

Big Flame

for Socialism

15p.

Paper of the revolutionary socialist organisation, Big Flame.

Inside

Immigration controls — racism in action. Turn to page 12.

Otelo de Carvalho talks about his commitment to popular power in Portugal Centre pages.

Racist Laws: Tories Carry On from where Labour Left Off

The new government immigration restrictions are directed against black people, abroad and in Britain. Harassing the so-called illegal immigrants now occupies an increasing amount of police time in the major cities. These latest Tory controls will reinforce the racists in blue who would operate forcible repatriation if they were given half a chance.

NO CUTS!

Carlos Augusto(I.F.L.)

The news is spreading. More and more people are seeing through the Tories' policies. Understanding that the economic mumbo-jumbo about 'inflation', 'money supply' and 'incentives' conceals a massive transfer of wealth and power from one class to another through the cuts in public spending.

Understanding that spending on the welfare state is a tax on the rich in favour of the working class; while cutting back school meals, housing and hospitals favours the rich who are already benefitting from the cuts in income tax.

CUTS KILL

- But understanding isn't enough. The Tories' policies have to be defeated before:
- o unemployment soars to 2...3 millions
 - o before thousands of old people are killed by a winter without adequate heating
 - o before the old diseases return because our children are doing without school meals and milk
 - o before infant and mother mortality rises because of the closure of ante-natal clinics.

The cuts aren't only an inconvenience, they're a killer.

WARNING

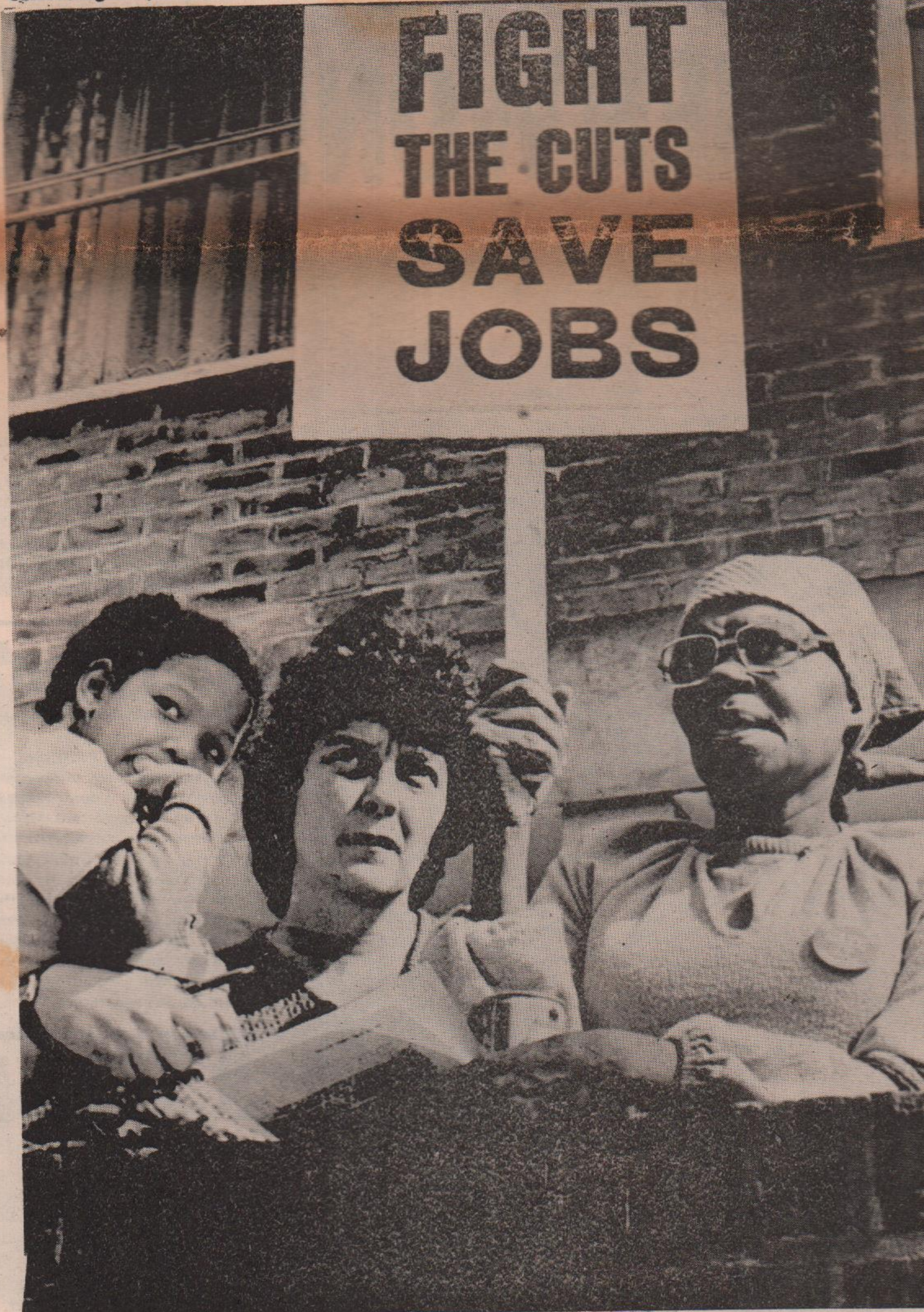
On its own, the November 28th demonstration won't change the Government's mind. But it gives a clear warning to Thatcher of the growing scale of the total opposition to the Tories' plans. November 28th underlines the need for a fight against the cuts on a broad nationwide front. We must make sure that the line of that front runs through every hospital, housing estate, dole office and school in the country.

FIGHT

Everyone who stands to lose from the cuts must link up into an effective fighting force in every area. Every trades council should set up its cuts committee. But such committees must bring together the organised power of the trade unions with the unemployed and organisations of women, black people, school students and the political organisations of the working class.

The example to follow is St. Benedicts, Tooting, where the nursing and ancillary staff have occupied the hospital against closure.

Give them your public support on November 28th. And then take the fight back home. If the Nicaraguans could get rid of Somoza, we can get rid of the cuts.



BANS

- The new controls will
- keep out the husbands and fiancés of women not born in this country, regardless of whether they are British passport holders (unless the women were born abroad to parents on government service).
 - Children under 18 will only be admitted if unmarried, while elderly dependents will be subject to even harsher tests. They will have to prove that they have "a standard of living below that of their own country".
 - Dependents over 18 but not classed as elderly will, in effect, be barred from entering Britain.
 - The Tories have also declared war on overseas students, by more than doubling their fees and refusing any extensions to stay after initial courses have been completed.

Even black business people do not escape the net. A minimum investment of £100,000 is now needed to qualify for residence.

But even if you get through all this and are finally allowed into the country the harassment doesn't end. One important function of the immigration laws is to provide justification for harassment, arrest, detention, deportation of any black person once they have settled here, on the grounds of rooting out so-called illegal immigrants.

QUOTA

- The Tory manifesto lists several other possible changes:
- A new British Nationality Act to "remove some of the possible sources of future immigration"
 - Severe restrictions on work permitless employment
 - Ending the practice of allowing permanent settlement of people admitted on a temporary basis since January 1973.
 - A compulsory register to be introduced for wives and children in the Indian sub-continent of men in the UK. Any names not entered on the register within a year would not be entitled to entry.
 - An immigration quota, ie a maximum figure to be set by the government year by year for all immigration from outside the EEC.
 - Intensified police action against illegal immigrants and overstayers (in effect this means intensified police action against all black people — since all could be seen as potential suspects).

FIGHT

A massive campaign has been launched against the present and proposed immigration laws. It is supported by all the major black organisations as well as many white anti-racist bodies. The demonstration called for 25th November should bring home the message loud and clear that black people in Britain are here to stay and here to fight.

(Contd. on page 12)

END ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

BRITISH JUSTICE, without equal in the world. Just so: without equal for inconsistency and class bias, as events in the Palace and Huyton underline.

Sir — sorry, plain Mr. — Anthony Blunt proves that blood is thicker than water in the upper classes. Nobody knows who knew what he had done at the time, but we do know now that the confessed "traitor" remained in Her Majesty's service from 1964 for fifteen years. Not quietly dismissed or asked to go into voluntary exile, but retained within the Royal retinue.

EMBARRASSED

The obvious question is about the powers of the unknown, irresponsible people who run the security services, apparently without reference even to the prime minister. This may not be a particularly pressing question for socialists, already sceptical about the supposed democracy we live under, but it is assuredly an embarrassment to the politicians.

The other question is about justice. Blunt confesses, receives a pardon for the information he provides and, to save faces all round, is allowed to live as if nothing had ever happened. George Blake was less fortunate. He confessed to having handed over naval secrets to the Russians, for £3,000, and was sent down for 21 years. But then there weren't the same mitigating circumstances in Blake's favour. He hadn't been brought up and educated alongside our rulers, nor could he count on friends in the upper echelons of

the security services. In protecting Blunt, the powers that be were protecting themselves.

CERTAIN

And that is the key to the Blair Peach and Jimmy Kelly cases too. In both cases, it is established that police action was the cause of death.

In the Kelly case, the identities of the arresting officers are known to the police. While there cannot be equal certainty about the identity of the killers of Blair Peach, the range of possible culprits is limited to a section of the special patrol group.

CONSPIRED

If these were ordinary cases of murder and this much were known about the assailants, charges would have been laid and arrests made. As it is, the police have decided not to prosecute over Peach's death and six months after James Kelly died in Huyton, and three months after the internal police enquiry began, nobody has been arrested and it would be surprising if they ever were.

In Britain, justice is a matter of who you are and whom you know. The security services, probably the Queen, the Special Patrol Group and K-Division of Merseyside Police have all conspired to conceal the identity of lawbreakers. But they need not fear prosecution.

The ironic part about the Blunt affair is that it occurred because in the United States there is a Freedom of Information Act which gives US citizens a right of access to information that in

this country would remain classified under the Official Secrets Act. That Blunt was the fourth man has been public knowledge in the States for a good while.

And surprise, surprise, the Government has announced that it will introduce in the next session of Parliament a Bill to replace the Official Secrets Act, which they call the 'Protection of Information Bill' — in fact, a better name would be the Suppression of Information Bill. Already the Labour MP for Lewisham has rightly called the Bill "the most serious long-term threat to freedom of expression in the United Kingdom this century."

And the Campaign for Press Freedom has launched an attack against the Bill. Revolutionaries may see this as only an issue of civil liberties — but then civil liberties can be the difference between life and death.

Zimbabwe

The original Anglo-American plan of incorporating the Patriotic Front (PF) has been pushed through by a combination of Tory bluff (of recognising Muzorewa) and the Rhodesia/South Africa war machine. Mozambique, Zambia and Angola were bombed and raided, the Zambian transport links were cut, a rebel army infiltrated Mozambique, and the IMF put their usual conditions on Tanzania's request for loans. The PF could not face a military stalemate in which their bases might eventually be withdrawn. The situation might have been different had more guerrillas entered from Zambia earlier in the war. When

the time came for Lord Carrington to call the guerrillas' bluff, he got only token opposition from Labour MPs bargaining for more time. After all, Dr Owen had helped design the strategy.

But the West cannot be sure it has stabilised Zimbabwe. The war will continue past the end of the conference, and the ceasefire will probably be broken during the run up to elections. If the PF win a clear majority of seats, South Africa may intervene to support a coup by the whites. If the PF lose badly (if Britain succeeds in manipulating the elections, or if ZAPU and ZANU split), then the guerrillas may begin again, in much more difficult conditions. More like, the PF will gain some power in the election, but not enough to really begin to dismatle capitalism in Zimbabwe. If they follow the agreed constitution, then whites (3% of the population) have 20% of the MPs for the next seven years, at least. Compensation is to be paid for any land that is nationalised. The West has made vague promises, which could be withdrawn, of a fund to pay for this. If the PF disregard the constitution, we can expect the Commonwealth 'observers' and 'monitoring force' to come back in strength. Britain with years of experience using the army to make 'peace' in Northern Ireland, may try the old game again.

Some people may feel that with the compromise reached in London, solidarity work can die down again. We believe that one reason the PF had to compromise was the failure of anti-imperialists to build a mass opposition to British policy. The November 11 demo, called by ZECC, attracted only about 3,000 people. But in a limited way, ZECC has managed to develop co-operation between black and white socialists and feminists, and we want this work to continue. In the immediate future the priority is for clear information about the changing situation

THESE WOMEN WON!



DRAFTEX, COVENTRY

In last month's Big Flame we reported on the strike of 100 women at the Draftex plant in Coventry. The women have now gone back to work — having won an improved offer from management.

An important support for the strike were the many visits made to the picket line from workers in

women's groups, from the T&G branch of unemployed women. 'We lived in a closed community at work before; you don't know about other sorts of people. But they've been marvellous coming down here, students and activists'.

The women also went to a women's day school in Coventry and were amazed at the many different things people were involved in. 'It's opened your eyes to being good citizens. I mean, what do we do? It's the 6 o'clock slump in front of the telly'.

The hard core of the picket line were mostly older women, as the younger girls didn't have much experience of the union. 'You're never too old to learn' they said over and over, as they talked about visits to factories, what to do with the kids, the abortion campaign, unemployment, everything under the sun.

The first thing the Draftex women did when they went back to work was put forward nominations for their union branch. They are adamant that since they are the majority of shop-floor members, there is no reason that they should not control the branch — especially as the men gave them little support during their strike.

Nazi Men's Movement

SEXUALITY AND FASCISM — Big Flame have reprinted this pamphlet because we think it contributes to discussion on this important issue. The three documents contained are talks given at a Big Flame Day School. The first on 'Women in Nazi Germany'; the second on 'Men and Fascism'; the third on 'Women and the National Front'.

The reprinting of *Sexuality and Fascism* is particularly appropriate at the moment, when we consider the battles raging inside the National Front just now.

The political recriminations following the failure of their electoral strategy are taking a very reactionary, sexist form. Secondly, the unashamed "sexual discrimination" of the state with regard to female immigrants not being allowed to bring in male fiancés and husbands shows how the state can lay the ground for fascist ideas of Race, Nation, and Sexuality.

Sexuality and Fascism — 25p from left bookshops or 35p (including postage) from 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

paper money

This month's total was £53.50, which includes £20 from a South London Member to celebrate the end of the Current editor's turn of office, £30 from a Coventry member, £2.25 from a Hemel sympathiser and £1 from a Preston member. There's also a new standing order donation for £2.00 from TJE. This brings to £44.50 the total of standing order donations every month. This is the best way for us to receive donations — regularly.

Donations to Newspaper Fund, 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7. Standing orders to Big Flame Newspaper, Lloyds Bank,

Water St., Liverpool. Code: 30-95 11. Acct. No. 0008738.

OK, so it's Christmas time — time for the yearly clean-up before visiting the folks. The trip to the launderette — but what powder to use? 'All powders are the same you say. And how many ads have you watched? Come off it, Persil is whiter (and Bold bolder) and they give away free vouchers that could allow comrades who work on the paper to come up to Liverpool by train. And we're sick of coaches. So, if you've forgotten to send us a Christmas card — rush it with Persil vouchers, tax rebates and your love.

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

Deadlines

This month was disastrous for deadlines — all articles arrived late — some are still in the post. Late articles mean that we are still at it in the early hours of Monday morning.

January Big Flame is out Friday January 11th. Features must be here by December 28th and news items by Thursday 3rd January — if nothing happens in your town over the New Year, invent it!

STAND BY



Lorry drivers at Liverpool Docks last Winter – "Without secondary picketing we'd never have got anywhere."

THE PICKET LINE

The incident at the Direct Works picket in Manchester is a direct result of the atmosphere created by the forthcoming Tory proposals to change the laws on picketing. By announcing that they are going to change the law, the Tories have encouraged employers to have a go at pickets. As it stands now, the law on picketing is vague – Tory proposals will limit by law the numbers allowed on pickets and make 'secondary' picketing illegal. So, for instance, lorry drivers will only be allowed to picket their lorry depot and not places where they pick up and deliver goods.

The Tories need to get their proposals passed in order to be in a better position for a head-on confrontation with shop floor organisation. And a successful fightback against their proposals is vital and possible. Union bodies, hurt by the government's failure to consult them, will be prepared to get involved in the fightback and what we have to struggle for is to make sure their involvement is on the rank and file's terms.

The right to picket is not something handed to the working class by capitalists. To keep that right means a constant struggle which many workers have paid dearly for.

Dave Horrocks of Manchester Direct Works, is the latest in a long list of casualties. We must make sure that in as many workplaces as possible what happened at Manchester Direct Works is known and a discussion is begun about how best to organise the fight back against the Tory Government's proposals on picketing.

One week after Dave Horrocks was run over, this driver told pickets that someone else would get hurt if they didn't move. Then he took out a jack handle to unload his potato sacks. This time the police cautioned the driver. See story below.



Four hundred fifty Direct Workers at the Bessemer St. depot in Manchester are locked out, and now on strike, over a bonus dispute. One of them – Dave Horrocks, 26 – is in Manchester Royal Infirmary on a Life Support system after being run over by a lorry that had smashed through the picket line.

A driver from the non-union haulage firm, R. P. Allison, Ltd, came to make a delivery. Allison's director claims the driver, phoned in for advice, and the firm phoned Manchester Corporation, where a yard supervisor said if the materials were brought in through the picket line they would be unloaded.

Dave Horrocks was leaving the picket when the lorry hit him and dragged him 50 yards along the front bumper until he fell off and was run over.

He was taken to hospital with injuries to his skull, pelvis, and spine. The rest of the Bessemer St. site walked out, and the driver who claims he didn't realize what happened, had to be escorted back through the line in a police van.

The police later said the driver would not be charged, as 'the action happened in a private road and is classed as an industrial accident'. Though the police have since retracted this state-

ment, Dave is still in hospital and is very poorly.

To try and settle the dispute management offered the workers a few per cent on the bonus, and a 'loan' instead of a pay rise, until the national claim is settled.

A mass meeting at Bessemer St. has rejected the offer and called for support from all other Direct Workers. Stewards from all Manchester sites are pledging support, including a mass demonstration to the Town Hall, blacking, and two half-day strikes (which won't be enough).

As shop floor support at other sites was low, another mass meeting of Bessemer St. has voted to step up disruption by all possible means. Flying pickets have persuaded a couple of sites to stop work. Management has arranged for some work to be done by outside contractors, but the Bessemer St. strike is solid.

Information from Manchester Building Worker, and Neil Swannick, TGWU.



Photo: Laurence Sparham I.F.L. (ii)



▲ Grunwick: 1977. The Police attitude to Picketing was an inspiration to the Tories!



← Ford Langley workers supporting the Chix Women in Slough. See story below.

Photo: Carlos Augusto (I.F.L.)

