

# Big Flame

for  
Socialism

Paper of the revolutionary  
socialist organisation 'Big Flame'

No. 76 July 1979 15p.

SOUNDS  
for a new system



Inside  
this issue

-centre pages

## The Shape of Things to Come?

# TORIES' LAW AND ORDER BLITZ

'KEEP OFF the streets and you won't get into trouble.' That's the advice of the head of the Metropolitan Police, David McNee, to London's black population. For those who break the curfew, there's his Special Patrol Group to reckon with. The SPG have tasted blood — they killed the anti-Nazi Blair Peach at Southall — and now they know they have their chief's full confidence.

And, in turn, the Government has demonstrated its support for the police by exempting them from its spending cuts and giving them a big pay rise.

Since the Tories' election, the police have become more daring in their outspokenness. Anderton, chief constable of Manchester, always amongst the toughest of the hard-liners, has called for 'penal work-camps'.

And another police chief has condemned the present system of local forces as outmoded. He wants a national organisation to fight the criminals.

### FEAR

All this has little to do with fighting crime — whatever the police claim — and plenty to do with putting the

fear of God (Anderton is a lay preacher) into the working class at large.

Whether they know it or not, the police hard-liners are valued by Mrs Thatcher less for the value of their suggestions — most of them utterly impractical — than for the

public impact of their outbursts.

### ASSAULT

The aim of this Government is to swing the political centre of gravity to the right through a two-pronged assault on our minds and our pockets. Law and order and the Budget are more closely linked than might at first appear to be the case.

The inevitable and *intended* consequence of the Budget will be to lengthen the dole queues by at least another half million over the next year or so. Young people and black people will be the hardest hit. (Unless they succumb to the police and army recruitment drives.)

### ANGELS

Anderton claims his penal work-camps are for Hells Angels. In reality, the new police hard-line is directed against the unemployed and all those who would resist Thatcher's attempts to weaken the strength and unity of the working class.



● Scenes from what began as a peaceful demonstration. Central London, early June and the police display their normal partiality towards anti-racists. Despite the arrests, there was a happy ending. For the full story, turn to our 'Pic' of the Month on page 3.





# Editorial

**THE REAL strategy** behind the first Tory budget is to create massive unemployment in order to weaken organised labour. To restore profitability in the long run requires wage cuts, and these cannot be imposed while the workers are still militant.

**INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT**  
The Tories believe (correctly) that at present levels of unemployment and welfare benefits means that those in jobs can resist attacks on their living standards. To break this resistance we'll be subjected to the discipline of the dole queue: expect another one million out of work by the end of 1980!

The measures leading to this result include public spending cuts, an end to em-

ployment subsidies, and a credit squeeze that'll bankrupt many businesses. Even the switch from direct to indirect taxes works in the same direction by creating divisions between the employed and the unemployed.

## NO NEW GOLDEN AGE

The tax cuts of the budget are useless as incentives to rebuild the British economy. A new 'golden age' is not going to dawn just because managing directors have doubled their take home pay. Nobody has illusions on that score.

## INVESTMENT ABROAD

The combination of relaxed exchange controls and high interest rates encourages more investment abroad by British based companies, rather than investment at home. This budget is a virtual invitation to British capital to go on holiday for a year or so, while the government's economic policies destroy the combativeness of the working class.

Will their strategy work? Only if we LET it work. Effective resistance to this destructive onslaught on our jobs, living standards and freedoms, requires that we underestimate neither the intelligence of their plans nor the savagery of their intentions.

## THE THORPE CASE

WHATEVER THE jury's verdict in the Jeremy Thorpe case, it is important to remember that no-one would have been in a position to blackmail him if it were not for the taboos that are attached to homosexuality in our society.

In San Francisco, someone who admitted to murdering a homosexual in cold blood was only convicted of 'accidental manslaughter'!

Gay Pride Week takes place in the context of an international backlash against gay people. It must be supported by gays and non-gays because unless everyone can have the sexual relations (s)he wants, none of us can.

an important date  
for YOUR diary

August 12th

# British Troops Out of Ireland

On the 10th anniversary of the British troops occupying the 6 counties of Northern Ireland, there will be a large demonstration calling for the withdrawal of the troops. More details next month.

## DIGNITY WITHOUT THE DOLLARS

'Here you can cut the cost and still have the dignity'. That's Oliver Linquist, general manager of the Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland, California, talking. He's pioneering the 'true alternative' to expensive funerals — 'rent-a-casket'. Well, not a whole coffin, that's illegal, but the fancy shell of a coffin that slips over a plain wooden box for that extra feeling of expense — or 'dignity' as they prefer to call it.

Coffin shells rent for 248 dollars for an oak one and 287 for metal — quite a saving from the hundreds of dollars usually required for anything other than a plain wooden box. There's one catch though. Like Cinderella and the pumpkin, all good things must come to an end and Chapel of the Chimes insists that the body must travel to the cemetery in the same old wooden box. 'Rent-a-casket' heads on back to the display room ready for the next customer.



Tories in the European parliament will sit next to the German Christian Democratic group. They will do well to remember the old saying, 'time is a great healer'. For one of the leading Christian Democrats in Strasbourg is Hans Jahn, whose Nazi past includes writing a book called *Judeo-Bolshevik Imperialism!* The book, published in 1943, includes statements like 'With the destruction of Bolshevism, the last great bid by Jewry for world domination will have been defeated... Thousands of years from now Man (sic), and above all Youth, will speak one name with reverence and awe: Adolf Hitler's'. Arguing in favour of a Nazi war victory, Jahn wrote: 'The English and Americans will one day thank God in Heaven that German victory will have saved them from the domination of Bolshevism'. (From People's News Service).

Does the oil under the North Sea belong to Scotland or its people? Not if the big oil companies — and NATO — have their way.

According to the Welsh Republican newspaper 'Y Faner Goch', thousands of NATO troops spent part of last September on a mock invasion of Shetland to 'secure key installations from local dissidents who had taken them over'.

As part of the preparations for keeping oil wealth in the hands of the capitalist companies and out of the hands of the people, a 'counter-insurgency' expert, Paul Wilkinson, has moved north.

Y Faner Goch reveals 'Wilkinson has links at the highest level with the armed forces, British Intelligence and undercover agencies overseas, and is the author of numerous books and articles on 'terrorism'. Now he is to take up a newly created chair in international politics in Aberdeen; senior sources there indicate that this new post has been financed by international oil companies with substantial stakes in the North Sea.'

Wilkinson is a former lecturer to the police and army on 'terrorism' and 'subversion' and is a consultant of the CIA-linked Institute for the Study of Conflict.

It seems that if you're a big oil company you can buy mercenaries of all kinds to protect your wealth — from mercenary British troops to mercenary academic experts!

Still on the subject of mercenaries and killers, ex-Colonel Stirling, the founder of the SAS as well as the now-defunct strike-breaking body GB75, owns an estate on the shores of Loch Morar, Invernesshire. According to 'Socialist Scotland' Stirling is planning to restrict access to the loch, closing off 40 square miles of land from hikers and anglers. He wants the loch patrolled by bailiffs with commando-dinghies and walkie-talkie radios. 'All camping and caravan sites will be kept under surveillance because certain innocent-looking visitors will turn out to be professional poachers.' At present, fishing on the loch is free to the public.

This might just be the case of another ex-Army crackpot reliving his military exploits in retirement.

But just as Stirling wants to restrict the enjoyment of a beautiful piece of countryside to himself, the body he formed, the Special Air Services, is killing people in Ireland in order to restrict the enjoyment of that country's wealth to the big companies, many of them British, which suck Ireland dry.

**THE EIGHT HOUR SMOOTHIE**  
The cosmetics industry is marketing yet another product for those weary souls stuck on the long road to the Fountain of Youth — wrinkle removers. Just rub these mineral based facial creams on each morning and enjoy up to eight hours wrinkle free, or so



Harvey Smith doing a Maggie Thatcher

## HEALTH UNDER APARTHEID

The health provision for a population of 22 million is 157 psychiatrists and 168 psychologists. Not one of the psychologists is African. Psychiatric hospital beds are divided between state institutions and institutions run by a private firm, Smith, Mitchell & Co. There are 2.55 beds per 1000 of the white population and 0.78 beds for the rest. Smith, Mitchell & Co. receive one third of the total budget for mental health in the country. They receive £35.50 per year for each white, and £6.50 for each patient who is black. Their purpose? 'We are here to make a profit', stated Mr. Tabatzevich, chairman of the group. Patients in these private institutions are forced out to work for firms, e.g., Metal Box, Standard Telephones, for which they are paid between one and five pounds per month. This gives each hospital an estimated yearly profit of £5000 to £10,000.

And what are these private institutions? They are mostly converted mining compounds. 'human warehouses, rendering only custodial care'. There is a high wire mesh around the compounds. Uniformed guards with rubber truncheons patrol them. They have up to 250 patients per ward. It seems that none of these institutions has a full-time medical officer, and that they are only visited by a part-time white psychiatrist. Electric shock treatment (ECT) is given without general anaesthetic — the spasm this causes can fracture the spine.

claim the makers of 'Line Tamer', 'Ever Smooth', 'Secret Miracle' and 'Wrinkles Away'. Aimed at the over-30 crowd — both men and women — the wrinkle smoothers sell for up to 50 dollars an ounce and some producers are predicting they'll be the hot item in the future.

## Money Needed!

£10 was sent by a South London member — in anticipation of the tax cuts he will be getting. This tinner together with £5 from a Liverpool taxi driver and £2.25 brought last month's donations to £17.25. We also got £7 in new standing orders which brings their total to £25 a month. Big Flame groups have pledged to take it in turn to put on a monthly social event that will raise £40 — in June, Coventry/Leamington organised a picnic outing to Bideford and in July it's Liverpool's turn.

No doubt you all get tired about being asked for money from all sides — after the revolution all this vulgar cash-talk will cease. In the meantime, we have to repeat month in, month out, that we need money — and we need it regular. So think seriously of bankers' orders, jumble sales, raffles — and other ways to get us money.

Standing order for periodical payments.

TO: Name of your bank Date 19

Please make the payments detailed below and debit my/our account.

TITLE OF ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED: (Your name)	ACCOUNT NUMBER	CHECKED
AMOUNT IN FIGURES	AMOUNT IN WORDS	
£		
DATE OF PAYMENTS	DATE & AMOUNT OF FIRST PAYMENT	DATE & AMOUNT OF FINAL PAYMENT
ACCOUNT TO BE CREDITED, or Name and Address of Payee if payment is to be made direct.	ACCOUNT No. OF PAYEE IF KNOWN	
<b>BIG FLAME NEWSPAPER</b>	<b>0008738</b>	
BANK & BRANCH, to which payment is to be made.	SORTING CODE NUMBER IF KNOWN	
<b>LOYDS BANK LTD., INDIA BUILDINGS, WATER STREET, LIVERPOOL L69 2BT</b>	<b>30-95-11</b>	
NAME & REFERENCE TO BE QUOTED, (if any)		
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS, (if any)		

Payments are to continue until date of final payment shown above, inclusive, or until you receive further notice in writing from \*me/any one of us (in the case of a Joint Account).

\*Delete as necessary.

Your signature.

## 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 of 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.

# subscribe

I want to subscribe to the paper  Sub rates: £2.75 per year, Britain & Ireland. £1.40 for 6 months. Abroad: £3.50 & £1.75.

I want more information about Big Flame

NAME ..  
ADDRESS ..

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



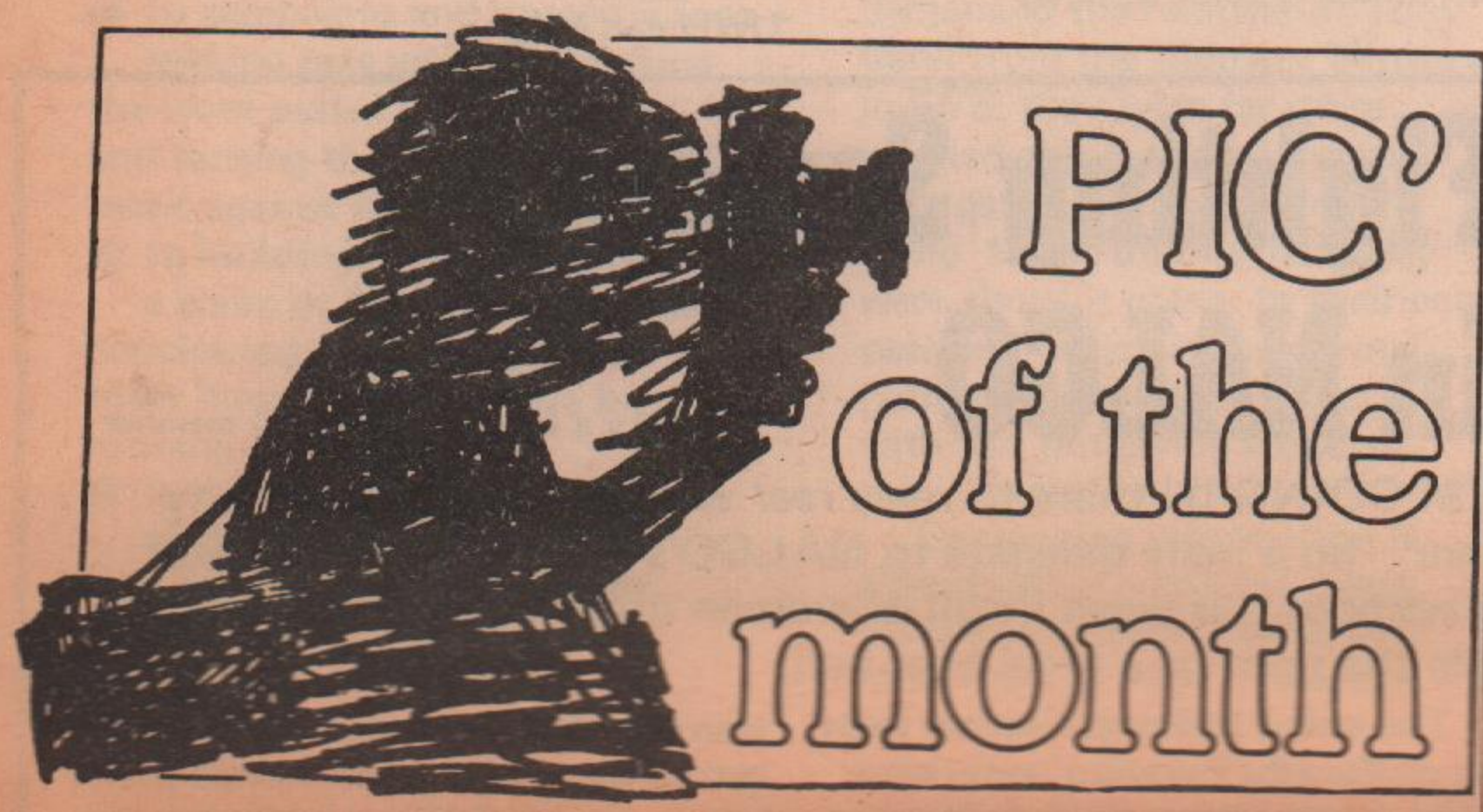
In April 1977 the Virk brothers (who are of Asian descent) were repairing their car outside their own front door in Newham when they were attacked by a group of white racists. The brothers defended themselves and two of their attackers were injured. The brothers were then framed up on charges of grievous bodily harm and assault and, after a travesty of a trial, were sentenced to terms of seven, three and two years in prison.



1. On Thursday June 7th 250 demonstrators set off to join ...



2. 50 people picketing the Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand in support of the three Virk brothers.



3. Some men in a lorry drove past shouting racist abuse at the pickets. Many of the demonstrators responded by giving vent to their own feelings about racists, and the result is that an SPG policeman (139) singles out a well-known black militant and arrests her for 'threatening behaviour'. The racists drive off with the blessings of the law. The police then form a cordon and refuse to allow the main body of the demonstrators to join their comrades outside the courts.



4. Some of the demonstrators sit down. Among the slogans are 'Fight back against Nazi and government attacks', 'Punish the racist attackers' and 'Free the Virk brothers'.



5. A further two arrests are made and a banner is also taken. But the appeal verdict is described by one black militant as 'a small victory'. Balwinder Virk, the youngest of the three is freed after having his sentence cut to one year; Mohander Virk's sentence is cut from three years to 18 months, and Joginder Virk's from seven years to three. Judge Lawton admits that it was a racist attack, whilst making patronising comments about it being in the Sikh tradition to fight back. He also adds that he hopes other judges will not follow the decision of the trial judge, Judge Argyle, in failing to see that he was dealing with a racist attack. Naturally, no attempt has been made to charge those who initiated the attack.



# Workers organising against Unemployment

MANY PEOPLE in the North East are now seriously concerned that they may be facing a return to the conditions of the 1930's. The old, heavy industries, which were once the backbone of the region, now find it a struggle to survive — particularly since the last recession set in. The rationalisation which has ensued has resulted in many jobs being lost, and the existence of whole communities being threatened. Reorganisation of the steel industry will mean the closure of Consett Steel Works in a town which has no other industry. Reorganisation of heavy engineering has recently seen Vickers jettison its Scotswood factory, and that of shipbuilding has resulted in the closure of one major shipyard this year — with the possibility of more to follow. The shut-down of Hylton Colliery was averted in March, but only because the miners lodge agreed to return to the age old method of shovelling coal so that the NCB need no longer hire expensive machinery.

Last month we reported on the closure of Courtauld's Spennymoor factory and the threatened closure of two more by Monsanto.

This steady decline in the region's industry is not, however, going unchecked. The Vickers and Courtaulds factories may have finally closed, but not without opposition from the workers involved. Now the Unemployed Workers Union is developing in the region, and is lending its strength to the fight against unemployment and further redundancies. Resistance may be weak but it is growing.

## NEWCASTLE :

N.E. Correspondent

THE FIRST branch of the UWU was set up in March of this year in Newcastle, and at present has 88 members. It works in close liaison with the Newcastle Centre for the Unemployed which is financed by the city council.

One of the unions main aims is to support the unemployed in fighting the worry, humiliation and poverty which inevitably accompany being on the dole.

Goeff Price, Chairman of the Newcastle branch, outlined some of the ways in which it was doing this "When I signed on I claimed everything I possibly could, and I got £26 a week. I didn't think it affected me at first, but then I realised that I was starting to look shabby because I couldn't afford new clothes. And I began to catch myself shaking empty tab packets left in pubs just to make sure there wasn't one left."

Alex McFadden worker at the Centre in Newcastle, is concerned that the situation is going to get worse. "Redundancies are being announced every day. People are coming directly from school onto the dole. And now Keith Joseph is suggesting that you'll have to be actively seeking work

in order to claim dole. It's going to mean you'll have your benefit stopped if you refuse three jobs. But if the unemployed work together through the UWU, they might be able to stop this happening."

