

Big Flame



15p

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

IRELAND- Bloody Sunday

DEMONSTRATION: Birmingham Jan 27th (details p. 12)

ABORTION- Corrie Bill

LOBBY AND RALLY: London Feb 5th

WOMEN ONLY ASSEMBLY: London Feb 8th (details p.2)

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SOLIDARITY -AN ISSUE OF STEEL

Thatcher has made it clear that she expects other trade-unionists to play a key role in breaking the steel-workers strike. In her 'Weekend World' television interview, she told us that she knew that other workers would soon be out of work because of the strike and she hoped that they would put pressure on the steel workers to settle.

This attempt to play sections of the working class off against each other is central to the Tory Government strategy. Against it the key working class weapon is solidarity—both national and international. Already support is being given to the steel workers by other trade unionists including the miners and dockers in continental ports who have pledged to not load steel in ships whose destination is this country.

The steel strike is important not only because of the issues of the strike itself—higher material wage increases for steel workers. But also because a victory over British Steel management will be a morale booster for the looming struggle against the Government's Employment Bill (see the Supplement, pages 8-11). Not surprisingly the weapons that will be decisive in winning the steel strike—secondary picketing, support from other workers on pickets—are under threat by the Employment Bill.



BIG FLAME PHOTO

Jobs, Wages = One struggle

this issue

- * SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT on the Employment BillPages 7-10
- * POLITICS OF HEALTH Interview with Lesley Doyal and Imogen PennellPage 15
- * CRUISE MISSILES The Threat to the FensPage 13
- * UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE 1930s: A Photo Feature.Page 3
- * IRELAND AND ZIMBABWE The Role of the ArmyPage 12

THE STEELWORKERS strike— their first national strike since 1926—is not just about money. Its outcome will determine their success in resisting the cut of 52,000 jobs proposed by BSC and it will be the first big test of Thatcher's plan for curbing union power and preventing effective picketing. THE STEEL STRIKE IS THEREFORE A CRUCIAL DISPUTE FOR ALL TRADE UNIONISTS.

The general demand from the strikers is for a 17% pay rise, although in S. Yorks the more militant No. 3 Division are demanding:

- **20% no strings pay increase
- **the closure of all private steel firms.
- **official approval of flying pickets at private firms

So far BSC have offered 6% but want talks on getting rid of the guaranteed week which gives 80% of earnings when work is not available. They say that any more money has to come from productivity deals which would link higher bonus payments to reduced manning. A smart way of getting workers in the more profitable plants to agree to closures and redundancies elsewhere.

We asked ISTC branch secretary Brian Molyneux, whose sacking led to a strike at BSC Stockbridge in

December, how he saw the dispute.

"The Strike action should have been on closures as well as wages. But you have to understand how it appears to Bill Sirs (ISTC general secretary). Its a much safer bet to go to the wage militants for support. But he's put himself in a position where he hasn't got total control of the situation. He's asked for support from other unions, and he's got it—much to his surprise I should imagine."

At Stockbridge the strike is entirely controlled by lay officials and rank and file members and full-timers have been forced to take a more militant stance.

It's the support from other trade unionists, plus the steelworkers own "secondary picketing" which will be decisive in winning the strike. The

ISTC executive has issued instructions that "No Steel Moves". This has given a lot of leeway to the local strike committees to get well organised with flying pickets of stockholders, ports and BSC customers and picketing of BSC works themselves to stop lorries and bring the other unions out. (The Craft unions have said they won't cross the picket lines).

Propaganda is also very important. BSC and successive governments have for years been attacking steelworkers for low productivity, thus pinning a lot of the blame for BSC's losses on the workforce. It is this form of attack which undermines communities near the steelworks and creates rifts between steelworkers and their families. In Stockbridge, recognition of the importance of gaining the community's support led to a leaflet explaining the position of the strikers and stressing the importance of steel for the livelihood of the community. The miserly pay offer has at long last galvanised the union into refuting BSC's propaganda. The comparative German produc-

tivity figures which management keeps quoting have been shown up as fake. The massive "losses" of the BSC have to be balanced against the £208 million paid out in interest charges last year and the profits of the private steel sector which escaped nationalisation in '67. If the Government subsidised steel in Britain to the extent that Governments do on the continent, the BSC could pay the claim.

The tactics which can win the strike will also be the tactics that can stop the redundancies. The confidence of steelworkers in their ability to stop closures will be boosted by a victory on wages. If the BSC and Thatcher win this one, we all lose. Rank and File support and contact on the picket lines is going to be vital, as are "blacking", collections, inviting speakers, help with posters and bulletins and demonstrations. Inevitably the strike will cause layoffs and it is important that workers affected are aware that it is BSC and the Government that are to blame and not the steelworkers.

Editorial

Immediately after World War 2, the leading powers of the world (U.S., U.S.S.R., Great Britain, and France) met in Yalta to decide on a world order for the post war period. The result of Yalta was that the world was divided in "spheres of interest of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R." And each of these two superpowers decided on a policy of respect for and non-interference in the other's sphere of interest. Results of the Yalta agreement were that the U.S.S.R. withdrew its support for the Greek support for the Greek resistance movement and the U.S. recognised that Russia could do what it wanted in Eastern Europe, including invade Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

AFGHANISTAN

Certain countries like Afghanistan were not included in this division into spheres of interest and the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. both gave aid to the Afghanistan government until 1955 when the U.S. withdrew its aid programme since it considered the policies of the current Afghan government too radical. This left the way open for the Soviet Union to consolidate their influence and aid, and

this they have been doing for the last 25 years! And throughout this period, Western observers have reported the presence of Russian tanks, army advisers, building contractors, etc.

MILITARY SUPPORT

Of course, Soviet involvement in Afghanistan has become more blatant—by now they are openly supporting different factions amongst the Afghan ruling class and providing military support for the factions they support. Currently, they are supporting the government of Babrak Karmal to the tune of 50,000 soldiers. And like the previous Moscow backed governments, Karmal's government will be unable to impose its policies, including their progressive aspects, on a Muslim rural population whose leaders are uniting around the banner of anti-communism. The anti-government Islamic tribal forces are receiving aid from China, Iran, and Saudi

Arabia but even without this aid they are gaining support as a result of the rebirth of Islamic nationalism that began with the coming to power of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.

But if the U.S.S.R. has been dominant in Afghanistan for 25 years, why has the U.S. government decided to get tough now? Well obviously sending in 50,000 troops involves an escalation of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. But there are two more important reasons.

Firstly, this year there is an election for President in the States. And Carter needs to convince the voters that he is a tough 'macho' Statesman, who is not afraid to engage in eyeball to eyeball confrontation with the Russian leaders.

Secondly, the U.S. realises Afghanistan presents them with a wonderful opportunity to win back some credibility with Islamic nationalism.

Certainly, Khomeini and other Islamic nationalists will support their co-religionist in Afghanistan against Soviet armed forces and this may force them to take up a more tactical attitude to the United States.