A HUNDRED Asian women recently walked out at Chix sweet manufacturers when they were refused union recognition. At the beginning of October a mass picket was called by the General and Municipal Workers Union which was supported by Ford Langley and Hammersmith Direct Labour.

Before the walk out, the Asian women were receiving 95p per hour, 35p less than their white counterparts, for exactly the same job. Chix, it seems, are prepared for a battle and are currently employing scab labour at £2.50 per hour to help break the strike

Clearly, we must draw a parallel between what is going on at Chix and the experience of Grunwick. Already six people have been arrested, but that hasn't intimidated the women,

"we have no fear of arrests", said one, "they can arrest us one by one or all together. But we are going to stay and win."

SOLIDARITY IS OUR GREATEST WEAPON

Flashback; August 1976, Women at Trico West London, on strike for equal pay. An eye witness reported 'five enormous lorries careered through the cordon of women and men weakened by the presence of an equal number of idiot policemen. Three people were arrested. We were not strong enough and the picket line was broken. Later we heard that the fork lift drivers inside had refused to handle the scab loads.'

NO CUTS!

IF THE number of 'Don't Blame Me, I Didn't Vote Tory' badges around is anything to go by, there are plenty of people prepared to show their disagreement with the Thatcher government. Probably most badge wearers are lefties, but even amongst middle-of-the-road Tory supporters, doubts are beginning to cloud the horizon.

After all, even the most fanatical 'we need more incentives' supporters can't be happy with a situation where income tax reductions are a couple of percentage points, whilst VAT goes up 7 per cent, prescription charges climb to 70p, the quality of school meals is cut back while their price soars. You don't have to be Einstein to calculate that only the super rich stand to gain from the changes — and it's not only the votes of the super rich that got the Tories elected.

BLACK PAPER

With the publication of their white paper on public spending plans for 1980-81, the government has made clear that it intends to continue its restructuring of public expenditure — spending on defence and law and order will increase and so will social security spending — this is because

of the increased unemployment which will result from the government's economic policies.

HOW THE CUTS WILL FALL

The sectors worse off include:

● **Council Spending.** By keeping the rate support grant (the money the central government gives local councils) constant in a year of rising prices and wages, central government has made sure that rates will have to go up by 30% just to keep services at today's level. Since 1974, local government spending has fallen 14% in real terms and the latest white paper makes sure that in 1980-81, it is capital projects that are cut back

● **Housing.** In housing, the cut-backs are absolutely disastrous. Remember

the days of the 500,000 building starts, well in 1980-81, there will be 45,000. (which is much less than the 91,000 a year average in the 1970-77 period).

These cuts mean more and more unemployment in the building industry and an explosion of housing waiting lists as the soaring price of houses puts them out of most people's reach.

● **Benefits.** In the white paper, it is clearly stated that savings of "some £240 million are to be made on school meals, milk and transport" — and they will be made off the backs of working class families. Against what appeared in the national press, there is no obligation for local authorities to provide free school meals for kids on Supplementary Benefit or Family Income Supplement.

● **Social Services.** Here, the cuts will mean the closure of nurseries (already announced in Oxfordshire), of old people's homes, a large increase in charges for home helps, meals on wheels etc. And of course, if you reduce community services more old people will have to be taken into hospitals. Already half the NHS beds are occupied by old people and the cuts in social services together with cuts in the NHS are producing a crisis situation. Maybe the government will celebrate 1984 by extending the right of freedom of the individual by making euthanasia legal!

● **Social Security.** Child benefit will remain at £4 till at least April 1981 — a period two years since the last rise.

Families with three kids will lose their automatic entitlement to free school milk. And pension rises will from now on, only allow for cost-of-living increases.

FIGHTBACK

When they started the cuts, Labour made respectable the argument that if we have less public expenditure, we'll have more investment in private industry. In fact, it is quite clear that there is no shortage of capital in the British economy. What is holding investment back is the low level of profits and not state expenditure, which is lower than average in this country.

In fact, many of the Tories know that their arguments, which are for public consumption, are bullshit. It is what lies behind them that is important. They are a very deliberate attempt to deflate the economy and thus bring about more unemployment. The Tories hope that even higher rates of unemployment will smash wage militancy — since workers will be afraid of losing their jobs. And unless in the fight against the cuts we also fight unemployment, 1984 may arrive sooner than expected.



Spirited Start for National Campaign

A REALLY GREAT start to a national fighting campaign against Government cuts in public spending — that was the almost unanimous verdict of the 15,000 or more people who braved the wettest weather of the year to register their protest at Tory attempts to railroad cuts through local government and health services in the area.

All Lambeth's Town Hall unions were on strike for the day and it was their banners and members, along with Ted Knight and Lambeth's Labour councillors which led the colourful procession from Clapham Common through the streets of Brixton, Kennington and Waterloo to the doorstep of Parliament.

Halfway through the morning, 70 to 80 schoolkids from Vauxhall Manor School had burst through its gates, as senior staff vainly tried to contain them, with lively chants of "March Against the Cuts" and "Kill Thatcher".

Their high spirits were reflected throughout the march, despite the sheeting rain and buffeting winds. As it wound its way through High Streets busy with shoppers, it drew in groups and individuals all along the route to a point where, by Lambeth Bridge, it had almost doubled in size. Cheerfully singing anti-Government songs and waving a whole host of brightly coloured placards and banners, the march was a really united expression of resistance to the Tory cuts. Even the local cinema exhibited a sign reading "Fightback Against All Cuts" in the place of the details of the week's films.

Along with the banners of the Lambeth Council Unions, came those of hospital workers, teachers, building workers, fireworkers and DHSS workers from all over London and beyond. Over a dozen Trades Councils, including those from South Yorkshire who initially called the Mass Lobby for the 28th, were represented; Vauxhall workers travelled down from Luton, Direct Labour workers and CPSA members from Manchester and a large contingent of miners made the journey up from Kent to take part. The turnout from local groups was particularly impressive, providing an accurate reflection of the broadbased nature of Lambeth people's resistance.

BANNERS

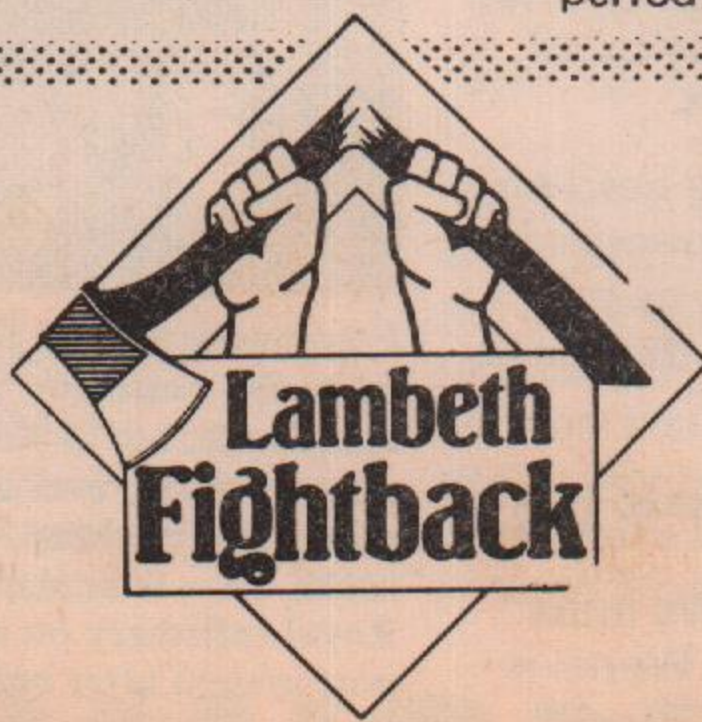
If there was one disappointment, it was in the feeling of anti-climax at the end of the march when the marchers reluctantly ditched their banners and placards the standard mile from Parliament, only to be channeled by the police into orderly queues for the lobby of Parliament or the rally in Central Hall on the other side of the river, or to file off home in the rain.

For those who attended the rally, Alan Fisher of NUPE seemed full of fire and Ted Knight was there to point to the essential need for other Councils and AHAs to support the stand Lambeth had taken and

the need to seek the fullest involvement of the country's labour movement in a campaign of action to defeat the Tories and their policies. Knight has already indicated that the only way for the Labour Group to maintain its "no cuts" decision into next year, will be to significantly raise the rates and it is likely that the Labour Group will leave active campaigning in the background as they put their energies into working out the details of this rise.

NEED TO EXPAND

But hundreds, maybe thousands of Lambeth workers and residents, may not be satisfied to just leave it at that. Cuts may not be going through local government services in the way that they are in most other parts of the country, but the recent suspension of DHSS workers at Kennington (inside Lambeth) for refusal to co-operate with management-ordered cuts, the appalling state of services, plus an urgent need to expand and extend the current level of services, leaves those active in the Trades Council's Lambeth Fightback Campaign with a lot of work to do — cementing working relationships between Town Hall and other unions and between the local labour movement and the community. Informing people of how the cuts



will actually affect the quality of their lives and involving them actively in the fight.

MASS PROTESTS

News of other mass protests around the country, such as in Liverpool the same day as the Lambeth march, when 2,000 marched (also in the pouring rain) and in Newcastle, where over 1,000 marched later in the week, have given a big boost to those actively involved through the Lambeth Fightback Campaign and elsewhere. We are presently building for the mass lobby on the 28th, and the campaign's next big public meeting (on the 5th December in Lambeth Town Hall). The message must be that we can't afford to just leave things to councillors, MPs and other "public figures" to decide whatever is most convenient for them to comply with Central Government's demands and



Union Place Collective

restrictions. One way or the other, whether through direct cuts in jobs and services, or through rate and price increases, to do so would only lead to a serious fall in living standards. We must show that there are enough people around the country willing to take the fight to the point where a mass movement against the cuts can turn the Tory tide.

(Terry McNiven Lambeth Fightback Campaign Steering Group, and South London Big Flame).

PS More information, including copies of Fightback News (the campaign's newspaper that sold over 4,000 of the first issue, another one coming soon) (5p each) and badges — "Fightback Against the cuts" (3 colours @ 20p each) from 17 Helix Gdns, Brixton London SW2 (01.671.3598)

Fightback Public Meeting — December 5th 7.30pm, Lambeth Town Hall assembly Rooms, Speakers Lou Lewis (Convenor, Wandsworth Direct Works, and speakers from Lambeth Council and Lambeth Fightback).



Union Place Collective

Hackney: Need for a Fightback

"OUR HANDS aren't tied" is the answer of those fighting the cuts in Hackney now that the scale and extent of Tory policies is sinking in. This was echoed at a recent public meeting called by Hackney's Labour-controlled council, attended by over 700 people. The council had sent out leaflets to all households saying "They're trying to tie our hands" in respect of cutting the local authority rate support grant, arguing that this meant either a massive cut in council spending or a 70% rate increase. Councillors were firmly told that there was a third choice: stop trying to pin the tail on the Tory donkey and start a fightback like Lambeth.

MORE CUTS AHEAD

It's no longer just a question of saving a single hospital like Bethnal Green or St. Leonards', but of finding the answers to prevent a fullscale re-structuring of local areas and services to foot the bill for the crisis. This buildup is what's happening now in response to a tangle of economic and social policies that affect people in hundreds of different ways. Everyone who uses public transport in the Hackney area knows it's pretty ropery: London Transport (LT) plans to cut 3-4000 jobs on the combine over the next 5 years, and a further cut in the G.L.C.'s Bus Grant to L.T. is expected; N.H.S. budgets have steadily increased yet standards of health care in the borough have actually gone down; in an area which regularly features in TV documentaries about bad housing the rate support grant is going to be cut leading to a freeze on council jobs, further

Organising a mass campaign against the cuts

cuts in services and a brake on council house spending.

GETTING IT TOGETHER

At this stage the campaigns being built in Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Newham reflect this torrent of Tory cuts and how much the fragmented opposition needs to be pulled together. The recent Hackney health conference voted to move along the lines of an open mass campaign, developing day-to-day tactics

in defence of the N.H.S. whilst encouraging new types of services based on people's experiences at work and as users. The campaign is now supporting the London Hospital porters who have refused to cover vacancies and have blacked pay beds. This should be an integral part of its work. It has continued to focus on St. Leonard's Hospital with a series of pickets and lobbies since the September mass demonstration. A similar set-up has been launched in Tower Hamlets based on the trades council and local trade unions; the immediate issues are to save the London Jewish Hospital, 82 beds at the London and 34 at Mile End; as in Hackney, they have started regular mass leafletting.

REGULARITY NEEDED

Creating enough political steam for all these struggles is going to take a fair time so these mass campaigns can play a big part in outlining the different ways that local groups, trade unions or the unemployed can organize actively to win and, in doing so, can establish many new networks for independent working class politics. For example, it is an idea to get a sympathetic union branch at a local bus or tube depot to nominate someone to work with your cuts campaign and get the information across at his/her place of work on a regular basis. In this way, transport issues are also being brought to a wider audience.

What we would want to see is a time when workers in, say, a victimisation dispute could confidently call on a local or national cuts campaign for help. Also, a hospital which is due to close can be defended not only by pickets or work-ins but also by a series of lightning occupations of local AHA offices or other public buildings. This could temporarily frustrate the authorities and help to win over workers in these places. Equally, what kinds of individual agitation work best; what help do people need in arguing cuts issues?

MASS POLITICS

Some of these ideas seem obvious but what has been done in the past on a small scale can be of enormous importance when used in mass political terms. In this way, resistance is put on a permanent footing. After all, these struggles will be part of the political landscape for a long time to come.

By a Member of North London Big Flame

HACKNEY PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION-SAY IT WON'T DO MAGGIE CUTS IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES TO GIVE YOUR RICH FRIENDS BIG TAX CUTS - HANDS OFF ST LEONARDS HOSP.



Carlos Augusto (IFL)

LIVERPOOL: 4,000 MARCH AGAINST CUTS

More than 4,000 council employees supported by nurses, firefighters students, and community groups marched through Liverpool to lobby the Town Hall in protest against proposed cuts in Council spending. The demonstration, called by L'pool Trades Council and supported by the Corporation Joint Shop Stewards and staff representatives committee, was a dramatic step in a city-wide campaign to unite all sections of Local Authority workers against the cuts.

The march followed a weekend conference addressed by Tony Benn Corby steelworkers and representatives of public sector unions, attended by more than 70 delegates from unions and community groups.



South Yorkshire: Strange Tale of a 'Socialist Republic'

TWO RECENT events in South Yorkshire highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the current movement against the cuts in public spending.

Event one: Barnsley Trades Council print badges inscribed with the words "Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire" — a reference to the hostility of the labour movement to the Tories' policies, and local councils' commitment to maintain services such as the famous cheap bus fares.

Event Two: Prince Charles opens the "new" Hallamshire Hospital (whose first bricks were laid in 1938!), and announces that the Queen has graciously allowed the term "Royal" to be added to the hospital's name. Much back slapping and self congratulation follows amongst notaries on the Area Health Authority, which of course includes Labour Councillors. (The AHA had recently voted for £1.3 million worth of cuts for this year and rejected proposals from a Trades Council delegation for an out-patient abortion unit).

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC?

It would be wrong to make too much of these slightly bizarre events. But yet they tell us quite a bit about the character of our "labour movement". The notion of a socialist republic within a capitalist society is of course only part-serious. And yet the massive applause received by speakers using the term at the big anti-cuts

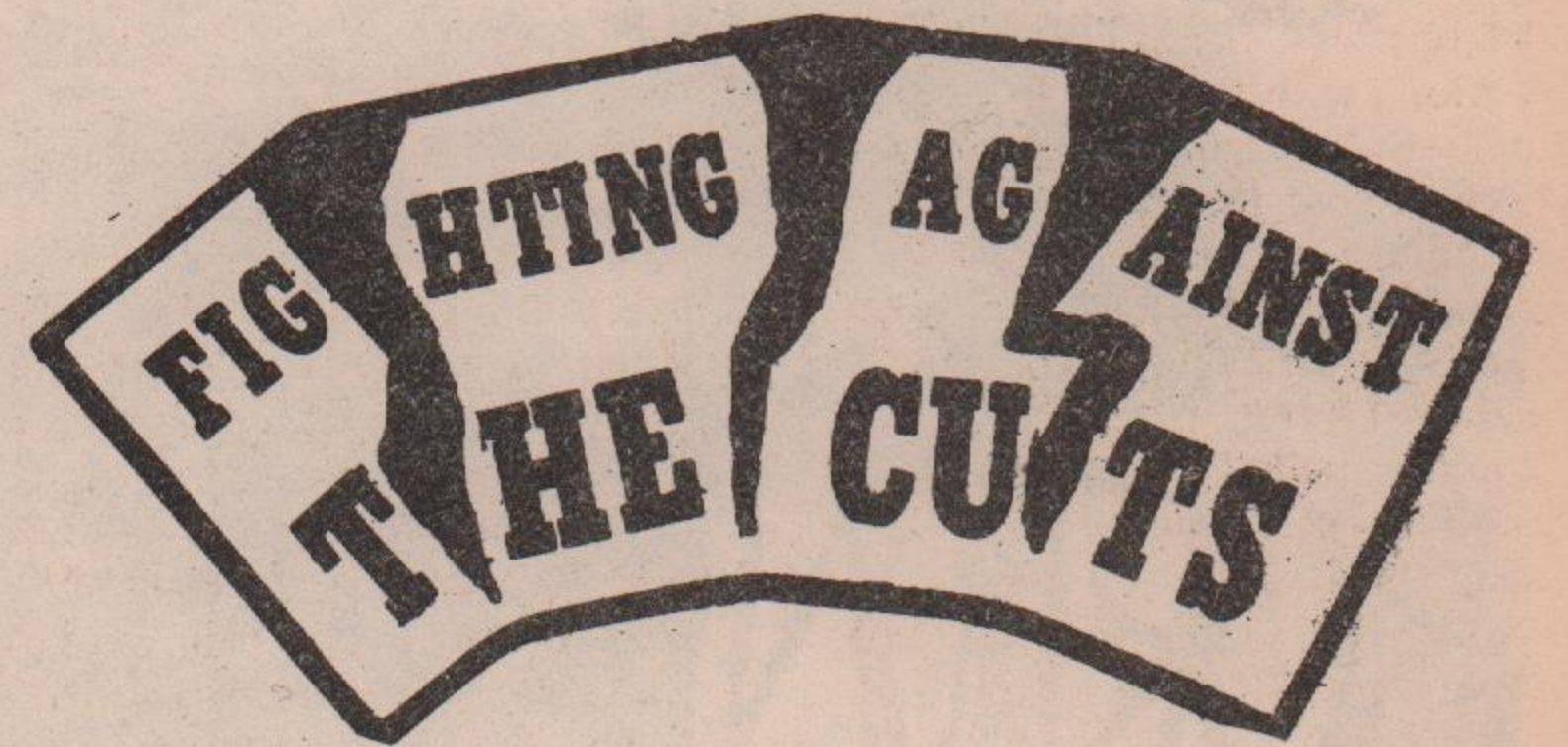
rally in Sheffield in October illustrates the sense of pride and gut anti-Toryism which is so firmly rooted in the county. South Yorkshire County Council has maintained its cheap fares, despite losing its transport grant from the previous Labour Government; and most of the Councils in the area are saying they will maintain services, albeit by

raising rates by 50% if necessary. Callaghan and Wilson (especially Wilson) were loudly denounced at the rally, and wavering Labour and union leaders have been dragged into an active campaign by the sheer weight of support which is beginning to be built up for the anti-cuts campaign.