Now that it is established in the North East, members of the UWU are hoping that they will soon be able to link up with other branches which could be set up throughout the country.

## SPENNYMOOR :

WHEN 1,570 PEOPLE were made redundant in Spennymoor County Durham, it was clear to the workers at the factory and people in the town that something had to be done to fight the growth of unemployment. That's why they've set up the second branch of the Unemployed Workers' Union.

"In Spennymoor, in certain categories of unskilled work — like machine minding — there are now 140 people chasing every vacancy," Gordon Bell, who works at the Unemployed Workers Centre in Newcastle told the meeting. "And if you are made unemployed when you are over 45 you have a 50% chance of remaining out of work for the rest of your life."

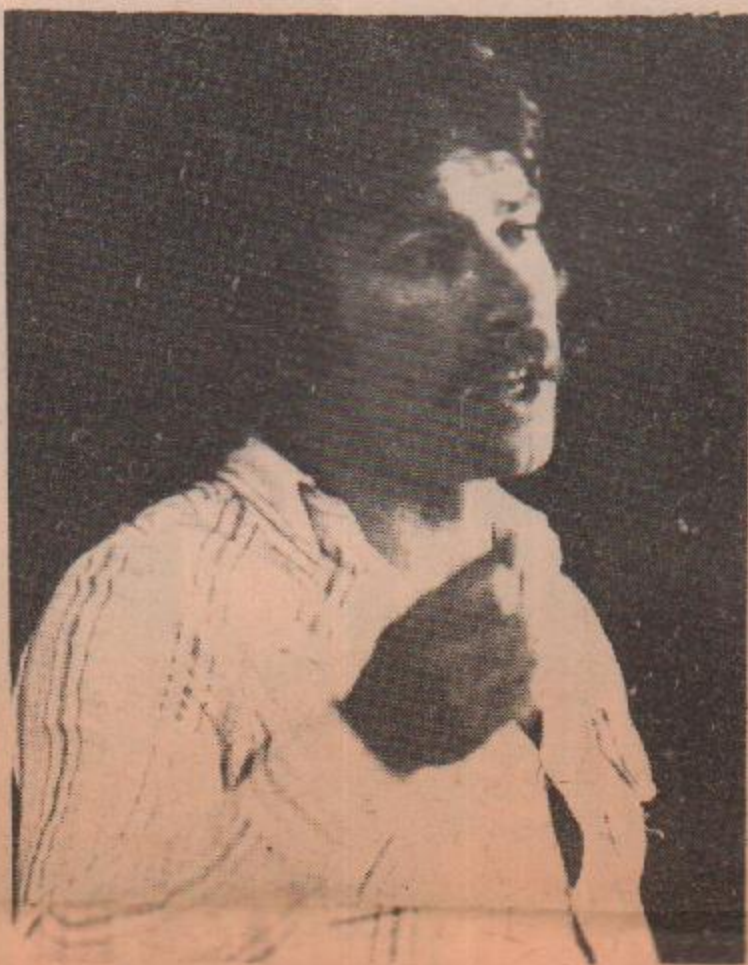
"People here have been thrown on the scrap heap by firms who are only concerned with their profits" said Alex McFadden.



Brian Gibson (Photo: NEPCO)

## MORE THREATENED

On top of this, less than ten miles away two Monsanto factories are threatened with closures. If these go through, a further 560 people will be put out of work. And in addition, the Trades Council expect that the proposed government cuts in local authority and civil service expenditure will make many more local people redundant.



Alex McFadden (Photo: NEPCO)



N.E. Correspondent

## 1½ MILLION JOBLESS

Like the branch in Newcastle the Spennymoor branch will be fighting the very existence of unemployment in the area.

"The branch can start a local debate on unemployment" said Gordon Bell. "It can put pressure on local councils and MPs to implement policies that will bring in new work. It can encourage the unemployed themselves to fight back and to campaign for the creation of more jobs through the implementation of such policies as work sharing, a 35 hour week, no redundancies, reduction in overtime etc."

The spirit of the meeting was, perhaps, best summed up by Brian Gibson, who used to be AUEW convenor at the Courtaulds' factory, when he said "I never thought the trade union movement would ever accept 1½ million on the dole. We are now facing the worst thing since the 1930's — mass unemployment. We must fight it. We've got to. And I'm sure the UWU can help us."

## Fighting Sexism in NALGO

By a Liverpool NALGO member

'I'M GOING IN there to see a real woman. There aren't any here'. So a male delegate to NALGO's Annual Conference at Blackpool this week insulted women union demonstrators outside the door of a local beer hall.

The union had organised an evening of 'Bawdy Bavarian' entertainment — including a stripper, topless go-go dancers, and blue comedian — for the delegates. The evening went ahead after the conference refused to give discussion time to a branch motion deploring the entertainment as sexist and insulting to the female majority of the union membership.

The demonstration — organised at short notice by the Liverpool 'Women in NALGO' group — mobilised over 100 women and anti-sexist men, and proved that direct ac-

tion to attack sexism in trade unions can be successful when formal methods inevitably fail in a male-dominated hierarchy.

The publicity attracted by the demonstration brought about the cancellation of the stripper by the police, who discovered that the club did not have a licence.

Although 400 tickets were sold only 150 braved the picket line. Many came and were turned away, hopefully to critically re-examine NALGO's policy of equal rights for women.

## Union gives access to new strength

Sheffield Big Flame

PAUL ACASTER WAS VICTIMISED. He was the AUEW shop steward, and he knew his stuff. The firm — Access Equipment — was highly profitable and had just set up a factory in Sheffield. The Directors thought perhaps that with a 'green' labour force, many straight off the dole queue, they could get away with sacking Paul. They were proved wrong. The determination of the workers who have stuck it out for Paul's reinstatement (seven weeks on strike at the time we go to press) has been remarkable, and an inspiration to trade unionists in the area.

Because of the recent refusal of the right-wing AUEW executive to support the strike it is all the more important that support should be extended.

### STRONGHOLD

The strike makes a mockery of the myth that 'trade unions have too much power'. If that were the case, then how could a small firm break procedure, victimise an elected union representative, sack all the workers on an official strike, flout the policies of the local authority (which had helped get them the factory site in the first place), and get away with it? And all this in an area which is supposed to be a stronghold of trade unionism.

Management tactics have been reminiscent of Grunwicks. Strikers were approached individually and enticed back to work on promises

that they would then not be sacked. Scabs have been picked up at secret venues in management cars and driven through the picket lines.

Because many of the workers were new to trade unionism, they were scared that they would be sacked, and so they agreed to return to work.

### BLACKING

But this situation could have been prevented if the strikers' own recommendations had been carried out right at the start. Mass picketing, factory collections, and national blacking have been the three key elements of their strategy. Yet the first officially sanctioned mass picket didn't happen until six weeks after the strike started — and it was poorly attended.

A TGWU lorry driver has repeatedly crossed the picket line — despite the fact that the local Confed



Two men and a dog on the picket line. Paul Acaster is on the right.

Big Flame Photo

(to which the TGWU belongs) has supported blacking of Access products.

### OFFICIAL

The strikers have refused to let these problems set them back. Though they realise the dispute could probably have been won weeks ago had the unions pulled their finger out. They've visited docks to get Access exports blacked (nearly half the firm's sales are abroad). They've made contact with the sister plant at Hemel Hempstead

And morale has been boosted by the success of stopping some workers who had been sent up from the dole office from taking jobs. Another morale-boosting success was getting the entrance to the CBI's Industry exhibition in Sheffield taken down because it was using Access scaffolding. The strikers now need money more than ever before, now that the union executive has refused to make the strike official — even though the Sheffield District Committee supported the

strike. The executive based its decision solely on the case of the management, and without properly investigating the case put by Paul Acaster, its own member!

If readers know of any Access or 'Zip-Up Hire' scaffolding, working platforms, or staging equipment being purchased or hired, then it needs to be blacked. Readers should then contact the Strike Committee. Money, messages of support, and all correspondence should go to the Strike Secretary, Wally Ansell, 129 Sycamore House Road, Sheffield 5: tel — Sheffield 613173.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR BOSS — AND WHERE TO FIND IT. By the BF Industrial Commission

# KNOW THY ENEMY

"KNOW THY enemy" is an old socialist slogan. But in today's world of multinational conglomerates and public bureaucracies it is more apt than ever.

Too often in recent years workers have been left to react to formal announcements of redundancies, manning cuts, closures and the like, rather than being able to anticipate those decisions and prepare to fight them. And how often do you get the feeling that you or your shop steward has been conned because management has tried to blind you with figures?

Information is becoming an important weapon in the class struggle. Every major employer knows the ideological value of the glossy report to employees the press statement about the plant which is no longer "viable" and the personal letter through the strikers' door.

## COUNTER WEAPON

But for us, information, if accurate and carefully used can also be turned into an effective counter-weapon.

- In campaigns and negotiations — making sure we're not getting the wool pulled over our eyes, and turning the "divide and rule" tactic against management.
- In building confidence for a claim or fight against redundancies, e.g. getting figures to show how the bosses have been running down a factory.
- In anticipating management's plans and therefore giving time for adequate preparation, for instance to protect jobs in the event of a take-over.
- For propaganda and education of the membership e.g. revealing the directors' earnings or showing the connection between your firm and another one.

## HOT POTATO

Like health and safety information, disclosure is a neat "hot potato" for management — remember the cries of horror from the CBI when the Bullock report proposed workers of the board. The thing which worried the employers more than anything was the possibility of trade unionists getting information which normally only the directors had access to. Similarly when employers' organisations demanded the removal of Tony Benn from the Industry Ministry in 1975, they were far more worried about the information they gave to the government going to the unions than they were about it going to their competitors, which is the normal pathetic excuse they come up with for not giving stewards the information they ask for.

Demanding information is a politically "sensitive" issue, because it challenges management's sacred right to manage. Of course information can never be a substitute for effective shop floor organisation, but it can help to strengthen that organisation.



## 'EXPERTS' ONLY

A lot of workers think that company or public finance is beyond their grasp — that it's only "experts" who can understand it. But this is nonsense, as many shop stewards who have attended courses at colleges have found out. For years management have been taking our knowledge of how things are produced and then using it against us. But now, with the legal time-off provision and the growth of trade union information units and "do it yourself" guides, we can begin to hit back. Most people who are prepared to spend a little time in their local library and in talking to other workers, including office staff, can find out valuable information. Information which can then be used in a shop stewards committee bulletin or in mass meetings. It can also do a lot to enhance the credibility of the left inside the workplace. If your prediction comes true, then a lot of folk are going to listen to you next time around.

There's an enormous amount that can be dug up — but we'd like to highlight just four areas which have proved to be particularly useful:

## COMPANY PERFORMANCES

— past profits, which can be re-worked to show the true surplus produced by the workforce; how much (or how little) tax has been paid; WHO OWNS WHOM — investigating who really owns the firm; interlocking directorships; shareholdings etc.

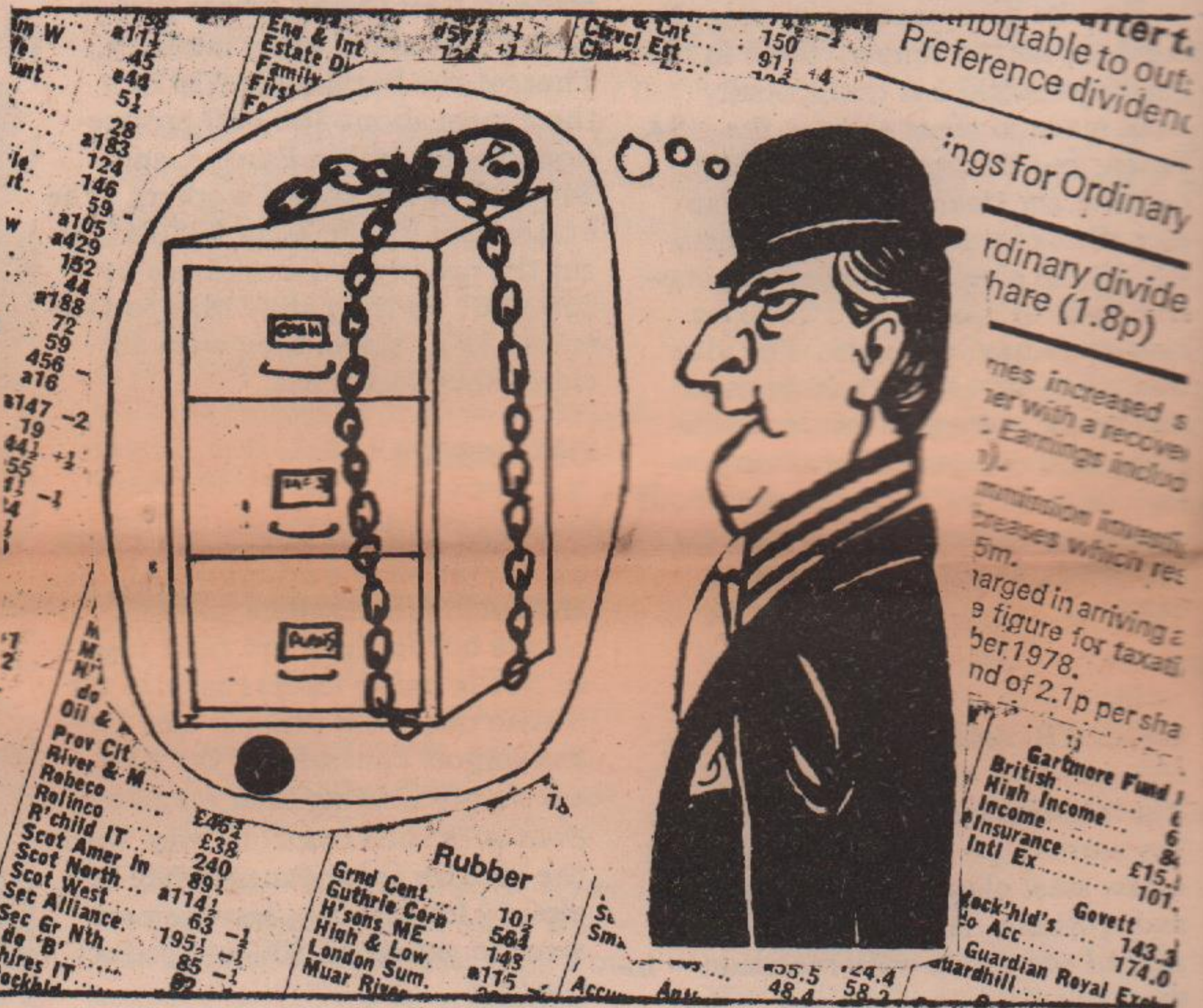
## WAGES AND SALARIES

— Comparing your wages and conditions with other workers in the same group; with prices; or with the salaries and perks of the directors. FUTURE PROSPECTS — Monitoring stocks, Shares, sales investment in new machinery, changes in management, take-over bids etc.

## HELPFUL PUBLICATIONS

Your Employers' Profits, Christopher Hird, (Pluto 90p) The best guide to company accounts. Labour Research Dept., How to Get the Facts about Prices and Profits (LRD 35p) Less detailed than Hird, but still useful: also has a good section on the retail price index Michael Barratt Brown Information at Work (Arrow £1.25) More general than

Hird but especially good on explaining how companies work, and what "inside" information to look for. Community Action, Investigators Handbook (30p from POBox 665, London SW1 X8DZ) Covers individuals and public bodies as well as private companies. The information has been updated in three issues of the excellent Community Action magazine, available from the same address.



# 30C International Information disclosure & the law

The Employment Protection Act introduced important new rights for trade unions to obtain information from employers. However the first cases under the act suggest considerable limitations in obtaining financial information and a restrictive interpretation of the Act in general. The law is not impartial and we should never rely on it. Here we summarise the parts of the act which deal with disclosure of information for our readers.

Section 17(1) of the Employment Protection Act (EPA) requires an employer to disclose to union representatives on request. Information requested must be needed for collective bargaining and this limits the area of possible demands.

## RESTRICTIONS

An employer is not required to produce or allow inspection of any document or to provide copies of any document. Also an employer need not compile or assemble any information where this would involve "an amount of work or expenditure out of reasonable proportion to the value of the information in the conduct of collective bargaining."

SECTION 19 COMPLAINTS Any trade union representative (shop steward, district secretary etc.) who is authorised by the union to negotiate with the employer can ask for information under S17 (EPA). If the request is not met the union can complain (S 19

EPA) to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). In the few cases where no voluntary agreement is possible the CAC hears the union claim and the employer's defence and then makes a declaration if it considers the complaint justified. Even if the employers then refuse to comply with the CAC ruling all the CAC can do is order an employer to improve the pay and conditions. An employer cannot be compelled to disclose information.

Information is not a panacea for all problems. There is NO substitute for good shop-floor organisation, and, where necessary militant action. And nor should information be left to union officials, convenors or outside academics, however sympathetic. We should always try to get the members involved in discovering and then discussing the information. Anyone who helps must report back regularly and be accountable. But better information can lead to better organisation, and help you to win. In future issues we will take up particular aspects in more detail, e.g. how to use company accounts, and answer readers' queries.

## WHERE TO GO

A lot of this information can be found by pooling the collective knowledge of activists in the plant and other subsidiaries owned by the same firm — or in the public sector by using bodies like community health councils or friendly contacts in the council planning department. But to get a better overall picture of what's happening, this "inside" information should be put together with published sources. There are two main places to go: The local central library — most big towns have good business sections in their

libraries. Companies House — offices in Cardiff, London (55 City Rd., London E.C.1.) and Edinburgh 102 George St., Edinburgh. All good libraries should contain Business reference books, such as Kompass, Dunnand and Bradstreets, Who Owns Whom? and the Directory of Directors. Business News Services, like Extel or Moodies, (which summarise and update information on company accounts) also government reports, e.g., from the National Economic Development Office. Financial papers and journals like Investor's Chronicle, Financial times, whose articles are

indexed in publications like the Research Index Most of what you need should be in the library but for some things, like accounts of subsidiary companies you may need to go, or get someone to go to Companies House. The Labour Research Department (78 Blackfriars Rd., London S.E.18HF) do this for affiliates and the People's News Service do a cheap company service. If you want help in interpreting the information, the units listed on this page will probably help. If you have problems, write to Big Flame, and we may be able to assist.