UNPREDICTABLE CONSEQUENCES

It is the demands of internal politics that are bringing on a U.S.—U.S.S.R. confrontation: the consequences of which are totally unpredictable. Already, Carter has broken off the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT 2) and cancelled a shipment of wheat to the Soviet Union. His envoy is flying out to China to assure the Chinese of U.S. support in any confrontation with the Soviet Union. And to top it all, Pakistan is on the verge of completing its nuclear bomb project.

For too long socialists in this country have taken the attitude that issues of defence and nuclear weapons could be left to the pacifists. It is essential that we see the connection to other issues we are involved in. For instance, less state money spent on defence means more money that can be spent on health and education. And workers in the armaments industry must be supported in their efforts to develop plans for the production of socially useful products.

We can no longer afford to remain within a political narrowness that is uninterested in these issues. Remember, a nuclear holocaust knows no boundaries.

Corrie's Minefield Approaches Fast

The following extracts are reprinted with thanks from an article by Angela Phillips which appeared in *Time Out*, 4 - 10 January, 1980

The brand new anti-abortion bill which has emerged from committee for its final vote on February 8 is not so much a bombshell as a minefield. The intricacies and obscurity of the wording combine to make it the most repressive Bill yet to threaten the 1967 Abortion Act. It will undoubtedly force the majority of unhappily pregnant women back into the hands of illegal abortionists.

After several months in committee a virtually new bill has been carved out for the final stage in the parliamentary process. All the major clauses have been changed using wording which appears to water down Corrie's hard line original.

However, the Bill is no less stringent in its revised form. Much of the wording is vague and inexact and open to differing interpretations. It could take up to two years for the real meaning to be interpreted through court actions.

LOWERED TIME LIMIT

One of the most alarming new additions is an apparently innocuous clause empowering the Secretary of State to lower the abortion time limit by statutory instrument. If passed, this clause would allow an anti-abortion Secretary of State to abolish the law by lowering the limit to zero.

The new Bill in any case lowers the existing limit by two months to 20 weeks. An effective limit of about 16 weeks as doctors tend to allow a wide berth in case of malicious litigation.

NO GUIDANCE TO DOCTORS

Under present conditions, changes in the time limit would only affect a minority of women, albeit a needy, often desperate minority. However, changes in the grounds for abortion, coupled with the crippling attack on the charity sector will ensure that even at an early stage it will be difficult for a woman to get legal help. The law now allows abortion when the risk to a woman's health by continuing the pregnancy is greater than if the pregnancy were terminated. This Bill demands that there should be a 'substantially greater risk of serious injury' before abortion is allowed. Doctors

will have no guidance on how this should be interpreted and few are likely to risk involvement in the test cases through which this clause will eventually be clarified in court.

It was clear from the start that the anti-abortionists would be gunning for the charity sector which currently arranges one third of all abortions. The intention is to ensure a total division of the referral agencies and the clinics which they currently own.

A rise in the cost of counselling would be inevitable and counsellors would be banned from referring women to any clinics. Once again, pregnant women would be forced to rely for information on the dubious help of taxi touts and others working for cash in the margins of the law.

DELAYING TACTICS

The stop-start methods by which this Bill has been guided through committee are as dubious as its contents. First the anti-abortion majority tried to rush it through, voting for long sessions and cutting debate to a minimum. The tactics changed as they realised a long committee stage could ensure them extra debating time in Parliament, by blocking access to committee for the Private Members Bills coming up behind them. Then, the week before Christmas, the stalling tactic was abruptly reversed and several clauses were rushed

through in hours in order to overtake an unexpected Scottish Bill which looked likely to beat them into the prime third reading slot of February 8.

Anti-abortionists are known to have approached Norman St. John Stevas, Leader of the House, and an ardent anti-abortionist, with a request for extra time to ensure a clear passage for the Bill.

The demonstration of 28 October showed the strength of the pro-choice movement. It's now clear that this strength must be mobilised as often as is necessary until the Corrie Bill - in whatever form - is totally smashed.

The South East Region TUC and the Campaign Against Corrie have booked Central Hall, Westminster on Tuesday 5 February for a rally and a mass lobby of parliament. This action will be followed on the day of the Third Reading itself - February 8 - by a mass assembly of women in Central Hall.

Between now and then we must all keep up our activities and publicity to make these actions effective. We must make it clear to everybody that the Corrie Bill is more dangerous than ever and that the obscure wording and the Bill's slow passage through parliament will not dilute our anger! A huge turnout on 5 February is essential.

Union Place foil attack

AT AROUND 10.30 on the evening of Saturday 25th November, three members of the National Front showed up behind the Union Place Resource Centre in Brixton, bearing what police later described as "an extremely powerful incendiary device". No doubt they expected to be able to plant the device, retire to a safe distance and leave the building and its contents to blaze to the ground. But what immediately followed they could not have anticipated at all . . .

The day before, workers in the Union Place Collective who provide a range of printing facilities for local organisations and activists had received a tip-off that just such an attack was likely to occur.

FLOOD LIT

Local police said they did not have the men to cover it so members of the collective decided to do the job themselves. By 10.30 several people were stationed around the darkened rooms of the Printshop. Almost as soon as the three would-be bombers came around the corner,

powerful floodlights switched on above them and, caught in the glare, they found themselves being photographed from several different points inside the building before they could realise what was happening and run away.

PETROL

The police were immediately contacted and, within 15 minutes, two of the gang had been caught pouring away bottles of petrol in a street nearby. By Monday the third had been picked up, clearly identified by one of the photographs. Later



and occasions like the Southwark Against the Cuts demo (where, two weeks after his release he was carrying the Southwark NUPE banner) are going to have to completely rethink their attitude to him and the company he keeps.

The success in landing such a significant fascist fish doesn't, however, overshadow the fact that, in the first place, they felt confident enough to do what would have been a pretty tough job of destruction on the Printshop. charged in Camberwell Magistrates Court with going equipped to cause explosions, their kit included two four gallon drums of petrol, explosives, batteries and 90 foot of wire. The three were released on £500 bail each, despite police opposing it.

NUPE STEWARD

Since the court case, it has transpired that the elder of the three arrested was a certain Ken Matthews, well-known as organiser of Southwark NF and a NUPE steward in a Southwark Council dustcart depot. Now the people who knew him only through the Southwark Under-5's Campaign

BOGLE

LOUVERTURE

IT IS CLEAR to the black community that when it comes to racist and fascist threats and attacks on black bookshops the police attitude is "don't bother us - we can't spare the men to investigate these things".

It took a letter to the Home Secretary to stir the Ealing police into investigating an attack which had taken place on the Bogle L'ouverture Bookshop almost a month earlier. But somehow the police had made enquiries that "have so far failed to reveal who were the perpetrators". According to the Home Secretary, they are even sending the CID round to investigate.

More recently the bookshop has received a threatening letter from the Ku Klux Klan which has met with a similar lack of response from the police. This and other attacks on black and community bookshops in recent months has led to the setting up of the Bookshop Joint Action. BJA feel that the lives of the Bogle L'ouverture Bookshop workers may be at risk unless the police take steps to deal with the situation.