WEAKNESSES

Unfortunately, the weaknesses of the campaign are not recognised very clearly by either the leading lights of the local labour movement or many of the campaign's supporters. Far too many folk are placing far too much faith in the councillors and full-time union officials to organise the campaign. And of course the latter are making pretty sure that they stay in control and don't open the campaign out too widely.

Take the case of the Yorkshire miners. At the Sheffield rally, Arthur Scargill called for massive support for the 28th November lobby. The Yorkshire Miner paper said "If we fail to mass in our thousands on Nov. 28th, the Tories will



interpret it as the green light to wreck the social fabric of everything we hold dear." And did the Yorkshire NUM call for a strike or finance for thousands of delegates to London? No, the word came through that four delegates only per pit would be paid for — anyone else wanting to go would have to knock a day and pay £8 for the train fare on top.

FINE WORDS

This is not a sectarian point — Scargill's support for the anti-cuts campaign has been very important — but fine words from the platform have to be matched by deeds on the ground. Leading councillors in Sheffield had to be really pushed into agreeing to a joint campaign with the tenants federation against Council house sales. Likewise, it has only been because of a mass movement being

built outside the council chambers and Parliament that the left has been able to get a labour movement conference called on December 8th open to delegates from bodies throughout the county.

MAKING A STAND

We can go on putting demands on our labour councillors till we're blue in the face, but it's only by creating a large and militant mass campaign, involving tenants and housewives, students and pensioners as well as industrial workers and labour parties, that the councillors will be forced to make a stand. Even then, many of them will duck out. November 28th should be the first in a series of actions which will end with us stopping the Tories cuts, not merely protesting about them.

By a member of Sheffield BF.

WHOSE RIGHT TO LEAD?

Sixty thousand people marched against the Corrie Bill on October the 28th. That is the unofficial police count, as opposed to the figure of 17,000 released to the press. It was one of the biggest demonstrations since the campaign against the Industrial Relations Act in 1971. Journalists Against Corrie are to lodge a complaint with the Press Council, expressing their anger at the inaccurate and uninformative reporting of the demonstration.

HISTORIC

It is a historic event — the TUC calling a mass demonstration on abortion rights. Abortion is a class as well as a feminist issue. Our choices as women over whether and when to have children are clearly determined by our class position, as is access to abortion itself. It is a real victory for trade unionists to have recognised this and to fight with us. And the support from trade unions and trades councils on the demo was impressive. However, there were problems caused by the TUC's failure to recognise that it is women who must lead the struggle for abortion rights. We need mass support to oppose the Corrie Bill and to fight for a woman's right to choose, but that support must be on women's terms.

We are the ones oppressed by our lack of fertility control. We decide what are the sorts of laws and facilities we want — we must decide what sort of action we need to achieve this, and we must be in control of that action.

DIVISIONS

The media concentrated very much on the arguments at the head of the march when feminists from London tried to take the lead of the march away from Len Murray and other trade union officials.

The scuffle between them was broken up by the Special Patrol Group. The Women's Advisory Committee of the TUC then moved forward to seize the lead.

It is very unfortunate that with a demonstration as large as this one the press can exploit divisions

among ourselves. However, that is no argument at all for condemning the London women. What took place was a political struggle between male trade unionists and women, which we all have to learn from.

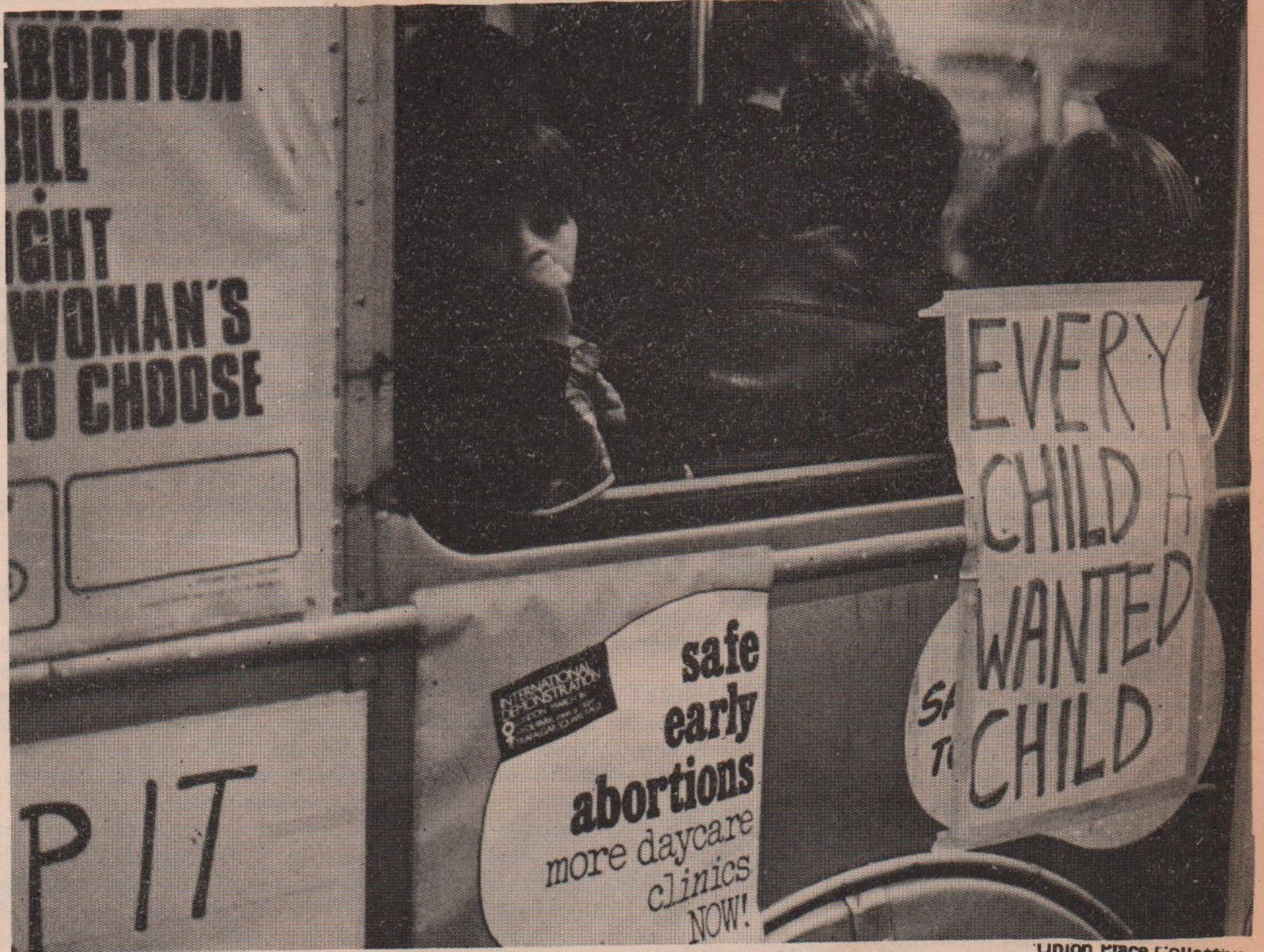
At the National Abortion Campaign's national planning meeting after the demonstration we recognised the need to criticise the fact that we had not ensured in advance that women would lead the march. A letter has also been sent to the TUC complaining about their lack of sensitivity over the demonstration — why had there been only one woman trade union steward, and why hadn't the chief marshal (who made the announcements) not been a woman? Obviously there should have been a woman's banner on the podium in Trafalgar Square. The way in which the TUC called in the police, or threatened to, in order to deal with women who disagreed with them is extremely serious.

AUTONOMY

The struggle to get the TUC to recognize women's autonomy will be a long one. But further action around Corrie, particularly the rally and lobby of Parliament and the national assembly of women in the week of the third reading in February, provides an opportunity to continue education and discussion on why women organise autonomously. And we will have learnt from October 28th to foresee situations where confrontation might arise and ensure that it is women who are giving the lead.

Member of Brighton NAC and Brighton Big Flame

Editorial Collective Note: This signed article does not necessarily reflect the views of us all. We would like to hear your views on this question.



Union Place Collective

Meanwhile in the Select Committee

THE GUARDIAN misunderstood the situation in the Select Committee when it said that the Corrie Bill would be amended to lower the time limit for abortions to 24 weeks and to tighten the medical conscience clause.

The only clause of the bill that has been discussed and amended is that concerning the grounds on which a woman can have an abortion. The time limit and conscience clauses, and the status of the charities (such as the British Pregnancy Advisory Service) are yet to be discussed. Anything could happen with them.

Gerard Vaughn, the Minister of Health, made his own position clear — that his main concern is to have

the time limit lowered to 24 weeks and to keep the rest of the 1967 Act more or less intact. But the bill is in the hands of the Select Committee.

Corrie says he is harassed and disillusioned, and doesn't care what happens to the bill, so long as it goes into the statute books with his name on it.

The amendments are being drafted by DHSS civil servants under Benyon's name, and he will be speaking on them at the Third Reading. He is, as we know, well versed in the law and parliamentary procedure and has made his position on abortion quite clear.

Only a Beginning

THE DEMONSTRATION on October 28th is only a beginning. The Campaign Against Corrie has to continue an assertive campaign right up until the Third Reading if the Corrie Bill is going to be defeated.

We have to really stretch our imaginations and resources to build support for the week of action in the week of the Third Reading. NAC has asked the TUC to call national strike action and a mass lobby of Parliament on Tuesday, Feb. 5th, with a rally on the same day, in Westminster Central Hall. We need to call on regional TUC's to support and prepare for this.

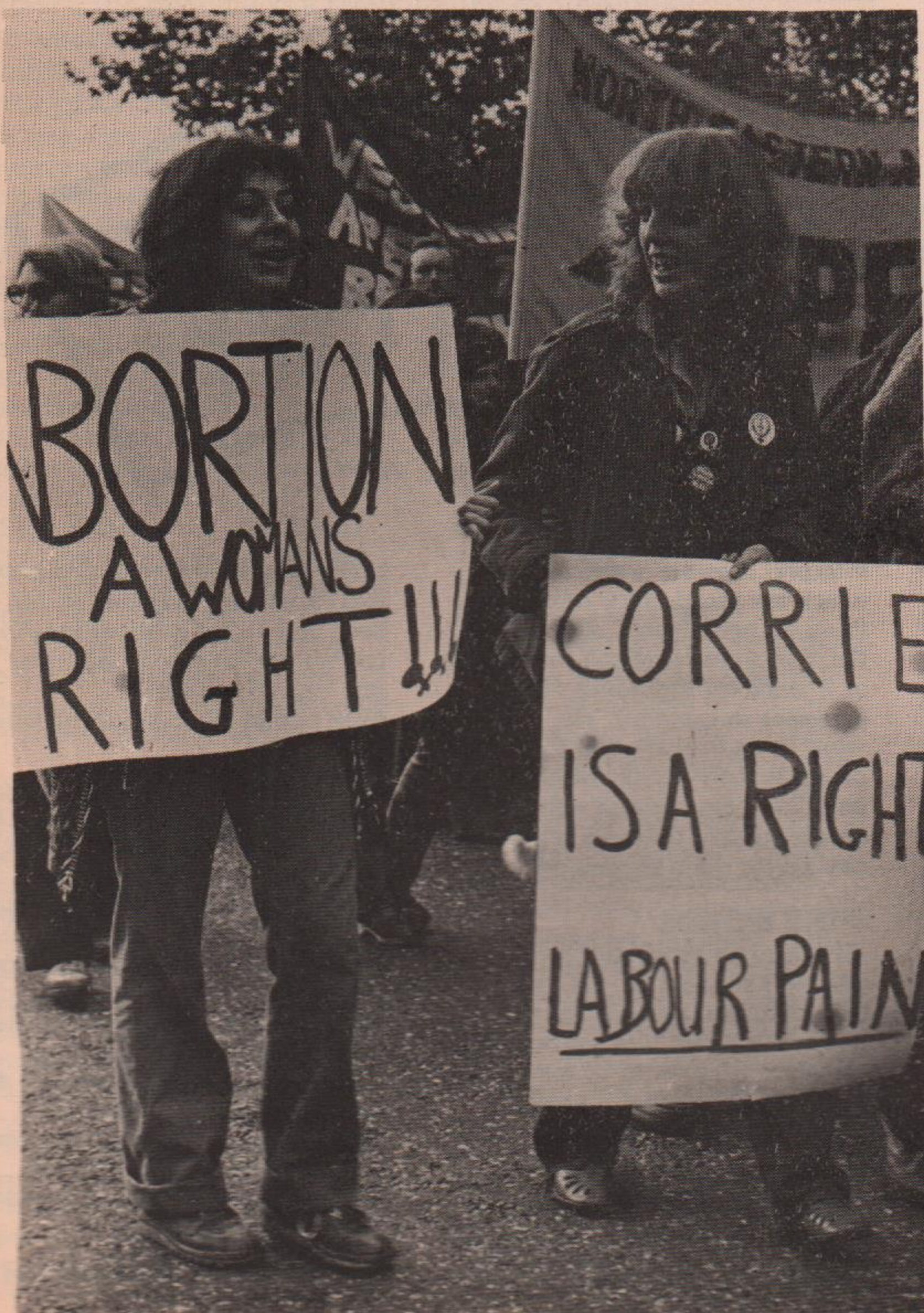
The South East and Scottish TUC's have already agreed to do this and the South East TUC is co-booking Central Hall, together with Campaign Against Corrie (CAC).

Then, on Friday Feb. 8th, the day of the Third Reading, there is to be a mass assembly of women at Westminster. Women will lobby MP's and then be ready to respond to the result of the vote.

ANGRY

Calls for strike action cannot be made in a vacuum. Over the next two months NAC and CAC are going to have to make abortion a real issue, with street meetings, petitions, occupations, vigils, Rock Against Corrie gigs, public meetings, and educational. The campaign must be angry and assertive — making it clear that women are not going to stand by and watch our rights being legislated away. We need to encourage all those who support us to actively come out and join us.

Member Brighton NAC and Brighton Big Flame



Union Place Collective



Big Flame Photol

In our October issue we announced a competition for a song to sing on the October 28th demonstration against the Corrie Bill. The three songs we received were printed on a song sheet handed out on the march. The winner was to be the song that was sung the most. The most popular was 'Twelve Months of Corrie', by A. Non of Oxford, who gets a free six-month subscription to Big Flame — as soon as she or he sends us an address. Thanks to her or him and to Steph Crook and Red Flu for their songs. Now how about sending us a song about the cuts?

Housing : The Red Brick Road

IN NOVEMBER, it is likely that the curtain will rise on a new Tory housing bill. Its contents hold few secrets. The main theme will be the extension of home ownership and the destruction of council housing — a yellow brick road to the gates of the 'property-owning democracy'.

Throughout the years between the wars, conservative policy was stuck in a well-worn groove supporting the private landlord. At some point in the early 1950's, they seized upon owner-occupation as an alternative form of tenure which was compatible with their ideological outlook.

In political terms their choice has proved to be a winner. Owner-occupation grew rapidly during the 1950's and has continued to grow unabated. Today, owner-occupation is seen (in the words of the last Labour Government) as the 'desired form of tenure' and already accounts for about 56% of all housing.

INFLATION

The last ten years demonstrate well publicised advantages of home ownership. The financial structure of the private market has meant that mortgage rates have lagged behind the rate of inflation. As house prices have risen ahead of inflation many owners have gained windfall benefits in the form of cash or an opportunity to move up the housing market.

Over the same period, council housing has suffered severe financial setbacks. Cuts in public expenditure have reduced services and forced rents up. Now two thirds of the expenditure on council housing is interest on loans. Council housing has been squeezed and stigmatised by the underspending of successive governments. It's no surprise that many tenants are susceptible to the ideological smokescreen erected to promote home-ownership.

The current phase of housing policy has been a joint enterprise, a Con-Lab pact. Callaghan's government was responsible for introducing council house sales and for sponsoring home-ownership. They also presided over the growth of housing associations, thereby creating a two-tier system of state housing. With the groundwork done, the Tories will pursue the same policies with more vigour.

COUNCIL HOUSE SALES

It is already clear that Tory policy will take the form of a major offensive on council housing. Discounts of between 30 to 50 per cent of market price are being offered on the sale of council houses, and there are plans — in the form of the so-called tenants charter — to give tenants the right to buy.

Cuts in public spending mean that new council building is at its lowest rate for 30 years, and most repairs and services can barely cope with essential needs. The worst deterioration of housing has taken place on high-rise or other mass housing schemes, where good maintenance is essential and where sales are least likely.

Most Direct Works departments have already suffered as a result of the cuts, and it now seems that central government is intending to force them into direct competition with the private sector. Such practices will serve to undermine the effectiveness of direct works, which is not organised as a contracting operation in the same way as private builders.

TORY POLICIES

The result of these Tory housing policies will be:

*The strength of council housing as a real alternative to home ownership will be undermined. This may not involve the elimination of council housing, but instead its reduction to a small impoverished sector which caters — badly — for those in need and hardship.

*State intervention in housing will continue in diverse forms, with housing associations, co-ownership and similar ventures being offered as an alternative to council housing. The subsidy structure of owner occupation, through tax relief on mortgages, will continue to benefit the rich at the expense of working class owner-occupiers and tenants.

*The main focus for working class struggle around the social provision

of housing — council housing — will be dispersed. Home ownership and housing associations do not create communities with easily identified common interests around which to struggle. By manipulating the subsidies available to different tenures, the state can successfully fragment working class interests by creating differences in the material benefits associated with each tenure. This allows one state sector to be seen as more attractive a proposition than another. The result is a mystification of housing problems and encourages the belief that a change in tenure is the solution to these problems.

IDEOLOGY

By promoting home ownership as the 'ideal' form of housing, the state promotes a pervasive ideology which justifies the private accumulation of wealth. It also promotes a vision of suburban family life — the nuclear family and its role as consumers of cars, washing machines, and all the rest.

The pressures on direct works are a direct assault on the Labour movement and the attempts of construction workers to establish stable and guaranteed conditions of work. In this they seek to blame direct works for many of the failures of council housing and thereby employ the sympathies of council tenants. On the other hand, they seek to cut direct works as a method of further undermining council housing. A neat but vicious circle.