## TRADE UNION INFORMATION UNITS

Over the past five years groups of left wing academics and shop stewards have got together to start a number of very valuable information units aimed at providing a service to working class organisations at work and in the Community. Some of them also make a great effort to help stewards committees and tenants groups to do their own investigations. Such local units are important because national bodies like Labour Research just can't cope with all the local demands and most unions have very tiny research staffs. Some useful addresses of information units: Southern Region TU Information Unit, c/o Paul Dunn, NUPE Area Officer, Winchester Hants. Coventry Workshop, 40 Binley Rd., Coventry CV3 1JA. tel. (0203) 27772

Leeds Trade Union and Community Research and Information Unit 29, Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2. Tel.: Leeds 39633. Counter-Information Services, 9 Poland St., London W.1. tel. 01.439.3764 (CIS researches both companies and general economic issues)

Leeds Trade Union and Community Research and Information Unit 29, Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2. Tel.: Leeds 39633. Counter-Information Services, 9 Poland St., London W.1. tel. 01.439.3764 (CIS researches both companies and general economic issues)

Bank of London, London, Bank of Switzerland, Yod Star, America, Rest of



# TEMPERING THE CRISIS IN STEEL: Forging International Links



Coventry BF member

IT'S WELL-KNOWN that the steel industry is in crisis. There's hardly a day goes by without the bourgeois press in Britain mentioning the daily £1 million lost by the British Steel Corporation (BSC). And in France (see May's Big Flame) a massive united struggle of French, Belgian, and German steel workers and their communities has forced a government climb-down over sackings. In Germany last year, steel unions struck for the 35-hour week to stop job losses. The strike was defeated, but the issue of closure will certainly blow up again.

## ABSURD SYSTEM

What's much less well-known is how bad things are, and why. The press tends to treat BSC's problems as being a result of 'inefficiency'. But one thing emerges, above all else, from a close look at what's really happening in steel: The problems are caused by the absurdity and viciousness of the capitalist system, and steel workers will have to fight united across national boundaries, until ultimately the industry, along with all other industries, is taken out of the capitalists' hands and run for people's needs.

For the basic reasons causing the crisis are all too simple. Steel in the capitalist world has traditionally been made in three areas — the USA, Japan, and Europe. Before 1973, demand for steel was growing rapidly all over the world. Thus virtually all the steel companies put massive sums of money into building new steel-making plants. The idea was, of course, to grab more sales and hence more profits. In addition, capitalist governments in several 'third world' countries set about establishing or expanding their own industries, to get in on the same bonanza.

## OVER-PRODUCTION

But it takes five or sometimes up to ten years to go from thinking about a new steel plant to getting it built and working. And from 1974 — as part of the world-wide recession — international demand for steel plunged, leading to a big slump in 1975/1976. This had two results: the existing steel companies couldn't sell all the steel they already had the capacity to make, even though they were busy building more. And new steel-making countries were also in the middle of similar building programmes, so the total potential output was set to skyrocket — while demand remained stagnant.

In 1978 the BSC made about 20 million tonnes of steel: it could have made nearly 30 million. At the same time, by about 1983, they will have opened new plant to make another 5.5 million tonnes a year, despite a surplus capacity of almost 10 million tonnes already!

The world picture tells the same story, only more so. Very roughly, each of the USA, Japan, and Europe makes around 100 million tonnes of steel a year. In the early seventies, the rest of the capitalist world made only a few tens of millions; in 1978 it made 100 millions, and by the early 1980's that will probably double. Total world capacity will have gone in a decade from rather over 300 to 500 million tonnes a year. Demand will hardly have gone up at all.

## IMPORT CONTROLS

In such a situation, something has to give. And the steel companies are clear what they want it to be: traditional steel workers and their communities. Of course, the bosses have their own squabbles, but those too serve to throw the burden of the crisis onto working people.

The US government, for example, imposed import controls early in 1978, at the demand of the US

steel industry. Just like import controls are bound to do, the US ones 'exported' unemployment — in this case to Europe. The European steel firms already had all the unused capacity mentioned above; they had already begun to implement a crisis plan (named after its sponsor, Common Market commissioner Davignon) in late 1977. So they, too, stepped up import controls, and they set about implementing the Davignon Plan in all its rigour. And the plan basically means: closing old plant, eliminating steel workers' jobs, destroying whole working class communities. (For steel tends to be made in steel towns, where there's not all that much other industry.) Thus, at the beginning of 1979, there were about 500,000 production jobs in steel in Europe, and 240,000 'white collar' workers. The bosses' aim by the early 1980's is to cut the production workforce by 250,000! In the period May to December 1979 alone, they want to chop 80,000 of them.

## OFFENSIVE

Faced with an offensive on such a scale the steel workers of Europe, and their communities, have no choice but to fight and fight together. Trade union leaders such as the British ones who support and demand import controls for the EEC, are simply kidding their members; even with such controls, even with the massive redundancies they've already let through, management want to get rid of 50% of production jobs.

Indeed, the logical complement to import controls — racist deportations of 'foreign' workers — has already been carried out by the French and German governments. The workers' movements' failure to defend those workers has left those still employed in a worse position to resist what's coming now. For that matter, the effects of capitalist nationalisation are also shown up by the the European steel crisis: the biggest company in Europe by far is the nationalised British Steel, and that's the very one that's eliminated most jobs already, and which has so much new capacity just around the corner that at least as many again are going to be attacked very, very soon.

## INTERNATIONAL LINKS

There aren't any easy answers, or magic programmes of demands that in-and-of themselves will guarantee that the European steel workers win. What's clearly necessary is to make sure people know the depth of the crisis, and what's really at stake; on top of doing that, publicising successes like that in France will help encourage resistance. But it's not all a success story, as the defeat in Germany shows. What is beyond dispute is that the crisis extends the length and breadth of Europe — and beyond — and that without building links between steel workers in different countries, without encouraging a clear recognition of the irreconcilable conflict between bosses and workers, without fighting for obviously sensible demands like the shorter working week with no loss of pay, the steel towns of Europe are in for a very rough time.



The headquarters of steel industry bosses at Longwy, France after being sacked by workers protesting against closures.

Helene Bamberger / Gamma.

# CORBRY WORKERS UNDER THE HAMMER

Norwich BF member

BRITISH STEEL faces large over-capacity in the 1980s. Its current economic strategy is clear — to close down inland steel making plants and to keep open the large coastal sites (eg Port Talbot, Redcar, Ravenscraig). Of the inland sites, East Moors, Shotton, Bilston are already closed and next in line is Corby in Northamptonshire. Over 50% of male jobs in Corby are at the steel works and if British Steel is allowed to close the steel rolling part of the works, male unemployment will rise to 25%. And there is very little chance of other firms coming to Corby since the town is badly placed for road and rail transport — in fact, the steel plant was only located there because of the plentiful iron ore in the area.

In 1934, when Stewart and Lloyd started making steel there, Corby was a village of 1,500 inhabitants — now the town's population is 54,000. To work the steel mills Stewart and Lloyd brought in Scottish steel workers who had been made redundant in the Depression. From the beginning, Corby was a company town. For instance, Stewart and Lloyd owned all the houses and the first time the workers went on strike, they were all evicted and on the streets by 2 p.m. of the strike! Over the years the closed shop has been fought for and won — and wages are good, as long as you are prepared to do many hours of overtime.

The economic argument British Steel is giving for the need to close a large part of the Corby plant is the high cost of energy, but what is really crippling Corby is the interest charges it has to pay to British Steel (£12.4 millions last year) and

the high price British Steel pays to the landowners who, after nationalisation, kept the mineral rights (and surprise, surprise, the major landowner is Stewart and Lloyd who sold the plant to British Steel!)

## CRIPPLING ORGANISATION

Almost all of the production workers are in the ISTC (Iron and Steel Trades Confederation) and it is the ISTC stewards who are leading the fight to keep all steel making capacity at Corby open. Currently, a 'token' march to London is being organised which will lobby Parliament on June 28th. But there are problems, as John Cowling, executive councillor of the ISTC, told us: 'The main problem the redundancy payments. The media is full of stories of sums like £22,000, but at Bilston only eight workers got that kind of money — the highly skilled workers with 30 years in the trade.

The trade union movement should never have accepted redundancy payments — instead the ISTC should have followed the NUM and gone for early retirement. The fight to save the works at Corby is going to be a hard one and there are signs that we won't get much support from the craft unions, especially the NUB (National Union of Blastfurnacemen). It's a crippling organisation in the steel industry having all these different unions.'

Together with the opposition to the closure coming from inside the plant, ROSAC is the campaign set up by people who live in Corby to keep the plant open. One of their first actions was to organise a successful public meeting at which the French steel workers spoke. They are now putting together an 'Open Door' programme which will be broadcast on BBC2 on July 7th.

## NO MORE JOBS

The past record of struggles against closures of British Steel plants is not good. But the fight to save Corby is helped by the fact that many Corby workers are aware of the effects of the militant action of the French steel workers and that everyone knows there are no other jobs to go to in the area. It is likely that 'Corby' will become very well known over the next year.

ROSAC can be contacted at 6, Berwick Rd, Stanion, Nr. Kettering, Northants.

## sub advertisements

Classified Ad. rates:  
3p a word

WOMEN IN IRAN — 2 new pamphlets. 'Women in Iran' by the Iranian Women's Group, 45 North Street, London SW 4 (36 pages, 50 pence). Also 'No Revolution Without Women's Liberation', by Azar Tabari, and available from Campaign for Solidarity with Iran, Box 4, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N.1 (15 pages, 20 pence). Both recommended.

ZIMBABWE — New special pamphlet against Tory recognition and denouncing the elections. Available from ZIG, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London N.W.1 (10 pence). Make bulk orders now!

'Women in Eastern Europe News-letter'. Articles and letters by women inside and outside Eastern Europe. Available from Women in Eastern Europe Collective c/o Barbara Brown, Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, PO Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Comrades from Radio Citta Futura, the free radio station of the revolutionary left in Rome will be organising a series of talks and film shows in Britain in July on 'Free Radio and the Changing Political Situation in Italy'. If you would like them to come to your town write to RCF, Via dei Marsi 22, 00185 Roma, Italy

STOP URENCO. Demonstration and direct action against uranium enrichment plant. July 14th/15th at Capenhurst, Cheshire. Details: 061-273 2044.

IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW' No.5, Summer '79, now out. Includes an interview with the Women and Ireland Group, a look at the economic geography of northern Ireland and an analysis of the recent election results. 30 p plus 15 p postage from 60, Loughborough Rd. London SW9.

MANCHESTER Meeting 'Life Under the Tories' Organised by Socialist Unity. Monday 25 June, Slade Lane Neighbourhood Centre, Stockport Rd.

MANCHESTER BIG FLAME Meeting 'Organising to Win' in industry, 28 June, Ancoats Hotel, Great Ancoats St. Further information 223 4515.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL TO HOLD FINAL HEARING July 7th/8th will see the final hearing of the International on Britain's Presence in Ireland. The sessions will be held in the Conway Hall, London, and will involve judges from many countries who have been active in the struggle to defend civil liberties, and a jury of delegates from the British labour, student and women's movements. Observers will also be welcome. Details from: International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland, 47 Wiksham St. London W11



# ANL - FIGHT RACISM !

ON JULY 14th a turning point could be reached in the struggle against racism and fascism in Britain. The second National Conference of the Anti-Nazi League has a number of political tasks to face up to and resolve. Set up originally as a means of channelling support on the widest possible basis against the National Front, it has succeeded — through its demonstrations, the distribution of millions of leaflets, and local activities — in discrediting the National Front as a potentially significant parliamentary party.

A lot of people are saying that since the General Election the NF is dead and buried and that the ANL no longer has a reason to continue its existence. We believe that such funeral rites are premature. The major factor that provides the NF with a potential recruiting base is the widespread racism that exists at all levels in our society. More and more working people will be hit by the worsening social crisis in the

coming years, and inevitably some will turn on the black community as a scapegoat. The NF could well be able to channel this large-scale social discontent into a new threat of developing a significant fascist party.

The ANL must continue, therefore, its past activities. But much more emphasis now needs to be placed on the fight against racism. If that doesn't happen, our fight

against the NF will always be a defensive one — a fight we can never win but which we can never afford to lose. The ANL must organise campaigns against all racist practices that accuse black people of being responsible for social ills or that attack and weaken the strength of the black community.

There is an urgent need for a mass campaign against the Immigration Laws and the New Nationality Law. Both are clearly aimed at removing certain rights associated with British citizenship from the black community. Under the guise of searching for 'illegal' immigrants the police have been harrasing black trade union and political militants. The Immigration Laws, by giving the impression that one of the causes of the social crisis is 'too many black immigrants', merely reinforce racist myths and prejudices.

### 'SUS' LAWS

One other example of state racism that the ANL must campaign against is the 'sus' law, which allows the police to pick someone up if they 'suspect' them of possibly 'intending' to commit a crime. The police have increasingly used this law against black youth who have resisted their oppression.

The events in Southall and Leicester, plus numerous smaller events during the General Election, demonstrated that it is not the 'lunatic fringe' referred to in the mass media that is opposed to granting the right of free speech to the NF, but thousands of Asians, black and white youth, and a not insignificant number of trade unionists. The ANL should adopt as its policy recognition of the fact that the NF is a threat to the safety and freedom of large sections of the community — blacks, Jews, gays, women, and trade unionists — and mobilise physical opposition to the NF's rallies and marches.

Southall was also the most recent of many examples that black people cannot rely on a racist police to defend them against racist and fascist

attacks. The ANL should recognise the right of the black community to organise in their own defence and give support where possible.

### ANL DEMOCRACY

In order to carry out these policies, the ANL must have a more democratic structure to allow for debate and more efficient coordination of its activities. A national steering committee elected from a conference, regional coordinating committees, regular meetings between regional delegates and local autonomy to take account of specific local circumstances are all necessary steps in this direction.

Big Flame will be arguing for one of these policies at the ANL Conference. If adopted, we believe that the ANL will successfully move forward towards a new, and in many ways more important struggle — a struggle against racism!

**ANL National Conference — Saturday, July 14th, Central London Polytechnic, London W. 1 (near Cendish Street). Credentials: two per ANL branch, from P.O. Box 151, London W.C. 2.**

Big Flame Anti Racist Anti Fascist Committee

## news

## WOMEN — IS FASCISM OUR FIGHT



Big Flame Photo

THE RALLY against racism and state brutality early in June was a landmark. For the first time in this country, black women's organisations, backed by the Indian Workers' Association, organised a major demonstration.

Four groups, AWAZ, OWAAD, the Brixton Black Women's Group and the Southall Black Women's Group, have made a dent in the false stereotype of the passive black woman.

The white left, which has tried to organise black groups for so long, was notable for its absence on the demonstration.

Big Flame pays tribute to Joshi, the national secretary of the IWA, who collapsed with a heart attack at the rally, and died on the way to hospital.

THE NATIONAL Women Against Racism and Fascism meeting was a great disappointment. There were very few of us there and we didn't find a way of discussing and confronting many of the issues which feminists involved in anti-racist and anti-fascist work are trying to come to terms with.

At present there are few active WARF groups, although a year ago there were many. But there are many feminists in or around the anti-fascist, anti-racist movement. Some work within the ANL, some find that difficult. Some work within existing campaigns like the Campaign against Immigration Laws and the Depo Provera Campaign; others are looking to find ways of involving themselves and others in local anti-fascist, anti-racist work. All of us, individually or in groups are trying to grapple with various questions:

- how to decide what is the most important activity for a women's group to be involved in? For instance should we be organising against state racism, or against the National Front and British Movement? Is the primary issue one of anti-racism or anti-fascism?

- how should we organise against racism as groups of predominantly white women?

- how should we relate to national structures like the ANL which is not democratic? How can women work locally within the ANL which sometimes brings together a weird collection of committed anti-fascists who aren't necessarily anti-racist and who certainly often aren't aware of the links between sexism, authoritarianism and the growth of fascism?

### WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

There is also the problem of the relation of women active in the anti-fascist anti-racist movement to the women's movement. A recent article in "Catcall" (a feminist discussion journal) was extremely hostile to WARF, saying that it was not a feminist campaign, that it was co-opting the Women's Movement into a male-defined anti-fascist movement, and that "it is time that this campaign was seen for what it is—a diversion to women's liberation."

### DEMOCRACY

Unfortunately the meeting was unable to deal with any of these issues effectively. It will be a loss to the women's and anti-fascist/anti-racist movements if the WARF groupings disappear into the mists of history. Perhaps if the ANL becomes a more democratic national organisation following the conference in July, it may be possible for women to raise and discuss the insights and understandings which have within its structures. There will always need to be independent women's groups within the anti-fascist, anti-racist movement, but if last Saturday's meeting is a true indication, it will be a long time before there is a strong national network.

Liverpool Big Flame Member

## ENGINEERS PLAN FIGHTBACK

FOR THE first time since the wave of strikes and sit-ins of 1972, a major national conflict over pay and hours is brewing in the engineering industry. In 1972, the executive decided to recommend plant bargaining and action, with demoralising effects in many areas. This time, militants in the unions involved are pushing for national strikes and a national overtime ban. It could be the first major industrial clash with employers under the new government.

Engineering pay bargaining has always been complicated by the fact that national agreements are only for minimum rates. Most workers then go for plant agreements which top up earnings. So as far as money is concerned, any increases achieved nationally have their main effect on

overtime rates and holiday pay. The left has realised therefore that the only way to achieve significant national action is to push claims for shorter hours and longer holidays to the centre of the campaign. And at long last it seems that this strategy might be paying off.

### WHEN WOULD THE RISE COME?

At a special meeting of the AUEW National Committee (the AUEW being the main union in the Confed) on June 12th, the right-wing executive pushed for acceptance of the working party if the EEF agreed to a slightly higher rate (£70) and common implementation date. The left, however, managed to get through an amendment by two votes which instructed the negotiators to go back for the full £80, at least one hour off the week this year with a promise of annual steps towards 35 hours, and two days more holiday. If the employers turn this down, the amendment said a national overtime ban and selective one-day strikes should be called.

### FULL CLAIM WANTED

The national claim submitted by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Workers ('Confed') was for £80 minimum for skilled workers (pro rata for other grades),

progressive steps towards a 35 hour week and longer holidays, improved apprentice rates, and maternity pay. The Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) offered £5 initially on the skilled rate, and then, after further talks, £8, which would bring the rate up to £68. There were two sticking points. One was the rate itself (even the right wing found it difficult to settle for less than £70). The other was its date of implementation. The EEF wanted the new rates to come in as local agreements became due for renegotiation. This would mean some workers waiting 12 months for the rise to come through. The unions wanted a common implementation date.

The EEF offered a compromise, whereby all the other parts of the claims, e.g., hours, would be looked at by a working party that would report in 12 months.

The other good thing about the National Committee decision was that it proposed district meetings to

discuss the campaign and a recalled NC if no progress was made. This has strengthened the arm of the Sheffield convenors who had already organised a national engineering shop stewards conference for July 7th. The problems, however, are very great. Even with shorter hours and holidays to go for, one day strikes and the overtime ban are going to be difficult to get mass support for, if only because conditions vary so greatly from factory to factory.

