasional fascist.

'OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC'

An increasing number of NF members and supporters have been appearing in court on charges related to firearms. An Edinburgh UDA member received seven years recently for possession of rifles, which were found by police in a room covered with NF stickers and posters.

John Gadd, one of four men recently sentenced to up to ten years for conspiracy to import arms on behalf of the UDA — along with Roy Forbes, a Tory councillor from Leeds, and Tommy Thompson from Liverpool — was revealed to be a member of the National Front in an interview given to a London

newspaper by a witness at his trial.

Again in Scotland at the trial of Brian Hosie, who last month received life imprisonment in Glasgow for the shooting of a West Indian who refused to pay protection money that Hosie demanded for the UDA:

evidence was produced proving Hosie to be a member of the NF.

Hosie had previously told one witness that the murder had been 'an over-enthusiastic program for repatriating our commonwealth citizens.' Thus further showing the naked race hatred which lies just below the surface of the Front's policy of so-called 'humane repatriation.' The NF has not felt it necessary to issue any statement disassociating itself from Hosie or his interpretation of NF policy.

The issue of whether John Tyndall will remain in the National Front is by no means decided. He is at present touring the country trying to rally his supporters to defend him. But the outcome of this faction fight will change nothing in the NF. The formation of para-military groups to attack their opponents, which all previous fascist movements have found necessary is already underway. In Oxford the police showed whose side they were on. It is left to the organisations of the working class to take action against the fascists.

PORTUGUESE PRINTWORKER SPEAKS

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE 'COMMUNIST PARTY TAKEOVER' AT REPUBLICA

Nothing makes the British newspaper editors' cherished 'freedom of the press' appear more hollow than their line up over the Common Market. All the national dailies — except the non-capitalist Morning Star and Workers Press — campaigned vigorously for a YES vote.

Freedom of the press is being used as a phoney battle-cry in another very different situation, Portugal. All the press is very much further to the left than it is here, but it is still dominated by the political parties which want a capitalist rather than a socialist solution to the present crisis. The workers who produce the papers are becoming more and more concerned about the political censorship exercised by managements. They believe they should be able to have a say in the contents. This conflict has come to a head over Republica, the oldest anti-fascist paper in Lisbon.

For two months it hasn't appeared as workers have fought with the management for control of the presses. The British press has presented Republica and its Socialist Party management as the victims of an international communist conspiracy.

Last week, the Republica workers coordinating committee sent a representative, Rui Domingues, a graphics worker, to Britain, to tell their side of the story. What follows here is based on what he said at a press conference organised in London by the Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee.

TAKE OVER BID BY THE PS

Since last April, the PS has set its heart on Republica, the only major daily it had any chance of influencing. The editor is Paul Rego who is a leading member of the PS and who was Minister of Information under Spinoza last year. The workers at Republica noticed that the paper was becoming more and more pro-PS. Anything hostile to the Party was suppressed and 17 journalists were forced to leave and were then replaced by PS sympathisers.

Everything came to a head in the late spring when a mass meeting of the workers decided that no more journalists should be taken on until the paper had been reorganised. They made two other demands:

an agreed editorial policy for the paper should be worked out by all its workers, so as to guarantee editorial freedom and halt the slide towards PS control.

working conditions at the paper should be improved for everyone. The roof leaks and parts of it are in danger of collapsing. The ventilation in the print-shop is inadequate and the machinery is old and run-down.

The fight at the Republica newspaper is about what kind of newspaper it should be: a paper produced by and for the workers, or a paper controlled by the increasingly right-wing Socialist Party (PS). You have to understand that since 25 April 1974, when fascism was overthrown, the mass media in Portugal has been the focus of an intense power struggle between the major political parties. That's to say, the PS, the Communist Party (PCP) and the right-wing PPD. They've been fighting amongst themselves and at the the same time they've been trying to resist the groundswell of an increasingly independent socialist workers movement.

Each party has been trying to grab as much control as possible for itself, so that now there is only one independent mass circulation daily paper left in the capital. The big party bureaucracies prefer to print the news the way they see it, generally at the expense of workers in struggle who are very rarely supported publicly by the PCP or the PS. So, just as in Britain, it has become very difficult for working class people to get their voice heard.

CONT P7



Shipyard workers march in support of the Republica workers

LOYALISTS PREPARE TAKEOVER

We don't often get the chance to study a Right-wing takeover being prepared in advance. They usually occur suddenly, with few warnings, like in Brazil 1964, Greece 1967 and Chile in 1973. But in Northern Ireland today the preparations are perfectly open.

The United Ulster Unionist Council, the coalition of extreme Right-wing Loyalist parties in the 6 counties recently became the group with the largest number of seats in the Ulster Convention elections. In fact, of course, they only received 35% of the votes while 37% boycotted the poll, following the lead of the Provisionals, Peoples Democracy and the Irish Republican Socialist Party and other Republican and Socialist groups.

POLICE STATE

The UUUC, led by men like William Craig of the Vanguard Party, Harry West of the Official Unionist Party and Glen Barr of Vanguard (and the UDA) are demanding that the British government give them full power to create a police state. If they don't get that power very soon they have set up their "provisional government" to take power themselves.