SOCIALIST STRATEGY

The challenge for the Left is how to combat these trends with a real socialist strategy for housing. The development of such a strategy and the recognition of housing as central to the struggle for socialism is essential.

It is clear that the state is actively seeking to promote divisions in working class attitudes to housing. Overcoming these divisions will be no easy job and will not be served by a simple defence of council housing. However, we must begin with working class struggle and this is most intense around council housing and direct works. The struggle around the cuts provides a



This was how it was in March '77. Now interest rates take 66p in every pound and services have declined.

Big Flame Photo

basis for uniting the interests of council tenants and workers.

UNITY

The Left has a clear role in promoting such unity and in providing a socialist vision of housing.

Through the struggles for housing it is important that tenants learn the importance of organisation, and that links are created between community and tenants groups and that they are seen as part of the whole tenant movement. Demands around council housing should seek to expose the financial structure, to promote greater democracy and joint tenant-worker control.

At the same time as developing the struggle around council housing, we must also accept that large sections of the working class are already owner-occupiers or housing association tenants. Much more attention needs to be paid to the experiences of such people and to the forms of organising which develop in these areas. Although rate-payers

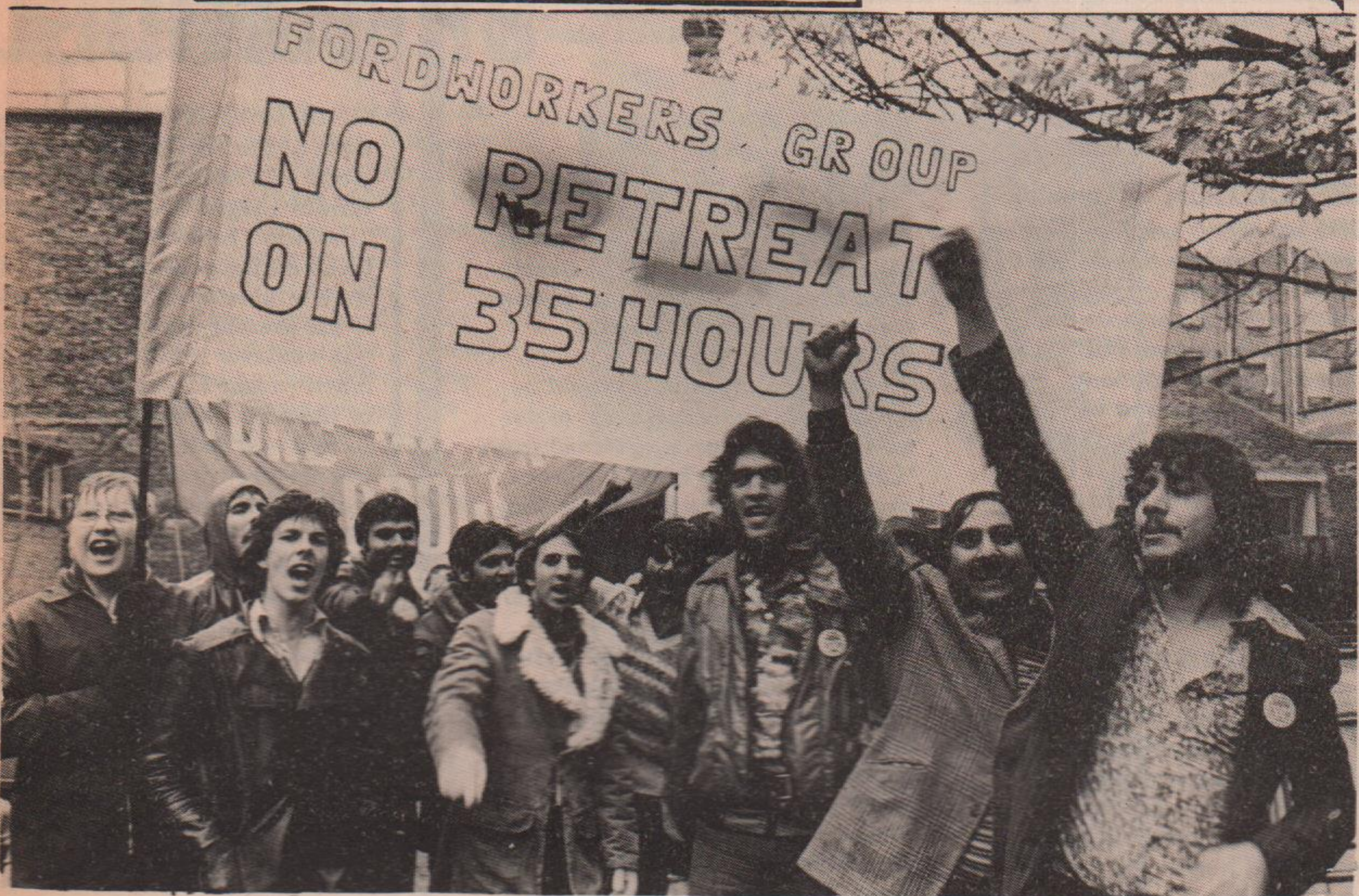
organisations are generally seen as a reactionary form of organisation, they may represent a focus for discussion which goes beyond rates to one that can make demands about the democratic control of building societies or the development of co-operatives. As the crisis deepens, the material benefits of owner-occupation and housing association tenancy will inevitably decline and we must be prepared to take up the challenge of addressing socialism to the experience of this section of the working class.

Many of the points in this article are developed in more detail in: 'Socialism and Housing Action—The Red Paper on Housing', available from Socialist Housing Activists Workshop c/o Tyne & Wear Resource Centre 13 Swinburne Street Gateshead

Member of Liverpool Big Flame

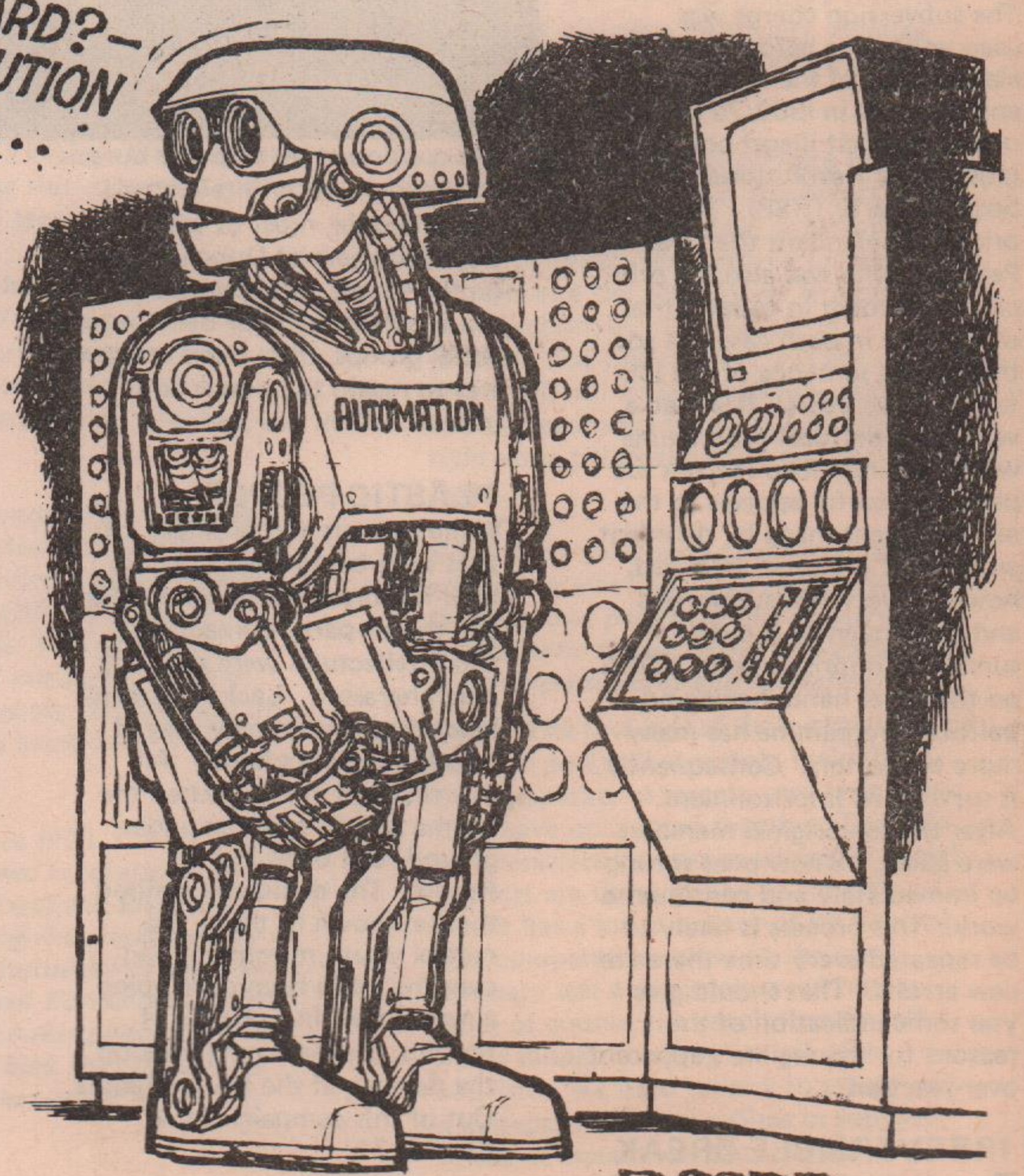


OH...HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?— THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IS OVER... WE WON....



Carlos Auguste

A lobby of 95 Ford workers on 16th November protested against the derisory pay offer being discussed between unions and Ford management. At the talks the offer of 14% on basic (About £11 per week) was rejected by the Unions and the Fordworkers Group are sticking out for an improved offer and a 35 hour week. The lobby was intended to publicise the Fordworkers demand and to push the slogan "Don't decide before Yuletide". The group want to reject a decision before Christmas in order to gain strength for their demands by the new year.



RCOBB



Dana Nemcova

In Czechoslovakia.... DON'T THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK - YOU MAY GO TO JAIL!

The ten people involved in the trial that was, as well as the trial to come, are members of VONS. This somewhat cumbersome abbreviation stands for the "Committee to Defend the Unjustly Persecuted." It's a spontaneously established group of citizens which does no more and no less than what its name indicates. It attempts an elementary civic resistance to the excesses of state repression. Its nearest equivalent here is the NCCL, to which, by the way, VONS addressed itself in one of its statements. On a cross-national level, its nearest equivalent is Amnesty International, with whom VONS had some meagre communication which constituted one of the prosecution's pathetic trump cards. In Poland, its nearest equivalent is KOR (Committee for Community Self-Defence) previously known as Committee to Defend the Workers.

LEGALISTIC

VONS does not attack, it merely attempts to defend elementary civil liberties: the right of citizens to be free from harassment, the right to a fair trial etc. VONS does not call for the overthrow of the Czech regime, it does not call for an end to the Soviet occupation of our republic, in fact, VONS does not put forward any political demands whatsoever. It is scrupulously legalistic and it merely urges the state to emulate it, that is, to uphold in practice both the spirit as well as the letter of its own laws and constitution. So why, you might ask, does the regime feel so threatened by this little group of ten people that it charges them with subversion of the state? A charge so ridiculous that the prosecution simply cannot prove it without further disgracing itself and without showing to everyone the real need for the existence of bodies such as VONS.

SMASHED BY PRISON

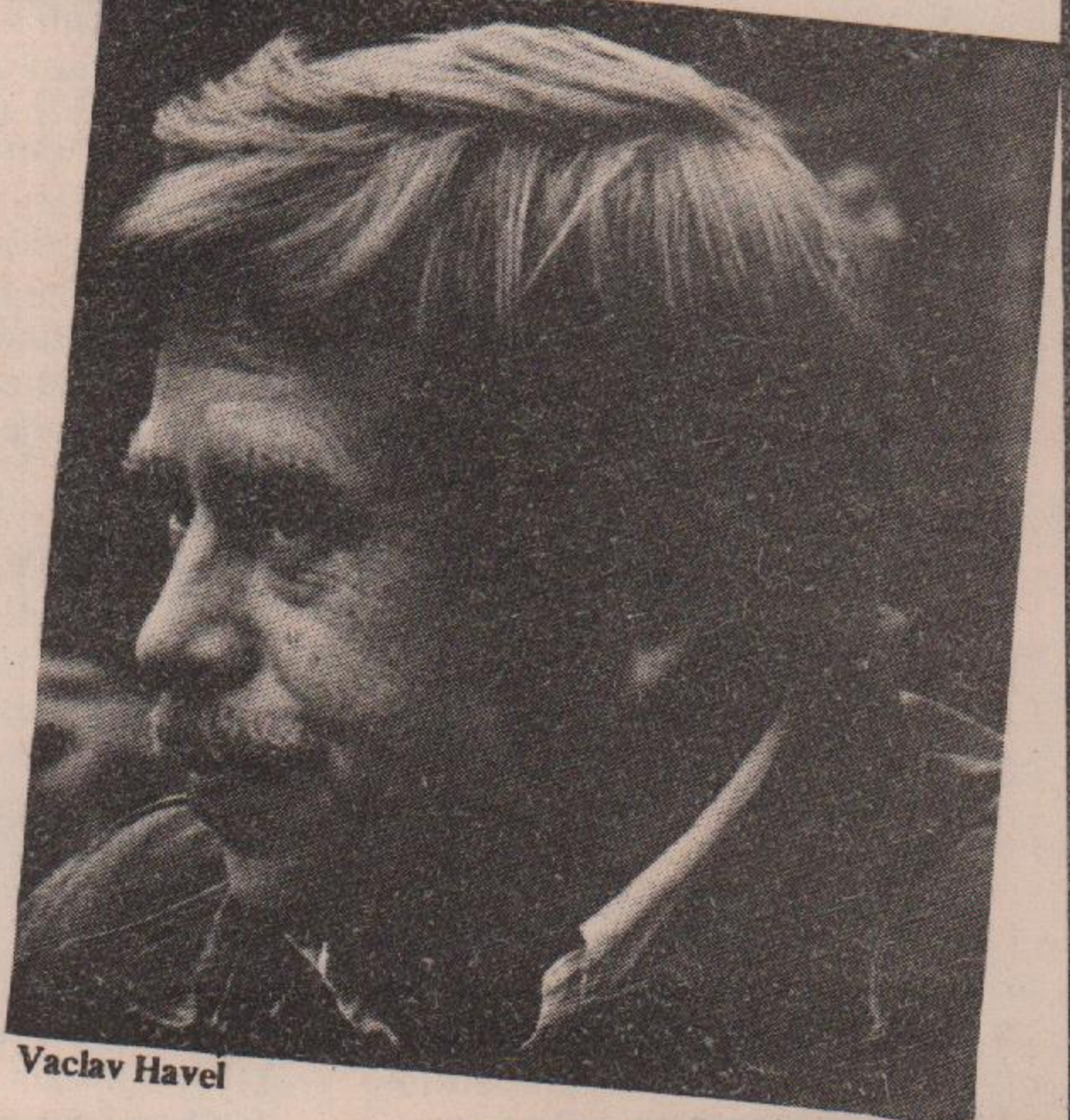
The subversion charge was used only once before in all the eleven years of the occupation - and that was in 1969/70 against one of the first illegal political groups, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). The principal defendant then was Petr Uhl, who was also the principal defendant in today's trial of VONS. In both cases he got the highest sentence of the lot (around five years). RSP had a very lucid political programme which distinguished it from the pathetic, tearful appeals to the establishment made by dissident currents at the time. RSP had, however, very few supporters and consequently it didn't survive its imprisonment. VONS on the other hand, having no political programme has many more supporters. Consequently, it survives its imprisonment. After the ten original members were jailed, 18 new ones sprung up immediately and continue to work. This process is likely to be repeated every time there are new arrests. That should give you some indication of the reasons for the regime's apparent over-reaction.

IRREVERSIBLE BREAK

The real reason, in my opinion, goes deeper still. VONS represents a final, and I think, irreversible break with an almost decade old tradition of elitist dissent, which

With the trials that have just ended in Czechoslovakia, a new stage in the resistance movement has been reached. Now, for the first time, links have been made between intellectuals and workers - and it is the danger to the regime brought about by this link that explains the very harsh sentences the Czech courts doled out to the members of the civil liberties group VONS.

Ivan Hartel, a Czech dissident now living in London, explains the background to the trials. Ivan was a Czech student leader in the 1960s. He was a defendant in the first series of trials - arrested for the support he was giving the Polish cultural underground.



Vaclav Havel



Czech prison 1968

was continued by ex-party bureaucrats and ex-party intellectuals.

These people, most of whom were followers of Dubcek were, on the whole, only concerned with the problems of their own narrow social groups, their main interest was to regain the power and influence they had lost.

PLASTIC PEOPLE

While radicals and ordinary citizens were being imprisoned in their hundreds for political offences, the ex-party bureaucrats and intellectuals were not very much harassed. Lacking a mass base, they unwittingly played into the regime's hand. All this changed in 1976, when the regime put on trial the underground rock band Plastic People. The dissidents realised that unknown to them, the radical youth movement had over the years been developing a mass base. In a change of politics, the dissidents took up the defense of the Plastic People. Out of this campaign came Charter 77.

CHARTER 77

Charter 77 radically departs from the tradition of elitist dissent by taking up the problems

of every major social group (workers, women, children, musicians, writers etc.) - and most of its support comes from ordinary workers.

PERSECUTION

VONS has grown because it offers to voiceless people the chance to defend themselves. It details the cases of political persecution, issues regular communiques (120 so far) on the acts of harassment. The result is that everyone can be assured of domestic and international public support if they are politically persecuted and if they choose to seek VONS' help. According to VONS, there are several hundred thousand of such cases of political persecution.

DAILY INTIMIDATION

By giving people this chance to defend themselves VONS not only exposes the hypocrisy of the regime, but robs it of one of its most formidable weapons - daily intimidation of working people. This is why the regime tries to oppress it with a variety of trumped up charges. These charges are becoming more and more absurd - the latest charges being a desperate bid to frame VONS members on charges of terrorism.

APPEAL

AN INTERNATIONAL appeal has been made on behalf of the Czech socialists and copies sent to governments throughout the world, including Czechoslovakia.

Copies of the appeal should be endorsed by individuals and organisations. They can be obtained from 'Labour Focus on Eastern Europe' or 'Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign', 10 Park Drive, London NW11, and Committee for Defence of Czech Socialists, 17a Woodland Gdns, London N10.

Donations to Charter 77 Defence Fund should be sent to Reg Race, MP, House of Commons, London W1. A book and record have been produced by the Plastic People Defence Fund. The record is of the Plastic People and the book looks at underground culture in Czechoslovakia. It is obtainable from Plastic People Defence Fund, BM 1415, London WC1 V1XX. £4.50 and 80p p&p for both.