Dear Big Flame,

Well, it's 3am, Monday morning, and we've not yet come to the end of another gruelling production weekend, each month's paper more exhausting than the last. Despite a longer period since the last paper, many contributors have stuck to their philosophy that there is no moment like the last moment. By Saturday morning there is no shortage of copy, but we are short of the time needed to transform that copy into a decent paper. Once again articles have been dropped because they arrive too late. We're getting discouraged; our energy doesn't get much response, and it drains us.

The paper isn't a gift to the organization from the collective. Other members of BF don't seem to see involvement in the paper as part of their political work. A hard weekend's work for 8 people, culminating in a 3 am finish and, for some poor sod, an hour's drive to the printers, improves neither the paper nor our tempers. And Conference decided in favour of a fortnightly paper! Under present conditions, we feel this is impossible, without a lot more solid support from the rest of the organization. Just getting articles in on time would help a lot. But more than that, the relationship between BF and the newspaper collective needs to change—to become closer and more two-way. We need:

- *feedback—do you like your paper?
- *punctual contributions. Deadlines for the next issue are 18 Jan(features), 24 Jan (news)
- *more people, especially women, to work on the paper
- *material help—donations, standing orders, a coffee percolator....

THINK ABOUT IT!!!!

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UNEMPLOYMENT: Memories of the 30's

AS WE EXPERIENCE a drift towards another crisis of thirties proportions, uppermost in our minds is the cost of living, wages that are not rising fast enough to keep up, cuts, unemployment and more repressive laws.

In this situation it is useful to look back to the last period that bears a similarity to the developments of the present - the 1930's - and to examine the course of events then, the actions taken against working people and their response to such actions. This is not to mechanically transpose the tactics of the thirties in to the seventies and eighties, but to remember the successes and failures of the past as a background to today's struggle.

The Jarrow hunger marches were seen by a decisive section of the organisers (the National Unempl

ployed Workers' Movement - NUWM) primarily as a petitioning body, and by creating political and public opinion which the government could not ignore. Other members of the NUWM disagreed, and believed that the primary aim was not to use the march as an emotional circus (thought that was very important), but to build Councils of Action and agitational defence groups in every town through which the march passed.

IN THIS Month's Photo Page we have taken a brief look at the fight against unemployment - for the right to work. In future issues of Big Flame we will take a look at the fightback in more depth, hopefully such discussion will lead to a more effective resistance in the 80's.



One of the many marches against unemployment in the '30s.



WORKING IN A GOVERNMENT SLAVE CAMP

THE SLAVE CAMPS: The essence of the Rehabilitation Camps (re-named by their inmates as Slave Camps) was that work was carried out without wages and under compulsion, they were intended for unemployed who had exhausted their benefit and had become "unemployable" through being out of work for a long period. The intention claimed was to 'retrain and rehabilitate people'.

The slave camp system started by public and private bodies setting up "Social Service Centres" where the unemployed could "keep their spirits up". This developed into occupational training in carpentry, often no more than sweated labour. The products were sold by the centre organisers to Local Authorities at prices far below any those possible for craftsmen working at trade union rates. This influx of cheaply

made craft goods was instrumental in taking away the livelihood of many small craft workers like furniture manufacturers.

Most of the work carried out at the slave camps was very hard unskilled such as quarrying and land drainage, the men were paid less than what they would have received if they were staying at home and receiving unemployment benefit.

PIC'of the month

This page has been compiled with the help of the WORKER PHOTOGRAPHER (152 Upper Street, London N1).

HAVE YOU THOUGHT?

There are two million of us unemployed. If we were organised in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement we should be a mighty force.

COULD THE GOVERNMENT RESIST OUR DEMANDS for work or decent maintenance if we were all acting together unitedly? NOT BI.—Y LIKELY! (as G.B.S. would say).

Organise for the right to work and live—JOIN UP NOW!

Membership Fee is One Penny per Week.

Fill in this Form and hand it to the Branch Steward. I wish to join the N.U.W.M.

Name _____

Address _____

Employed workers, in addition to their Trade Union membership, should join the N.U.W.M. to build the Unity of Unemployed and Employed Workers.



THE RAID ON THE RITZ: A group of unemployed workers donned their Sunday best and ordered the best meal in the Ritz, when they had eaten the meal they refused to pay and instead unrolled these banners. Of course the police were called and threw them out, but there were no arrests, they didn't want to fill the jails with well known trouble makers. They organised around the 'Hunger Marchers Charter'. The objects of the charter included: "to stir the whole working class into action on the present terrible extent and effects on unemployment; to expose the capitalist policy of the Labour Government in its treatment of the unemployed, and to demand an interview with the responsible Ministers of the Government". Their demands included: "full wage rates to become the recognised rights of all unemployed persons"; "full trade union rates and conditions on all Relief Work schemes"; "a national reduction in the working day to seven hours without wage reductions"; "Relieve unemployment by raising the old age pensions to 30 shillings per week"

GPs Exploit Immigrants

LAST MONTH in Birmingham a row blew up over the treatment of Asians in the NHS. It was alleged by the Central District Community Health Council (CHC) that some unsuspecting patients were paying doctors for home visits. General Practitioner, A medical magazine, actually named two doctors who are claimed to have charged between £2 and £15 for home visits to Asian families that the doctors were supposed to be treating on the NHS. The local Family Practitioner Committee, however, refused to take up the issue unless a patient could be found to complain directly to the committee. Not surprisingly, individual patients are reluctant to complain, as this could mean that all the GPs in an area would gang together and refuse to take them as patients. They would then be left with no medical cover at all.

The background to this story is a much wider investigation, carried out by the CHC, of NHS services and their use by Asian patients in the district. What they found was that recent Asian immigrants lived in the inner city area with poor NHS services, and squalid housing, and worked in the most low status jobs. Language difficulties and cultural differences worked against them getting the best out of the service. Often women were not allowed out of the house by their husbands to visit the doctor's surgery and it was in some of these cases that doctors were charging for home visits. In other words, the doctors were exploiting immigrants' difficulties rather than thinking of ways to adapt the service to Asian culture. Against this, the CHC suggested a 'street health education' project so that young Asians could take basic health education to their own families and friends.

PATIENTS LAST

This CHC obviously played an important part in bringing to light discrimination against Asian patients. If the Tories have their way, all CHCs will be scrapped in their great cost-cutting reorganisation of health service administration, described in their recently published book, 'Patients First'. In fact, under cover of removing unpopular bureaucrats, the Tory proposals would also tip the balance of power heavily in favour of the medical hierarchy. At the present time, the Area Health Authorities (AHA) and the CHCs are the only places where there is representation of outside interests within the health service. Their voice is not very strong, but nonetheless, the Tories would like to get rid of both these bodies. Instead, the proposals suggest that the NHS would be run by about 150 small district authorities. In this way there would be less local bureaucracy, but there would also be less local cash. In other words, the remote regions plan the budget within the Tories' 'cash limits', and the districts face the music as the cuts play havoc with local services.