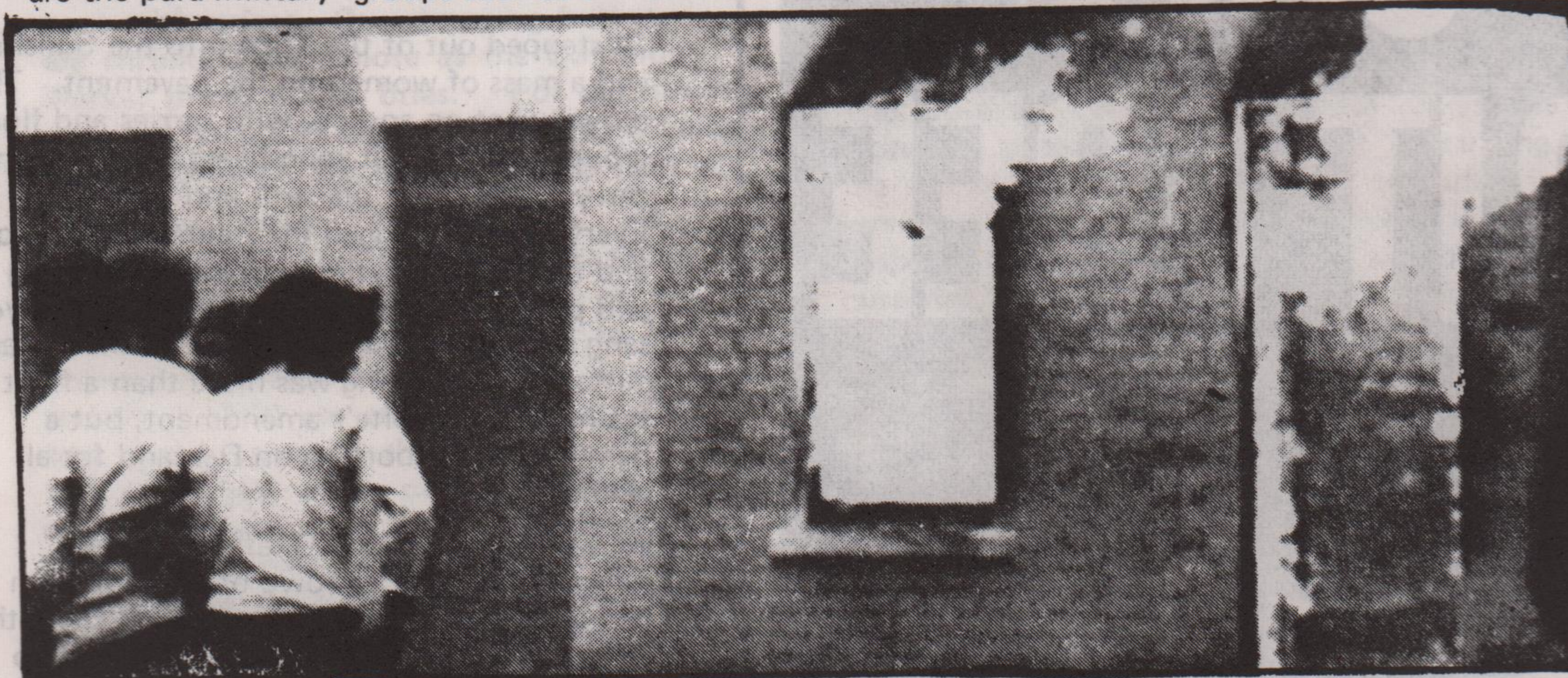
FIREPOWER

United in the UUUC, the Loyalist parties can act together when the time is ripe. But recently they have acquired the necessary firepower to carry out their threat. Much of this firepower has been supplied by the British government. Both Tory and Labour governments have armed and trained vastly expanded Loyalist forces from the Ulster Defence Regiment (now nearly 8,000 strong) to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (over 6,000 men) and RUC Reserve (a massive 4,000 heavily armed "part timers") Recruiting to those overwhelmingly Protestant and Loyalist forces has been encouraged by the British Secretary for Northern Ireland, the "moderate" Merlyn Rees. The vast majority of these men owe their allegiance to the UUUC extremists and no to the British Government.

THE LOYALIST GANGS

These paramilitary groups are now united in the "Ulster Army Council" under UDA leader Andy Tyrrie. And they co-operate with the politicians in the newly formed "Ulster Loyalists Council." The ULC intends to openly recruit and arm 20,000 men in the next few months, ready for a takeover.

But more closely tied to the Loyalist politicians are the para-military groups such as the UDA.



The fire last time: Belfast Catholic Community burnt out 1969

THE BRITISH ARMY

Needless to say the so-called "Neutral" British Army has done nothing to disarm or disrupt the growing strength of the paramilitaries. In fact, a few weeks ago a newspaper revealed that the Army had supplied a Loyalist gang with lists of Republican ex-internees, their addresses and the names and addresses of friends and relatives who visited them in Long Kesh Camp.

RESISTANCE

Such a takeover would lead to massive attacks on Republican areas, led by the UDR and RUC. The Loyalists want power to remain firmly in the hands of the Protestant businessmen,

backed up by Protestant workers who receive small privileges in jobs, wages and houses in return for "keeping the Taigs (Catholics) in their place" as second class citizens. To succeed they have to launch a brutal and massive pogrom, involving the murder of hundreds of Catholics and burning out thousands more. And they must have a bigoted police state of the kind found in South Africa or Chile to back them up.

This will be resisted by the Republican popula-

By constant arrests, the British army is draining the isolated Republican communities of their means of defence and exposing them to the unchecked violence of the Loyalist extremists.

RELIEF

"Relief Committees" are being formed in all the Republican areas of Belfast. They aim to raise as much money as possible, with which to buy the food, drink, fuel and electricity-generators necessary to withstand a long siege. During the Loyalist UWC strike last year many districts came close to starvation as all supplies were cut off and they had not prepared. The British Army made no attempt to end the Loyalist strike, even though that strike destroyed the British government's "solution", the Sunningdale agreement. The British Army will undoubtedly stand aside the next time as well.

But this time the Republican areas are preparing for the siege and they have appealed for sympathetic groups in Britain and elsewhere to help raise cash for the Relief Committees. Big Flame is taking that appeal seriously and the Kirkby and Liverpool branches of the Troops Out Movement of which Big Flame is a part, will be organising fund-raising events and personal weekly levies to help the Relief Committees.

TROOPS OUT NOW

It is still unclear when the Loyalists will make their move. They may wait until next January when all the Convention negotiations are over or they may feel sufficiently prepared to move later this summer. Regardless of the timing the British army will not prevent them. The British presence in Ireland has done nothing but back up the most reactionary forces in these islands, the Ulster Loyalists. The troops must be withdrawn immediately. If not they may assist the Loyalists to set up the worst police-state in Europe outside of Franco's Spain. They must not be allowed to succeed!

Manchester Relief Group C/o 43 Aspinall St. Manchester 14
Birmingham C/o 632 Bookshop, 632 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

As a result there are nearly 2,000 Republican political prisoners in Irish jails, including 300 interned without charge or trial.

Big Flame is a national revolutionary socialist organisation. Socialist because our aim is to build a socialist society, where the working class holds power. Revolutionary because we believe, to create socialism, the working class has to defeat the capitalist state — and potentially it has the power to do so. At the moment, the working class produce the wealth and the ruling class take it. In a socialist society, we will all get the wealth, but we'll get much more — the power to control our own lives.

We want people who agree with our politics and the way we work to join our organisation.

the unemployed, cleaners... To destroy capitalism and build the type of society we want, we must fight wherever we can.

The ruling class always tries to divide the working class by skill, sex, race, age; to turn one section against another. So, as revolutionaries, we try to develop the struggle by each section against their own oppression —

national liberation and socialism are usually inseparable. This is the case in Ireland, a country oppressed by Britain for 800 years.

We are marxists. We try to learn as much as ORGANISATION we can from the various marxist traditions, but we firmly believe in the need to create a politics and organisation which grow out of the

We fight for higher wages, shorter hours, a lighter workload and for full pay, whether there's work or not.

We oppose income policies, social contricks, productivity deals, redundancies, speed-ups.

We encourage the link-up of factory and community struggles, opening up

WHAT IS BIG FLAME

OUR MAIN PRINCIPLES

Our politics and ways of organising are carried out at a mass level. We want to put the means of struggle, propaganda and organisation in the hands of the majority of the people, not just a minority of militants, however committed. We see no point in political groups burrowing away inside the trade union and Labour Party machines to capture them, replace their leaders or make them 'democratic'. This does not, and never will, alter fundamentally the way these reformist set-ups operate. Political organisations which pursue this strategy towards the trade unions become compromised and cut-off from the needs and experience of the mass of the working class. On the other hand, the influence of the unions and the Labour Party should not be ignored; the point is for the working class to use them as much as it can. But that can only be done when there is an independent politics of the working class, mass-based and involving a clear understanding of reformism, as well as stressing the need for people to lead their own struggles.

Capitalism oppresses the whole of our lives. Not only are exploited at work, we also have to pay high prices and rents, make do with bad housing, schools and hospitals. But it's not just the sections of the working class with great economic power, like the miners and car workers, who can fight back. Power is also social, political, military. This means the struggle can be successfully fought in the community, by white collar-workers, students,

UNITED WORKING CLASS

unskilled workers, immigrants, women. In the fight, the real enemy, the ruling class, will be exposed. Then, a unity within the working class, against capitalism, can be built: strong enough to take on and beat our enemies.