All the above organisations would welcome affiliations from groups and individuals.

Big Flame Interview

MORE THAN anyone else, Otelo Sarmento, leader of the Portuguese revolutionary army Otelo was a key figure in the overthrow of the Fascist regime. He was a repressive force, but became radicalised in the conflicts that opposed workers, peasants and the revolutionary left. Since the defeat suffered by the revolution, Otelo has been stripped of his military post and is in prison. At the last presidential election he was on the revolutionary platform and got 17% of the vote. In Portugal in September 1980, Otelo led an electoral alliance of the revolutionary left and workers' organisations. Last month, he was arrested. During his visit he found time

BF: The elections in December come after a long period of political instability in Portugal - do you think they will end this instability?

Otelo: The elections on December 2nd are intermediary elections which will act as a holding operation until the general election in September 1980. For the December elections, the three right-wing parties have formed an electoral pact which they call the "Democratic Alliance". I would think that this Alliance will get the most votes, but not a majority in the parliament. A situation may well exist where the Socialist and Communist parties have enough MPs to vote out any government the right wing tries to form, so instability will continue.

BF: What are your own current political projects?

Otelo: Our political project is to develop a unity platform of the revolutionary left and this is a project that cannot be rushed; we expect to be able to contest the September 1980 elections.

BF: Presumably, a process of drawing up the programme and bringing together the different forces of the revolutionary left has begun?

Otelo: Yes, we have begun discussing how best to build this unity platform since June. As soon as we have the basis for a platform, we intend to hold meetings throughout the country to discuss it with the workers and peasants. After these meetings, there will be a national conference of Popular Power at which a committee to run the campaign will be elected and a list of candidates selected. If the campaign is well organised we should be able to make sure that there is a strong representation of the revolutionary left in the next parliament.

BF: Obviously, our sources of information about Portugal are the bourgeois press and they are interested in giving the impression that all the gains of 1975 have been rolled back - do you think that this is so?

PORTUGUESE

SINCE JUNE 1978, forty-one leading militants of the Portuguese revolutionary group PRP are in prison charged with various alleged crimes ranging from "political" robberies to incitement to break military discipline. The Portuguese state refuses to make public what evidence it will present against the PRP militants but whatever it is, it is not likely to carry much weight in a court. In fact, only one of the political prisoners has been brought to trial - it lasted an hour only and he was set free by the judge who very quickly realised the non-existence of the prosecution's case. The political prisoners could be freed by the Law of Amnesty which has been passed twice in the Portuguese parliament - but the Law does not become operative until ratified by the president and this, President Eanes, who wants to keep in with the right wing, has so far refused to do.

To break this deadlock, the PRP political prisoners went on a hunger strike which lasted the whole of October. As the condition of many of the hunger strikers became very critical, the government gave in to their demands and has promised that by Christmas they will either be brought to trial or freed under Law of Amnesty which the President has agreed to ratify.

OTELO: BUILDING POPULAR POWER

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as in London talking to Portuguese
to talk with *Big Flame*.

Otelo: A key gain of the 1975 period has been a qualitative jump in the way workers and peasants think – in their political consciousness. After the set-back of November 1975, the workers and peasants had to abandon the organs of popular power (e.g. the workers' and tenants' commissions) that they had built. They turned to the more traditional institutions like the trade unions. The trade unions are now very strong and militant in Portugal and although dominated by the Communist Party, there is a presence of the revolutionary left inside them which is strong enough to make sure its views are heard and strong enough to keep the CP combative. This militancy and combativity exists in the fields amongst the agricultural workers and in the factories – there have been many recent victories. For example, this June the miners in Beira Alta were on strike for 45 days; many of which they spent at the bottom of the mine. They were totally supported in their struggle by their wives and children and in the end won a total victory.

BF: One of the things that struck all of us who visited Portugal after the fall of fascism was the great difference in the level of political consciousness and militancy between the North and South of the country – is that division as great now as it was a few years ago?

Otelo: For example, the strike at the mines that I just mentioned took place near Viseu, which is a most reactionary town in the North. Things seem to be changing in the North, there are developments that are grounds for optimism; in local elections in Mirandela, which is in the most Northern part of the country (Tras os Montes), the CP won a couple of seats. The right-wing seems to be on the decline in even the most reactionary areas of the country.

If you take the river Tagus as a geographical division; then two thirds of the population live to the North of it. The agricultural workers in the South have always had a higher level of political consciousness, they have always had only their labour to sell. It is a region of



Carlos Augusto, IFL

Otelo de Carvalho talks with *Big Flame*



FLASHBACK to 1975: from an interview with Lotta Continua

"If socialism triumphed in Spain as well, this would mean a socialist Iberia (Spain and Portugal). A blaze, an explosion of liberty throughout the continent, in this moment of terrible crisis for capitalism. Who knows what results it could have. Revolution for the first time would have advanced into the very centre of the international capitalist system."

land-owners who own vast estates. In the North, consciousness is much lower; there the peasants are isolated, they all work separate bits of land that they own. And the reactionary influence of the local notables and the church is much greater. And they vote for whom the notables, church and police tell them to. Because they are so isolated in their work and everyday life, they are not in contact with the political life of the country.

BF: What is the situation with the "retornados", the exiles returned from the ex-colonies in Africa – are they still an important political force in the country?

Otelo: Yes. There are 800,000 of them and they constitute at least 10% of the voters and they vote for right-wing candidates. In fact, the government has dealt with the problem of the retornados very efficiently; it spent a lot of money making sure that they were inte-

grated back into society. A lot of them now have dominant positions in small industry and trade.

BF: Entrance into the Common Market (EEC) is a big political issue in Portugal, are you opposed to it?

Otelo: Yes, the revolutionary left thinks that joining the EEC would be disastrous for the Portuguese people. The standard of living of the people would decline since Portuguese industry would not be able to compete with the industry of the more industrialised countries of Northern Europe, we would become a market for their goods, including food. At the present time, Portugal imports 70% of its food needs. And we are totally unprepared to face the competition we will face in the EEC.

Our alternative project is to open up a new economic space for Portugal by developing economic links with the ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa – we could exchange our technology for their raw materials. We have a very good relationship with countries like Mozambique and yet it is countries of the EEC like West Germany that is developing this economic space and trading with Mozambique.

BF: The fact is that if Portugal joins the EEC this will only accentuate its role as provider of "guest workers" for the West German and French economies and supplier of cheap wine.

Otelo: The government's policy has been to try and deal with balance of payments problems by devaluing the currency – with the hope of increasing exports. This of course has the effect of raising the price of imports and lowering the standard of living. Well, you know how it all worked!

BF: To go back to 1975. I think that what surprised revolutionaries outside Portugal was the speed in which the gains of the revolutionary process and the influence of the left-wing of the Armed Forces Movement were defeated. Looking back on that period, do you think that there were mistakes made that could have been avoided?

Otelo: The fatal mistake was that after the fall of fascism, elections were held to the Constituent Assembly which legitimised the existing political parties.

So the struggle was transformed into a parliamentary struggle between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party which was supported by all the right-wing political forces. And this struggle split the Revolutionary Council (of the MFA) into a pro-communist and a pro-socialist wing; and it was the latter who had a majority in the armed forces as a whole; so the MFA was isolated. With the fall of the CP-dominated government of Vasco Gonçalves, the way was open for the Socialist Party and their supporters in the MFA (the "group of nine") to take control. The only force that could have stopped them was COPCON (the centralised control system for the armed forces in Portugal) and we were much too isolated and our power limited to the Lisbon area. So when the crunch came on November 25th, we found in COPCON that we were only supported by a few barracks in the Lisbon area.

BF: Presumably, also one of the problems was that apart from its military isolation, COPCON was also politically isolated – there was no mass movement in the country to support it.

Otelo: COPCON was supported by the overwhelming majority of workers with a more advanced political consciousness in the working class areas of Lisbon, Porto Setubal and the agricultural workers of the Alentejo; by poor people in general. But this support was not organised and could not balance the propaganda and counter-propaganda put out by the right wing political parties and the Socialist Party.

BF: I know you're in a rush so to end I'll ask you in what way you think revolutionaries and people in this country sympathetic to the Portuguese experience can express support and solidarity?

Otelo: The fact is that those structures of popular power that remain including the co-operatives remain very isolated – they have not joined together. The only co-operatives that are receiving financial support are those linked to the CP which has a lot of money at its disposal. The co-operatives close to the revolutionary left desperately need money. And, of course, the revolutionary left needs money to carry out all of its activities. We need money to set up a newspaper, to make films in support of the co-operatives and to finance our electoral campaign. The best political gesture you could do is to set up a campaign to raise money for us.

THE PRISONERS

Of course, governments do not do all that they promise. And to try and make sure that the Portuguese government carry out the promises they have made to the political prisoners a campaign in support of the political prisoners has been set up in London – on the lines of very successful campaigns that already exist in France, Spain, and of course, Portugal. Already supported by the SWP and *Big Flame*, we hope the campaign will get support from all revolutionary and progressive forces in this country. We hope to get the support of the women's movement for the PRP leader, Isabel do Carmo who is in prison with her baby son, who has literally spent his whole life in prison.

The campaign in Portugal which is asking people to send telegrams to President Eanes (c/o Belem, Lisbon) demanding that he ratify the Law of Amnesty can be contacted at CSPA, Rua Borges Carneiro 20 – 19, Lisbon.

The campaign in this country will be holding its first meeting in early December (see ads) when a comrade just back from Portugal will be reporting on the situation of the political prisoners. It can be contacted at Support for Portuguese Political Prisoners, Room 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London E.C.1.



Isabel do Carmo marching in 1974.

SOVIET PUZZLE

By Peter Anderson, Coventry Big Flame

THERE IS no doubt that the development of the "so-called" socialist countries (i.e. the USSR, the countries of Eastern Europe, Angola, China, Cuba etc.) is of tremendous importance to revolutionaries in Western capitalist countries. If only for the important role they play as a model (or anti-model) for socialism amongst the working class of those capitalist countries. To daydream for a moment — imagine what an effect it would have on the political situation in this country if the USSR was in the process of building socialism — if the standard of living of the Soviet proletariat was constantly rising, if it had increasing control of all aspects of its lives, and if it was using its growing affluence to aid and support the other countries of the Soviet bloc who were also building socialism — if pigs could fly . . .

ROAD-WORKS

Unfortunately for us, in no way is the USSR building socialism (that is why it is described as so-called socialist) and every day brings another event to help put the working class of capitalist countries off socialism — the war between Vietnam and China is a recent example. But though we all know that it is important to try and come to grips with what is happening in the so-called socialist countries, it is also true that for many years now the revolutionary left in this country when it takes up the issue has been locked in a totally sterile debate.

STERILE DEBATE

The debate is between those (the IMG and other traditional Trotskyist groups) who believe that countries like the USSR and China are 'workers' states though with some serious deficiencies (deformations is the term they use) and those (the SWP and certain Maoist groups) who believe that countries like the USSR are capitalist — run by one big company which is the state. Now, it is the great merit of "Century of the Unexpected" that it makes clear the incoherence of both the "deformed workers" state and "state capitalist" positions — by getting rid of this theoretical dead-wood, it opens the way for new and creative critical insights. They criticise the degenerate workers state position by pointing out that there is nothing inherently socialist about state planning of the economy

and state ownership of property. As Fantham and Machover write: "the essence of socialism and the transition to socialism lies not in the existence of nationalised property and planned production, but in the control of production and the plan by the working class." (my emphasis)

The key question is which class controls the state and in the "so-called" socialist countries it is certainly not the working class. Another argument central to the degenerate workers' state position is that countries like the USSR are countries transitional between capitalism and socialism, but it is clear from its history of the last 30 years that there is no evidence of a growth of socialism in the USSR, and the other so-called socialist societies — though this is not to say that the societies are totally stable.

STATE CAPITALIST

The advantage of the (state) capitalist position is that it recognises that anyone who thinks socialism is being built in the countries of the "second" world (which is how the pamphlet refers to the USSR etc.) is seriously misleading him/herself. But in fact, as the pamphlet points out, the state capitalist position which starts with the belief that if a country is not socialist it must be capitalist, has very weak arguments for its claim that the second world is capitalist. The argument that because second

world countries trade with capitalist countries they must be capitalist is a lousy one — feudal societies traded with capitalist ones, and were not capitalist. And, of course, characteristics which Marx saw as fundamental to capitalism are not present in the economies of the second world countries i.e. competition between capitalists and the freedom of the worker to offer his/her labour on the labour market — there is no competition between factories in the plan gives them a quota to fill) and it is illegal not to work in the USSR (it is also much more difficult to get the sack).

STATE COLLECTIVISM

Fantham and Machover argue that the principle of social organisation of second world countries is neither socialist, nor in transition to socialism nor capitalist — they call it "state collectivist". And in making this claim they are developing the ideas of a long line of Marxists (e.g. Ciliga, Kuron and Modzelewski, Risi, Carlo, Rakovski) whose ideas have for too long been neglected by the revolutionary left in this country. And if their analysis is right in its overall orientation (and I think it is) then it provides us with the tools to begin an analysis of the mode of production of second world societies, to understand the relationship between the USSR and other countries of the Soviet bloc (the relationship by definition cannot be an imperialist one) and the dynamics of the relationship between Western imperialism (whose leader remains the United States) and the second world — in which the major forces are the USSR and China.

SOME CRITICISMS

"The Century of the Unexpected" is a short pamphlet and it would be unreasonable to expect it to do more than lay the foundations of its authors' position. Even so, there is one fundamental criticism that must be made of the pamphlet. And that is that in it, Fantham and Machover have not broken with that strand of Marxism that sees socialism as a development out of capitalism. They approvingly refer to Marx's quote; that with the development of capitalism "grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production." (Capital Vol 1 pp 762-3 emphases added).

ECONOMISM

Given the history of the 20th century, it becomes more and more implausible for Marxists to continue to argue that it is some sort of accident that all revolutions have taken place in under developed countries and none in the "advanced" capitalist countries Marx predicted would become ripe for socialism. Tragically for revolutionaries it seems to be the case that in those countries where the development of the forces of production place the (revolutionary) transition to socialism on the agenda, other forces inhibit the development of a revolutionary consciousness and organisation that can bring about this transition. Put another way, where the "objective" conditions for revolution (e.g. forces of production) are present, "subjective" factors have not matured. And this is a fundamental problem for Marxists which Fantham and Machover refuse to face up to. They remain within a perspective of economic determinism that is also part of Marx's legacy.

STIMULATING

Love it or hate it, "Century of the Unexpected" is a stimulating pamphlet that takes up some of the main issues facing revolutionary socialists today — including the key issue of the relationship between socialism and democracy. By publishing it Big Flame hopes to revive a debate that has become old with dogma.



THE CENTURY OF THE UNEXPECTED
A NEW ANALYSIS OF SOVIET TYPE SOCIETIES
A BIG FLAME PUBLICATION

"Century of the Unexpected" costs 65p and is distributed by the PDC. It is available from PDC 27 Clerkenwell Close, London ECL. and all progressive bookshops.

Khomeiny's two front war

By Ben Johnson, South London Big Flame

IMAGINE GLASGOW at New Year. Masses of Scots out on the streets celebrating. Then Maggie Thatcher sends in troops to take over the city and hundreds of Scots are killed. The city is stunned and bodies lie untended on the streets for days before friends and relatives are able to throw blocks of ice over the decomposing corpses.

Absurd? Outrageous? Yet this is pretty much what happened in Mahabad and the other towns in Kurdistan at the hands of the Iranian troops in August, during the Kurds' annual festival.

What's more, there is a direct relationship to the present stage-managed 'crisis' at the American Embassy in Tehran. Both are symptoms of the very real — if still fermenting — crisis facing the fanatical Khomeiny regime.

KURDISTAN

Led by a radical Sheikh, Sheikh Moseini, the Kurdish nationalist movement incorporates a wide range of forces from the far left (Maoists and fedayeen guerillas) to liberals who simply support the right of self-determination. The main organised force is the broad-based Kurdish Democratic Party. Originally a Communist Party front, it is now more of a hotch-potch.

Still, it is a movement with massive support. In Saqqez, barricades went up and the army was fought in house to house battles before the town fell to the Iranian army. Eighty per cent of the inhabitants left. Mahabad fell to planes, helicopters, and troops, but guerillas have since recaptured all but the

garrison, and effectively control the town.

DICTATES

The guerillas — the 'pesh mergas' — move amongst the people in classic fish-through-the-sea style. Kurds, who have never had autonomy, and whose only experience in self-government was the short-lived Mahabad republic of 1946, have always known oppression, and their struggle against it has been kept alive in at least one country (besides Iran, the Kurds live in parts of Iraq, Turkey and the USSR), whatever the level of repression directed against them. If a socialist consciousness is not widespread, there is a strong anti-imperialist awareness, reinforced by a commitment to mutual support and collective struggle. At the same time, the Kurds — especially women — have refused to accept many of Khomeiny's Islamic dictates, including wearing the chador (the black cloak or veil) or the banning of contraceptives.

JOHN WAYNES OF ISLAM

Why did Khomeiny send in troops to massacre the Kurds? The reason is not entirely clear, but there is no doubt that Khomeiny was nervous because of the effects that democratic and pro-feminist tendencies in Kurdistan may have in the rest of Iran and because of the growing discontent amongst Iranians and the effect of this on the



Iranian regime — where a conflict was brewing between the clergy (headed by Khomeiny) and the pro-capitalist forces represented mainly by ex-Prime Minister Bazargan.

You have to realise that Iran is still in a state of semi-anarchy. Gun-toting Islamic John Waynes roam the streets, freely interpreting the will of God and Khomeiny. Anything up to one in four Iranians are out of work, and prices are shooting up at the rate of about five per cent a month. Living conditions, bad enough under the Shah, are getting worse, and only Islamic remedies (like holding a period of 'religious' fasting when there's a food shortage) help out.

WAR

Khomeiny's Islamic clergy imagine themselves at war with capitalism and socialism, but they have no economic policy of their own. Oil may be Iran's life line, but it may not be equal to the strains of a costly war against the Kurds and a break

in Iran's trade relations with Western imperialist countries.

The occupation of the US Embassy was a stunt, stage-managed and probably without any deep commitment to cutting Iran's connections with imperialism. But, as happened in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the actors may take things beyond the wishes of the stage manager. If so, Khomeiny may have created more problems for himself than he started with.

In short, Khomeiny's regime does not know where it's going. But this does not mean that there is any kind of popular awareness of socialism as the alternative. A growing anti-imperialist consciousness exists side by side with open repression of radicals. Many leftists, including a group of Iranian Trotskyists, are under threat of execution.