### SUPPORT NEEDED

Despite the uncertainties, the initiatives from the rank and file, in particular from Sheffield, which has consistently pushed the claim have opened up important possibilities. With continuing closures and redundancies in the industrial centres of the country, this small beginning to a sustained campaign for shorter hours, higher basic wages and longer holidays deserves all the support it can get.





Two new albums that speak for a 'bran new breed of blacks'.

# LINTON JOHNSON

LINTON KWESI Johnson is a militant at the roots, a member of the RACE TODAY collective and librarian at north London's Keskidee Centre for the development of black people's arts and culture. He is also a "poet", a label that doesn't sit easily on him because the links between his art and his politics make it almost meaningless. Over the last five years he has built a political platform which puts him in a unique position to speak to and on behalf of the black communities of Britain.

In the recent T.V. film about him Linton spoke of the fetters which the English language imposed on him when he wanted to deal with black realities, these limitations extend beyond the language itself and into the very idea of a "poetry book"

His work has a grasp of history, so he understands two fundamental aspects of continuity in black culture — dance and the spoken word. His move from books to records is therefore a lot more than a bid to increase his audience. His poems are written to be heard rather than read from the cold page. By making records which can reproduce and enhance a performance he can speak directly to the black youth at the blues dance in a shared language and an oral tradition that has come to them from the work of I Roy, Big Youth, Dr Alimantado and Trinity-Bass Culture: "muzik of blood, black reared pain rooted heart geared"

## ILLUSION

But don't get the idea that he has illusions about the role of his poetry. He never ceases to say that his work can do little more than express a historical situa-

tion, on its own it can change

nothing, and as Tom Robinson said, being a socialist pop star is like trying to be a socialist perfume manufacturer.

He has made two albums, "Dread Beat and Blood" which was also the title of his impressive book of poems published by Bogle L'ouverture, and the recent "Forces of Victory". They are the most consistent and confident expression so far of a long term trend in black culture in this country — an attempt to ground reggae in urban, British reality while acknowledging its past but insisting on the primacy of here and now.

The first record is less melodic than "Forces" and hits harder at first. So; the poems which are voiced version-style over simple bass and drum rhythms, hit hard in a space between Big Youth and the Last Poets. It marked the beginning of LKJ's partnership with Dennis "Blackbeard" Matumbi who has shaped the records with his distinctive British dub style. Linton is often at his best when dealing with an immediate political issue, and the poem for recently released George Lindo really stands out. This tough uncompromising

piece  
inter  
and s  
there  
artist  
clarit  
ises  
his c  
to ke  
mum  
DA  
The  
shed  
don'  
any  
integ  
use  
instr  
leger  
rigue  
pred  
The  
rave'  
wage  
"me  
me n  
me h  
a wa  
noh  
them  
rhyt  
dub-  
as a  
letta  
is th  
It is  
tatio  
Polic  
them  
you.  
"  
ends  
beca

# The Voice of Palestine

AN IMPORTANT part of the "Against the Bosses Europe — or a Workers Unity" Campaign was the Counter-Eurovision concert held in Brussels in front of 3,000 very enthusiastic spectators, recently.

Revolutionary groups and singers were there from fifteen European countries. Since the official Euro-vision contest was held this year, in Jerusalem, it was boycotted by all Arab countries. This gave added importance to the presence in Brussels of Mustapha el Kurd, the great Palestinian poet and singer, who together with a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) movingly reminded all those present of the continuing heroic struggle of their people.

This interview with Mustapha el Kurd is taken from "Pour" the newspaper of PLS, the Belgian group involved in the campaign.

What was the attitude of the Israeli authorities towards you when you lived in Israeli occupied territory?

I started to sing political songs in 1967, four months after the occupation of the West Bank of Sudan and Jerusalem by Israel.

ANNOUNCED  
From then on, the authorities began to hassle me because of my songs. My first regular spot was at the trade union centre in Jerusalem. The authorities did not stop my singing but declared the trade union illegal!

I continued to give concerts and to play, the Israelis began to intimidate those who came to our shows. Spectators would be arrested and "cleaned on".

SON  
When they began to hassle me. I was taken in for questioning a couple of months and "advised" to stop singing. I refused and was given a seven months prison sentence — was just after the popular uprisings in occupied territories in 1976.

I got out of prison, I learnt that the Israeli authorities were again

looking for me so, rather than face an even longer stretch inside, I decided to leave the country. I now live in Lebanon.

Where does the inspiration for your songs come from?

I choose my songs according to the political objectives of the moment. When I began, it was with low level patriotic songs which encouraged the inhabitants of the occupied territories to take up Arab nationalism

The second period included songs that told people to remain on their lands — since at that time there was an Israeli campaign on the West Bank to get people to leave the area and replace them with Israeli settlements.

In a third period, songs were used as a way of conveying information, for example, in a situation where people were being expelled from their village. The songs were used to tell about events that had been censored from the media.

## IMPERIALISM

The last period has been determined by my own coming to understand the true nature of the conflict in

the area. Through study and personal contact with the Zionist occupation, I have become aware of the class nature of the struggle. For me, Zionism is an ally of imperialism, on the other side, there is a persecuted people.

So, my songs have another dimension. I don't only direct them at Arabs who are aware of the conflict, but also at Israelis to make them understand that they are also oppressed because they belong to the working class.

## EXPLOSIVE

The confrontation with the Israeli authorities then became explosive. It had got through to them that progressive Israelis had understood what I was singing about and were in agreement.

On quite a few occasions there were as many Jews as Arabs amongst the audience — this is very important for me.

Are your songs broadcast on the radio stations of Arab countries?

My songs are political songs. I am not prepared to be a tool of Arab ruling classes in their attempt to dupe the Arab masses. So I have always refused to give interviews or sing for the official Arab radio and television. On the other hand, I do give public concerts in Syria and Lebanon.

Also there is a Palestinian radio station in Beirut, called the "Voice of the Revolution", which can be received in Arab countries.

What importance do you give to this Counter-Eurovision concert?

A great deal. It's another arena of struggle — different from the political and the military. It's using music as an arm in the struggle — to inform people, to make them understand how people are oppressed and who our enemies are. So it's totally different from bourgeois songs whose function is to make the people forget their oppression and so remain ignorant and accept their lot.

A double LP of the concert will soon be available in this country. Preparations for next year's concert are already underway — it's going to be a cracker!



"IT IS not enough to write a revolution you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people will come by themselves, and of themselves."  
Frantz Fanon.



Songs for Liberation: Mustapha el. Kurd



# SON'S DREAD BEAT

aces all the problems of  
ning in the culture industry  
rives them to prove that  
s a space for "committed"  
providing they have political  
and realism. LKJ never trivial-  
litical reality for the sake of  
nmitment and is therefore able  
p the political effect at maxi-

CE  
cent "Forces" is more poli-  
nd complete. The tracks  
ound like poems set to music  
ore, they're much better  
ited. The more extensive  
dub effects and strong  
mental support from the  
ary trombonist Rico Rod-  
distinguish it from its  
essor. It's a dance record.  
a influenced "want fi goh  
expresses the situation of  
ss Black youth brilliantly  
oh work fe no pittance  
n draw dem assistance....  
ve fe pick a pocket tek  
et from a jacket..." "It  
nny" builds on the same  
to a militant rockers  
n and ends in a convincing  
ise climax which serves  
elude to "Sonny's  
(Anti-sus poem)" which  
high point of the first side.  
familiar story of confron-  
between youth and the  
who habitually harass  
I won't spoil the plot for

dependant Intavenshan"  
de one. It's important  
e it presents a conception

of autonomous black struggles  
which is a cornerstone of LKJ's  
politics and a pointer for the  
future. The message is self organis-  
ation: "The IMG cant's set we  
free, the SWP can' do it for we,  
the Communist party true dem  
too arty farty, and the labourites  
nuh gonna fight for your rights".  
There is also a fine trombone  
solo.

## REALITY

Linton's chief criticism of Rasta  
has been that it isn't a realist  
response to the current situation,  
and if there's one theme which  
underpins everything he does it's  
a plea for political realism which  
finds its most elaborate expression  
in the magnificent "reality Poem"  
"This is the age of reality.... the  
age of science and technology....  
some get a vision, start to preach  
religion, but they can't mek decision  
when it comes to a fight they  
can't mek decision when it comes  
to wi rights...when we can't face  
reality we leggo we clarity....."

In LKJ the Black communities  
have found a hard eloquent voice.  
The tough message of his dread  
realism can only be that Blacks  
are here to stay and here to fight.  
This is a message that Black youth  
have been ready to hear for a  
long time, at least in their hearts.

He is not alone, in the world  
of music, Eddie Grant, Steel  
Pulse and Manchester's Exodus  
are right behind. I hope that  
next time, he gets to record  
the poem "Yout Rebels" because  
it explains the changes much  
better than I possibly can.

Paul Gilroy,  
Birmingham

## YOUT REBELS

a bran new breed of blacks  
have now emerged  
leadin on the rough scene,  
breakin away  
takin the day,  
sayin to capital nevva  
movin forwud hevva.

they can only be  
new in age  
but not in rage,  
not needin  
the soft and also  
shallow councillin  
of the soot-brained  
sage in chain;  
wreckin then-shelled words  
wor  
movin always forwud

Young blood  
yout rebels:  
new shapes  
shapin  
new patterns  
creatin new links  
linkin  
blood rising surely  
carvin a new path  
movin forwud to freedom  
from "Dread Beat And  
Blood" published by  
Bogle L'ouverture.



Linton Kwesi Johnson in the recording studios where he works.

Photo: Franco Rosso

onary song;  
n the people.  
e, the songs  
mselves."

Pleasurable in itself, but not only that: music  
expresses the hope of freedom and socialism.  
The musicians we look at here have each taken  
a form popular in their own culture and  
developed it musically and politically.



Photo Luta Comun

# KARAXU

## Songs of Struggle

KARAXU RECENTLY completed a successful tour of England,  
singing in solidarity with the popular resistance in Chile.  
Unlike other Chilean groups, whose songs still tend to date  
from the Popular Unity Period, Karaxu are performing a new  
type of music — the traditional folk songs, alongside new songs  
of struggle, which have been developing in Chile since the coup.  
Their concerts showed the new hope and determination to  
struggle which is growing daily in Chile.

We asked them how the popular song movement has grown  
in Chile.

**Karaxu:** There have always been  
popular singers in Chile, especially  
in the countryside and amongst  
the sectors of the working class  
with the greatest experience of  
struggle. Their songs were about  
the feelings, struggles and hopes  
of the everyday life of the  
people. However, these songs  
were rarely heard on the air.  
The folksingers who did sing  
and play in the mass media were  
those who were in favour with  
the landowners and the bosses.  
These were songs which sang of  
the little tree in the valley, and  
love, but never of the social  
struggles. They were performed by  
"artistes" and not by genuine  
popular singers.

### CLUBS

With the growth of the mass  
movement in Chile, and with the  
compilation of folk songs by  
singers such as Violeta Parra,  
the folk songs once again took on  
their role as an expression of  
social problems and struggles. In  
the 1960's the size of this  
movement was unprecedented.  
Folk clubs (penas) were started,  
and a number of folk singers  
and composers emerged who  
tried to reflect the struggles of

the people through their music.

The high point of the movement  
came with the period of the Pop-  
ular Unity government of President  
Allende (1970-73). The right  
still dominated the mass media  
but the left had won enough  
influence by now to give folk  
music the public airing it deserved.  
Chilean popular music, which  
naturally drew on all the committed  
music of Latin America, had a big  
impact at the big left-wing marches  
and meetings.

But we shouldn't exaggerate  
its influence. It never broke through  
as a really mass form of expression  
during Popular Unity.

### MIR

The MIR — Movement of the  
Revolutionary Left — sprang up  
during this period, and to start  
off with, it saw itself as a purely  
political organisation. At that time  
it wasn't sufficiently developed  
to deal with cultural politics.  
This doesn't mean that there  
weren't popular singers who iden-  
tified with the MIR.

With the coup, there came  
a period of repression of popular  
songs and the persecution of the



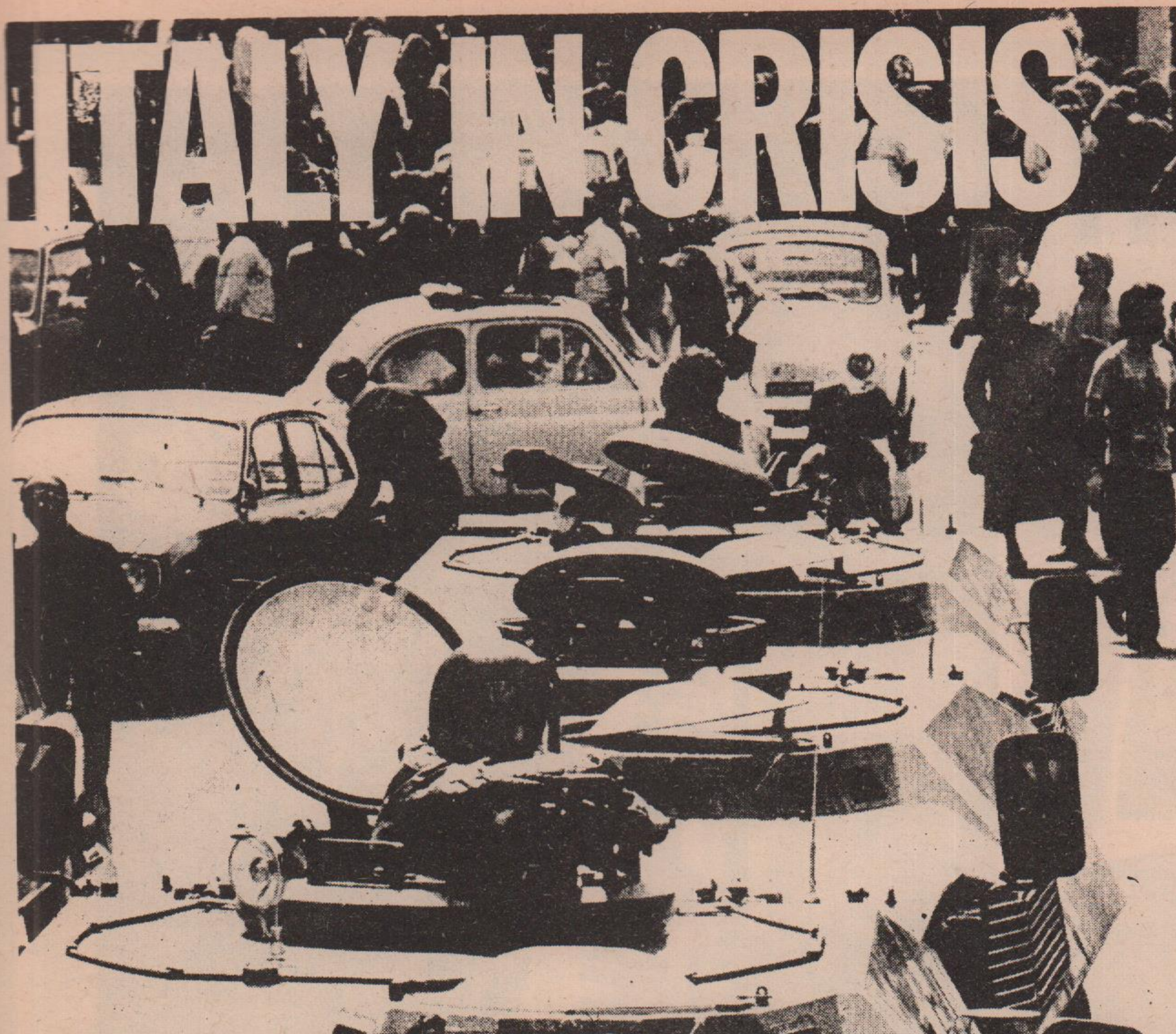
popular singers; their imprison-  
ment, murder and exile. The folk  
clubs were closed and the songs  
prohibited.

Slowly, though, popular songs  
began to emerge again, but in  
new forms. The words of the songs  
contained in symbolic language  
a social content; expressing struggle  
though in an indirect way. New  
folk clubs have grown up, at  
first in a semi-clandestine way,  
though now more openly, as  
people have begun to find an  
escape valve through music.  
Folk festivals held in Santiago  
and other places have turned  
into demonstrations, the only  
ones through which the people  
can express their opposition to  
the dictatorship. At the same  
time, Chilean songs and music  
are being developed in exile,  
with groups which made up the  
new song movement like Inti-  
Illimani and Quilapayun, as  
well as groups which have been  
formed in exile, such as Karaxu.

### SOLIDARITY

The main aim of our work is  
to give support to the popular  
resistance in Chile by encouraging  
international solidarity with Chile,  
and with Latin America in  
general. Our work is not simply agi-  
tational. We are trying to  
express the life of the Chilean  
people through song, by linking  
life in exile with the struggle in  
our country. In the long term, we  
aim to return to Chile.





# ARMED 'TERRORISM'... POLITICS OF DESPAIR

As the economic and political crisis gets worse, the Italian revolutionary movement is being more and more squeezed between the anti-working class policies of the Communist Party and the terrorism of the Red Brigades. In this extremely difficult situation, many comrades are looking for personal solutions to the crisis (eg drugs, Zen), others are turning to individual acts of violence, the 'diffuse guerrilla warfare' the interview refers to. By publishing this interview we do not in any way want to endorse the points of view put forward in it. In fact, we feel politically closer to those groups like Proletarian Democracy that are 'swimming against the current'. However, the interview is important in that it reflects the experience of militants whose hope for rapid revolutionary change was not realised. (The interview with two Italian autonomists is from the French left wing daily 'Liberation').

Are many of the comrades armed?  
Most of them. It's more for attack than defence. Though they know that if they hit someone it's more likely to be a random policeman than a government minister. The problem is that we are unable to find a correct way of dealing with the type of violence that the state imposes on the streets, in a situation where a mass response no longer exists.

What about the planned violence of the Red Brigades?

The strategy of the Red Brigades is to bring about a social and political crisis that leads to civil war, and they do this without taking into consideration the strength of the different forces that make up the movement.

When Lotta Continua, of which we were members, dissolved itself in 1976, we were in agreement. Now we regret not having the old organisation; not because it had the correct revolutionary strategy (who knows what that is?) but because it gave us a collective strength that we are dearly lacking. Given what has happened to our movement, comrades are turning to violence out of despair.

Why have things come to this?

A few years ago when a comrade was killed by a fascist, we would give out a leaflet, try to build a mass struggle, we would get together a march that went to burn the fascists' local offices. Today, no-one bothers to do this since it hasn't proved an effective way of dealing with the fascists. Now we take direct action. We shoot the fascist, the local boss, the police who are always on our backs, the landlord. We're not going to wait to do these things till after the revolution.