Capitalism is international. The struggle for socialism in other countries — Vietnam, Portugal, Spain — attacks capitalism internationally and helps the struggle in this country. We therefore support revolutionary movements abroad. For countries dominated by imperialist powers, particularly the US, the struggles for

situation today. We must understand how capitalism works now, not fifty years ago. As we see it, Big Flame's role is to make the working class more aware of its power, and how to strengthen the fight for it. We can only do that by being involved in the struggles of the class. We see the need for a revolutionary Party of the working class that will lead the fight to defeat capitalism. The Party cannot be set up by any self-styled leadership. If it is to truly reflect the needs and experience of every part of the working class, it must come out of a new type of mass anti-capitalist struggle and be created by the vanguards of that struggle.

STRUGGLES WE SUPPORT

The capitalists want to solve their economic crisis by forcing the working class to pay the cost. Their solutions are unemployment, speed-up, wage freeze, cut-backs in housing, health and education spending; measures which affect us in the home, the college, the factory, the shops, everywhere.

Our solution is socialism, the abolition of wage labour. Every victory of the class which strengthens it and makes it more united is a step in that direction. That's why we support the fight for higher wages. But that is not enough. Everyone should have a guaranteed income, enough to live well on, whether they receive a wage or not — The low-paid, the pensioner, the housewife, the unemployed. This is the way to break down the divisions in the class that the trade unions strengthen and which capitalism always uses against us.

occupations to the community, and taking rent and housing struggles to the work-place. We back the fight of council tenants, private tenants and squatters against rents and for decent housing for all.

We support the struggle for community-controlled facilities like nurseries and playgroups. These things



are vital for developing the involvement and strength of women.

We fight against sexism and racism and support the independent organisation of women and blackpeople for their own power.

We oppose British involvement in Northern Ireland, and support the republican and revolutionary demands

MASSIVE ABORTION DEMO DEMANDS :

KEEP IT SAFE KEEP IT FREE



Saturday June 21st: Over 30,000 people, mainly women, showed their opposition to the attempt by James

White MP, to amend the Abortion Act and make it harder for women to get abortions. Women's groups, hospital

workers, trade unions and political groups were among those marching from Charing Cross to Speaker's Corner, calling for "A Woman's Right to Choose" and "Free, safe, legal abortion on demand."

"I stepped out of the Tube into the Sunshine and a mass of women on the pavement. The crowd went on and on, with lorries and floats, groups handing out songsheets and everyone carrying balloons, placards and banners. Everyone had slogged their guts out for months, and the demonstration was every bit as big and powerful as we hoped it would be. We sang and shouted as we marched; there was no mistaking the feeling was more than a fight against James White's amendment, but a fight for Free Abortion on Demand for all women.

We wound up towards Trafalgar Square, rumours flying of a crowd of anti-abortion demonstrators waiting for us. And there they were — a few hundred of them — trying to impose their beliefs on all women. They were quiet enough that day — but they've been very busy and still are — spreading a lot of lies and horror stories about abortion to try and terrify people against it. They're trying to say that all women should be denied safe and legal abortions. We say that thousands of women desperately need abortions and it's their right to be able to choose free and safe ones on the NHS. We're not going to force anyone who doesn't want one to have an abortion — but they're trying to force us all to the back-streets by denying legal abortion...

By the time we reached Hyde Park, we were hoarse and exhausted. We flopped on the grass but the Birmingham Womens Group still had the energy to put on a show of their street theatre — a picture of what will happen if the amendment is passed. The message came over clearly. "Nobody has the right to force a

woman to have children she doesn't want. Only that woman understands her own circumstances, her own feelings and what it would do to her physically and mentally...."

The demonstration was certainly impressive. Its size reflects the anger among millions of women stirred up by James White's attempt to amend the 1967 Abortion Act. "What right has he got to tell us when we shall have kids?"

MORE THAN ABORTION AT STAKE

Still, whether the amendment bill gets through when it's voted on next September, or just disappears without trace before then, we'll still be fighting — for the long over-due improvements in the 1967 Act. Such as the state putting more money into providing better facilities, like out-patient abortion clinics, and better, safe, contraceptives that really work 100% so we don't have to have abortions.

We'll be fighting for better housing, free community child-care facilities and better health-care, so that we can bring up the kids we do have without having to struggle to scrimp and save, without having to live on our nerves all the time.

If the NHS set up out-patient abortion units in every hospital, it would save £1 million a year, yet the power and influence of some consultants is preventing this from happening. Instead, savings are being made by running-down essential services, making staff redundant, and giving those that are left more work to do.

IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN ALONE TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE

Part of the campaign against White's amendment was a display and stall in the market in Kirkby. This account is from the Kirkby Bulletin, a local newsletter put out by tenants and workers.

'...Women stopped and talked and said how angry they were about this new bill. Older women were

for troops out now, for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole, and for a united socialist Ireland.

There are Big Flame groups in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. We are active in hospitals, car and other factories, and among students, tenants and housewives. Linked to these kinds of struggle, is our activity with other left-wing groups in the Troops Out Movement, Chile Solidarity Campaign, as well as on local anti-fascist committees. Our work is coordinated and directed nationally by a National Committee and by several commissions: Ireland, Workplace, Women, Car, Education, Publications, International.

If you would like to know more about Big Flame and what we do, fill in the form on page 8 and send it to your nearest Big Flame group.

BIG FLAME PUBLICATIONS

PAMPHLETS

Italy 69-70 - 15p.
Chile Si - 1974 - 25p.
Portugal, A Blaze of Freedom - 1975 - 20p.
Fords, 5 Months of Struggle - 1973 - 15p.
Shop Stewards and Class Struggle - 1973 - 10p.
We Won't Pay, Womens' Struggle on Tower Hill (BF Womens' Commission) 1975 - 10p.
Peoples' Co-op (East London BF) 1975 - 10p.

NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Womens' Struggle Notes (BF Womens' Commission) Issues 1-4 1974-75. 10p.
Irish Bulletin (BF Irish Commission) Issues 1-3 1975 - 10p.
Big Flame Journal Issue 1 - 1975 - 25p.
Factfolder (no longer published) Issues 1-3 1971-74 - 20p.
Documents from the Lotta Continua Congress 1975 - 10p.

LOCAL PUBLICATIONS

Selly Oak Bulletin (Birmingham BF) Issues 1-3 - 1975 - 2p.
Longbridge Bulletin (Birmingham BF) Issues 1-3 - 1975 - Free.
Halewood Bulletin (Liverpool BF) Issues 1-6 - 1974/5 - 2p.
Liverpool Hospital Bulletin - Issues 1-3 - Free
Student Struggle Bulletin (Live.pool BF) Issues 1-4 1974-75 - 2p.
Liverpool BF militants also contribute to the independent publications:
Dockside Bulletin - Issues 1-11 - 1973/75 - 2p.
Kirkby Bulletin - Issues 1-4 - 1974/75 - 2p.
Big Flame Newspaper: Merseyside Edition Issues 1-27, June 1972 & monthly from then.
Manchester Edition from issue 25/Feb 75 - 5p.

had brought up 8, 9 or 10 children in the times before you could get contraceptives or abortions were really angry. They knew how hard it can be to bring up children with very little money. They also know how it feels to have no choice in the matter and to be treated just as someone who breeds children and has no rights of their own. Everyone said it was no business of a man like James White to be ordering women around like that. More and more women, faced with rising prices and low wages, are feeling the need to be able to decide for themselves when they have children, and how many.'