LESS DEMOCRACY

All these recommendations fly in the face of the Royal Commission Report on the NHS published in July 1979. Almost all the recommendations made by this report are the direct opposite of Tory proposals. The Commission proposed more representation and power for patients' committees, more money and training in preventive health care, more determination in steering medical resources away from high technology into the unpopular specialities, such as mental sub-normality and geriatrics, and the scrapping of health services charges, such as prescription charges. The Royal Commission spent years producing their report, and arrived at an embarrassing time for the Tories, who had to quickly produce their own scraggy little report based on not much more than the desire to save money and restore doctors' status. (By a member of Birmingham BF)

Bradford Asian Youth Movement are organising a long march from Bradford to London in the summer. It will be a march against racism, against the immigration laws and against the bussing of Asian children and against the Southall arrests.

For further information and if you wish to support this in any way contact:

Bradford Asian Youth Movement,
266 Lumb Lane,
Bradford.
Tel: Brad. 499310

Mine Deaths

KINSLEY DRIFT MINE in Yorkshire, the most modern coal mine in the country, is claimed to be one of the safest pits around. It was opened only five months ago and has already claimed its first lives.

The men were killed when what is meant to be the safest and most up to date underground transport system smashed through safety devices.

QUESTIONS

Since the disaster extra safety devices have been fitted in the

drift and the question being asked by the men is why weren't they fitted before the pit was opened.

PROFIT'S TOLL

This was just one of many disasters and near disasters involving the transportation of men and material in Yorkshire pits. Fatal injuries rose rapidly last year (78/79) from 48 to 72 - a rise of 50%. The Coal Board's drive for productivity and profit is taking a heavy toll.

Neil Parry, a member of Kinsley Drift NUM Branch Committee.

Preston Poly Opposes Racism

THE STUDENT occupation of Preston Poly's administrative centre in protest against the Tories' proposals to charge full-fee costs to overseas students was highly successful, as Adrian Royle reports.

Although we met some initial opposition for both the occupation and the picket, we found that when people were made aware of the nature and implication of the proposed fee increases, the great majority agreed that opposition to them was vital. At

Preston, the loss of overseas students would mean the possible closure of our engineering department and the closure of several other courses. In addition we made it a point in the leaflets we distributed to dispel the media myth that all overseas students are the sons of oil sheiks.



Black Women's Co-op Workers Speak Out

THE MANCHESTER BLACK WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE was started in 1975 by a group of women associated with the George Jackson House Trust, a house for homeless black youths. The Trust applied to the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) and received the initial grant on behalf of the Co-op because at the time, the Co-op had no premises. Men from the Trust were paid to help prepare premises, and the Co-op opened as a commercial skills training school, for young unsupported black mothers. Most of the staff were women, and women controlled the running of the Co-op.

For nearly 5 years, the Co-op ran independently, and dealt directly with the CRE. In September, the workers felt the need for a general meeting to stimulate wider community involvement. A meeting was planned for the evening of Oct. 26; and the workers were also to meet that afternoon with Leslie Scaife, head of the Self Help section at the CRE. The Trust, however, opposed the workers' plans and wanted to relocate the Co-op nearer to the premises of the Trust.

LOCKED OUT

On Oct. 26, the workers received letters of suspension from the Trust, and a notice suspending all Co-op activities. The lock on the front door had been changed, but the workers found a way in round the back. They waited for Mr. Scaife, who arrived 2 hours late, accompanied by members of the Trust. Scaife gave the Co-op and the Trust 3 weeks to sort out their differences. The general meeting was held, and a committee elected. But the Trust refused to unlock the front door, and so the workers occupied the building for 10 days.

After unsuccessful attempts to resolve the problem, the Co-op asked another black organisation to medi-

ate. This led to the Trust opening the front door, and to 2 further meetings. But the Trust did not acknowledge the autonomy of the Co-op. They claimed that the initial grant application proved that the Trust was the governing body.

Meanwhile, the workers reopened the Co-op as a training school; advertised the classes and got students in. The CRE was informed that the Co-op was now functioning, and the original conditions for grant aid were being met. The CRE did not release the funds, and the workers have not been paid since Oct. 15th. So the CRE, claiming to keep on the side lines, are in fact supporting the Trust against the Co-op.

INVADED

On Nov. 28, a group of men from the Trust, led by Ron Phillips (recognised by the CRE as a Black community leader) and aided by Janet Barrett (the Co-op coordinator), entered the Co-op and took out all the equipment: typewriters, chairs, a printing press, duplicators... The classes were disrupted and one of the women (a worker) was manhandled. The CRE was informed immediately; and, while sympathetic, have done nothing except to state that the equipment belongs to them.

We see this as a blatant oppression of Black women. Our experience should serve as a lesson for others who have dealings with the CRE and for local groups who may be involved with the opportunists of the George Jackson House Trust.

We are now re-organising as Abasindi Co-op, and are in urgent need of donations and support.

Contact: Abasindi Co-op
Moss Side Peoples Centre

St. Mary's St.
Manchester M16. Tele 061-226 6837

After six days of occupation, a meeting between members of the occupation committee and County Education chiefs led to the pledge that no overseas student at the Poly would be forced to leave their course through financial hardship. This led to a meeting in the occupation of over 300 students voting to suspend the action pending the results of 21 test cases

of students who would be applying for fee waivers for the current increase. It was stressed, however, that the occupation was only the beginning of our involvement in the campaign against racist tuition fees and that the campaign cannot be complete until Britain follows the example of several EEC nations (not to mention Russia) and abolishes tuition fees completely.



Caroline Laidler

SHOPPERS IN Sheffield's city centre were amazed by a small but noisy march of 100 women one Saturday last month.

The violence of the Yorkshire Ripper is very much in the minds of Sheffield women but as the marchers pointed out, male violence goes way beyond the individual actions of the Ripper.

Women are expected to put up with battering in their own homes and rape by husbands of 'their' wives is still legal.

Over a quarter of all reported violent crime is wife assault. Over half of rapes occur in the homes of the victim or rapist. Over half of rapists are relatives or 'friends' of their victims.

The local police have advised women to stay at home to avoid attack by the Ripper. But is home really that safe a place when you look at the facts above? The women on the march were saying NO to the Ripper and all forms of male violence.

Along with other banners which included Women's Aid, Rape Crisis and Women's Liberation, was the Women and Ireland banner. Armies have always used sexual harassment as a means of humiliating the enemy in war and the British Army in Ireland is no exception.

As a first step towards learning to resist male violence the women organised a self-defence workshop on the day following the march.

Men make the laws
Men break the laws

We won't be victims any more!

OCCUPATION: SUPPORT GROWS

OCCUPATION OF ST BENEDICTS' HOSPITAL

ON 15th November, the St Benedicts Defence Committee took over the running of the hospital for old people in Tooting, South West London, and have been running it ever since. We spoke to the secretary of the occupation committee, head porter Arthur Hautot.