The conditions are set for violence to become a permanent feature of our society — like unemployment. At a certain point in its development, advanced capitalist countries can put up with a great number of unemployed. It's the same with terrorism — it's now part of our way of life.

Who would you say was mainly involved in this 'diffuse violence'?

There is no longer an effective political alternative to the armed struggle. Changing institutions? I don't believe in it any more. Mass action? All we did shows that what we did had no lasting effect. Every time that we won something, it was only a victory for a month, three months or a year. Even our most important victories were recuperated by those

in power. The biggest working class struggles in Europe were in Italy. The greatest struggles against piece work took place in Italy. And now at the Alfa-Romeo plant near Naples, the workers have rejected the unions' position and accepted the re-introduction of piece rates and productivity bonuses! So, people no longer believe in the possibility of struggle in the short term. They look at things from an individual point of view. . .

What are the political principles of those who, like yourselves, are into 'diffuse violence'?

Those who are into diffuse violence don't see themselves as vanguards. They do it for themselves and no-one else.

So violence becomes a way of life rather than a political programme?

It's a form of rebellion in relation to society which is brought about by being marginalised in a system as inhuman as capitalism. . .

Don't these developments frighten you?

It's the fruits of all our defeats. Sure, it frightens me, but I would be even more frightened if there was nothing. And it has got nothing to do with the Red Brigades when they claim the armed proletariat is attacking the state. We are completely on the defensive. But, as far as I'm concerned, the most worrying thing is the growing separation with political life, the total distrust of the unions, of any revolutionary project, the turning in on themselves of comrades who have been involved in all the struggles. It would seem as if people have lost any sense of personal initiative. Some parts of the working class have a relationship of delegation towards the armed organisations. True, there is political disagreement with the Red Brigades but at the same time there is support, especially in cases like the foreman getting shot in the legs. . .

And what about the diffuse guerrilla warfare?

Yes, there's nothing else to be done. But it shouldn't be seen as a political initiative — it's a form of defence, of individual political existence. It's a way of showing that we still exist. But it's an awful experience to have to go through.

All that you are saying is profoundly pessimistic.

It was when we were enthusiastic that we suffered our worst defeats. Now, we live with pessimism — it's safer. Now, at least we are able to lucidly assess the situation. Something is bound to turn up. If only a stunning disaster!

## Election blow for Communists

THE RECENT Italian elections mark the end of the 'historic compromise' — the alliance that the Italian Communist Party (PCI) has for so long tried to force upon the Christian Democracy (the largest party of the ruling class).

The PCI's strategy of gaining respectability and votes by leading the battle for an austerity incomes policy has failed totally. Its overall vote has gone down from 34% to 30%, and in working class areas of large towns like Naples, Turin, Bari, and Milan, the collapse of the PCI vote was much greater.

The vote of the Christian Democrats (DC) is down slightly (from 39% to 38%), and the big winners of the elections are the left-wing Radical Party (whose vote went up 2.5% to 3.5% and who will have 18 members in the new parliament. The beginnings of the Radicals go back to 1929 and an anti-fascist movement 'justice and liberty'.

The Radicals also played a key role in the wartime resistance against Mussolini. Pannella, the current leader of the Radicals, first became well known when he went on hunger strike over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

### MARGINAL ELEMENTS

Since then the Radical Party has continued to gain supporters as it took up courageous positions in favour of women's liberation, gay

rights, the democratic rights of soldiers (and conscientious objectors), dope smoking, divorce, abortion, and votes for the 18 to 25 age group. In a period where the two major parties (the Christian Democracy and the Communists) adopted a strategy of making the 'marginal elements' (youth, migrants, women) of the working class pay for the crisis, the Radicals gained support by developing a libertarian tradition that included practising direct action and the yearly rotation of their members of parliament.

An analysis of the recent elections shows that thirty per cent of new Radical voters in 1979 are ex-PCI voters. This makes clear that many people no longer see the Communists as a party of change. It is also interesting that out of 100,000 voters in Milan between 18 and 25 years old, 20,800 voted Radical and another 15,000 voted for the

two left-wing slates, NSU and PdUP!

### FAR LEFT

The three slates to the left of the PCI got a total of 2,100,000 votes (5.6%) in the Italian general election. They did even better in the elections for the European parliament — with the radicals electing four and PdUP and the NSU one member each.

The elections have shown that there is an important section of the Italian working class that has rejected the Communist Party's claim 'either you are with us or you are with the terrorist Red Brigades'. The elections have shown the continuing existence of an anti-authoritarian current. With the PCI brooding and licking its electoral wounds, the Italian left has a good opportunity to develop a political and organisational strategy to overcome these divisions.

Big Flame Irish Commission

And it is attracting a wide range of sponsors — from Lord Brockway to Cyril Smith and Anna Raeburn.

### SACRIFICE

This crack in the Liberal Party — which could lead to similar divisions in the Labour Party — has only come about because the 10 year war in Ireland simply will not end. The people of the republican areas have refused to give up and return to second class citizenship. Above all, the members of the Irish Republican Army and Irish National Liberation Army have accepted imprisonment, torture — and all too often, death — rather than surrender. It is this incredible effort and sacrifice in the face of great danger that has put British policy on Ireland into crisis.

Too many people have died. It is up to UTOM, as the leading anti-imperialist campaign in this country, to exploit the divisions in the establishment parties to the full.

## TROOPS OUT CONFERENCE

"There are more cities in Britain than London". That's one of the messages of a Big Flame document presented to the National Conference of the United Troops Out Movement in Birmingham (June 23).

For too long the growing demand for troop withdrawal has been hidden by press self-censorship. Marches, pickets, petitions. All have gone unnoticed by the media.

It doesn't help just holding marches in London. The audience tends to consist of thousands of tourists in the West End.

That's why Big Flame has been arguing for some time that every major city should be considered as a venue for 'troops out' marches. A mere 300 demonstrators can have more effect on Manchester, Glasgow

or Birmingham than 20 times that number in London — because local newspapers and radio are less able to ignore significant local events.

### BUT . . .

But it must be said that the most important demonstration on Ireland for years will take place on August 12th in London. Called originally by the Young Liberals, it calls for troop withdrawal as the solution to the Irish war. This is the first time any section of the big three parties has openly called for an end to the British occupation of part of Ireland.



# Abortion is a Feminist and a class issue

Abortion is a feminist issue. It is also a class issue. Rich women have always been able to get abortions, even if illegally. That's why it is so important that women are fighting to defend the rights given us by the 1967 Act especially as the coming period is likely to see a concerted attack on women's rights and a reinforcement of traditional views of the family and sexuality.

"We're tired of asking politely for an abortion clinic" — that's what one woman told the National Abortion Campaign Conference in Nottingham on June 9th and 10th. The conference made it clear that the fight for abortion rights must not just be defensive — our defence must be offensive! Also NAC must also build a broad based movement within which the position of Free Abortion on Demand, a Woman's Right to Choose with no medical or Legal Restrictions would be argued for. Also important is the fight to make abortion provision what women and not what the professionals want it to be. So the fight for free, day-care abortion clinics, which would make abortion safer, must be extended.

## RESTRICTIONS

There was debate on the question of legal or medical restrictions. There were women who supported a woman's right to abortion only up to 28 weeks when the foetus is 'viable', that is it can survive with the help of a life support system. They feel that the foetus has rights once it is viable and that we have alienated much of our support by insisting on a woman's right to choose up until term. Along with the problems of increased technology continually lowering the date of viability, many women present felt that it *must* be the woman herself who decides whether or not to reproduce, not the legal or medical profession. She alone can know all the factors — personal, social, medical — that contribute to her decision. Women understand what late abortion is like and we must be considered responsible for controlling our own lives and our own fertility. What is more, at present it is only 1% of abortions that take place after 16 weeks. Through the difficulties at the moment in obtaining abortions women are often *forced* into having late abortions. If there were easily

available day-care abortion facilities in every town the number of women seeking later abortions would be far less than that 1%. We recognised that discussion of late abortions is used against us by anti-abortionists and diverts us from our most important concern: free, safe, *early* abortion. And that we must not let ourselves be divided within that central concern.

## OTHER CAMPAIGNS

It is important to build our links with other campaigns in the women's movement — with the Depo Provera Campaign which is seeking to expose and outlaw the use of the Depo Provera injection contraceptive which is known to be very dangerous and is used on black and especially vulnerable working class women; with campaigns around forced sterilisation and virginity tests; with Women and Health groups. A workshop on sexuality discussed the way in which contraception and abortion affect our sexual relationships with men. In a situation of inadequate, male designed contraception, fear of pregnancy, and poor access to abortion, women's sexuality within heterosexual relationships is inevitably constrained.

## CLASS ISSUE

As pro-abortionists we must build support within the labour movement, since it claims to represent working people. The TUC, LP, and major trade unions all now have a policy of 'A Woman's Right to Choose'. We need to work actively at all levels within these, making our position clear and making demands on their elected representatives from local to national level. In particular NAC will call for a national TUC-Labour Party sponsored demonstration in the autumn against any restrictive legislation. Also a national TUC conference will be called for spring 1980 to discuss plans for positive legislation, as well as for reorganisation of the NHS, to oblige the NHS to provide abortion facilities,

just as it is now obliged to provide contraception facilities.

## SAFE AND EARLY

The reorganisation of the NHS is important in our campaign around day-care clinics. If the NHS is forced to provide abortion facilities we will have much more muscle in our fight with Area Health Authorities and consultants to provide what we consider to be adequate facilities. We welcomed the fact that menstrual aspiration is now legal. That means that women can have the contents of the womb removed, without anaesthetic, up to 14 days after a missed period. Now that this is legal, we must fight for its provision. We recognized, though, that the fight for abortion clinics must not be at the expense of other NHS services. We must link up with the fight against cuts in public spending and so agreed to support the Fightback Conference on June 30th.

## INTERNATIONAL LINKS

One of the most exciting things that has happened in NAC over the last year is our involvement in the International Contraception, Abortion, Sterilisation Campaign (ICASC). The connections between imperialism and fertility control are clear. Women in the third world have been used as guinea pigs too often, testing dangerous contraceptives which, then improved, have given a lot more choice and freedom to women in the advanced countries. It is also a fact that in this country black women are given abortions quite readily, but often only on the condition that they accept sterilisation. This understanding has been important for our anti-racist and anti-imperialist work and the Conference agreed to build our links with anti-racist groups and with women in Ireland.

## FUTURE

Over the past NAC has had problems of demoralisation and finance. But the Conference looked positively at what support we have gained and although our position of a Woman's Right to Choose With No Legal or Medical Restrictions has met with opposition, we reaffirmed our commitment to it and felt confident of the support we will find if we have a restrictive bill to fight.

Brighton Big Flame member

# Never kiss a baby!



IF YOU'VE ever been told:

"You shouldn't have a bath/swim/wash your hair when you've got the curse" or

"Let the baby cry if it's not time for his four-hourly feed, he'll get spoilt if you pick him up and anyway he needs to exercise his lungs" or

"It's no wonder that there are more men doctors than women, women are less logical than men and anyway what man would put up with being treated by a woman?"

and wondered where this "expert" advice has come from, then a new book by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English is the book for you.

In it they look back over 150 years of experts' advice to women. Doctors, psychiatrists, child experts, gynaecologists and many more over the years have tried to tell women what is good for them.

Women were traditionally the ones with healing skills. Their knowledge of herbal remedies was often more effective and less dangerous than those male "doctors" who eventually stopped them practising. Women healers who persisted in their craft were burnt as witches.

## NEVER KISS THEM

This century, too, has seen the advent of the experts into childhood — and, of course, the bulk of their advice has fallen on women. This advice has changed over the years — at one time the behaviourists held the floor:

"There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults. Dress them, bathe them with care and circumspection. Let your behaviour always be objective and kindly firm. Never hug or kiss them, never let them sit on your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say goodnight. Shake hands with them in the morning." (quoted on p 184)

## BLAME

Whatever the theory of the moment, be it behaviourist, permissive or to stimulate the baby so that it can read at ten months, the mothers always takes the blame if the child does not turn out the way it is supposed to.

"The doctors' attempt to secure victory over the female healers: with the "scientific" evidence that woman's essential nature was not to be strong, competent help-giver, but to

be a patient"

## ILLNESSES

For women to be weak and less capable of an active life (unless, of course, she was a working class woman who was expected to work every hour that god sent) was the best way to ensure that women would remain the passive, child-bearing wives of the middle and upper classes. So the natural functions of the female body have gradually been labelled by the experts as illnesses.

"We cannot too emphatically urge the importance of regarding these monthly returns as periods of ill-health, as days when the ordinary occupations are to be suspended or modified... Long walks, dancing, shopping, riding and parties should be avoided at this time of month invariably and under all circumstances...."

"It was suddenly discovered that the mother could be blamed for almost everything. In every case history of the troubled child, alcoholic, suicidal, schizophrenic, psychopathic, neurotic, adult; impotent, homosexual male, frigid, promiscuous female; ulcerous, asthmatic, and otherwise disturbed American, could be found a mother." (quoted on p 212)

There is a lot more to this fascinating book. The only problem is that so many of the examples are American, but it's well worth reading.

"For her Own Good: 150 years of the experts advice to women" B. Ehrenreich and D. English. Pluto Press Paperback

# Portugal's Crime Women picket Liverpool's Harley St.

MARIA Antonia Palla, a Portuguese journalist, is on trial now in Portugal for writing the script of a TV programme called 'Abortion is not a Crime'.

This programme was shown in 1976 and exposed the horrors of backstreet abortions in Portugal, where abortion is illegal. It revealed that there are 180,000 backstreet abortions in Portugal and 2,000 women die each year as a result.

Maria Antonia Palla has been accused of "outrage of public morals" and "incitement to crime" because her programme showed that abortion can be completely safe and should be legal. If she is convicted, she can serve 4-6 years in prison.

Right now other women in Portugal are also on trial for having had abortions, or for helping other women to obtain them. Their 'crime' carries a penalty of 2-8 years. We say:

**THE CRIME IS THAT OF THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT.**

**DROP THE CHARGES!**

**DEFEND A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!**

Send letters and telegrams to the Portuguese Ambassador, 11 Belgrave Sq., London SW 1, with copies to ICAR, 374 Gays Inn Rd, London WC1 and to Ms Palla at Rua de Zinha 51, Lisbon,

"Hypocratic hypocrites", "Day Care abortions now", "You don't believe in it unless we can pay for it — day care abortions now".

The sound of our voices reverberated around the elegant facades of Rodney Street — Liverpool's Harley Street for the practitioners of private medicine. Faces of receptionists occasionally peeped around the well-hung anonymous net curtains. The gynaecologists, the target of the picket kept out of sight.

## NHS

Liverpool, as many women can confirm from personal experience, is one of the hardest places in the country to get an abortion on the NHS.

The principle obstacle to a day-care abortion centre is the gynaecologists. The money is available but the professionals are fighting hard to protect their lucrative private practice.

Now Liverpool's abortion campaigners have decided to force the issue, to win public

support for the safe, easy to do method of early abortions in day care units.

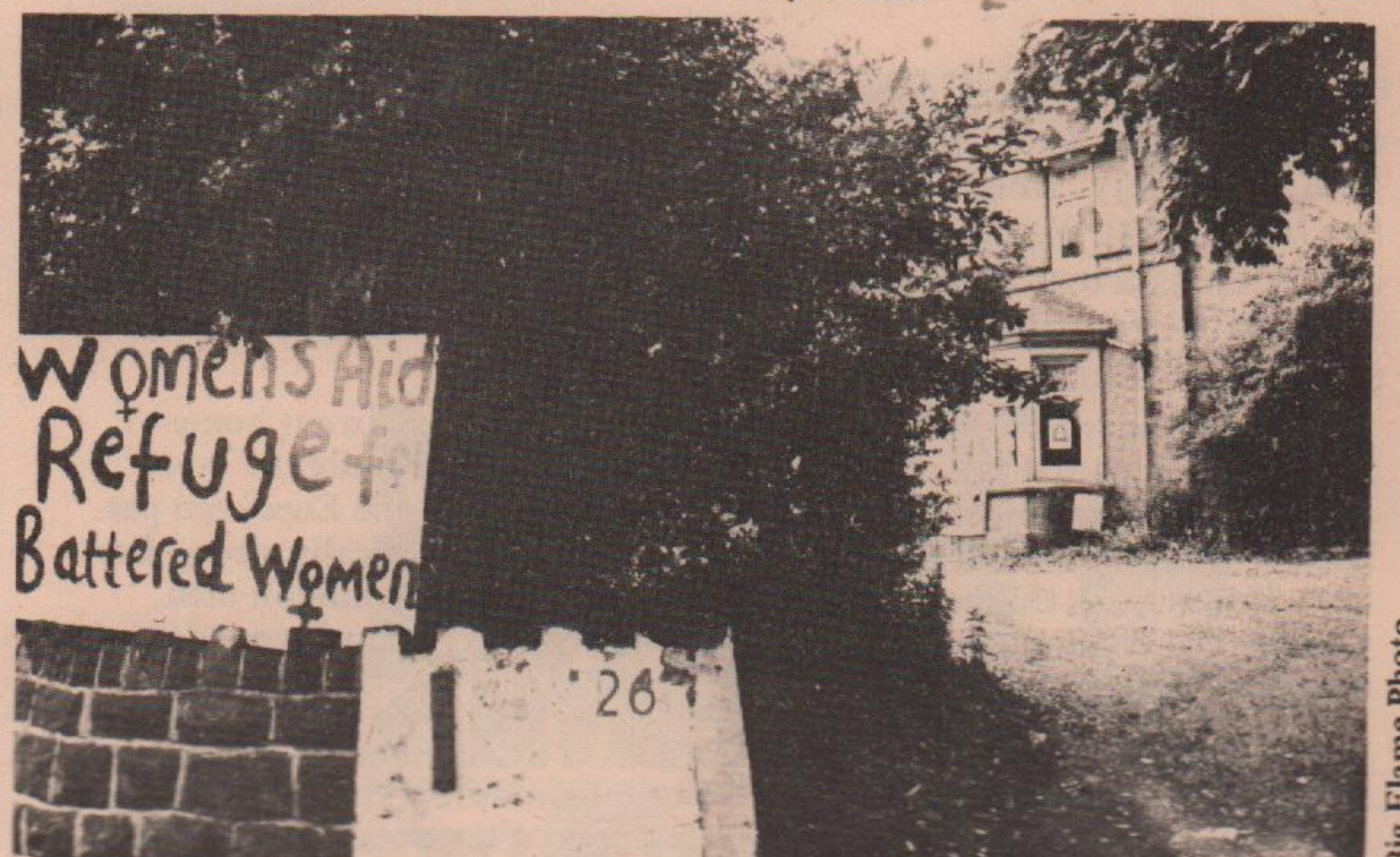
The day after the Rodney Street picket the outpatient clinic at Sefton General Hospital was occupied. The clinic has been under-used since the transfer of services to the new Royal Liverpool Hospital. We know this would be a good place to house a day-care abortion unit.