The campaign against White's amendment has focussed attention something broader than abortion itself, and begun to involve more and more people in fighting for all the things that the Government is now trying to slice away as part of its crisis measures.

PICKETING AGAINST THE POWER OF THE CONSULTANTS - London and Liverpool

Heads of the Gynaecology Departments at Hammersmith Hospital, London, and the Royal Infirmary, Liverpool, were the target of recent pickets organised by women involved in Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign (WACC). These consultants have used their power to block the setting-up of proper abortion facilities. They've used their position to make it well-nigh impossible for women to get abortions in their hospitals, specialising in subjecting women to humiliating interviews before turning down their request.

Both pickets were demanding out-patient abortion clinics staffed by people who support the right of all women to have abortions if they want. The Hammersmith picket was jointly organised by hospital workers and the local WACC, and was also demanding a free nursery for workers and patients at the hospital

EDITORIAL

It's scarcely a month since the Referendum, but already the results of the pro-marketeters' victory are only too clear—a setback for the working class, especially on the jobs front.

The Yes vote, which should be obvious to everyone by now, represented not only a vote for the EEC, but also for a move to the right by the Government. That move now affects the way we all live in this country.

Let's look at the form of this shift to the right, and what its effects have been.

Within days of the Referendum came Benn's removal from Industry to the Energy Ministry, and Judith Hart's resignation. Not only was the left of the Government decisively weakened by these moves, but economic policy fell even more into the hands of the Cabinet's right — Lever, Crosland, Healey.

So, nobody should be surprised by the shift in Government policy on unemployment. Healey's threats have become less guarded. Varley has decided to postpone — indefinitely? — Benn's plans for the nationalisation of shipbuilding. He has also made it clear that lame ducks like Pilkington's tv tube plant and Norton-Villiers-Triumph can drop dead as far as he is concerned.

In other words, the political space opened up by Benn, which the working class had made such good use of over the past year or so, has undergone a rapid contraction.

And in the last few days, it has shrunk almost to nothing. For part and parcel of the move to the right, has been the sudden rush towards an incomes policy. At first it was six weeks away, but then it became a matter of days: in just one day, the pound had come closer, faster to not being worth the paper it was printed on than ever before.

The international bankers squeezed Healey, and Healey squeezed the TUC. And to what effect! Now we could see how well Wilson had taken advantage of the Referendum to strengthen his hand. The shift in the balance of forces now

meant that he could lean much more on the unions on the question of wages; that's why we called the result of June 6 a setback for the working class.

Not a defeat, though, as the railwaymen showed. The Government had no intention of tackling them head-on or any other section before it's had more time to extract a wages deal from the TUC. So, the railwaymen's claim slipped through, the last agreement in the present wages round. But now with the miners debating about their £100 a week claim, all the weakness of the left in the unions and the Labour Party is exposed for all to see.

The alliance of left union leaders and Government ministers which the working class has used to obstruct the harsh measures of Healey and Jenkins has disappeared almost overnight since the Referendum. Benn has been silenced under the North Sea; Foot is contemplating the difficult choice between moral and political suicide as the wage freeze which he is still sworn to prevent inevitably approaches; Scanlon is holding out for the 'return of free collective bargaining' as if inflation were running at 3% not 33% and there were no crisis.

And Jones is leading the TUC towards a policy of wage cuts for all (the working class). The old alliance is split. Now they present us with the Jones surrender or the Scanlon no surrender. Neither has anything to offer the working class.

When the pressure is on, the leadership of the Labour left, in and out of parliament, has rarely been able to resist it, and Jones is no exception. He submits to the shift to the right but claims that it's better to accept a wages policy than open the way to a right-wing coalition, like 1931.

The difference between Jones and Scanlon — or, if you like, Gormley and Scargill — is that Scargill and Scanlon are both under the most intense pressure from their own rank and file not to cave in to Government pressure on wages. Scargill couldn't very well back down on this even if he wanted to. The Yorkshire, Scottish and Derbyshire regions of his union have taken

up a clear position on the £100 claim. They're going to get it!

Well, good luck to them and the engineers in their claims, but nobody should imagine for a moment that they are presenting a rallying point to the rest of the working class. On the contrary, they seem more likely to isolate themselves and to deepen the sectional splits within the class.

The inability of the 'muscle-men', the 'big battalions', to put forward political perspectives which might act as a beacon for working class struggle generally was clearly revealed during the Referendum campaign.

In the main, the 33% or so who voted NO were more or less the hard core of the Labour movement — the solid, unionised, class conscious supporters of the Labour Party. They mainly voted by instinct. They had to since the 'anti' campaign was hopelessly negative. What Benn, Jones and the others had to say about the future outside the Common Market can have convinced few to vote with them. And this is still the key problem for the working class: the lack of a political programme which could begin to overcome the sectionalism which we see everywhere at present.

In the space of the same week, you have the TGWU voting en masse in conference for the Jones plan for flat rate wage CUTS, but the miners pressing ahead for their £100 and 30,000 women and men demonstrating for free abortion on demand. This shows that there is plenty of fight there and a lot of anger about prices, rents, public spending cuts and wages. It suggests that the Government and the ruling class is going to have a very hard summer and autumn trying to convince us that we ought to pay for the crisis.

But it would be stupid to be complacent. We are living in dangerous times, when the Government badly needs to force a wedge in on wages and cutbacks in spending by the State. Too many signs of weakness by the working class, too little disunity, and we could find ourselves very quickly staring a real defeat in the face.

With the official left split asunder, a lot now depends on the working class' capacity for independent action, regardless of the all the blackmail about the crisis. In particular, a lot hangs now on the emergence of a set of demands around which many sections could be united. We suggest below some of the lines of a programme which could help the process of unification.

JOBS, WAGES, RENTS UNITE TO WIN!

WAGES AND PRICES

As far as wages go, the days are gone when an ever ever-expanding income and a secure future for all under capitalism, were promised by the politicians. Now they are clear, it's wage cuts for all. They tell us and the union leaders agree, that our standard of living has to fall, never mind merely keep pace with prices. Our shopping baskets are shrinking even more as the Common Market prices policy bites. For our survival we need to smash any wage freeze, voluntary or compulsory. We must fight for rises as strikes, occupations, flying pickets. But talk of returning to 'free collective bargaining' isn't enough. The fight must be on one basis only — we all need big rises to live, not because we're rullmen, or miners, or any one section. We'll use any methods possible, two rises a year, thresholds, anything. But let's set targets which unite the whole working class not divide it. And let's not forget the income of those out of work, in the home or on social security, they need to live as well and they don't have the same power as productive sectors

Big Flame says:

- ★ Big rises across the board
- ★ Thresholds tied to the working class's cost of living.
- ★ No to any incomes policy or wage controls.
- ★ A living wage for the unemployed pensioners and people on SS. Automatic rises with the cost of living.
- ★ Force the government to control prices.

RENTS AND HOUSING

To pay off the moneylenders and subsidise private industry, the State is also putting up our rents, cutting council house building and ending council loans for mortgages. Everywhere people are in arrears as they're forced to spend the money on other necessi-

ties. Squats of empty property by those without a decent home are increasing. Rent strikes are on the cards.

Big Flame says:

- ★ No to the rent rises, for low rents and cheap mortgages.
- ★ Fill the empty houses, homes for all and end the unemployment of building workers.