As long as Khomeiny's religious nationalism retains the loyalty of a large majority of the Iranian people, things will be very difficult indeed for his left-wing critics.

DAILY Media

REDS TAKE ON THE PRESS

The TUC recently has published two pamphlets on the media. One, "A Cause for Concern", examines media coverage of

the industrial disputes last winter. The other, "How to Handle the Media", is a practical guide for trade unionists.

As they are produced by the TUC, it is not surprising that their major weakness lies in the politics behind them. The Foreword to *A Cause for Concern* signed by Lionel Murray sets the moderate tone. He reminds us that not all trade unionists behaved perfectly on every occasion.

The complaint is that media does not give enough attention to union attempts to restrict the effects of industrial action or when production targets are exceeded.

PRESS OWNERSHIP

Without any Marxist theory of how ideology operates in capitalist societies, 'A Cause for Concern' has little explanation for the overwhelming bias against unions. All it offers is the simplistic (although true) fact that the press is owned by a small number of rich men. The only useful things in the pamphlet are the examples it quotes which bring out the savagery of the media's attacks on strikes. 'How to Handle the Media' is better, if only because it is written in a much livelier style and includes some nice cartoons. The advice it gives on press releases and press conferences, while often valuable for those unfamiliar with the media, is identical with that companies would give their executives. Only in the section on broadcasting does it suggest being awkward and making a fuss by insisting on choosing where you are filmed, meeting the other participants in a discussion beforehand and so on.) This section draws extensively on the 'TV Handbook' produced by Free Communications Group in 1973 although without crediting it and moderating some of the suggested demands. One point stressed in the 'TV Handbook' but omitted here is the need for a group of you to appear together to lend each other collective support and not to allow the broadcasters to reduce you to a single representative.

PESSIMISTIC

Overall 'How to Handle the Media' is pessimistic. Readers are warned not to expect too much from a sympathetic journalist as whatever he or she writes can be totally changed by a subeditor. Similarly trade unionists are told they have little chance of success from appealing to the Press Council or taking libel action.

This suggests that forms of direct action, not considered in the pamphlet, are likely to bring the best results. The occupation of the *Evening News* offices after its story on lesbian parenthood through AID and the *Guardian* offices after its report on the Gay Pride march won space in their pages for a reply. Action of this type and making links with the trade unionists working in the media seem to offer the best hope of combatting media coverage of strikes.

A Cause for Concern and *How to Handle the Media* both 60p from TUC, Great Russell St., London W.C.1.

by a member of North London Big Flame



Carl Gardner reports

ples of what can be done: the feminist occupation of the *Evening News* offices in January 1978 over its witch-hunting attack on lesbian mothers and the Lucas Aerospace workers' occupation of an ATV studio, to ensure their case was put. These are the kinds of action which deserve analysing and popularising - they are worth a hundred cosy chats with sympathetic hacks.

However, these weaknesses - uncritical acceptance of journalistic ideology, lack of an adequate theory of the media and a downgrading of the direct forms of action - should not detract totally from the many useful aspects of this volume. As a handbook it deals in detail with such practical matters as writing and issuing press statements, organising News Conferences and radio and TV interview techniques. MacShane continually stresses the need to determine what specific audience you want to reach and what precise political aim you are trying to achieve. This is an important tactical requirement which cuts across the most common assumption of journalism - which talks about the 'viewers' or 'the reader', without recognising that the audience contains deep divisions of class, sex and race. Despite the problems with the book it is still extremely useful for its extensive directory of addresses in the final chapter.

Denis McShane *Using the Media* (Pluto Press, £2.50)

IN 1977, Rolls-Royce car-division engineers were in dispute with their local management. They decided to write to the Queen apologising because a new Rolls-Royce promised for her Jubilee Year would be delivered late as a result of the industrial action they were forced to take in pursuit of their claim.

This bizarre, almost feudal, stunt which eventually found its way into the national press, is cited favourably by Denis McShane in a new book 'Using the Media' as an example of 'amusing ways of putting over your side in a dispute'. And in a way this ideologically-loaded action, which in terms of political consciousness certainly raises more problems than it solves, says a lot about the central weakness of this latest offering in the 'Workers' Handbook' series.

For the author (ex-President of the National Union of Journalists and a member of the TUC Media committee) the traditional 'news values' of Fleet Street - 'human interest', 'scandal', 'novelty', 'scoop' etc - are not the suspect bearers of a particularly narrow and reactionary view of the world, but neutral devices which the labour movement itself can adopt to hit the front page. The task at hand is not that of challenging and transforming the present media and its values, as part of the struggle for a freer society as a whole. Instead workers have to learn to play the media-game better.

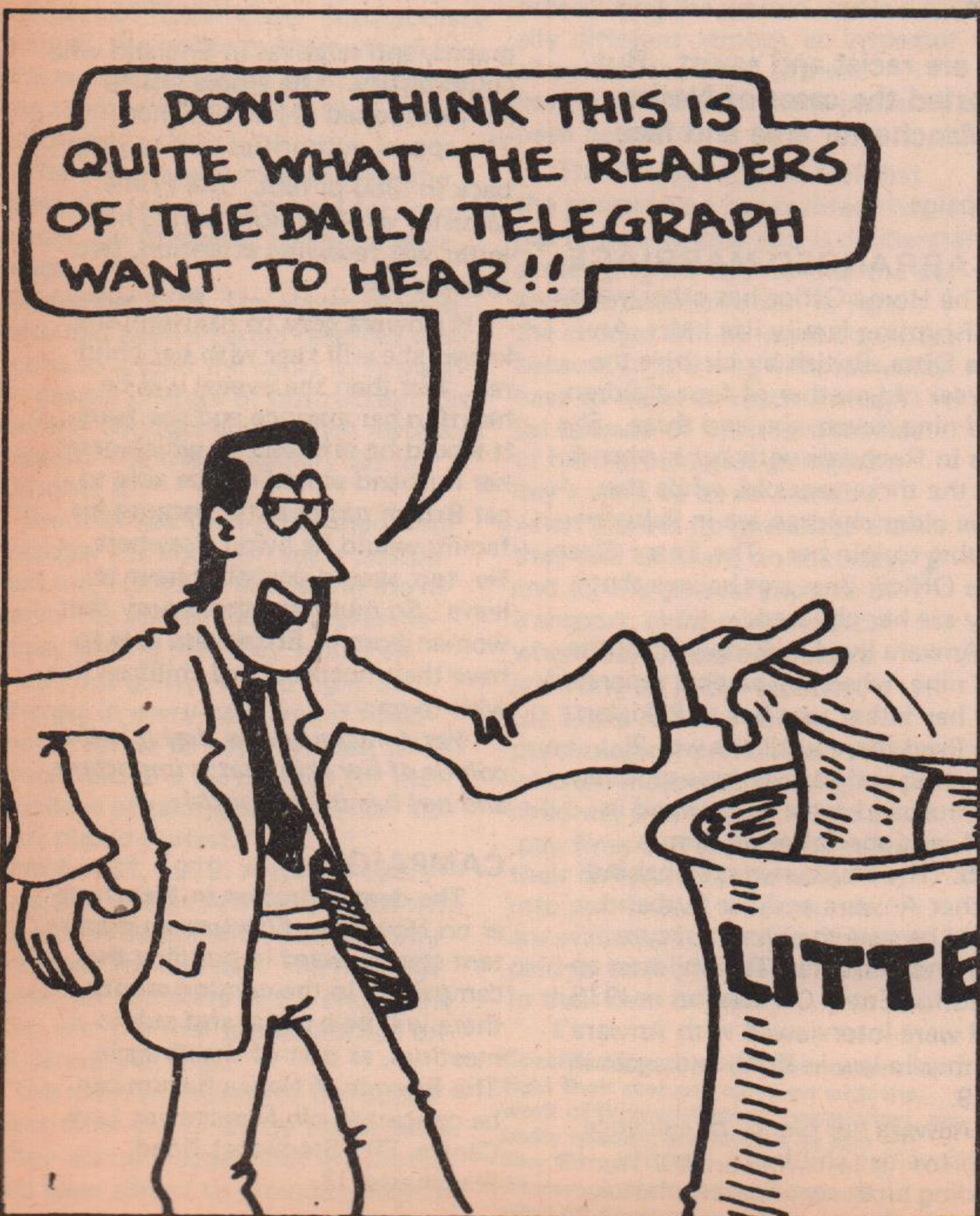
As he says early on: 'For the time being we have to take the media...as they are'. For McShane important change will

only come about through legislative measures from above in the shape of recent TUC/Institute of Workers' Control proposals such as a national printing corporation and a strengthened Press Council. Meanwhile we should be concerned simply with defensive measures against current media practices to get a 'fairer' deal.

Although he doesn't intend a theoretical analysis of the subject, the book contains an implicit theory which explains 'media distortion' in terms of the bias of media workers: TV's 'journalistic quality and interest in trade union news varies according to the ability and predilections of... producers and editors'. It shouldn't be necessary to point out that the media are pro-capital and anti-union because of the way television and the press are organised and run, not as a result of individual decisions or personalities.

The emphasis in his strategy is on forming friendly, personal relations with journalists, 'many of whom are poorly-paid trade unionists'. This even extends to 'getting the editor on your side'. This value of collective action to confront journalists and editors is played down, particularly in the book's weakest section on 'Complaints'.

Two actions mentioned by McShane merely in passing are outstanding exam-



EXTREMISTS SEEK NEW GROUND

TWO YEARS ago the IMG organised a fortnightly series of discussions in London on "Marxism and the Mass Media." They were very popular and the discussions, preceded by more or less formal lectures, were wide-ranging, exploratory, open-ended. Written up, they've finally been published in paperback

On a very small (London) scale, it was an exciting time. Cultural politics, hardly a new concept, was getting a shot in the arm. A lot of new projects were around: Rock Against Racism, Music for Socialism, Wedge Magazine, new theatre groups, even (remember the optimism?) Socialist Challenge. Semiology (the study of signs) and psychoanalysis were in an interesting limbo somewhere between being new possibilities and new commodities. Enzenberger's book *Raids and Reconstructions* was selling well on the fortnightly bookstall. He talked of a 'politicised counter-culture', which seemed, then, like it could mean a lot more

than punks + programme = new youth vanguard.

SOCIALISM AND TELLY

With a couple of exceptions (mainly the material by Carl Gardner, who tries to get an 'overview'), there are three quite different strands in the book. Which seems, now, to be a major part of the problem. First, 'traditional' discussions of workers control, democracy and censorship in the mass media. Uncontroversial re-runs of the debates on *Republica* and *Radio Renascença* in Portugal; Ernest



Mandel's not very illuminating concession that 'socialism now means workers councils plus automation plus television'. More interesting are the pieces on socialist strategies in the arts and media. A history of Red Ladder theatre

group, Roger Proetz on 'Their Papers and Ours', two opposing contributions on music. And two articles on film, which lead into a third strand, 'struggle in ideology.' Like the rest, they suffer from the absence of the discussion which originally followed them - too brief, too glib.

ECONOMISM RULES OK

Two years on, the gaps between the words in the books's title seem just as wide. It's a case, maybe, of not seeing the wood (cultural politics) for the trees (new specialisations). So media theory becomes an academic career and a safe bet for publishers, while at the same time *Beyond the Fragments*, which talks, very mildly, of the possibilities of a 'prefigurative politics', a political practice - in campaigns, meetings, demonstrations, daily life - that concerns itself with 'form' as well as 'content', i.e., with *ideology*, gets attacked as a 'libertarian' diversion. Meanwhile, the economism of the 'far left' trundles on. Yet again, it seems to be back to arts and theory on one side and 'militants' on the other. Perhaps we have to wait until we've got ride of the Tories to make the connections. Trouble is, without them, it may be a long, long wait.

Media, Politics and Culture: A Socialist View, edited by Carl Gardner. Macmillan paperback, £3.95. Review by Malcolm Imrie.

THEY'RE WELCOME HERE!

"I became an immigration officer at Heathrow Airport in November 1976 and part of my work was to refuse certain people—usually black—the right to enter the UK. 18 months later I left the job because I could no longer continue operating what I felt to be a racist and sexist immigration control, amongst colleagues who were themselves both racist and sexist."

(Anthea Lowe, ex-immigration officer)
Over 100 million people are entitled to come to the UK whenever they want, free of immigration control. They include millions of white commonwealth citizens who were exempted from immigration control by the 1971 Immigration Act. And Common Market citizens who can come here freely to look for jobs.

That is one half of Britain's immigration policy: no immigration controls for millions of people, mainly white.

The other half of the law imposes harsh controls on blacks. For many years it has been virtually impossible for people from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean to come here. Or for those settled here to be joined by their dependents.

The chief aim of the immigration laws is to discourage non-whites from attempting to settle in Britain.

Entering the country is made deliberately difficult for people who want to join their families, here. At the end of June just over 27,000 applications for immediate settlement were outstanding in the Indian subcontinent. Waiting time ranged from 7 months to 24½ months. These are mainly from wives and children of men who are already living here.

This was the experience of one Bangladeshi family six years ago;

things have got worse since then:

"I had been here for several years working in the steel works, when I applied for my wife and son to join me. It took two years for them to be granted an interview in Dacca. They set off from Sylhet, which is 150 miles from Dacca — a 12 hour journey on foot by bus, ferry and train. My wife didn't speak English so an interpreter answered the questions. Our ten-year-old son was seen separately and had a head X-ray to check on his age."

Children are routinely separated from their parents and questioned. They are often subjected to X-ray examination for age estimation — although in the UK the X-raying of children for non-medical purposes is forbidden because of risk of damage to glands. It is known that pregnant women have also been X-rayed.

They were asked detailed questions and their son, confused and for the first time in a big town and strange situation, gave

some answers which were different from those of his mother when talking about who owned the cows and the names of his cousins. They waited three months and then were refused entry.

It was only after two more years of fighting appeals and supplying documentary evidence that this family was finally reunited. Many were very young and separated from their parents. They were "looked after" by Securicor guards.

Of the 1,340 people discharged from Immigration Act imprisonment in 1978, 48% had been in prison for over a month and 4% for over three months.

In 1977 16 year old Shanaz Begum came here from Pakista to marry. She was interrogated at Heathrow by immigration officers who claimed she was 16 and could not marry. She was locked in Harmondsworth detention centre after being given a vaginal examination by officials whom she thought might be doctors.

"There were two of them. One taunted me, asking me if I knew what was going to happen to me my wedding night. Later they told me my examination had shown I was not yet 16."

Even when you manage to get an entry voucher the battle doesn't end — you still need the Immigration Officer's OK, and if your papers are queried at all, you risk detention for days in Harmondsworth Detention Centre, near Heathrow. In 1978 5,128 people were detained there. In the first six months of 1979 149 children were detained for up to 30 nights

STOP THE TORY RACIST LAWS

Photo Evans (I.F.L.)



Racist Attack



ASIANS IN the Attercliffe area of Sheffield are worried about escalating violence against them. The latest incident was an attack on the home of a Pakistani late Saturday night. A gang of about a dozen young white men broke four windows and upturned rubbish bins. It was the second attack on the family's home and a relative's shop next door.

Asians believe the attack is the latest of a series of organised violent crimes this year against people and property in the area. 'This has become a playground for fascists. Most of them don't live here,

they come up especially for the violence to an area where our people are particularly vulnerable'.

Half a dozen successful citizens arrests have been made on attackers this year — but certain shops and homes seem to be the targets of organised racist raids.

The initial response of the police was to suggest that there was no racial motive behind the attacks!

The picture shows the back yard, after the attack, littered with broken glass and rubbish from upturned dustbins. Picture Big Flame

IT'S OFFICIAL RACISM

THE TORY proposals on Immigration are racist and sexist. But so is the 1971 Act. Last month we reported the cases of Nasira Begum and Saïd Bibi, who live in the Manchester area and face deportation.

The Home Office, who told Nasira that hers was not a proper marriage (after her husband turned her out nearly three years ago), gave a final deadline of Nov. 12 for her to leave the country. Because she was three days late applying for a visa, she has no right of appeal and can be arrested. But if the Home Office serve notice of deportation, she will have the right to appeal against the deportation order. By which time Nasira will probably be in Risley Remand Centre.

In Saïd Bibi's case, the Home Office insist that this 80 year old woman go back to Pakistan to wait while they consider her appeal to stay with her son in Rochdale. The authorities say that her son's house is not big enough to accommodate her, despite the fact that he rented an extra room for her. Rochdale Council are willing to offer the family a council house, but even that doesn't convince the Home Office, who claim Saïd has other relatives to care for her in Pakistan. Liberal MP, Cyril Smith has abandoned the

campaign.

RE-ARRANGED MARRIAGE

The Home Office has other ways of disrupting family life. Mrs. Anwara Ditta, British by birth, is the 25 year old mother of four children aged nine, seven, six, and three. She lives in Rochdale with her husband and the three-year old, while the three older children are in Pakistan waiting to join her. The Entry Clearance Officer does not believe that they are her children.

Anwara lived in Britain until she was nine, when her parents separated and her father sent her to Pakistan. She lived there until she was 21, marrying and having three children. Her husband came to England in 1974, and she followed him in 1975. The children stayed behind so that Anwara and her husband could be sure they had a secure home to come to. The children applied for Entry Certificates in 1976, and were interviewed with Anwara's mother-in-law in 1978, and again in 1979.

Anwara has plenty of evidence to prove her children's identity — including birth certificates, photo-

graphs, and relatives in England who could testify. The Home Office has not looked at her evidence. The appeal authorities said to ring back in 1980 or 1981. The Prime Minister wrote a note saying her letter was receiving attention, two months ago.

If Anwara goes to Pakistan, she knows she will stay with her children. But then the appeal will be heard in her absence and she fears it would be refused. In which case her husband would not be able to get British nationality, because his family would be living elsewhere. He, too, would probably have to leave. So much for the theory that women born in Britain are able to have their husband and children live with them.

Yet Anwara knows that it is the colour of her skin that is important, and not her British birth!

CAMPAIGN

The demonstration in Manchester on November 17th was an important step forward in building the campaign. In the coming month, there will be a social and public meetings, as part of the struggle. The Friends of Nasira Begum can be contacted c/o Manchester Law Centre, 595 Stockport Road, Manchester 13.

UTOM "Troops Out Now"

WAR WEARINESS is pushing the British government towards a solution in Northern Ireland. But any initiative comes up against the rightward drift of the loyalists. For the moment, the result is stalemate in the North. In Britain, feeling against the war hardens, giving the United Troops Out Movement (UTOM) a new opportunity in its campaign to withdraw the troops. UTOM is growing fast, and around forty branches will be represented at this month's annual conference. This article stems from discussions in UTOM and the Big Flame Irish Commission. A longer version has already appeared in UTOM's discussion bulletin.