A letter announcing "temporary" closure of the hospital was sent in September to staff three weeks after a totally different misleading letter had been sent describing reorganisation and improvement in the local geriatric services. As always loss of beds was denied and obscured by a complicated plan to transfer patients to another local hospital.

Immediately a deputation of staff from St Benedict's went to see how suitable the proposed hospital was for geriatric patients and far from being an improved service they found it was obviously unsuitable and inferior.

OCCUPATION

Straight away a defence committee was formed to fight closure and it soon was realised that occupation was the only way. The next few weeks were a constant round of talking and talking, with the activists constantly explaining, educating and persuading the rest of the hospital staff about the need to fight and to occupy.

A key factor in the success of the occupation so far is the fantastic support of the nurses who have the powerful support of a very militant shop steward from the Royal College of Nursing. The local NUPE and COHSE full time officials have also been very involved and active. As a result out of approximately 170 nursing staff, so far only two part time nurses have accepted transfers to other hospitals. The rest have acted in unison by refusing to attend job transfer interviews with management. Two senior nurses were in the original deputation visiting the local hospital to assess its suitability for St Benedicts patients, and the effective leadership and solidarity of these nurses was ensured. They realised the transfer plan was just a con-trick and that the patients would inevitably get a worse deal. In many of the other local hospitals which have been closed without effective resistance, the nurses have been negotiated with individually by management and transferred to other hospitals and united action has failed.

Nurses' solidarity is absolutely crucial to the success of a hospital occupation. So far work continues as normal at St Benedict's. The problem of declining numbers of patients because of discharged patients not being replaced is not too pressing as the hospital caters for long stay geriatric patients and turnover is slow. At the moment the hospital is about 4/5ths full. New admissions are being blocked by the District Management Team, but the defence committee is trying to find ways round this.

DOCTORS

Dr Watson, the consultant geriatrician, and three other doctors in the hospital have pledged their support: "All the time you are fighting to keep St Benedicts open and there are patients here I will support you" he promised.

CLOSURES

All round the district other hospitals are closing. Already closed are: Queen Elizabeth House rehabilitation unit; the Cumberland Unit for Chest Ailments; the Henderson Hospital; and

with Putney General it's only a matter of time before it goes. Hautot explained: "We thought the other hospitals would take our lead but we are the only ones to occupy."

Pressure against the occupation is building up. Various ultimatums have been given by the Management including loss of jobs if occupying staff continue to refuse job transfers. Each nurse has filled in the form giving St Benedict's as first, second and third choice of hospital to be transferred to! Even more immediate — the hospital boiler is breaking down and they refuse to replace it. No hospital can operate without heating so the engineers are struggling to keep it functioning. The management would like nothing better than to move in to close the hospital because of lack of heating or to point the finger at the occupying staff and accuse them of putting the patients' lives at risk.

LOW PROFILE

Despite the intensity of the struggle the occupation has deliberately been pitched in a low key non-militant way. Hautot explained: "We're adopting a low profile. We had a right stripping here last year because of the hospital workers' industrial action. The local people and the press haven't forgotten this and are still suspicious."

So the occupation has chosen to present a moderate non-militant image. Soon after the occupation started all NUPE and COHSE banners were taken down from the front gates and the union names deleted from petitions and publicity material.

VULNERABLE

Forming and sustaining an occupation committee has not always been easy. A very substantial majority of the hospital's workforce are not British born. Many of them have difficulty in communicating with each other as well as with the English. Their involvement in the politics of this country has been slow to develop, Hautot felt, and they also feel pretty vulnerable. Despite this, involvement is spreading slowly from the handful of key activists on the committee and morale is infinitely better than

before the occupation.

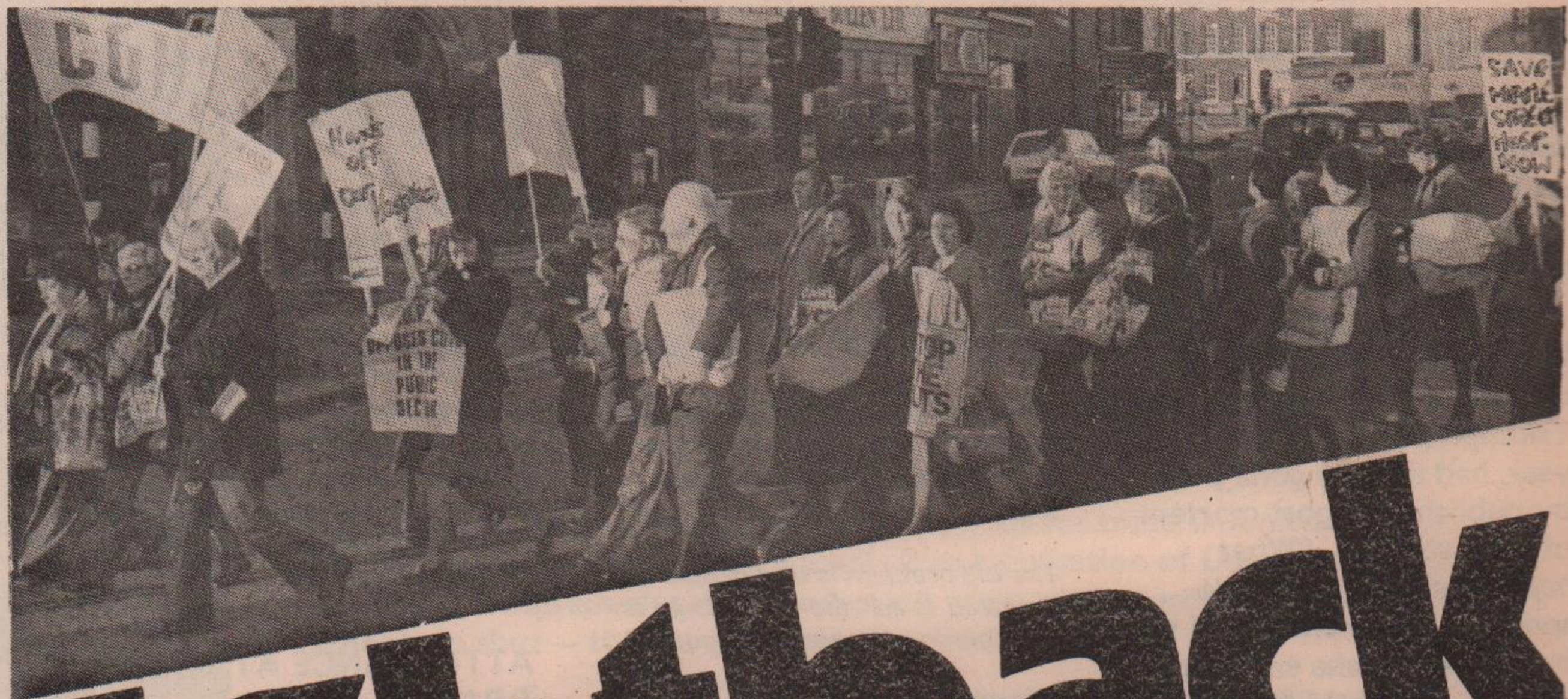
Staff meetings are held twice a week and are open to all hospital staff. They made sure there were more women than men on the occupation committee to reflect the high proportion of women on the hospital staff. At first some of the women were lacking in confidence but they're getting stronger and more involved now.