PUBLIC SPENDING

The more the crisis of the system grows, the more the state has to subsidise it by cutting the money that should be spent on public services. At the very moment when we desperately need more hospitals, schools, nurseries, swimming baths, Healey and the Labour government are ruthlessly cutting back hundreds of millions off public spending. And they are planning more, even considering raising the retirement age of women back to 65. Meanwhile, the upper middle-class opt out by spending their money on private hospitals, schools and facilities. But we're not taking this lying down. Hospital workers are fighting the run-down of the NHS and the growth of private medicine. Housewives are fighting for community controlled nurseries, for more family allowances and more facilities to reduce the load of housework.

Big Flame says:

- ★ Fight the cuts in public spending
- ★ More hospitals, schools and community controlled facilities.

JOBS

The weapon which the capitalist class has used most in the last year is *unemployment*. It does not start at the dole queue. It starts when management wants to impose cuts in *manning levels, speed-ups, mobility of labour and increase productivity*. That is when they want to rationalise production and increase the exploitation of the workforce

to boost their profits. Unemployment continues with *short-time and lay-offs*, which are forms of concealed unemployment used to smash shop floor organisation and split and blackmail workers. Or it may take the form of *natural wastage*, which is not natural, but is planned as *redundancies and closures*. They weld this into a general plan to re-establish the power of capital over the working class, increasing their wealth at our expense.

Against this attack workers have fought countless struggles to maintain manning levels and job organisation. At Ford Halewood workers have realised that the only guarantee against lay-off is resisting attempts to increase workload. In Speke and Kirkby in Liverpool, we've seen committees set up to fight closures and redundancies. At Dagenham, Vauxhall, Triumph, Coventry and Chrysler, the demand has been *full lay off pay*.

Big Flame says:

- ★ No to unemployment, fight closures and redundancies.
- ★ No to manning cuts, natural wastage, mobility of labour and speed-ups.
- ★ 35 hour week with increased pay, no increase in workload, as our solution to unemployment.
- ★ No to short time and layoffs
- ★ Full lay-off pay — full pay work or not.

A GUARANTEED INCOME FOR ALL

Everyone of these demands and struggles has to be generalised to each section of the working class, linking every aspect of the struggle towards a final goal — the defeat of the capitalist state and the creation of a socialist society. In a society free from the rule of profit we can rid ourselves of poverty, re-distribute the wealth and power and establish our priorities for how we live and work.

RAPE

On April 30th three High Court judges ruled that if a rapist could show that he 'honestly believed' the woman was consenting, 'however unreasonable' his grounds - then he would get off. Since then there has been great pressure for a reversal of the ruling and for further changes in the law that would make it easier rather than more difficult for women to press charges against rapists. Following the 'rapists charter' as the ruling has been called, there have been a number of cases which highlight the issues involved in rape. These include the case of the Cambridge rapist to the 18 year old who received a six month suspended sentence after admitting to two rape attacks at knifepoint. Below we look at the real issues involved in rape. Not the sensational stories, but the way the law treats women and the causes of rape that the press never mentions, because they are responsible.

WOMEN AND THE LAW

When making the recent ruling Lord Hailsham, Tory Minister said:

'What a woman wants and what she consents to may be two different things.'

This astounding piece of arrogance echoes the general attitude of the law and the system to women - that women don't know their own mind and that judges, doctors, politicians and men in general can decide it instead. So if a woman is screaming 'no' and fighting a rapist, this is not taken to mean that she doesn't want to be raped - she really means 'yes' and is protesting merely to give a man the 'additional thrill of struggle'. And if she decides it's safer not to fight back for fear of being killed or mutilated, the court may say that because she didn't struggle, she was really consenting. Imagine this rule of 'justice' applying to other serious crimes. A bank robber could get off by saying he honestly believed the cashier wanted to give him the money as he brandished a sawn-off shotgun in his face.

But these attitudes go far beyond rape cases. The James White Amendment Bill also presumes a woman doesn't know her own mind. Doctors and a whole bevy of learned gentlemen are apparently in a better position to decide whether a woman wants another child or not. In some hospitals wives still have to get their husbands consent to hysterectomies and they cannot get sterilised without his permission. Again the assumption that a woman's body is not her own but her husband's. At a time when women are demanding more power and forcing bills against sex discrimination, the rape ruling and other attempts to turn the clock back represent last ditch stands by reactionary moralists and men who fear the power of women.

RAPE AND THE COURTS

The ruling and recent judgments on rape have made it even more unlikely that women will report attacks. An estimated 75 out of a hundred known rapes, according to one feminist lawyer, go unreported in this country and it's not surprising. The police and the hospitals are usually unsympathetic and imply



Fighting the rape threat: women's self-defence class

that you're just a hysterical female who is turning nasty on a fella after you've agreed to have sex with him. They get you to tell in detail exactly what happened to you, sometimes three or four times over and in graphic detail. This, when you're in a state of shock and trying to forget it!

SUSPENDED SENTENCE

When a woman gets to court you'd think it was her that was on trial not the rapist. Women are made to recount their past sex life. If she's had sex before the defence often claim that she's immoral and provoked the attack. So the view that women exist for men's convenience is upheld by the courts. This was particularly obvious in the case of the 18 year old who got a suspended sentence for rape. When he let him off, the judge said that the youth was going through a difficult time of life and experiencing so-called 'uncontrollable sexual urges'. As the woman who was raped said.

'if a man's sexual urges have to be obeyed then women are just being used as tools.'

There was nothing uncontrollable about his act as was shown by the fact that he was caught going back with a mate for a second try! The question is not the length of the

sentence, but that the decision will make women even more unwilling to go through the humiliations of prosecuting rapists.

THE FIGHT BACK

The most important fight back starts from the practical help women give each other. In the case of rape, this could be rape centres, like they've set up in America. From these centres women can get advice and support if they have been attacked and press for legal reforms, like a woman not having to reveal her past sex life and be publicly identified. They also run self-defence classes, so they no longer feel they are an easy target.

But neither compensation through law nor self-defence will prevent the vast amount of sexual violence directed against women. That violence is rooted in the attitudes and relationships between men and women, and will only change when the challenge becomes public. For example, in East London, when a battered wives centre was set up, women used it as a defence against their men by threatening to leave. The men didn't dare batter their women any more because they knew the women had somewhere to go.

SEXUAL ATTITUDES

Most people can see what's wrong with rape when it's the act of maniacs like the Cambridge rapist or child rapers. But the daily acts of sexual violence committed by lots of perfectly 'normal' men gets less prominence. Whether it's rape or battering women, the attitude is the same - If you can't get your own way just force her''.

'That's what's frightening about rape - the force and violence that men use - and their contempt and hatred for you. But a lot of people don't see that it's just like any other violence, they just see the sex.'

How many times have you heard the phrase - 'Well, all women want to be secretly raped anyway'. The view that women are passive objects is re-inforced by the very people who loudly condemn rape, - the mass media. By showing women as no more than a nice pair of tits and arse they are saying that women exist for men's pleasure and don't have a mind of their own.

'It's always supposed to be women that lead men on' just by looking or talking to a man and that you've got to be careful because men have all these passionate feelings. But so do women. Men have just had more experience of using force and bossing women around.'