## MORE PLANS

At both events, we gave out leaflets explaining what we were doing to passers by and to workers in the hospital. At the hospital we gave a letter to the administrator for the acting chairman of the AHA. We postered the town and got sympathetic coverage in the local press and a bit of time on local radio.

So far our campaign has been successful in drawing attention to the case for a day-care centre in Liverpool and we've got more plans. We'll be doing street theatre, with music and leaflets in the city centre on Saturday June 23.

Liverpool Big Flame member



Birmingham Women's Aid are angry at the over-crowded, short-term accommodation they have been given over the last three and a half years. That's why they have occupied this large, empty council-owned house which the council is about to sell back to its freeholders. Birmingham Women's Aid are going to squat until the council provides them with adequate accommodation for a refuge.



# BIG FLAME MEETING.... Immigration and the bosses' Europe

Big Flame International Committee

"ALL OUR lives, we've been taught to say "yes", now we're learning to say "No!" These stirring words from a Portuguese worker set the tone of the Big Flame meeting on Immigration which took place last month in London as part of the "Against the Bosses' Europe - For workers' Unity" Co-ordination on the elections to the European parliament. The meeting which was organised to co-incide with a demonstration of immigrant workers at the European parliament in Strasbourg was attended by over 100 people.

The speeches from the platform and the discussion in workshops contributed to our understanding of the key role immigrant workers play in bringing a tradition of anti-imperialist struggle to this country. Speakers from Ireland (Sinn Fein), Grenada (the New Jewel Movement) and Portugal (the Portuguese Workers' Co-ordinating Committee) informed us of the conditions that existed in their countries and how workers from there were forced to come to work in this country. The speaker from Sinn Fein explained how the Prevention of Terrorism Act was being used against Irish workers organisation in Britain.

## EXPORT

It was quite clear from the discussion that took place at the meeting that as the economic recession gets worse, the governments of Western Europe will try to export their unemployment by sending immigrant workers back to the country they come from. The legacy of the Empire and Commonwealth make it more difficult for the British government to do this, but the

restrictive Tory proposals on immigration policy are clearly a step in this direction.

There was strong agreement at the meeting that racism and immigration would have to be a key priority of revolutionary organisations over the coming period. This would involve an attempt to get the A.N.L. to take up issues like opposition to immigration controls and support for campaigns like B.A.S.H. (Blacks Against State Harassment) and O.W.A.A.D. (Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent), and support for C.A.I.L. (the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws), though it was recognised that the priority for the white left was to fight the racism that exists amongst the white working class.

The meeting, which was excellently organised by London Big Flame, ended with a showing of Franco Rossi's film about Linton Kwesi Johnson's "Dread, Beat an' Blood" and then, for anyone with any stamina left, there was a disco.

## POLICE HARASSING IMMIGRANT WORKERS IN PARIS STREETS.

"In times of crisis, one must know how to make difficult decisions" - with these words, a French MP explained the passing last month of a new bill against the rights of immigrant workers. The French state already has the right to detain any foreign worker who is considered a 'menace to public order'. The new bill legalises deportation centres. It also gives the police the task of expelling all foreigners normally resident in France whose residence permits have not been renewed. The immigration officers have the right to refuse entry to anyone who does not have 'sufficient means of support'.

The immediate response of the organisations of immigrant workers to the new bill has been one of anger. Now they face the difficult task of organising against the state harassment that will increase sharply. (PNS)



Photo: Daniel Pszeny

# IMMIGRANTS' CHARTER

OVER 2000 IMMIGRANT workers from all over Europe attended the mass meeting in Strasbourg. Coaches had come from Holland, Germany, Belgium, and France. At the meeting a Charter for Immigrant Workers was presented and approved. The Charter is seen as a useful way of unifying the struggles and demands of many different organisations that represent immigrant workers in the Common Market.

The meeting was held in Strasbourg because it is the current home of the European parliament. The preamble to the Charter made the point that: 'One of the objectives of the current elections to the European parliament is the consolidation of an economically and politically strong Europe. However, in this geographical area, there are twelve million men, women, and children who contribute to the economy and who are denied all rights'.

The preamble makes clear the urgent need to unite immigrant organisations given that we are seeing a rapid harmonisation of the immigration policies of the countries of the

EEC. This harmonisation takes the form of adopting the most repressive features of the policies of the different countries.

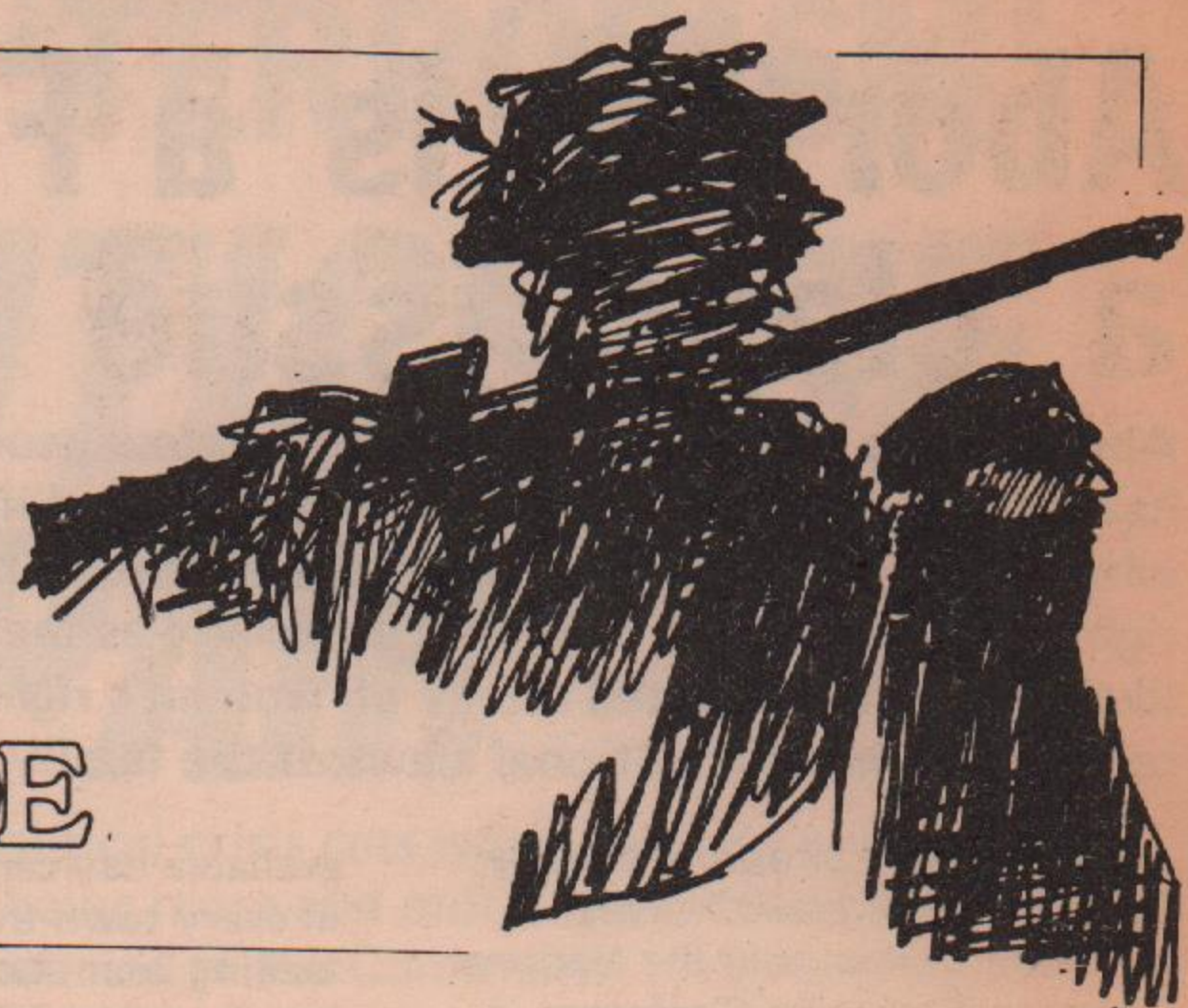
The preamble makes the point that 'a foreign work force costs

nothing to the capitalists - neither in food, nor health, nor education. Will we be a buffer with the young, women and other marginal sectors of the working class, that takes all the shocks of the labour market?'

The Charter itself sets out rights that immigrant workers must win for themselves: the right to work, social and political rights, and the right to join a trade union, to have our families with us, the right to our own culture and language and a guarantee for the future of the second generation.

The Charter ends by stating that to build this Europe of immigrant workers, it will be necessary 'to strengthen our autonomous organisations and to give total support to the democratic and trade union organisations of the countries we are settled in'.

## THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



Extracts of speech made at the immigration meeting by a member of Big Flame who is also involved in OWAAD

"Big Flame has organised this meeting in the hope of increasing our understanding of what an internationalist perspective means and in particular an understanding of the specific position of immigrant workers. But, the role of a revolutionary organisation is not just to understand but also to act on that understanding..."

## BLACK AUTONOMY

"I want to start by talking about myself and from there go on to what I feel about black autonomy. I think that people have always found it easy to patronise me and I hate it. Not only am I black and female, but I'm small. When somebody patronises you it really makes you feel powerless - like a victim of circumstances that you can't change. I don't want to change the fact that I'm black and female because I'm proud to be both. But what I want to change is anyone's notion of me as a "victim"...."

## SICK

"I get sick of hearing the left talk about splits and disunity in the black movement - as if it was something unique to the black movement. As if the white working class movement was totally united and had no divisions, no splits, no disunity."

## SUPPORT

"Black autonomy" doesn't mean letting black people get on with it. It means seeing black people as the leadership of their own struggles and following that lead in a concrete supporting way.

## WHITE RACISM

There are two major problems of the anti-racist struggle that I want to take up:

Firstly, white anti-racists see racism as the blacks' problem. But it's the whites who are the racists - they are the ones who have to be challenged. The white working class is being weakened by racism and the white anti-racists have to tackle this - hard though it may be.

Secondly, to a large extent, the anti-racist struggle has been submerged in the anti-fascist struggle. Yes, the fascists are a threat and we don't want them on the streets or harassing black people. But the threat to black people involves more than fascists. It is the threat of the racist state and of institutionalised racism which goes way beyond fascism.... Take the immigration laws and the proposed nationality laws. They have been forgotten in the fight against the fascists - and they are a far more destructive attack on black people than any activities of the National Front....

## IMMIGRATION

White anti-racists have to take up the issue of immigration by supporting the moves already being made by black people.

White anti-racists shouldn't think that the notion of black autonomy lets them off the hook, what it does is required of them that they put themselves in a position they are unaccustomed to - that of accepting the leadership of others."

## EUROPEAN RANK & FILE MEET IN DENMARK

Women textile workers in Sweden have occupied a factory threatened with closure. They replaced the assembly-line with production by work groups which worked on all stages from design to the finished product. Recently, they contacted hospital workers to find out what design of clothing and overalls

was best suited to hospital work.

This report was given to a European conference for rank and file workers, organised over Whitsun by the Danish Socialists, VS. Over 100 delegates attended to exchange experiences and to plan joint action.

The reports from each country made clear that everywhere rank and file organisation is threatened by new, repressive laws and that foreign workers and the unemployed are being hit very hard.

75% of the unemployed were under 30! This led to great divisions and tensions between older workers and the younger workers who are forced into casual working, home-working and moonlighting.

## 35 HOURS

An important element in the fightback is the struggle for a shorter working week - in Denmark, night-shift workers are demanding a 30 hour week, Italian workers are fighting for the 35 hour week by 1985, in Austria, employers have conceded the 36 hour week, as have employers in Belgium, subject to workers agreeing to a no-strike clause.

When delegates talked about trade union organisation in their own country, the discussion showed up important differences. A militant of the PSU explained that in France only 25% of the workers were in unions - there were no closed shops. To join a union required a conscious political decision and so most trade unionists were already highly politicised. A speaker from Proletarian Democracy said that unemployment in Italy was 1,600,000 (7.2%) and that

## ILLEGAL

On the last day, there was a moving statement from Workers in Eastern Europe about the independent working class organisations that were being created in Poland the USSR and Rumania - in Poland around the illegal newspaper "Rabotnik" (the Worker), in the U.S.S.R., around the independent trade union SMOT.

The problem with the conference was the lack of urgency over demands and perspectives for struggle. Hopefully, these will come out of future meetings, like the one for activists from all of Ford's European plants which takes place in the Autumn.

A word of thanks to the comrades from VS for the excellent organisation of the conference and their wonderful hospitality. The conference was full of many memorable events for me - not least of which was pub selling "Big Flame" in Copenhagen!

Coventry Big Flame member



# AFTER THE TREATY... OCCUPIED PALESTINE STRUGGLES ON

DURING THE last few weeks, especially since the Treaty of Washington was signed between Israel and Egypt, things have been hotting up in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The mass struggle against Israeli occupation has reached new heights — and so has the level of Israeli repression. There can be little doubt that this escalation will continue.

There are several inter-connected reasons for these new developments. So long as the haggling between Egypt and Israel was still going on, many Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip adopted a wait and see attitude; they were hoping against hope that Sadat would not consent to sign an agreement which would give them, the Palestinians, nothing at all.

But in the event this is exactly what did happen. The Palestinians are offered a five-year transitional period of "autonomy" after which the fate of the occupied territories and their inhabitants would be decided — by others.

## AUTONOMY

Begin insisted — and Sadat finally agreed — that the autonomy would not be granted to the territories occupied by Israel, but only to their inhabitants. This formulation excludes altogether the majority of the Palestinian people, who live as refugees outside Palestine and will have no territorial jurisdiction whatsoever.

Israel's military rule over the occupied territories will not be "abolished" (as Sadat had demanded at first) but only "withdrawn" and Israel can retain military forces

in selected locations in the territories — selected, that is, by Israel.

## INTERPRETATION

The Israeli interpretation of what Palestinian "autonomy" will

without any political powers whatsoever. Israel will continue to control all public land (which includes the common lands of many villages!) and the water resources. The Israeli settlements, whose number and size will continue to grow, will not be subject to the "autonomous" authority but remain under direct Israeli control. As the Israeli daily Ha'aretz admits "The state of Israel will have under the autonomy regime more rights than it can apply under military rule."



mean makes it clear that the autonomy will be purely administrative,

The Egyptians have rejected Israel's interpretation. But there

is very little they can do about it even if they wanted to. As Dayan has pointed out, Israel is in actual control over the territories, and if the Egyptians or the Americans "don't like our interpretation, then they know what they can do..."

## MOBILISED

Once the Palestinians in the occupied territories realised the true meaning of the Treaty of Washington, they understood they had nothing to lose, and mobilised for struggle.

The Treaty of Washington does not offer any real advantage to ex-Jordanian officials in the West Bank who have exerted some restraining influence against mass struggle but who no longer have any motive for doing so.

The Palestinians in the occupied territories are supposed to elect a representative body, and, however impotent that body will in fact be, it has raised the political temperature. They force people to take a clear public position, if only a position in favour of boycotting the elections.

Once the treaty had been signed, the Jewish colonisation of Arab lands was stepped up and has now reached an unprecedented level of intensity. This blatant provocation has of course contributed to the escalation of the Palestinian struggle.

## ESCALATION

This escalation has been met with a wave of brutal repression. Demon-

strators are shot and killed; mass arrests have become frequent, and prisoners are brutalised and tortured; long curfews (in some cases for over a fortnight) are imposed on militant villages and townships, and vital supplies from the outside are stopped.

Even worse than the Army and the Police, are the armed vigilante gangs formed by the fanatic Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful) settlers, who have taken the "law" into their own hands.

## PRO-ZIONIST MEDIA

Very little of all this is reported by the Pro-Zionist Western press. But the Palestine Liberation Organisation has apparently not made a great effort to publicise the events in the occupied territories. This is probably because the PLO bases itself almost exclusively on the guerrilla forces recruited in the refugee camps outside Palestine. Its favoured form of struggle is the incursion of small raiding groups across the border into Israel. It has always shown relatively little interest in the mass popular struggle inside the occupied territories.

The struggle inside is led by local forces (including, notably, the communists) which nominally pay allegiance to the PLO but are, in fact, largely independent. It is this struggle which is likely to become the real focus of the Palestinian struggle as a whole.

M. Machover

## Women In Middle East Conflicts

"KHAM SIN" is a journal published by revolutionary socialists of the Middle East.... Khamsin is a committed journal. It aims not merely to reflect and express, but also to be part of the struggles for social liberation and against nationalist and religious mystifications."

The central theme of issue No 6. of "Khamsin" is women in the Arab world. Three articles examine different aspects of the position of women in traditional Arab-Islamic society.

The piece "Arab Women" discusses the role of Islam in the oppression of women. In nearly all the Arab countries Islam is the state religion and legislation governing family law and the status of women is either inspired by or directly taken from the Koran. Despite the claims of some Islamic progressives the Koran explicitly states the inferiority of women. In Islamic societies there is hardly any separation between the state and religion. The oppression of woman in traditional practice and attitudes and her inferiority according to religious teaching is institutionalised and re-inforced through state laws. Any truly progressive movement against the forces of imperialism in the Arab world will also have to struggle against religion if it is to improve the position of women. However the reaction against imperialism has led most radical movements to uphold Islam against the encroachment of Western culture. Any liberalisation in the position of

women has been identified as part of the imperialist attack.

Though "Arab Women" was written before women took such a central role in the Iranian revolution, (and Iran is not an Arab country) it is given fresh topicality by those events. It should make us take a critical distance from the euphoria generated by the overthrow of the Shah and ask: exactly what do women have to gain from an Islamic Republic?

## WOMEN IN PALESTINE

The article on "Changes in Palestinian Society" looks at the position of women in the traditional Palestinian village and family, and how this has changed under Zionist rule. The article shows how Palestinian women are caught between their oppression by Zionism and by the "hamoulah" — the traditional family structure.