SPLITS

In an unguarded moment, Humphry Atkins, the Northern Ireland Secretary, blurted out the truth that everyone knows but the government prefers not to admit, that the IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) are stronger and better armed than ever. And just to underline the impossibility of a military solution, war weariness is growing as never before.

Parents of soldiers are signing troops out petitions and squaddies are cracking up and committing suicide. The old establishment consensus on Ireland is on the verge of breakdown. There is now a popular mass circulation daily calling for the troops to be withdrawn - eventually. The *Daily Mirror* has taken the most adamant position, but further behind come the *Guardian* and *Financial Times* calling for 'a political solution'. And to complicate matters for the government, there's the American dimension, an increasingly key consideration in presidential election year. The loyalists and the Tory right want more troops and more protestants in arms: US and West German capital wants a solution that will make the North safe for investment.

DILEMMA

However the government re-

solves its dilemma, political tension can only grow over Ireland, maybe forcing a real split in the British ruling class. All the signs point to a new opportunity for the Irish solidarity movement to take its demands out to people on the streets in this country.

WITHDRAWAL

UTOM's demands are for 'troops out now' and 'self-determination for the Irish people'. The British army occupation of the North is the biggest barrier to the unification of the two sections of the working class. Big Flame disagrees with the proposals to widen UTOM's appeal by playing down its demands.

The two demands flow from the realisation that the troops play a reactionary role and are the main force in repressing the nationalist population. Whilst we cannot accept the positions of the broader withdrawal movement - 'back to barracks...in the near future' - we believe that the UTOM can work within and alongside such forces.

UTOM's demands relate not only to the present situation, but also prepare the ground for opposing any future attempts by the government to impose a solution that would stop the war but leave self-determination in limbo.

For more information about UTOM, contact:

Box U.T.
2a St. Pauls Road
London N.1

If there isn't a branch near you, you might consider forming one.



Big Flame Photo

MAKE THE message loud and clear! That was the attitude of Merseyside United Troops Out Movement when it organised a local demonstration calling for troop withdrawal from Ireland.

For too long marches have been concentrated in the West End of London. With the Press censoring itself, these demos are rarely even heard about in Liverpool or elsewhere.

NO ESCAPE

But few Merseysiders could escape knowing about the "troops out" demo on November 3rd. It was reported practically every hour on local radio news bulletins.

And when 400 people took to the streets, they chanted the message and waved a forest of placards all the way to the Pier Head.

It was vital that it wasn't seen as a weary trail of bored left wingers marching about something-or-other yet again. In that, it succeeded.

Loyalists link with NF

BRITAIN'S ULTRA right-wing National Front has linked up with the remains of TARA, one of the most sinister loyalist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. Oddly, for a loyalist group, Tara is named after the hill where the High Kings of ancient Ireland were crowned.

The connection was made in August when a former member of TARA, who lives in Bangor, Co. Down, travelled to East London where he met members of the NF's National Directorate. A short time later Stuart McKinley, an East Belfast youth who is not connected with TARA, went to London where he was appointed acting chairman of the Front in Belfast after talks with Richard Verrall, one of the Front's leaders. Authorisation for the appointment was given by John Tyndall, the NF's chairman. Several weeks ago one of the Front's travelling organisers, Bernard Ward, who was NF candidate in Stoke-on-Trent, slipped into Belfast for a number of meetings with former TARA men and other potential recruits. Since then contact has been made with many ex-TARA men who had dropped out of paramilitary activity or become involved with the UDA.

TARA, which was always the most secretive of the loyalist paramilitary groups, was formed in East Belfast in 1972 by a politician who was a close associate of the Rev. Ian Paisley. The group has been responsible for at least a dozen sectarian murders and for intimidating hundreds of Catholic families to flee their homes in East Belfast. This city has witnessed the greatest population shift in Europe since the end of the last world war.

EVANGELICAL

TARA's statements usually have a strong racist, anti-socialist tone, and often sprinkled with evangelical cliches, reflecting the views of its leader. Its members overlap between such groups as the UDA, and some with the Baker gang,

which carried out the infamous "Romper Room" murders. TARA's speciality was the evening pipe bomb attack. Their crude pipe grenades were made from sodium chlorate and sugar stuffed into a short metal pipe and fitted with a percussion fuse. These would be lobbed over the back wall or through the window of an unsuspecting Catholic family or a socialist bookshop. Later they switched to doorstep assassinations, using pistols. To TARA, Ulster's enemies are the unlikely twins of the "Vatican and Catholicism backed by an international communist conspiracy."

CONSPIRACY

Both the National Front and TARA have an identical view of the

war for national liberation in Ireland. They see it as part of an international conspiracy which can be defeated by having total integration with Britain - and shipping all the Catholics in the north to the Republic, and in the case of the blacks in Britain, forcible repatriation. Not surprisingly therefore, much sympathy can be found in the pubs and homes of the republican ghettos for the black people in Britain and for the Anti-Nazi League, and no sympathy whatsoever from the people for the state's police force who are seen here as being potential fascists, based on the experiences of the RUC attacks on working class areas here.

An axis of the two groups means that TARA will get new life and the benefits of the NF's propaganda and organisational skills. The expertise which TARA can offer the Front in return is more frightening. A copy of "Bulldog", the magazine directed at young fascists in Belfast recently asked: "How long before London becomes like Belfast with shootings and murders nearly every day?" Black people living in East London may not have to wait too long for an answer to that question.

This article is written by a Derry comrade, and is based on research presented in *Hibernia*, a weekly Dublin magazine, 25/10/79

ARMAGH 11

March 8, 1979. International Women's Day. A peaceful picket of about fifty women, with children, outside Armagh Gaol to protest about inhuman conditions there.

When the picket was over and the women returning to their coach, four vehicles of Royal Ulster Constabulary arrived, the police in them attacked the women, dragging them and beating them, and finally arrested eleven of them.

The eleven were released later the same day, after being held for four hours. No charges at this time were made.

September 1979. The eleven women who had been arrested received summons to attend the court in Armagh to answer charges of obstruction, disorderly conduct and, in two instances assault. The trial originally set for October 8.

The trial was then postponed until October 25, and then again postponed until October 31. During the interval the women issued a press release, stating that they would all plead not guilty, would fight the charges in every case, and if fined would refuse to pay the fines, which amounted to a fee charged for the privilege of taking part in a non violent public protest.

October 31, 1979. A special court was arranged in Armagh to deal with all eleven defendants; but was only arranged for one day. The hearings were not complete at the end of the day, and the trial was adjourned until January 2, 1980.

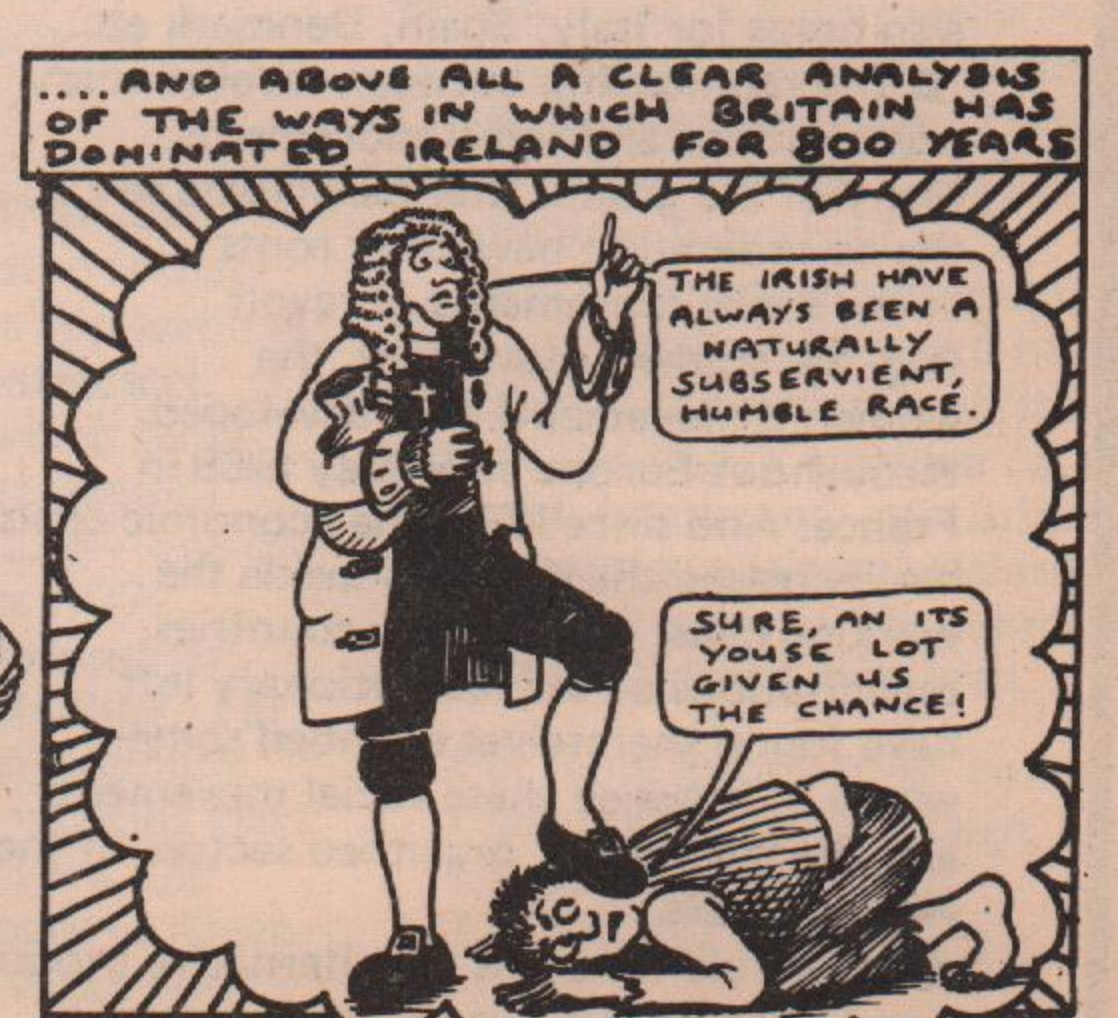
The main witnesses for the police were cross examined by the defence. They acknowledged that the protest had been filmed to provide evidence, but the movie-camera had suffered

from some mysterious defect. The still photographs, however, that were produced by the prosecution showed no violence or rioting.

The Magistrate made the comment that the charges were probably incorrect and that the police should be prosecuting the women under a totally different statute, an inspector of police (the chief witness) having admitted that the protest had been peaceful.

The Armagh Eleven feel that the prosecution has realised that it has in fact no case and is deliberately prolonging the trial so that the defendants determination to fight the charges will be worn down, (a) because of the long distances they have to travel to reach Armagh, (b) because of the improbability of having witnesses giving up a day's work to be on standby when there is no guarantee that they will be heard on that day, and (c) the general expense of transport, child-minding etc. when four of the defendants are living on social security. (d) There is also a strong psychological pressure on those who are mothers of young children, that if they refuse to pay fines and are sent to prison, their children will be taken into public care unless funds are available for people to be paid to look after the children in their own homes.

Contributions to enable the women for fight their case and carry on with the work of Women Against Imperialism, are badly needed: and should be sent to; May Enright, 8 Dermott Hill Drive, Whiterock, Belfast 12, N. Ireland (sent by Margaretta D'Arcy, one of the eleven)



IRISH HISTORY CO-OP

The Irish History Co-op is producing a book on Ireland and they need money for its publication. Donations can be made direct to the Bank of Ireland, 557/9 Stratford Rd., Sparkhill, Birmingham B114TP. Account Number 70462987

Train of Thought

Dear Big Flame,

Last month, I read Rudi Dutschke's tale about how he tamed a wrestler and thought this kind of thing could never happen to me. Well, last week it did and the least I can do is tell you about it.

I was on a train with a couple of mates coming back from some rank and file meeting. The train is very full and one of the only seats free is the one next to me.

Soon it is occupied by a woman carrying a lot of books. After a while of staring at her pile of books, I ask her about them. She tells me she is a publishers assistant and that she has just returned from living abroad for a few years. We start talking about what's happening here and she

starts off on how the nation's going to the dogs, how the unions are too powerful etc.

I take her points one by one, explain to her how the real problem is lack of investment, how the unions are too weak, not too strong and how cutting public expenditure will just cause a lot of suffering and misery and not get us out of our economic problems.

We have a good chat for a while and then the train arrives at Coventry and I get off. By the time I get home, it's around six and the local Midlands news programme is on the telly.

To my amazement, one item on the programme is an interview with the woman I have just been chatting with on the train! It's Mandy Rice-Davies and she's just

back from living in Israel. The interviewer asks her a lot of these "we're going to the dogs" type questions hoping that she will agree with him and blame it all on the unions.

But no, she doesn't. She gives a lot of the same answers that I gave in my discussion with her! Lack of investment, unions too weak etc! The interviewer, who by the way is very reactionary, doesn't go much for the interview and ends it pretty fast - but not before Mandy Rice-Davies has made some pretty good points.

I don't know what the moral of this tale is, but certainly I felt that my conversation on the train had been very worthwhile! a member of Coventry Big Flame.

write
on

Women in India

12 Poorvi Marg,
Vasant Vihar,
New Delhi 110057,
India.

Dear Big Flame,

I am writing on behalf of some friends in the Bhartiya Mahila Jagriti Parishad, a Dalit women's group. This is a progressive organisation, formed about three years ago, which opposes all atrocities and injustices against Dalit women. "Dalit" means oppressed and so refers to all women belonging to the untouchable caste, working class and peasantry.

They are planning to have an exhibition next month on the role and experiences of women in feminist, working-

class and anti-imperialist struggles. They want to take the exhibition around schools colleges and factories in India. They desperately need posters, leaflets, badges, stickers poems and songs about the suffragettes, Cuba, USSR, Vietnam, Iran, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Northern Ireland. They particularly want to have a section on sexism and fascism and want as much material as possible on this.

Please can you send us whatever you have to the above address as soon as possible. If you let me know the cost, I'll refund you by cheque.

Yours in sisterhood,
Jude Howell



South Africa Cut

Dear Comrades,

I'd like to add a comment to the article I wrote on changes in South Africa for the November issue of the paper. The article was cut by the editorial collective so as to allow more space for the coverage of the Lancaster House conference.

While I agreed with that decision, it left some gaps in the analysis I offered and some comrades have raised the question with me that the analysis as published was inadequate. I agree. The article, as published, did not adequately explain what the material basis of the "liberalisation" in South Africa is. Nor did it account for the connection between an internal "liberalisation" and increasing external aggressiveness (particularly in Zimbabwe). The explanation is to be found in a shift in the political base of the ruling National Party in South Africa. They are moving

away from their traditional Afrikaaner base, whose economic interests are maintained by apartheid. They are moving towards those sectors of white south Africa which favour a more orthodox capitalist system. These sectors, predominantly those in manufacturing, wish to stabilise South African capitalism by improving the working conditions of Blacks and by creating a black petty bourgeoisie. A greater incorporation of sections of the Blacks into South African society would in turn allow greater recruitment of Blacks into the security forces. Thus, internal liberalisation and external aggression are two sides of the same coin. That coin is the attempt to provide a stable integration of South Africa into the international imperialist system.

In struggle,
Gavin MacLean
(Brighton Big Flame)

Dear Comrades,

TO MY surprise I received £1050 redundancy money last May. As you know, the most dangerous thing a person on social security or a grant can have is money in the bank. So bearing this in mind, my wife and I decided on five weeks holiday in the United States and Canada. Here are just a few impressions of the holiday.

I must say I've never met a group of people like the Canadians (I've been there before). Each ethnic group seems more nationalistic than the people in the country they have left. The good life in Canada pales a bit when you talk to the people and realise what they do to maintain it. A good job is one in a casting foundry or General Motors with guaranteed overtime. The average week within the circle of people I mixed with was about fifty-seven hours. You needed this to keep the swimming pool, your wife's car, skating lessons for the kids, etc. Not that you really wanted these things, but you had to have them to show 'the wops' down the road that the British were as good as them. I did mention to a trained nurse in Canada that I couldn't stand racial intolerance, especially against blacks. Her response was astounding: 'did I class Italians as black or white?'

RACE ABROAD

After the long journey south we reached Atlanta, Georgia. From there on it was like stepping into the past. Maybe racial equality is on the statute books, but no ordinary people seem to recognise it.

The house we stayed in when we visited Alabama had pictures of George Wallace in every room. Rather like the pope's picture in strict catholic households. All the people we met had their own fire arms. Most brought into the conversation your religion, and when I said I was 'protestant' (a Liverpool habit - most people would say C of E), I was in! A real WASP. The bigotry stunned me. People continually used the word 'nigger' in the most vicious way.

The local hero in this town was a man who had shot a black man through his bedroom window and then just got back into bed. Was the black man hurt? 'He lost his leg, I think'.

The 'Lady' of the house was sixty years old, she had two load-

ed guns under her bed 'for them niggers'. The family had two dogs - 'they only bark at niggers, they just know they're evil'.

A friend of the family once ran his truck into a new car 'because it upset him to see a nigger driving one'. Both sons didn't like the blacks, not because they were black, but 'because most of them were poor and scruffy'. Even the poor whites in the mountains of northern Georgia and the backwoods of Alabama looked down on the blacks, and I have never seen so-called civilised Western people living in housing like those poor whites.

Anyone who likes music should visit New Orleans if possible. The old part of town after dark has every type of music, from the traditional to the most advanced jazz, on show. You can listen to fine music of your choice 24 hours a day; it's beautiful. The blacks rule here. They ooze style. From the street kids dancing for nickels to the most statuesque men and women in

the finest, most 'hip' clothes I have ever seen. Even the doormen and barmen in the thousands of clubs have style, the audiences have it, too. The whole place is a show, you can't place a line between performers and audiences. I felt more at home in New Orleans than anywhere else in America.

The whites I mixed with in the South were steeped in bigotry. It was eating them away. I genuinely liked the blacks I met, they sensed somehow your true feelings and in New Orleans they dressed, acted, enjoyed themselves and swanked about themselves in the nicest possible way. In a way I've always wanted to do, but never had the nerve.

I am not being patronizing, it's just that there is something about any minority that asserts itself that I envy.

I haven't signed this letter for security reasons - Social Security, I mean!

Travelling Man, *Essexpool*

COMMUNING IN PARIS

THE CO-ORDINATION of European groups of the revolutionary left that came together over the elections to the European parliament continues to meet. The last meeting of the co-ordination was held in Paris on October 27th-28th, groups new to the co-ordination included the SWP from Britain and Maxitis and the O.S.R. from Greece.

The topic of the meeting was "The Crisis of the Revolutionary Left." The range of views expressed in part reflected the different national experiences since 1970 but in part they stemmed from the differing political traditions of the groups involved.