MARRIAGE

People also forget that rape exists in marriage, although legally it can't. Many wives are viciously and consistently beaten up by their husbands but can't escape because of the kids and lack of money. Forcing a woman to have sex in marriage at times when she doesn't want to is rape. It's not that women don't want sex, women don't want brutal sex that ignores their feelings and needs.

'In my circle of friends most of the girls are ill treated by their husbands. One came in drunk at 4 o'clock in the morning and dragged her out of bed by the hair. "I've just left a tart to come home to you," he said.'

Reported rapes are the tip of the iceberg. Only when women challenge sexist attitudes and being dependent on men for money will sexual violence against women start to decrease. The more power for women the less chance for rapists.

AMERICAN WOMEN FIGHT FOR A WOMAN WHO FOUGHT BACK

The fightback by American women has now reached a crucial point with the trial of 20 year old black woman, JoAnne Little. She is charged with the murder of a prison guard, Clarence Allgood. One night, while she was sleeping, he entered her cell with an icepick. Although she is only 5'3", JoAnne managed to wrest the icepick out of his hand and wounded him fatally in the heart. He was found dead, his pants pulled down and seminal fluid on his leg.

She fled but later turned herself in, not realising that Allbad was dead. Meanwhile, the police had declared her an outlaw, liable to be shot on sight. The guard's death was described by the local press as being 'in the line of duty'. Now the local court have refused to allow the State medical examiner to testify in her defence, have refused to hand over the rapist's underwear and other vital evidence. They've also denied her State defence funds. The women's movement has helped to form a defence committee which is fighting her case hard.

IN OUR CROWD most blokes never thought twice about rape, about forcing girls to have sex. I've seen girls attacked regularly on buses, houses and streets, never mind more secluded spots. It never seemed to enter into anyone's heads that women could enjoy sex and freely choose their partners and what they wanted to do. If the blokes never got what they wanted - what is laughingly known as sex - most were prepared to use force and threats. Afterwards, they'd tell all their mates, who'd expect the same. It's no wonder that most of the girls would resist.

These rapes go on every day, I've never seen any of them reported. The girl would be too frightened of the police questioning and the lads. Why do they do it? I think that most men are made to feel inadequate if they're not getting it regularly, if they're not showing that they can attract and screw with women. The papers, the adverts, the films are always making out that women are there for the taking, and if you're not taking it, you're a failure. Also there's a real competitive thing, especially amongst lads, where you're supposed to be more of a man and get more respect, the more girls you've had it off with, which is bound to encourage the use of force.

But, anyway, men grow up thinking womens' bodies are just their property. We used to call them 'beef'. I don't think it's even actual sex that makes men rape. You hear judges go on about 'uncontrollable sexual urges'. That's a load of crap, it can't be the sex itself because, let's face it, it's no good under those circumstances. It's more the prestige amongst your mates and the feeling of power and security it gives you. Anyone who won't take part in that kind of thing is regarded as a pansy, or soft of something. So, you can't win. Everywhere there's pressure to treat women like dirt, even though you know it poisons the whole thing.

MEN TALKING ABOUT RAPE



SUBVERTISEMENTS

PORTUGAL - A BLAZE OF FREEDOM

New pamphlet from Big Flame. Exciting and lavishly illustrated account of the first year of the revolutionary struggle in Portugal

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Designed for mass circulation, it is a 32 page readable account of the political situation in Ireland, the history of its struggle, also containing an interview with a British Soldier and with people from all parts of the 6 counties.

It is illustrated throughout with previously unpublished and dramatic pictures.

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ARTICLES ON: The Economic crisis
The struggle in the hospitals
Ireland
Struggle Notes

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Also: THE IRISH BULLETIN Issue No 3.

Up to date information and analysis

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TOWARDS A RAPE CENTRE

A Meeting at the Women's Centre
218 Upper Brook St Manchester
(061 - 273 2287) at 8pm on
16 July to talk about setting up
a rape centre.

For any pamphlets or publications advertised in this newspaper, write to Birmingham Big Flame at 632 Bristol Road, Selly Oak.

HOUSING: THE FIGHT BACK HAS BEGUN!



MAY Macbeth Street won't take any more.



MAY Logan Towers occupies the Housing Office

REPUBLICA (CONT.)

Finally, an elected coordinating committee of the workers, which included two editorial staff, got together to hammer out an agreement about the paper's policy. One of the points was that *All progressive parties should have identical treatment. The correct application of this principle will depend on the daily analysis of the paper by the workers coordinating committee...*

THE BREAK-DOWN

It was quickly obvious that the management were just ignoring this policy. The crunch came when the commercial manager, who'd been strongly supported by the workers, resigned in disgust. The workers committee immediately demanded that he should come back and that the editor should resign instead. Then the editor asked for the front page to make a statement about the dispute. When the workers refused, the discussion broke down, and the next edition was produced with the commercial manager acting as editor.

Management asked COPCON, the internal security force for Portugal, to intervene. They decided that the paper should be handed back to the management provided no workers were dismissed. Rego rejected this and so COPCON handed the keys to the press over to the workers.

(Editors note: a photo of the incident in a

French paper showed a worker holding the keys jubilantly aloft. He was wearing a Socialist Party badge in his lapel. It wouldn't have done to mention this in the British press where the story was kept up that this was a communist take-over. In fact, the Communist Party's influence among the workers of Republica is a minority one.)

Since then they have reported for work every day but no paper has appeared. After nearly two months, the workers are still united and determined to win, but they are very doubtful about reaching any compromise solution with Rego. They insist that next time Republica comes out it will be on their terms.

SUPPORT

The workers have received support from all sections of the Portuguese working class, including the Lisnave shipyard workers, Sorefame, heavy engineering workers, and the national steel works. Similar struggles are beginning in other papers and in the radio where workers are fighting the Parties' censorship and demanding control over editorial policy. What happens at Republica could have a very important effect on how these other struggles turn out. What's at stake is whether the Portuguese press will serve the interests of the Parties which are trying to hold back the development of the socialist and independent workers movement, or whether it will serve the interests of that movement instead.



JUNE Tenants picket the Town Hall about rent rises.

WHAT ARE WE PAYING FOR?

The Right Honourable Anthony Crosland, Labour MP and Secretary for the Environment has described the housing situation as a "Dog's Breakfast." He should know — he's in charge of it.

The basic problem is that whenever houses are built, someones making a big profit out of them; mainly the big-time money lenders who loan money to the Government and Corporations for building houses at massive interest rates. These rates are soaring. This year interest rates throughout the country reached £1,152 million — by 1980 they will amount to £3,000 million a year. That's not going on bricks, mortar and building workers wages — that's just profit going back to money lenders. The Government and the Corpy, by putting up rents are trying to make council tenants pay these interest bills.

But we're not getting anything "concrete" for our money. The number of houses being built in this country per month is not increasing but homelessness is. Government grants which cities use to improve existing houses has just been cut by £295 million. Yet three years ago improvement grants were declared to be the "solution" to the housing problem. Meanwhile overcrowding is on the increase.

Between 1963 and 1971 the cost of building a council house doubled. And doubled again between 1971 and this year. For Liverpool

(The result is...) a housing market in which record levels of homelessness go with a post-war record of vacant housing, in which the effective cost of a mortgage is cheapest for the richest buyers, while poor council tenants subsidise their richer neighbours.

—this indictment of capitalist housing policy was printed in the July 7 Financial Times.

Corpy this means a debt of £16½ million, which is why the Liberal council fixed the rents so high. But we're not paying for houses any more — we're paying off debts.