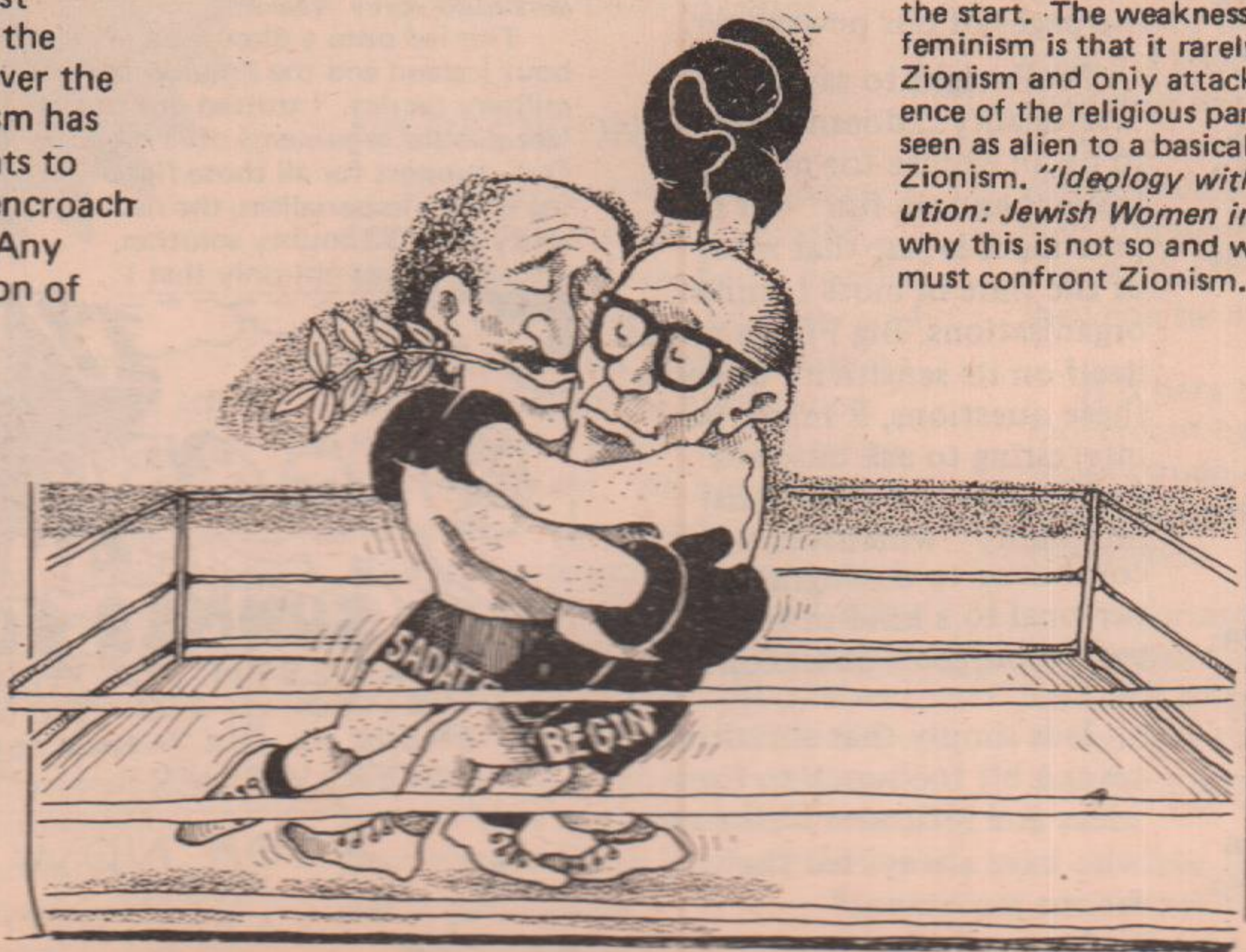
The Authors conclude that "The hamoulah, religion, tradition and conservative customs" oppress women directly, but also men, and that women must take part in the struggle (for liberation) from Zionism. "If they take a stand equally with men, in the broadest front, it will help their own struggle for social equality." They omit to mention that this will not happen unless women organise separately to make their voice heard and force the left to take their issues seriously.

## WOMEN IN LEBANON

"Women and politics in Lebanon" is a bitter personal testament which raises this very question. The weakness of Lebanese women's politics meant that their involvement in the civil war did not help their liberation: "even by taking up arms.... we fill precisely that role given to us for all (patriarchal) eternity: that of the beautiful woman fighter, or the avenging mother defending her little ones. Why were we involved in a struggle from which we would gain nothing?"

## WOMEN AND ZIONISM

"Khamsin" 6 also contains an article on Jewish women in Israel which shows how hollow the myth of equality for women in Israel is. Zionism betrayed the aspirations of women for equality right from the start. The weakness of Israeli feminism is that it rarely confronts Zionism and only attacks the influence of the religious parties, which is seen as alien to a basically secular Zionism. "Ideology without Revolution: Jewish Women in Israel" shows why this is not so and why feminism must confront Zionism.



Khamsin, which is published by Pluto Press is available at left bookshops at £2, a bit steep but you can order it from libraries.

## Bradford Anti-Zionist Arrested In Israel

BRADFORD UNIVERSITY lecturer and prominent anti-Zionist activist Dr. Uri Davis was arrested on arrival in Israel on May 24th. His arrest is part of a systematic campaign of harassment and repression directed against opponents of Israeli government policy.

The current wave of repression reached new heights not only in the occupied territories with the closure of Bir Zeit University and widespread arrests and interrogations, but has spread also to the 500,000 Palestinians who live inside the pre-1967 borders of Israel. It has focussed mainly on the students and intellectuals who constitute part of the Palestinian national movement in Israel. In the last few weeks around 20 activists in the villages and universities were arrested. Many are still detained today.

The peace treaty with Egypt and the continued repressiveness of the government has led to an upsurge of (non-violent) opposition in support of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israeli authorities are particularly anxious about plans to publish a Palestinian nationalist newspaper. Such publication is of course perfectly legal under Israeli law. To prevent the paper from appearing the authorities are using methods of intimidation and criminalisation by alleging contact between the internal opposition and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Dr. Davis's arrest must be seen against this background of resurgent militancy among Palestinians inside Israel. He is accused of 'contact with an enemy agent'. This is a charge which can effectively be used to make any contact with a Palestinian a criminal offence.

In three court appearances police failed to produce any evidence against Uri Davis. On June 7th, he was released on bail. His passport has been confiscated for one month.

Davis, who is Jewish and holds dual Israeli-British citizenship, was held in a cell six feet by six feet, with the light on 24 hours. He was allowed no exercise, no washing facilities or clean clothes, no books or newspapers. After his release he stated that there are over 3000 political prisoners in Israeli jails, held under conditions far worse than the ones he personally experienced.

For more information contact:

The Uri Davis Defence Committee, c/o Richard Linley, Interdisciplinary Human Studies, University of Bradford (Bradford 33466, ext. 481 or 561);

Committee Against Political Repression in Palestine, P.S.C., Box 98, c/o Rising Free Bookshop, 182 Upper Street, London N. 1.

**NO TORY  
SELLOUT IN  
ZIMBABWE**  
ASSEMBLE: 2.30 PM SMITHFIELDS MARKET  
**SATURDAY JUNE 30**  
MARCH VIA FLEET STREET & RHODESIA HOUSE  
TO TRAFALGAR SQUARE RALLY AT 4 PM



## a letter from Denmark

Dear Big Flame,

In Denmark, as in the other countries of Europe, there is an economic crisis. The worst hit by the crisis are the traditionally weak sections of the working class — old workers, non-unionised workers and women. At present we have a wages' freeze and large cuts in public sector spending.

I am a student and for us the situation is bad — the value of our grants is constantly declining and the interest rates on the loans we have to get from banks to pay for our education are sky high. So many students are forced to take jobs — and there is always the danger that we act as a "scab" labour force and undermine union organisation. Where I work, the students have got together with the regular workers and it was decided that the students, who are less worried about getting the sack, would stop work over a health and safety issue — the wearing of ear-muffs in a 90 decibel work situation. We were able to win the demand for all workers. But this was an exceptional case and usually the presence of students weakens shop-floor organisation.

write on



I would like to know how students in England, who work in the holidays, cope with the problem. How do they make sure that antagonisms don't crop up with the full-time workers they are working with? How are we going to set about building unity between the employed, the unemployed and students who work during the vacations?

Finn M. Sommer, Roskilde, Denmark.

## Time for a rethink

Dear Big Flame,

At a time when a lot of the left is hanging out its "Business as usual" signs and waiting for the "inevitable anti-Tory upsurge" it was good to see some fresh thinking on the way ahead.

It should be obvious to a jelly-fish that 1979 is not 1970. Mrs Thatcher may be further right than Mr Heath, but she won't be a push-over for all that. In any case, we need to be thinking further ahead than that. If we can't produce a socialist alternative, in 1984 we could be faced with the choice between the Tories and another Labour Government like Wilson's or Callaghan's.

What we need now is a discussion about how the socialist movement is going to go about forming an organisation which not only appeals to feminists, industrial militants and black people, but also proves irresistible to sections of the Labour and Communist Parties. Let's not rush into instant regroupments, but let's be clear about the kind of organisation we need to create over the next decade.

Yours S. Amsden, Hull.

## Question of Viability

Dear Big Flame,

While we agree with Jane Dobson (letters, June BF) when she says we must campaign for safe and legal abortion, we do not think the viability argument can be ignored. 'The foetus that cried' raises inescapable issues. As socialists we must never give the impression that we are unconcerned about questions of life and death. If we did, we would concede to the anti-abortionists their claimed monopoly of concern for life. We must confront the 'abortion is murder' charge and must conclusively refute it. This cannot be done without focusing on viability.

This problem was highlighted for us when we watched a friend's seven week premature daughter struggle to retain life on machines that gave her breath and food. It made us realise how morally irrelevant and inherently trivial was the difference between one life support system (the mother's body) and another (machines). In either case, what we have is a dependent human being.

We believe a woman should have the right to control her own body. This means that she should have the right to terminate her pregnancy at any time. But this is not the same as de-

manding abortion at any time. The connection between a woman's right to control her own body and her right to have an abortion is this: a pregnant woman can exercise her right to control her own body, up to a point in time, only if she has access to abortion. Once the foetus is viable, however, this is no longer true. When a 32 weeks pregnant woman (for example) wants to terminate her pregnancy, she should have a further option — that of giving birth prematurely.

It follows that woman's right to control her own body cannot be used to justify the abortion of a viable foetus. It can only justify her right to terminate her pregnancy whenever she chooses. But termination of pregnancy is not the same as abortion. Viability is so central to the problem precisely because it is the point at which a second mode of terminating pregnancy arises, while prior to viability there is only one such mode. The fact the moment of viability relates 'nature' to the state of medical technology does not affect the issue.

This is not academic debating, because NAC has raised the issue in the socialist movement by its resolution 'abortion on demand to term'. The resolution has caused NAC to lose a lot of support among socialists and feminists — and would prove totally unacceptable to the majority of people, were it more widely known. It is not just illogical to ignore or minimise the question of viability: it is also politically futile. The 'to term' demand is also futile because it is inconceivable that it will ever be met. It is abstract, a mere slogan. All it does is take attention away from the crucial issue — the need for early, safe abortion on demand.

'A woman's right to choose' is a politically powerful demand because it raises the issue of abortion in a much wider context. This context involves choices concerning contraception, sexuality, health care, and the choice to actually have children. Let us not allow the 'abortion to term' position to debase this demand!

In solidarity,  
Jane Storr, Max Farrar,  
Terri Wragg, George Hardy  
(Leeds)

## What unity?

Dear Comrades,

In the June issue of Big Flame you announce that your organisation has signed a unity document "against the bosses Europe". In the spirit of that slogan, Provisional Sinn Fein (a fellow-signatory) was calling for an outright boycott of the EEC Direct Elections.

In Britain, the Labour Party was campaigning for votes on the basis of trying to make the best of the EEC for "this country" (as well as making empty threats to 'reconsider Britain's membership'). Big Flame apparently was advocating that the British working class give its votes to Labour Party candidates on much the same basis as that Party's campaign: i.e. that there is little prospect of Britain withdrawing from the EEC in the near future. For you to say that — and no more — is to imply that the working class does in fact have a stake in who "represents" it in the institutions of the international bourgeoisie. How do you reconcile your support for Labour candidates with the Provos' call for a boycott (ever where McAliskey was running)? With such a fundamental difference in political approach, what does it mean for both you and the Provos to sign a common unity document?

Incredulously yours,  
L. (London)

Ed's Reply. We called for a Labour vote in the European elections as a position consistent with calling for a Labour vote in the General Election. We are opposed to the E'EC' and support British withdrawal from it — but in the meantime, we think the fewer Tories elected the better. We do not accept a chauvinist 'Europe does not matter attitude. What we signed with Sinn Fein was a political programme which left tactical questions like what to do in the elections up to the groups that signed it. By the way, why do you support an abstentionist position in this country and criticise Sinn Fein for advocating a boycott of the elections.

# How men get shaped



## Stereotyped thoughts

Dear Big Flame,

I'm sure you'll have plenty of letters disagreeing with Paul Thompson's comments (June) about the 'Men's Movement' article in the May paper. But here's one just in case.

Paul appears to claim, in the first part of his letter, that the May BF concentrated on the 'men's movement' at the expense of the issues of 'male sexuality generally'. I think he's wrong on two counts. First, the point of fact: the original article *did* deal with the issues, precisely by means of discussing what people were thinking, feeling and doing in relation to them. You can't discuss people's problems without mentioning the people! Second, the political point: it isn't just male sexuality that socialist men should be concerned about; it's the whole of the stereotyped male personality. And that's just what May BF said: by missing the point Paul proves how relevant it is.

But the second part of his letter is worse: he complains that the article accepted some weaker points of the men's movement, and then goes on to defend rationality, toughness and emotional self-control. What he doesn't appear to realise is that men who are trying to fight sexism (including their own) are concerned with a specific stereotype (or group of stereotypes) of what constitutes rationality, toughness and so on, and of what men ought to be. That (group of) stereotype(s) involves counterposing 'rationality' to feelings, involves putting 'toughness' on a pedestal at the expense of caring about other people, encourages being 'unemotional' by the stiff upper lip image and the myth that big boys don't cry. The whole point of anti-sexist politics for men is that this approach deforms men as well as encouraging them to brutal-

ise others (both women and men) And on each count the standard male stereotype is counter-productive in the struggle for socialism. That's why the issues raised by the 'men's movement' are so important; that's why it's so sad to see a letter like Paul's.

Comradely,  
Chris Marshall (Norwich BF)

## More Discussions needed

Dear Big Flame,

I'm glad that one person, at least, took the trouble to respond to the article on the Men's Movement — which we optimistically thought was "Worth Talking About" in the May issues of Big Flame. I agree with Paul Thompson (letters, June BF) that there is a danger of restricting the discussion of male sexuality by hinging the article on the Men's Movement, and that the article will be obscure to many people. One problem however, is that Big Flame has never really discussed male sexuality before in public, and so the Conference of men's groups was a convenient way of trying to start some discussion. The other problem is that, unfortunately, Big Flame is not a mass paper, and so one writes in the knowledge that it is mainly leftists who read the paper, and they should be able to relate to these sorts of issues.

But I disagree with some

of Paul's remarks about toughness, rationality and Leninism. More precisely, I disagree with the tone of the remarks. The tone smacks of the rancour, dogmatism and coldness which characterises tough Leninists — and which does a disservice both to Paul and to Big Flame's variety of Leninism.

He should have noticed that I referred to "orthodox Leninism" in my (admittedly too brief and dismissive) reference to Leninism. I consider myself a sort of Leninist, and a sort of Libertarian, and I think that the insights of sexual, politics, when firmly attached to revolutionary socialist activity, provide a way of bridging the gap between these usually hostile camps.

We could have an obscure discussion about whether as Paul suggests rationality is the core of socialist politics. I think that it is a mistake to rigidly separate reason from emotion, and to counterpose rational ("scientific"?) socialism from the more spiritual ("Utopian"?) strand in our history. Equally, I think that the self-control and resilience that are needed to go on struggling should not be separated from the investigation and expression of our softer, emotional characteristics.

I hope more people will write in with their views on these issues, since there is so much to try and sort out.  
Solidarity, Paul Holt.

## Personal Life

Dear Big Flame,

I agree with Paul Thompson (letters, Big Flame June '79) that an article on male sexuality would have been of more general interest than your page on the men's movement. I know dozens of men — working class and middle class — who are in a Tiz-waz over sex. The women's movement has thrown them into doubt about their own sexual role.

It's a pity it's taken Big Flame so long to deal with these questions — in public, anyway. They were very early in our history a subject for informal debate, but it's taken the rise of the men's movement to bring them into the pages of our newspaper.

Paul's right to say that "rationality....doesn't have to be an excuse for no feelings and no fun" but in practice it is just that most of the time in most Leninist organisations. Big Flame prides itself on its sensitivity towards these questions, it might be interesting to ask ourselves again, what is it if 'socialist rationality' which seems constantly to downgrade the personal to a kind of trivial, petty bourgeois obsession?

Is it simply that socialism owes a bit too much to the ideas and attitudes of the men, who have always led the labour movement?

Yours, P. Bateson,  
Liverpool.

## Who, Leeds?

Dear Big Flame,

Congratulations on the new paper — a great improvement. But most praise is reserved for the three pages in the last issue with all those words crossed out. Some will think this was incompetence. But I realise that it was done deliberately to incite the masses to join the editorial collective to improve the look of the paper.

## Worries about violence

Dear Big Flame,

I had just sold a copy of Big Flame in the office where I work. The buyer came rushing back to me. 'This is disgusting', he said. He was talking about an item in your 'Seeing Red' column in BF 75, particularly the quote from *Republican News*, where a chocolate box was trampled 'into the shape of the late unlamented Airey Neave'.

This led onto a discussion about Ireland and the Provisionals' military tactics. I trotted out the 'acceptable' arguments of 'Troops Out', support for all those fighting British imperialism, the necessity for a 32 county solution, etc. But it was not only that I

This Super Ploy has had the desired result. One of our members — who describes himself as a proof-reading terrorist — will be joining the collective to contribute a unique skill to Big Flame: the ability to spell.

I hope the other Ploy also bears fruit. You are obviously correct to continue cutting out the black lines with blunt kitchen scissors. Soon a layout fetishist will be so incensed by all those ragged edges that she will decide to come and help out. Unless she decides to stab you all with the same blunt kitchen scissors.

Solidarity,  
Red Graphic, Leeds

was talking with someone from Ireland that made my arguments seem insufficient. Is it okay for cynical lefties to dismiss people's worries about the violence involved in political struggle by treating incidents like these as jokes? Does the end always justify the means? The means of the class struggle also define what sort of society and human relationships we are fighting for. I am not arguing for pacifism. But I am saying that we must be able to criticise the military tactics (or strategy) of the Provisionals, like those of any struggle. And not just on the grounds that they are 'counterproductive'.

John Warrington  
Liverpool

17-71

APOL-5  
£28-30

BIG FLAME

SUMMER SCHOOL

JULY 28TH. TO AUGUST 4TH.  
One week of fun, frolic and work-shops on the theme of "SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVES"

BOOK NOW TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

Forms from 31 Villa Road London SW19.