The occupation has some links with the national "Fightback Campaign" against cuts in the health

service and with students at a local teacher training college, but as yet by far the most extensive practical support with picketing printing etc. has been from the SWP.

All offers of financial or practical support should be addressed to the Defence Committee, St Benedicts' Hospital, Church Lane, London, S.W.17. tel. 01.672.2231.

by a member of South London Big Flame.



fightback

against cuts in the health service

.... In Liverpool

AROUND A hundred hospital workers and supporters marched through Liverpool city centre and picketed a meeting of the Area Health Authority on Friday 4th January. They were protesting the planned closure of the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital in Myrtle St., Central Liverpool. The demonstration, composed mainly of women hospital workers was called by the TUC Affiliates Committee Against Hospital Closures. It co-incided with token stoppages by Hospital laundry and other ancillary workers.

The closure is part of an A.H.A. package to "rationalise" child services. It will mean that Heswall, Wirral and Myrtle Street Children's hospitals will close altogether and children's services will exist only at Alder Hey. Severely handicapped children will be moved from Olive Mount mental handicap hospital to Alder Hey and a new school, costing £¼ million built specially for those children, will close.

Although cuts in Liverpool's health care have been successfully fought in some recent cases, resis-

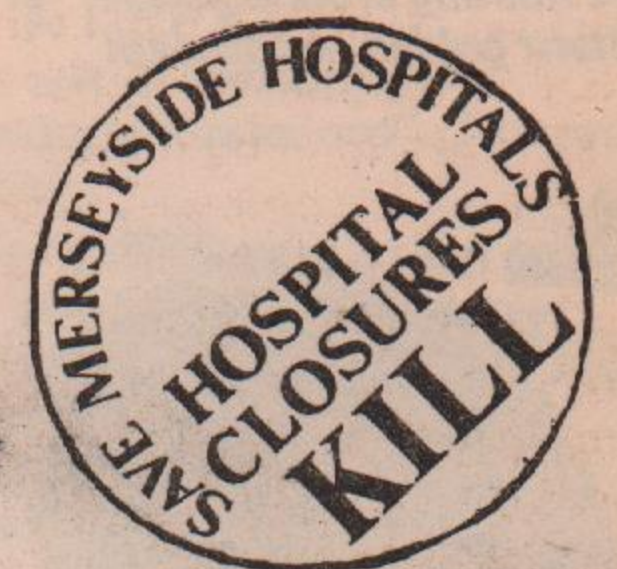
tance has been on a one off basis with little co-ordination between different struggles. This has led to cuts being averted in one area only to be made in another.

MERSEYSIDE FIGHTBACK LAUNCHED

In a bid to provide co-ordination, information and support for health struggles in Merseyside a Fightback Group has been formed. Although it has only had one small meeting it has drawn support from health workers, union stewards community activists and women

active in N.A.C. and plans to hold a large public meeting in six weeks time. The basis tenets of Fightback, militant worker/user action fighting for a socialist health care service, have been well received, but a lot of contacts need to be made before progress can be made.

Fightback planning meeting: Wed 16th January. Trades Council Offices, 70 Victoria St., Liverpool 2, 7.30pm. For information contact Mary on 236.1177.



Nottingham Education More Cuts

CLAREMONT SECONDARY School, Nottingham, will be closed in September 1980 unless the "Claremont Action Group" can muster enough support to prevent this from happening.

The fight against the school closure has fired the imagination of many local residents and parents because the transfer of the school students to another school a couple of miles away will both vastly increase danger to children from traffic and reduce the influence of the local community on the school,

A start has been made with well-attended public meetings as well as petitioning and lobbying, including a lot of very public campaigning — posters, badges etc. Like any campaign at the moment, it will be necessary to gain a wide range of support — from parents and teachers and school students to others involved with education and trade unionists to be able to win.

Messages of support to:
C.A.C. c/o 204 Noel St.,
Hyson Green, Nottingham.

READERS OF Big Flame will recall the energetic and broad-based campaign that has been fought in Nottingham to Save Our Nurseries. Large demonstrations supported by parents, teachers and nursery nurses have forced the County Council to think hard about the two nurseries and the 246 nursery jobs they intend to chop.

QUIET CUTS

During the past few months, job after job has been "redeployed" and place after place has been lost, almost behind the backs of S.O.N. with no obvious way of fighting back. And now, the County Council plan to sell one of the nurseries to private enterprise and to give the other to the S.O.N. mums to run! The campaign and trade unionists supporting it at a recent Trades Council Cuts meeting were torn about what to do. Would this be a sell-out, allowing the state off the hook for the responsibili-

ties for providing good cheap nurseries? Or will it allow working class people the chance to at least hang onto a purpose-built nursery which otherwise would probably become a private warehouse.

Whatever is decided at a public meeting in January, one thing is certain: it's been mass and public campaigning that has made the Council even consider this "compromise" and the same kind of pressure will be needed if the remaining nursery provision is to be protected and the "S.O.N. nursery" is to be a victory not a defeat.

Fighting For Jobs

"FOR THE unemployed, it's like the '30's. There shouldn't be reasons why people can't join a union if they're out of work. The unions should be organising the unemployed, and we've got to challenge them on this." (Frank Banton, ex-car worker, now secretary of the only T&GWU unemployed workers branch, 6-612, Liverpool.) In Spennymoor and in Liverpool, there could be the seeds of a movement of the unemployed in the '80's, but it's all due to the efforts of local militants as these two interviews make clear.

What Happened at Speke

Last spring, with the news that Dunlop wanted to close their Speke plant, 6-612 branch of the T&GWU decided to take action in support of the Dunlop workers action committee. They set up a community picket outside the factory gates to prevent the firm moving stocks and equipment out.

The branch, which had continued in existence after the closure of the Standard-Triumph plant the previous year, had already gone public by publishing a post-mortem of their struggle, "What happened at Speke?" We spoke to two members of the branch, Phil Ashe and Frank Banton. We began by asking whether, in hindsight, they would have handled the closure threat differently.

"Well it's easy to say it in hindsight, but I don't think we should have left things to the national officials. At the time, we thought, good, our job's being done for us. We also gave a lot of credence to the Labour Government. MPs were coming to us and saying that there was no way they could close a factory in Liverpool — but they did.

The difficult question is whether we should have gone ahead with the strike. Just prior to the redundancy notices, we'd been out for 17 weeks over manning, and there's no doubt about it, it was hard to ask the lads to commit themselves to a struggle for their jobs immediately afterwards....

Especially when Edwardes was saying that there'd be less money if we didn't accept the redundancy terms there and then.

Yes, but don't forget, Phil, that at that time, there was all kinds of rumours floating around about the exorbitant golden handshakes

that we were supposed to be getting.