* In Birmingham the average council house costs every year:

Maintenance and repairs	£80
Administration	£25
Interest rate	£1342

What are our rents paying for? The answer is simple. We're paying for rising interest rates, corporation debts and we're subsidising house owners. The only thing we're not paying for is more and better council houses. You've got to be a rich dog to get your breakfast these days.

THE HIDDEN RENT STRIKE

Up and down the country, it takes just one word to make the councillors tremble — **ARREARS!** This form of opposition to rent rises is the most successful so far and is growing every day. Merseyside tenants now owe £3,200,000 between them — which is 10% of all the arrears owed in this national "hidden rent strike" in all £26 million.

There used to be a time when it was considered shameful to be "behind with the rent." When the rent was the most important weekly item, and the "notice to quit" the worst thing that could ever come through a letter box. But with the rising cost of living and the impossibility of making ends meet, people have started to resist in the only way possible.

The first time this new feeling came out in the open was when the women of Tower Hill and Liverpool marched through the city singing "Fair Rent is spent" As one housewife put it at the time "If it's a choice between food for the kids, and going behind on the rent, what comes first?"

When the 1972/73 official rent strike on Merseyside finally came to an end, local councils claimed a victory. "The rent strike failed" they crowed. But did it?

* On Tower Hill, tenants who owed between £200 and £700 arrears are still in their houses, paying off their arrears at rates they forced the Council to accept — like 10p a week.

* Although the total rent strike "Over the Bridge" in Liverpool officially lasted only 6 months, evictions were fought, and none took place. While tenants arranged a convenient way to pay back arrears, Over the Bridge did not suffer the next round of increases. Was this because the Council feared another rent strike even after they had "beaten the tenants"? Or was it because they knew they wouldn't get the money, rent strike or no rent strike?

There are more ways of skinning a cat... While many tenants on Merseyside are unwilling to face another official rent strike at this stage, there is no doubt that the main attitude in flats and council houses is **We can't afford it.**

"Unofficial" forms of opposition are on the increase. Incidents of squatting are on the

Shocking sum

ABOUT £65 millions was owed by 4,500,000 people in outstanding electricity bills and £60 millions by 2,500,000 in gas bills, the Energy Secretary, Mr Tony Benn, said in a written reply.

increase in Merseyside (See last months Big Flame) and although we don't yet have the 20,000 squatters which London has, these kinds of resistance will increase as people solve the "housing problem" in the only way possible.

BIG FLAME

FORDS: ECHO STORY NAILED

'Squads of industrial terrorists are causing chaos at a car plant, it was said today.' — That was the Liverpool Echo on July 3 (and the Southern edition of almost every national and local paper, including the Sun and the Express). Despite its prominence — the top of the front page — the Echo's report is so shakily-based that it won't bear scrutiny.

A 'group of men', we're told, from the Ford tractor plant at Basildon, Essex, have written to 40 MPs demanding an inquiry into the activities of the 'red wreckers' at the Ford Dagenham Body plant. Although the letter writers are nowhere identified in the press, we know them to be the Basildon plant convenor, Bill Cleary, acting in collusion with a couple of Dagenham top union men.

Their motives have as much to do with pending elections inside the TGWU as with their concern about the menace presented by 'Red Flame, International Marxists, Maoists, Trotskyite, Black Dwarf'.

DEAD DWARF

'Red Flame' is, of course, Big Flame, active for the last three years in Dagenham, and there's no doubt that the International Marxist Group exists, but what about the others?

We assume the letter writers were too overcome with hysteria and ambition to reflect on whether any organisation is likely to call itself Trotskyite (it's as if we habitually referred to Mrs Thatcher's party as 'Capitalistic'). But couldn't these experts on the Dagenham scene be expected to know that Black Dwarf is no more sinister than a long-dead revolutionary weekly paper whose only connection with Dagenham is the interview with two senior shop stewards there published nearly five years ago.

By now, you will be suspecting that we're dealing with one of those flimsy, commie-bashing fabrications so beloved of the right-wing press,

including our own Echo. Readers with a long memory may recall the Tory MP whose allegations about a group of 'roving industrial saboteurs' called Blue (!) Flame caused such a stir in the middle of the 1971 Ford strike. Pressed to reveal more, the MP was suddenly seized by lock-jaw. The Echo, naturally, was just as pleased to print garbage then as it is now.

REVOLTING MOB

The question remains, why the Echo and all the others make so much of it? What gets the goat of the Echo, and the money men who call its tune, is the growth of working class power — in any form. Like eighteenth century aristocrats, they live in terror of the mob revolting, and it's something like that which is suggested by the Basildon letter writers —

It is because we believe the official union has lost control that we want an inquiry in order that the union regains control for the good of all Ford workers.

And to cap it all, the Express describes us as 'the most militant and potentially the most disruptive.' How they flatter us! What immense influence we must have over the lives of thousands of Ford workers, but the truth is less dramatic. Big Flame is active in the Ford plants at Dagenham, Langley and Halewood, as well as in Longbridge (BLMC). We neither try to hide our presence or our reasons for being so involved from Ford or British Leyland workers. Naturally, we tend to be less helpful or informative towards bosses' newspapers like the Echo and the Express which we know from some bitter experience tend to print this nonsense.