# FEMINISM AND ORGANISATION: Questions are The Personal does matter as important as Answers

WHAT LESSONS have we learned in the Women's Movement and in the left groups over the last decade? Is it possible for a feminist to stay in a Leninist style group at present? Is it enough to work locally or do we need national organisation?

These are the questions three women ask in the pamphlet, *'Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism'*, by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright. Mostly I shall discuss Sheila's contribution — partly because it is the longest, but also because I come from many of the same places — the student left of the 1960s into the International Socialists, and out again.

It is hard to write impressions without doing a disservice to Sheila Rowbotham's careful sorting of ideas. I liked her style — sometimes allegorical, sometimes quite chatty, often intense or funny. It's a style suited to the kind of observations the women's movement has taught us to value — based on subjective impressions but with a truth going beyond that. Sheila writes down the kind of insights that women swap in intimate situations after left meetings but wouldn't dream of raising at the meetings themselves.

## THE LONELY MILITANT

Her main point is that personal and organisational style matters. It matters *how* we do things, how we relate to each other, whether we are competitive, aggressive, and interminably correct, or supportive, tentative, and willing to listen and learn.

She has some brilliant descriptions — I could fill in names and occasions myself — of the behaviour of self-styled revolutionaries:

*'This individual militant appears as a lonely character without ties, bereft of domestic emotions, who is hard, self-contained, controlled, without the time or ability to express loving passion, who cannot pause to nurture and for whom friendship is a diversion.'* (p. 35.)

About leadership she says:

*'Even if it gets a bit hot at the top now and then there is a loophole. The members — poor old things, tramping around getting sore feet on their paper sales up and down all those concrete council flat steps, getting calloused hands lassoing elusive 'contacts' over the balconies. Well they have a tendency to get routinised. Not the leadership. It is up to the leadership to spot when this is happening and leap out towards 'the class' to knock the members into shape. Whoosh — Superman.'* (pp. 38-9.)



These are not just niceties. They affect our possibility of creating socialism, of winning people to our vision. It also, she argues, makes real democracy impossible, as leaders stay on top and criticism, new insights or initiatives are stifled, especially if they come from traditionally powerless sections, like women.

But is what Sheila describes as a problem of Leninism really specific to 'Leninist' organisations, or is it a problem of most organisations in our 'patriarchal' society — trade unions, clubs, etc.?

Certainly the ways in which men and women relate (or fail to relate) in left groups mirrors what goes on elsewhere. I have experienced them in student groups and work settings as much as in the old IS.

But student gatherings and school staff rooms are not aiming to change society. Sheila argues that the organs of change must 'prefigure' the values they are aiming for. She draws on historical examples of other traditions in the workers' movement as well as in the women's movement to conclude that Leninism fails to do this. It fails to confront behaviour that is alienating and oppressive and its emphasis on 'cadres' and 'leaders' actually encourages elitism, competitiveness and arrogance and leads to passivity among ordinary members. The notion of party conveyed by Leninism is too narrow, too task-oriented, and too undemocratic.

She notes sadly that we cannot assume that the democratic centralist form is neutral when in every historical example the democracy has been eroded to leave a more centralised leadership. Though here I think the Trotskyist Left does in fact have a better record than the CP.

The problem of democracy is important for all of us (it was on this issue, among others, that I was expelled from IS). Sheila does not attempt to answer, but she is, I think, too optimistic about democracy in the women's movement and the libertarian left.

## WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

It is true that there is more awareness of some anti-democratic behaviour — leaders, rigged agendas, star speakers, intimidating styles. But the women's movement has some very undemocratic processes, too — cliques of keen organisers ('planning committees') taking political decisions, non-published agendas so you never know if something important is about to come up, an atmosphere of 'sisterliness' which seems to include everyone but you and a terror of expressing strong disagreements for fear of being labelled 'left politico', 'masculine', 'aggressive'. And there *are* conflicts which are aggressive and bitter, as at the last Woman's Liberation conference. Although there are no 'factions', so no-one can be the losing side, I sometimes feel we are all losers in these situations.

## NO DECISIONS

Many women in the socialist feminist current feel frustrated, too, by nothing ever being decided — each year we seem to go through the same debates such as those on the structure of the conference. It's partly the problem of being a new movement. We have to keep reliving our experience — and the lessons one group of women learned have to be re-experienced and learned by another. There seems to be little carry over. Maybe we lack the necessary national link-ups. We learn things slowly, haphazardly, and have so little sense of our own history. This is why theorizing is so difficult.

It worries me considerably that we move so slowly because I am

*In this issue we begin a discussion on 'Beyond the Fragments' a book by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright which uses the experience of the Women's Movement to ask questions about the revolutionary organisations and their functioning.*

*We will carry more contributions on 'Beyond the Fragments' in future issues of Big Flame. Contributions are very welcome — they should not exceed 800 words and should arrive two weeks before the layout date. 'Beyond the Fragments' is published by the Islington and Tyneside Socialist Centres and is available from good bookshops at £1.30.*

committed to revolution, not reformism, I can feel the pressures of economic and social crisis affecting me — especially as a woman — and I feel I want to convince people in the space we have left.

One of the other questions that worries me and other women in my socialist feminist group is the question of class. Sheila suggests that different oppressed groups have different insights and contributions to the revolutionary process. But she doesn't assess their roles in relation to the role of the working class. The hoary old question, 'why the working class?', the subject of so many IS educationals, is still relevant. Or is this only my residual Leninism popping up? One central lesson learned in IS which still has meaning is to trust the working class itself, not its self-styled leaders, nor any other group that substitutes itself for it.

## THE WORKING CLASS

This stems from the basic Marxist notion that the working class is the only really revolutionary class. So no political group that abandons this idea can ever be really trusted. It is this that creates a fundamental difference between the Communist Party with its history and its current policy of class alliances and the revolutionary left.



worth talking about

It is a realisation of the importance of the working class that makes many socialist feminists in my group want to see more working class women active in the movement. We know that unless the working class fights for socialism then feminism is a lost cause. We know, too, that unless feminist ideas are fought for in the working class then socialism will not be won — not so much because the class will be divided as because workers, men and women, will not have the liberating aims held out for which they can be inspired to fight.

It is here that the women's movement has vital lessons for all those struggling to change society and themselves. As Sheila Rowbotham says:

*'The problem of how people can overcome the passivity, self-hatred and lack of trust which is peculiar to modern capitalism is crucial for making a socialist movement.'*

Celia Burgess  
Hackney Socialist Feminist  
Group & International  
Socialist Alliance (ISA)

In political debates, it is usually the case that there is an unwritten agreement between those on either side of the argument that their most vitriolic anger will be directed at anyone who tries to occupy a middle position. It's as if such a middle position, scornfully called a 'compromise', is experienced as a psychological threat by those on either extreme of the debate. The contributors to *'Beyond the Fragments'* have courageously occupied the middle ground in the debate on revolutionary organisation and it is a safe prediction that much critical venom will be directed at them both from the revolutionary groups who will accuse them of 'anti-organisationism' and many of the unaligned left who will accuse them of being 'soft on Leninism'.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DOUBT

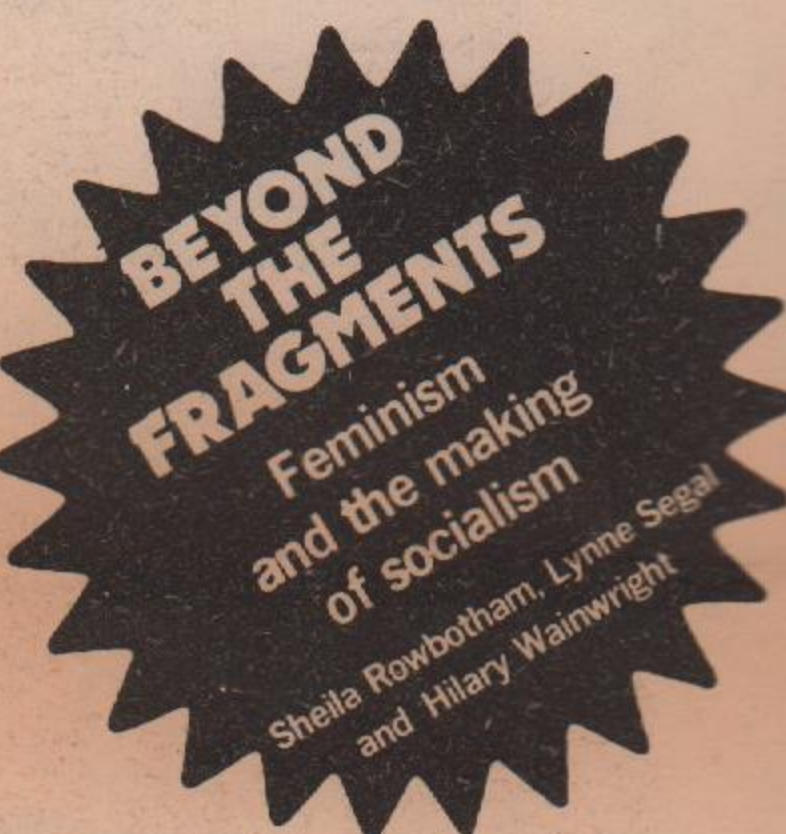
*'Beyond the Fragments'* is a valuable pamphlet not only because of its 'middle' position on organisation, but more importantly because it includes the expression of political doubt — another taboo on the revolutionary left. No doubt, there will be many that will feel threatened by reading a pamphlet in which the contributors admit to not knowing some of the answers and some of the solutions. The fact is that we are living in a period of very rapid social, political, and economic change — to try and cope with this situation dogmatists on the left clutch more and more desperately to theories developed twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. The more the theory proves itself to be inadequate, the louder they shout it from the roof-tops. The more difficult course to take is to shed the dogma and to begin the task of making sense of our own reality. As Sheila Rowbotham says: 'It's frightening to set off on new journeys without any maps. Perhaps the hardest bit is deciding what to hang on to and what to shed' (p. 15). Even if what we are saying seems to be relevant there is always the nagging fear that it is no business of mere mortals like us to question the writings of Marx, Lenin, Mao, etc., who after all *made* revolutions.

power — which will often be a violent, brutal business.

## THE DANGERS OF WRITING IN THE FIRST PERSON

Two of the three contributions, Lynne Segal's and Sheila Rowbotham's, are very clearly auto-biographical and there is always the danger that a writer writing about her or his own experiences will tend to overestimate the universality of the experience. Sheila Rowbotham writes about leaving the Socialist Workers Party (then the International Socialists) in the same 'cosmic' way that a previous generation wrote about leaving the Communist Party in 1956 over the Soviet invasion of Hungary. No doubt many comrades have been profoundly damaged by what happened to them in the SWP, but their hurt is not on the same scale as the resignations from the CP in 1956 — which represented a whole generation of intellectuals belatedly coming to terms with Stalinism. With the SWP, the hopes and the disillusionment were of a smaller magnitude.

In any case, it is unclear how strong a point Rowbotham is making about the degeneration of the SWP. She may be saying that we



must all learn from what happened to the SWP, to make sure that it doesn't happen again (a point I agree with), or she may be saying that it is inevitable that all revolutionary organisations degenerate the way the SWP did (a point I don't agree with). Those of us who remained outside never had any illusions about the undemocratic nature of the SWP. Thus we were never very disillusioned by its 'progress'.

## APPEAL TO THE RANK & FILE

Those of us in revolutionary organisations tend to be ground down by an endless round of tasks. To make things easier for ourselves (and leaderships encourage this, since they prefer an unthinking rank and file) we tend to dismiss from our minds some of the thornier problems of revolutionary organisation. Reading *'Beyond the Fragments'* reminds us of these thorny problems, in particular, it reminded me that building a revolutionary organisation is always a *gamble* — in the sense that there is always the risk of an undemocratic, authoritarian degeneration. And all of us in organisations need to be constantly reminded of this possibility.

## A SEMINAL BOOK

I hope that the discussion around *'Beyond the Fragments'* does not become polarised on anti-organisation and pro-organisation lines. It has the potential of beginning a dialogue between comrades who are unaligned but who realise the difficulties their choice brings them and comrades in organisations who realise that in many cases organisations will not provide the right answers — not even ask the right questions. If *'Beyond the Fragments'* is able to help this dialogue begin it will more than justify the claim made on the back cover that it is 'an important book'.

Peter Anderson  
Coventry Big Flame



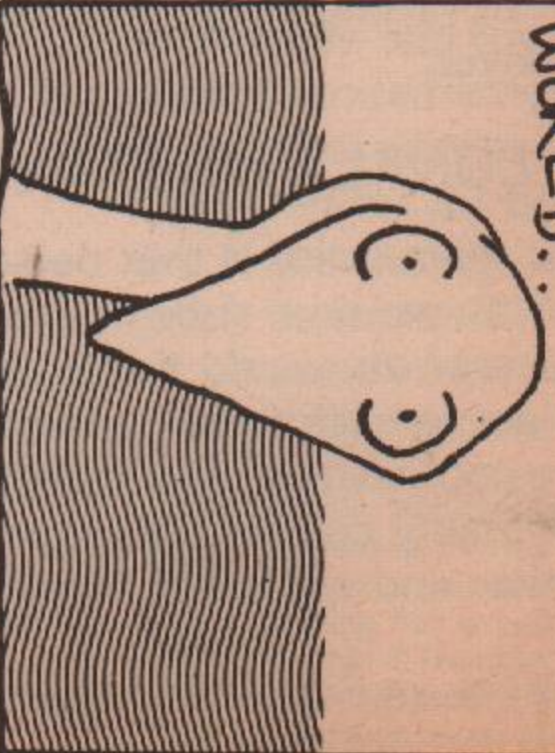
THE EGG... SYMBOL OF A NEW BEGINNING -



ITS OCCUPANT EMERGING IN A BACKWARD SORT OF WAY



OPENING UNPREJUDICED EYES ON A STRANGE WORLD..



AND SO THE FIRST IN WHAT IS TO BE A LONG LINE OF INCREDIBLY STUPID QUESTIONS



BROTHER GOOSE HE WANTS TO KNOW THE ANSWER

IT WILL RESTORE THE WEALTH TO THOSE FROM WHOM IT HAS BEEN CRUELLY TAKEN!

IT WILL ENCOURAGE FREEDOM OF CHOICE

I THINK I'LL CHOOSE THE ROLLS - ROYCE

IT WILL STIMULATE COMPETITION

AND REWARD MERIT

SO WHY DOES THE CABINET INCLUDE FIVE LAND OWNERS WITH INHERITED TITLES?

\*Another dumb Question. Ed.

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

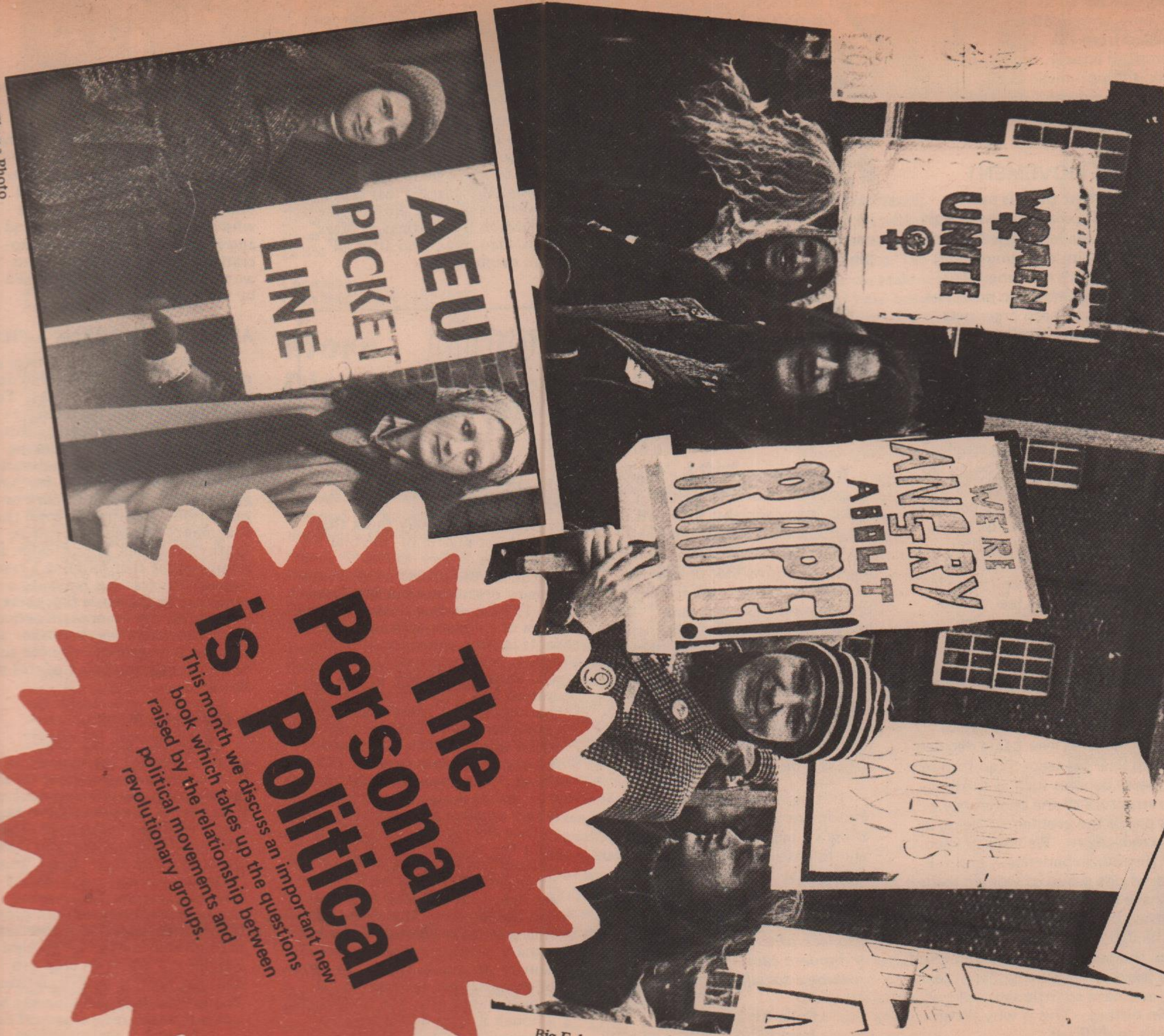
WHO'S TALKING ABOUT SENSE? I'M TALKING ABOUT REVENGE!



# Big Flame

No. 76 July 1979 15p.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE  
Music For Socialism: Inside the Company - Industrial Information; Immigration in Europe; Irish Solidarity - building a movement. And lots more.



The Personal is Political

This month we discuss an important new book which takes up the questions raised by the relationship between political movements and revolutionary groups.

Big Flame Photo

Big Flame Photo