The most important debates were over:

■ The role of reformism. The central problem we had to explain was why as social democracy moved to the right it did not lose its working class support? Those who believe that the hold of reformism lies in its ability to deliver material rewards to the working class have to answer why its hold does not weaken even when the material rewards dry up. And this is not only the experience of England, it also holds for Italy, Spain, Denmark etc.

■ The relationship between revolutionary organisations and social movements. Many of the groups that participate in the co-ordination have their roots in the social movements of revolt (e.g. the student movement, the women's movement) that developed throughout Europe after May 1968 in France. And since 1975, the economic crisis has increased the divisions inside the working class. So in many countries, organisations of the revolutionary left have found themselves stranded somewhere in between these social movements and the traditional, organised sectors of the working class.

■ What role for plans for alternative production? Throughout Europe, the economic recession is leading to redundancies and closures, especially in the established

heavy industries like steel-making and ship-building. Speakers from many of the groups saw alternative plans as having potential to mobilise workers who wanted to exercise control over the how and what of production. Other speakers (e.g. the SWP) saw alternative plans as merely a step on the slope to reformism.

■ The speakers from Sinn Fein and the E.I.A. (an organisation from the Basque country) forcibly reminded us about the importance of the struggles for national liberation inside Europe. In general, the European revolutionary left has failed to understand the dynamic of these struggles and the key role that they play in the struggle for socialism in Europe. Problems of translation made the meeting a cumbersome business (at times) nevertheless, the co-ordination continues to be a unique opportunity for revolutionary groups from different parts of the political spectrum to get to know each other's politics better. The next meeting, jointly organised by the SWP and Big Flame, will be in London at the end of February. Its subject is the so-called socialist states and it could well be a cracker! (see below for the press statement on Ireland signed by most of the groups present at the Paris meeting).

By a member of the International Commission

Open Letter to the British Government

1 November 1979

There are, in the current period, 3000 men and women prisoners in prisons of the North of Ireland and England.

At least 400 of them are naked, on the blanket - the men at Long Kesh near Belfast, and the women at Armagh prison. They will not wear the prison uniform and, all year round, they live naked in their cell, refusing to wash and slopping out. They have two aims: to get the attention of world opinion drawn towards their condition, and to obtain what is their right: The status of prisoners of war.

We, the movements of the Left, meeting in Paris, are horrified to learn that the infamous H Blocks and the 'programme of criminalisation' have reached new heights of barbarism.

Internationally, Great Britain is presented as the birthplace of democracy and the protector of the rights of man - this total hypocrisy comes out in the disgusting treatment handed out to the political prisoners.

We, Europeans, are profoundly shocked by these sinister memories that lead us to compare your actions to those of the fascists during the Nazi occupation.

It cannot be enough to say that these men and women are 'prisoners

of common law' and that they choose themselves 'their conditions of life', when we know that they have been imprisoned through the 'Political Conveyor Belt System', following the Emergency Laws, long and brutal interrogations, a special court, with special sentences - the whole process orchestrated by the British armed forces and the local colonial forces. It is ludicrous to pretend that such prisoners are 'criminals of common law'. They are prisoners of war, of an 'armed conflict', and thus have the right to the corresponding status.

We can add that the fact that the servile government of the South of Ireland keeps silent is in no way an excuse for Britain. A public inquiry like the one demanded by Amnesty International must be organised immediately.

We demand the immediate end to the conditions of detention that exist in H-Block, the immediate withdrawal of British troops and self-determination for the Irish people.

(Signing organisations)
OUT (Portugal), MC-OIC (Spain), EIA (Basque Country), OCT (France), CEDETIM (France), OSE (Greece), OC Machitis (Greece), PLS (Belgium), SWP (Britain), Big Flame (Britain), FS (Denmark), VS (Denmark), FK (Sweden), SU (Norway), SOAK-CTS (Luxemburg).

U.S. FEMINISM '79

BARBARA EHRENREICH has just finished a speaking tour of England, which she did with Deidre English to promote their book *For Her Own Good*. She is an American socialist feminist active around health, and a member of the New American Movement (NAM).

The interview we print below is part of a longer interview that will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Revolutionary Socialism*. Readers may be interested to know that the most recent issue of *Revolutionary Socialism* (RS 4 — on the socialist alternative) takes up in an English context some of the points made by Barbara Ehrenreich in this interview.

Big Flame: Can you tell us something about the women's movement in the United States?

Barbara: I think that the women's movement is much broader and more respectable in the United States than it is here. That's one big difference. We've had the impression that the women's movement has had a lot less of a cultural impact here than in America. Also I think that there's somehow more of a feeling in the women's movement here of being quite beleaguered by the left — that it constantly has to define itself as against, or in relation to, the left, and that's much less true in the States, where there is not much of a mixed left.

The sort of equivalent to your Trotskyist groups, our party building types of Marxist-Leninist groups, have kind of faded out of sight. And then there are different kinds of social democratic groups but there's not a sense that the women's movement is engaged in a dialogue with the left in the way it is here. In fact, I think a more correct perception in the States is that the women's movement is one of the largest progressive forces of any kind that there is — including the bourgeois feminists. It tends to be progressive on social issues. There is more of a sense, certainly among socialist feminists, but also among those who are a counterpart to your radical feminists, that what gets done we have to do. There's not a left that does some things and we do the others, such as the 'women's issues'.

I guess then, that to put it quite frankly, our perception is more that we have to do it all. We are the left, or anyway we are the radical movement. There are definitely other things, although they're not very well organised. There's a lot of radical consciousness in such groups as rank and file movements (in largely male unions) and there is a lot of neighbourhood organising and so on. But there is not this left presence that you could point to. It makes more sense to think of an autonomous women's movement just being a general radical movement, but in a new way, in a different way. I'd say that is more the consciousness

Big Flame Interview

of the women's movement in America — not that there aren't problems as compared to here.

But within the women's movement there are all sorts of tendencies. There is the more bourgeois feminist part, which is sometimes just mistakenly identified with the National Organisation of Women (NOW). I would say that's a little unfair, because NOW is multi-tendency and there are all sorts of different people and chapters within it. Then there are unaligned feminists, radical feminists, lesbian feminists, socialist feminists, and so on. But the basic form of organising of the women's movement outside of something like NOW is in projects. These are usually enterprises or co-operatives of some sort. The form of organising around a project as opposed to a campaign or party or organisation seems to be much more native to America. Women set up a women's restaurant, or women's bookstore, or women's health centre, and expect that some people will support themselves through its operation.

A lot of the feminist projects like the women's health centres got off the ground just because some women worked themselves to death, they really did, working for years, seven days a week, all the time, with almost no money for themselves — and not wealthy women either. Some socialist feminists did feel quite troubled that here were women pouring all this energy into creating a 'little alternative' that wouldn't be political. But I think that the feminist health centre, at least some of the ones I'm in closest contact with, have done a tremendous amount of educational work. It's amazing. There's a chain of them that co-operate and hold joint conferences, etc. I was looking at the agenda of one of the recent conferences and there were workshops on marxism (which is really something in the States), workshops on multinational corporations and the world order today. There is a lot of internationalist consciousness in the women's health movement. We

think a lot about the lives of third world women.

BF: We are always worrying about how you link up the different campaigns in the women's movement that could feed into and support each other. Is that seen as a problem?

B: Oh yes, definitely. Some guy asked me the other night, at a meet-

ing of socialist feminists, 'you say there is this socialist feminism stuff, well, what are your top three issues?' Of course I cleverly threw it back and said, 'you're a socialist, what are your top three issues?' It's always socialist feminism that's put on the defensive, with respect to other feminists and socialists. But our sense about it is that we're not defined by a particular list of issues but by the way we try to link up issues, and that is what makes the difference between us as revolutionary socialist feminists and the way somebody else might approach the same issue. The best example would be how we're working on abortion. We're not taking it as a single issue this time around, but taking it as one issue within a larger framework of reproductive rights for women. This has to include freedom from enforced sterilisation (which almost entirely is directed at minority group women) and reproductive rights at the workplace, not to be forced to be sterilised in order to hold a job because of industrial toxins. That is something that is really happening: women are given the right to be sterilised or else to be bumped out of a skilled job because of exposure to toxins.

BF: What sort of jobs?

B: American Cyanamide offered women that choice a year or so ago. It just became public a few months ago. The work involved exposure to lead, so the women were told to get sterilised or else to be bumped back into the general labour pool. They were young women, and they did get sterilised, although they didn't want to. But they did talk to the union about it. It's a pretty good union, which then made a big stink about it and they are suing the company. So that's one of the things that we're linking as a reproductive right. We're talking about the right to have children, the right to health care, the right to be able to raise the kids. For example, we link up the struggle for nurseries. And this isn't just coming from a

small group of socialist feminists. In the recent National Abortion Rights Action week, the platform and all the publicity for it said this, that we see the struggle as for reproductive rights in the fullest sense.

BF: With the economic recession getting worse, the revolutionary left in this country will prioritise 'bread and butter issues' — is that happening in the United States?

B: Well, I think the overall tendency on the left in both our countries is that because it's hard times, to heave a sigh and say, 'thank god, we've gotten over that silly phase now. We can forget all that silly stuff and focus in on the real issues'. We're back to the basics, back to the question of the price of petrol. And that's the overall tendency, really, a vast sigh of relief from many people who suffered through the sixties. But I think as a person very much identifying with what I would call that subversive tendency on the left, which does go back before the sixties—I think there's always been different currents on the left — that this drift towards economism is really terrifying.

For one thing, it means that in a very practical sense all those issues which don't fit into Vol. One of *Capital* or something are being ceded to the right. What is happening in the States is that the left or social democratic groups eagerly run to grasp the economic issues. But then the right has all this territory of the family, abortion, sexuality, everything to talk of. They don't touch economic issues on the right, they don't even bother with them. They know there's more unease over the issue of who you're going to bed with, who you're going to live with, whether you'll have any friends in your old age, or whatever it is. These are the anxieties that are at the heart of the anti-abortion

WOMAN'S
LIP
FOLLOW
JESUS CHRIST
& YOUR HUSBAND
& YOUR PASTOR
(BASICS)
REPENT



(The Right out in force at a Women's Liberation demonstration in the States)

movement and the save-the-family tendencies.

So I think it's just appalling that the left is surrendering this territory to the right. And I also think in a more long term kind of way that you can build all kinds of campaigns and maybe organisations and things around those bread and butter issues, but any movement that gets anywhere has to offer people a transcendent vision of how their life and other people's lives could radically be transformed beyond anything that's visible in the capitalist market place of ideas and commodities. It just makes sense from experience, and from the experience of the feminist movement concretely, that a revolutionary movement has to connect in some way with people's actual needs, with their own fantasies, with their desires, and their imaginations and everything. And that a movement which talks only about prices and unemployment cannot do that.



Keep the Door Open

On 29 October Home Secretary William Whitelaw, announced the axing of the special programme for refugees from Latin America. No more refugees are to be let into the UK, other than those with 'very strong links with Britain', such as relatives. Also threatened is the Joint Working Group on Latin American Refugees, who help negotiate visas, receive refugees into the country, and help arrange housing and language classes. All provision for the 3000 refugees already in Britain will go.

'APPLICATIONS DWINDLING'

Whitelaw's justification is that the number of refugees' applications has dwindled. This contradicts Home Office figures, which show that at the end of September 161 applications were pending — one of the highest figures since 1977.

Quite obviously, repression in Latin America isn't dwindling. Far from it. The increasing militancy of the Latin American working class (the teachers' strike in Peru, the Peugeot workers' stoppage in Argentina, the steelworkers' strike now going on in Chile) is provoking the expected reaction from military and paramilitary forces.

But the British government, by

restoring diplomatic links with Chile and Argentina, and now by asserting that there's no longer any need for a refugee programme, tries to pretend that repressive regimes aren't really repressive, don't really exist — especially when we want to do more valuable business with them.

TORIES' RIGHT TO CHOOSE?

Moreover, they're aiming to play off sections against one another by saying that closure of the Latin American programme will allow better provision for the boat people. Britain is the only European country not to have signed the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Does this mean the government can pick and choose who to accept?

The refugee programme closure isn't just a callous disregard of human rights in other countries; it's also part of the Tories' headline on the entry of immigrants into Britain. The campaign against the closure must be taken up by the campaign against the immigration laws.

For more information, contact:
Chile Solidarity Campaign
129 Seven Sisters Road
London N7 7QG

Joint Working Group on Latin American Refugees
21 Star Street
London W2 1QB



advertisements

JUST OUT 'Revolutionary Socialism 4' new issue of BF journal. With articles on communal living, health care in Lambeth and China, and local organising on Tyne-side and in Islington. 50 p from all radical book-shops or from BF groups

MANCHESTER BIG FLAME Christmas Social with Meli Antu, Red Flu, disco, late bar. Friday December 7th 8 pm to 1 am Capri Ballroom, Yew Tree Rd.

NORWICH: Freewheel Community Bookshop, now

open. We stock pamphlets/badges/books on socialism, feminism, anarchism, anti-Imperialism, pacifism, ecology, non-sexist children's books, radical fiction. Open 10-6 Mon. to Sat (late evening Friday)

Big Flame



Otelo:
Committed to
Popular Power
in Portugal



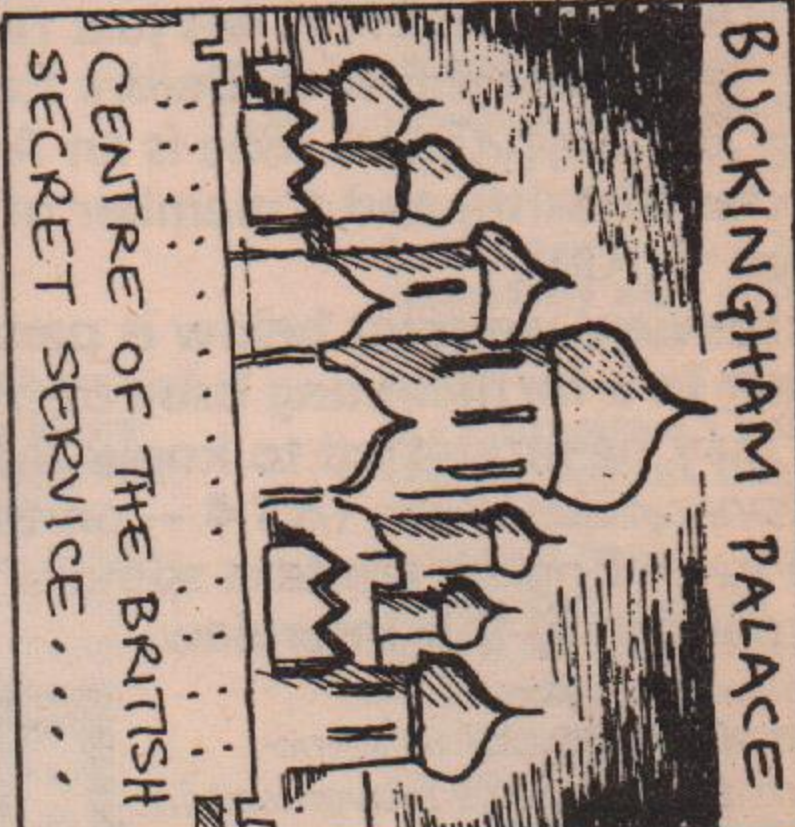
Photo Carlos Augusto (I.F.L.)

Feminism in the USA — Big Flame interviews Barbara Ehrenreich, Czech exile speaks out; handling the press — we discuss the recent publications about the media; abortion and women's autonomy; a mass campaign against the cuts; defending Direct Works; the Soviet Union isn't socialist — but what is it? — we review an important new pamphlet recently published by Big Flame; Immigration Laws — how they operate.

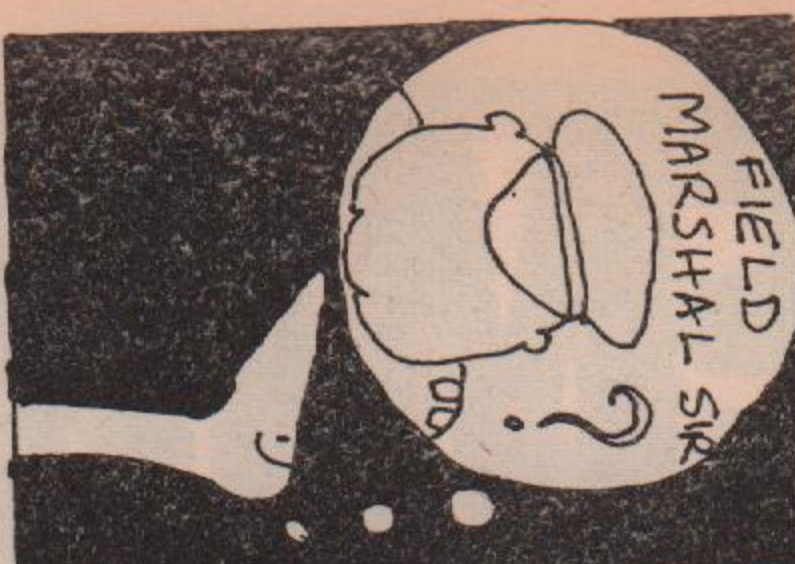
Inside

brother goose

"HE WANTS TO KNOW THE ANSWER!"



A PRIVATE AUDIENCE...
"GUESS, GOOSE! who is the fifth man?"



HERE'S A CLUE... HE IS WELL CONNECTED... UNMARRIED... EDUCATED AT CAMBRIDGE... A NATIONAL FIGURE
GOODBYE MOTHER JUST OFF FOR A SPOT OF FISH!
"British intelligence?"

EVEN THE PRIME MINISTER - WISEST WOMAN IN WESTERN EUROPE - WHO CAN SOLVE ALL BRITAIN'S PROBLEMS, DOES NOT KNOW!
GIVEN 150 YEARS AND AN IMPOSSIBLY ENTHUSIASTIC WORKING CLASS. ED.

but if you put in George Blake in prison for 21 years for spying...
"why did you shield Mr. blunt?"
"WE COULDN'T AFFORD TO LOSE FACE!"
"THE PM DON'T TELL US COURSE NOT BORIS OK MAURICE HORACE"

and they want a new official secrets act?!

IN DESPERATION, PRIME MINISTER THATCHER DELIVERS AN ATTACK ON THE RUSSIANS...
"WE WILL DRIVE THEM INTO THE SEA!"
"tee hee hee hee"

MEANWHILE, BACK IN WHITEHALL, IN AN UPSTAIRS OFFICE
SHOULDN'T TELL SOMEONE THAT LEONID'S BEEN WORKING FOR US FOR 20 YEARS?
ALEXEI KOSYGIN TOO!
REMEMBER HIM AT ETON... LITTLE SQUIRT!

hmm... class the ruling party can't afford to keep all of us together
Solidarity!
"THERE'S NAME YES... YOUR MOVEMENT TO THE QUEEN"