Doesn't the failure to keep Standards open mean that the trade unions are incapable of fighting to save jobs?

The big problem is that people are prepared to sell their jobs to go on the dole for a couple of thousand.

But what about UCS?

An important consideration at UCS, apart from the fact that it was a different period, was the question of alternative work. I was at the CAITS (alternative industrial) technology centre at North East London Poly) conference on alternative plans a while back where we decided that the grass roots have got to be persuaded that it's worth fighting for workers plans. The Lucas Aerospace workers combine are going to write to other combine committees to suggest setting up a co-ordinating committee to spread understanding of alternative plans. Thinking now about socially useful products is going to be crucial. What's happening to BL now is probably going to be Ford's future. Maybe there won't be a car industry at all in Britain the way things are going.

Anyway, after the factory closed, we just went on having the branch meetings. The only difference was that we got better attendance than we did when we were in work. There was 50 or 60 lads regularly attending. My

theory is that a lot of them thought the union might be able to fit them up with a job.

Yes, the branch was like a labour exchange, with people coming in with news of work.

UNEMPLOYED

We never discussed the need for continuing with the branch in any depth. There was a feeling that there was a need for a branch for the unemployed. We wanted to challenge the official unions, but we haven't really succeeded. For the unemployed it's a bit like the '30's. There shouldn't be reasons why people can't join a union if they're out of work. The unions should be organising the unemployed. When we set up the unemployed workers branch we had in mind as well the danger of the National Front. This is something the unions have got to answer to: what happens to the school leavers who can't get a job, or the people who lose their jobs and drop out of the union. If the unions can't offer them something, the National Front will.

ATTENDANCE AT THE BRANCH

Attendance at the branch has gone down a lot. Quite a few of the lads have found a job, although not always on Merseyside. Some have gone down south and a couple have given it a try in Germany, but it's no answer. We've got to try new ideas, new tactics.

Personally, I think the only thing for the unemployed is to get politically involved and join a party. I'm a member of the Labour Party. There's a new mood in the Party that could be the basis for unity on the left. It's not going to come from anywhere else, or from the splinter groups. The problem is that the Labour Party only appeals to the grass roots at election times.

You have to talk about what matters to the ordinary people.

I agree, Frank, and you have to keep up regular contact, not just at election times.

Would Benn have kept Standards open if he'd been the prime minister?

I doubt it.



Big Flame Photo

Organizing Against the Dole

PAUL ELLIS used to be a shop steward at the Courtaulds factory in Spennymoor. Now he's the secretary of the town's branch of the Unemployed Workers Union. Here he explains what the Union is trying to do.

The branch was formed in June soon after Courtaulds closed. A few of the people who had been fighting to keep the factory open felt we shouldn't just stop because we'd lost that battle. A lot of men felt as though they'd been thrown on the scrap heap when they lost their jobs, and we didn't think that was right.

So what's the branch trying to do?

At the moment we're mainly concerned with impressing upon people that it shouldn't be a stigma to be unemployed. We've been conditioned to think that when you're out of work you're a scrounger and less worthy than everyone else. But it's not the fault of people who lose their jobs that they are out of work.

Courtaulds came here saying they were going to end unemployment in the area — and they ended up doubling it! It was Courtaulds who made the factory run at a loss and then used that as an excuse to make us all redundant.

Most people on the dole around here aren't scroungers — they're on the dole because they can't get any work, because there aren't enough jobs.

They shouldn't be ashamed or stigmatised for that.

Practically speaking, we're doing a lot of different things, although we're still only learning. So far we've got over 30 members and are trying to get as many as we can. At the moment we meet regularly every

Friday at 1pm in the Town Hall. We're wanting to get a Day Centre somewhere in the town as soon as possible, then we'll have a base to work from and a place for people to come to. People get a lot of problems when they're out of work — about money, and bills, with the DHSS and so on.

The Union can help with these a lot. We can share ideas on how best to cope, and provide information on welfare rights and benefits etc.

Whenever someone says something detrimental about the unemployed publicly, we get on to the press, radio and TV and ask them to put over our point of view. Also, we have leaflets for advice and information.

In the long term, the whole idea is that the Union will eventually destroy itself, because there won't be any unemployment. We're campaigning amongst the trade union movement itself for all workers to fight for a decent basic wage, so they won't need to work overtime, and for a shorter working week. That won't happen overnight, of course, but in the end everyone could be in a job.

At the same time we will be campaigning to get more work to come into the area.

Anyone out of work can join the branch, and have their say in what it's doing. We're doing a good job, and the more people who get involved the better.

(Thanks to Durham Street Press for the Spennymoor interview)



Big Flame Photo

MECCANO WHERE NEXT?

Workers at the Meccano factory in Liverpool have been in 24-hour a day occupation since the closure was announced on November 30th. The workers are determined to fight on, as our reporter found out when he talked to a group of women workers in the factory canteen:

"The management really misjudged the mood here. They thought we'd collapse over Christmas, but we're determined to fight Airfix. If they can get away with this, they can all start doing it. Those of us who work in the canteen had gone home at three o'clock, and we only heard about the closure when people here rang us up."

"If we can't beat them, we won't join them. I'll certainly never work for an Airfix company again. All the other factories in the group are non-union, scab labour. This is the only unionised plant in the Airfix group. When they bought this place that's what they didn't like about it. And without a trade union this place would have closed by now."

B.F. Could you get jobs in Liverpool if you lost these?

"No way. There's no way you'll

find a job in Liverpool now. It's a depressed area..

SUPPORT

The Meccano workers are fighting on. Airfix have said they won't open the plant again, and they want to shift production to another part of the country, or even abroad to France and Hong Kong. The workers are occupying to keep expensive, government-subsidised machinery from being taken away and they are looking to Trade unionists to support them in the fight to stop Meccano's production being started up elsewhere and to black all Airfix products. But the question remains: if the workers don't want to work for Airfix, and Airfix don't want to employ them, what are the options open to them? A take-over, a co-operative, nationalisation?



Photo: Andrew Ward (Report) (11)

GRUNWICKS. By 1977 it was clear that trade unions could not do enough to make the heroic struggle of these Asian women for union recognition successful. When Cricklewood postal workers decided to stop handling Grunwicks mail-order films, a High Court injunction ordered them to handle

them. Tom Jackson (UPW leader) then ordered the postal workers to comply and heavily disciplined local branch officials who wanted to carry on supporting pickets. Without such support, these pickets could not beat well-organised strike breakers and the local police.

"I assert very clearly that everyone has the right to work and everyone has the right to cross a picket line." Callaghan, as Prime Minister, on 23.1.79.

Concordat paved way for union-bashing Bill

On February 14th 1979, the TUC and Labour Cabinet cobbled together the "Concordat". The key sections of the Employment Bill on picketing and secret ballots are based on the "Concordat".

This last attempt to keep Labour in office came as groups like hospital workers and school cleaners stopped work. After four years of the "Social Contract" which had seen real wages drop by 6.4% from 1975 to 1978, unemployment almost trebled, over 30,000 hospital beds closed and prices doubled, a wages "revolt" broke out — led by the very low-paid workers the "Social Contract" was supposed to benefit.