NO WONDER THEY'RE LOSING CONTROL

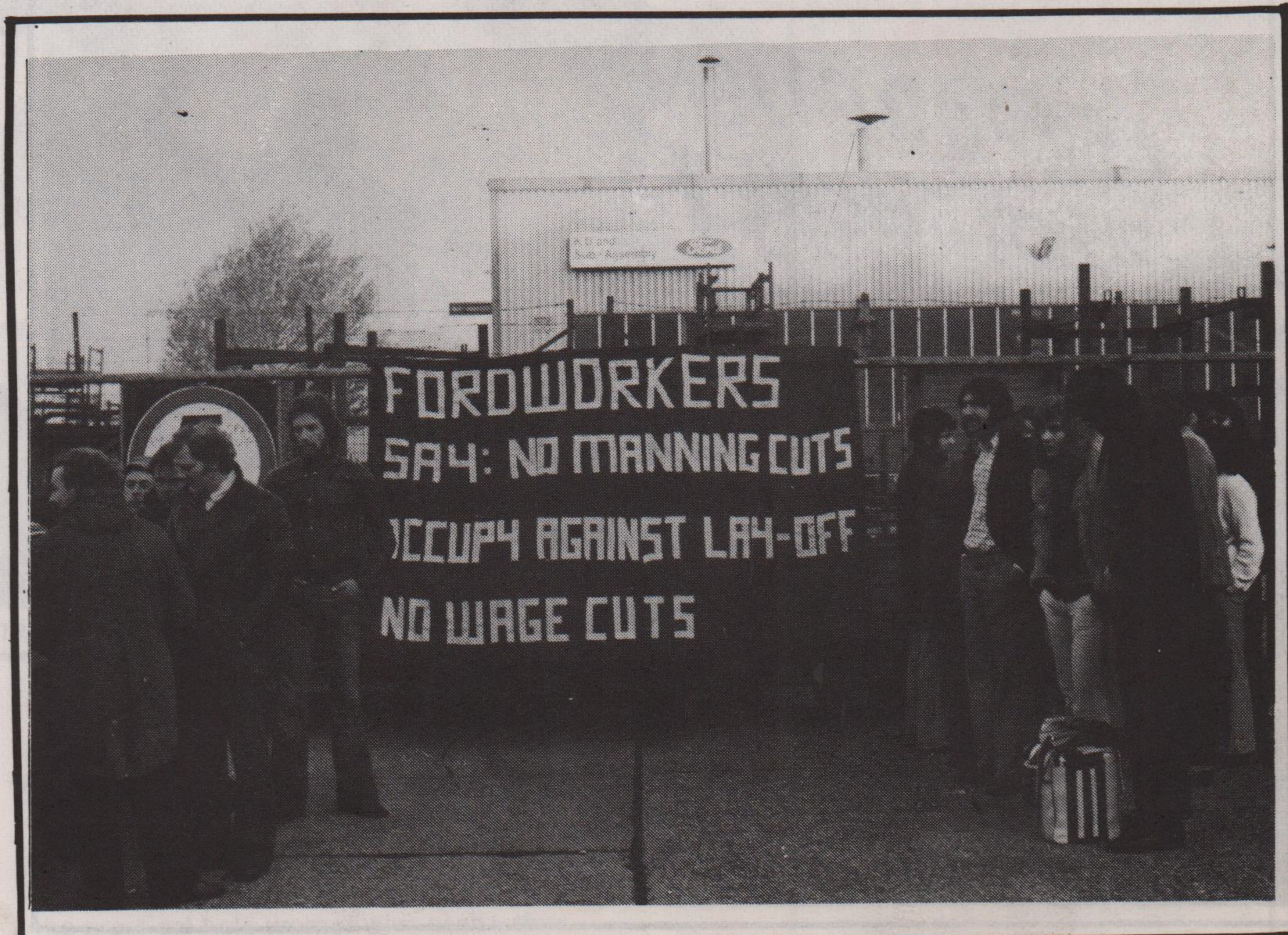
The last week of June was blisteringly hot. Inside the Halewood assembly plant, the men sweated as they worked. One of them was filling gear-boxes with oil using a pressure gun. He cursed when it broke down because the only alternative was to do the job manually until the gun was repaired. But that involved 28 separate motions to fill every gear-box, and meanwhile the line runs on at 68 an hour. It was clearly an impossible task, even when another two men were put on the job to help.

Despite that, the worker was given a written reprimand for failing to do the job. The rest of his section asked for it to be rescinded, and when it wasn't, they walked out in solidarity. The

plant convenor's response was to warn them that their mate would be sacked unless they started work.

Is it any wonder that the union's losing control? As a Halewood transmission plant worker put it — 'I'm not an extremist but it seems to be that the extremists are the only ones who get anything done on the shop floor.'

And he might have added that if the so-called extremists let Bill Cleary have his own way, the car plants would be full of men killing themselves to keep pace with the line. At a time when the car bosses are on the attack, Bill Cleary's letters to the press are something Ford workers can do without.



EVEN THE FOREMEN HAVE TO READ IT!

Unfortunately for the Echo, and Fords, there are many Ford workers who prefer to listen to our version of events. Even the Company had to recognise this when it carried out a survey among its foremen. Asking them about the main sources of their day to day information about plant matters, the questionnaire listed several possibilities, including the Ford Supervisors Bulletin — and Big Flame which was first on the list.

But the main issue was summed up in one of our Halewood Bulletins —

'We feel that what we do around Fords is necessary because the union are not capable nor interested enough to fight against the bosses... there has to be an alternative organisation of the rank and file...'

Well, that's what we're up to. How about you Mr Cleary?

The reason why the union is losing control, as

you put it, is that the workers see that it's no use to them. That the only way to get things done is by exerting their own power and by building a political alternative to our bankrupt leaders in the unions. That is the political and organisational task that Big Flame has set itself.

Perhaps we should be thinking of spreading ourselves to Basildon as well. Recently, a group of ex-Dagenham workers left Basildon in disgust at the poor organisation and returned to their former plant.

FOOTNOTE

You can read a full statement of our aims on page four. You may be interested to know that Ford stooge, Cleary, and his mates in Dagenham are locked in a bitter struggle for control of the Body Plant. They're trying to oust Dan Connor, the present convenor, in the coming elections, whom they regard as a left-winger. They've stirred up this campaign about the 'red wreckers' in the hope that they'll manage to entangle Connor in the storm of publicity.

TINLINGS - SIT-IN ON THE CARDS

"If Tony Benn had still been in the Department of Industry, there may have been a chance, but now it's extremely limited."

Tony Mulhern, the chairman of the printing trades unions at Tinlings plant at Prescott Lancs., was taking account of the effects of the Government's shift to the right since the Referendum and Benn's move to Energy. It could be that otherwise the 375 workers whose jobs are at stake since the Receiver moved in would have already decided to occupy, secure in the knowledge that help would have come from the Government. Now, they must think twice. So, as Mulhern says, "We're working normally, to buy time to see what can be achieved."

What do they want? Naturally they'd prefer some form of nationalisation or workers cooperative which would give them job security. But Benn's replacement, Varley, has made it plain already to Imperial Typewriters workers in Hull as well as to Norton-Villiers-Triumph, that he can be as tough as the next Tory when it comes to redundancies.

There are signs that Tinlings management are more interested in asset-stripping than printing. The workers claim there's orders for maybe another couple of months as well as outstanding debts owing to the firm of £2-300,000. Tinlings just say the profits are insufficient.



Tinlings, Prescott: if Varley won't help, we'll have to,

BOSSES SACRIFICES

In case you didn't know it, July 2 was Free Enterprise Day. The employers' public relations outfit, Aims of Industry had gathered 400 'Captains of Industry' together for a banquet at which Mrs (Milk-snatcher) Thatcher presented an award to Sir Keith (Sack 'em and Sterilise 'em) Joseph, as 'Free Enterprise Man of the Year'.

What a sturdy example of sacrifice they set us all in this time of crisis. What a sacrifice to have to eat mousse de saumon, selle d'agneau rotie, tarte a l'orange and grande marnier avec creme fraiche, washed down with Chateau De Carignan. What a sacrifice to be driven away in 29 chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royces, to say nothing of the Jags and Daimlers.

In her speech, Mrs Thatcher referred to free enterprise 'creating the surplus of wealth'. But, seeing that the banquet lasted over three hours, it was painfully obvious who was creating the wealth that afternoon, and every other day — the workers of their factories! It reminded us of the joke, 'Who's the only person who can take three hours off for lunch and not be missed.' Answers on a postcard, please. For the winner, a two week luxury tour around Sir Keith Joseph's bathroom.

SPANISH POLITICAL PRISONERS PICKET IN LIVERPOOL

Liverpool was recently reminded of the hundreds of political prisoners in Franco's jails by a picket outside the Spanish Consulate and in Williamson Square. The

picket was organised by left-wing organisations in support of Eva Forest, held after terrible torture for supposedly helping to assassinate the ex-Prime Minister, Carrero Blanco in December 1973, and two Basques charged with killing a notorious torturer, an Inspector in the political police earlier this year.

If you want to enquire about joining Big Flame, or find out more about our activities write to one of the groups below:

- Merseyside 66 Logan Towers Athol St Liverpool 5 051-207 5400
- Birmingham 632 Bristol Road Selly Oak 021-472 7019
- London 7 Norland Gardens London W11 01-603 3275
- Manchester 317 Bradford Road Manchester 10 061-205 5895

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