PRESS HYSTERIA

Press hysteria broke out about "union power" and "secondary pickets". The TUC panicked. It produced the "Concordat" to bring some "common sense" to strike action. It proposed:

- ▶ Energetic steps to end unofficial strikes
- ▶ Strike action of any sort to be avoided if at all possible
- ▶ Secret ballots to be held before strike action occurs (section 5)
- ▶ Public sector workers could give up the right to strike in return for guarantees on wages and conditions (section 32)
- ▶ Unions should be more "flexible" about the "closed shop" (section 12)
- ▶ Massive restrictions on picketing including:
 1. Pickets to be confined to their own workplace, customers and supplier.
 2. Request to stop at picket lines to be done via union officials only.
 3. If places other than your own employers are to be picketed, this should only be done via officials and after consulting other unions likely to be affected.
 4. Armbands to be worn to identify pickets whose numbers "should be

no more than necessary".

5. Experienced officials should be in charge of picket lines.
6. If union members on official's instructions cross picket lines, no sanction should be applied to them.
7. Demonstrations or mass pickets should not have as their aim "blockading the workplace."

Not one "left wing" member of the TUC General Council or the Labour Cabinet voted against the Concordat — whose aim was clearly to extend official control over the membership.

NO REPEAL

It is no wonder that Eric Varley MP, Labour's official spokesman on Prior's Bill says that a future Labour Government "would not repeal" all of Prior's proposals. As for Len Murray of the TUC, after Grunwicks, Derek Robinson, Corby, Charing Cross Hospital and other major defeats, he writes: "these proposals would turn industrial relations into a battleground."

What does he think they are now? The TUC will confine their protests to trying "persuasion" to which end a Sunday afternoon march and a "day of action" will be organised. What they will not do — is defy the law.

THE EMPLOYMENT BILL will affect every single trade unionist. It will also affect all others — whether you be hospital patient, parent, unemployed worker, pensioner, student who supports and "trade dispute". This supplement looks at what the Bill says and some of its effects. We also point out the way in which employers are producing their own "Guidelines" to cash in on anti-union feeling.

REAL TORY AIMS

"There is nothing that concentrates the mind like a bit of poverty" (leading Tory on the spending cuts)

The last few months have not been happy ones for trade unionists. Massive redundancies in British Steel, the victimisation of Derek Robinson, hospitals closing almost every week, all Oxfordshire nursery schools to shut — the list of defeats is endless.

Shrewsbury building workers — were jailed under criminal offences for picketing and were not released.

MONETARISM

Prior's Bill is intended to deal with the battles to come as the Government's economic policies dig deeper and deeper.

The backbone of the Government's attacks on us is monetarism — the policy of controlling money supply, interest rates and "cash limits" on Government spending which means that:

- if you don't accept wage cuts your job may be threatened.
- if you don't accept speed up and some sackings, the entire workplace may close (and your redundancy pay cut).
- public sector jobs, wages and services will be slashed.

The Tories are planning for a worsened crisis in 1980. In a year's time, unemployment will be over two millions. The aim is to sap our will to fight.

Prior's Bill is intended to deal with future battles. In doing so, Prior has learned from previous attempts at union controls.

NO REPEAT

Heath's 1971 Act was eventually put on ice, in 1972, after five dockers jailed under it were released by a mass unofficial strike wave. This Bill is different. There are no special judges, or courts, no cooling off periods, no Registrar. There is no central focus and all offences are part of ordinary civil and criminal law. Prior knows that although the dockers were released from Pentonville Jail, other workers — especially the

AGAINST UNREST

Prior's Bill is only part of the Government's plans for dealing with any unrest caused by their economic policies. Amongst others are:

- Guidelines to Government Departments on smashing trade unionism within the public sector (see inside).
- Plans to deduct £10 from social security payments to strikers families.
- The use of the army in industrial disputes. As Ian Gilmour, Tory defence spokesman, said: "Instead of being treated worse than other people, the Armed Forces should have been treated better. They have a unique strategic importance.... They are used to keep the community services running when other workers go on strike."
- More use of laws such as the 1971 Immigration Act (and more recent additions) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (4,000 arrests, but only 12 convictions) to harass black and Irish trade unionists.

ATTACK 'N DEFY

The Tories talk of "restoring the balance of industrial relations". The real aim is twofold:

- to restore "management's right to manage" and gain the control over workers leading to speed up, unfettered introduction of new technology etc.
- push down wages — to restore high profits.

To defeat these policies we must be prepared to attack the Bill and defy when it becomes law.



PENTONVILLE JAIL 1972. Five London dockers jailed for "secondary picketing" released by a mass strike movement. So massive were the strikes to release them that even the TUC

threatened a one day General Strike. Prior hopes his Bill will avoid head on confrontation like this one by creating no special courts and judges.

Trade Unionists and the L

SECRET BALLOTS

THE TORIES say they want to make unions 'more democratic'. We also think the unions should be more democratic. We are against a set-up where many union officials are never elected, where officials are elected for life, where secret deals are agreed over the heads of the members, where the members in many unions have little control over the running of their own union, or even their own meetings.

But Prior's aim is not to end any of this. After all, the Tories don't offer us secret ballots on whether we want our local hospital closed or £20,000 millions wasted on nuclear power stations.

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

His aim is to use secret ballots to control the rank and file membership of trade unions. We are against secret postal ballots because:

the essence of trade unionism is collective discussion and action. At mass meetings we can hear both points of view, be aware of our strength of numbers and feelings, at home on our own, we are isolated and the media greatly influence who we vote for. Anyway, why

shouldn't our workmates know how everyone voted? secret ballots can greatly weaken our strength if an immediate vote is needed - as when someone is suspended or sacked, where health and safety are involved, or over a bonus. Very often the threat of immediate action is enough - and no actual strike is needed.

Ballots are not as accurate as is claimed. In the recent Leyland postal ballots, an AUEW(TASS) survey showed that of 1130 members 14% had not received a ballot paper, 11% had received two papers and 1% more than two papers. This is in addition to ex-Leyland workers who got a vote.

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

THE UNFAIR dismissal procedures introduced by the last Labour government have done much to defuse conflicts over sackings. But a lot of workers have found that you can't get justice from the law - what it does is to undermine the solidarity of workmates, which is the only effective way to get justice (see box).

SACKING MADE EASIER

Government figures show that of all the cases brought (over 30,000 a year) only one in a hundred results in the worker getting her job back. The employer wins three-quarters of tribunal cases - yet the Tory proposals make it even easier for them to win by saying it is no longer up to them to prove the sacking was "unfair". Tribunals

TRIBUNALS NO ANSWER

"I was sacked for trade union activities after 25 years service. The membership stopped work but the convenors put it around that such action might jeopardise my chances at an Industrial Tribunal unfair dismissal case.

"So the members resumed work but I later lost my case for unfair dismissal even though Leyland withdrew the charges against me. But by then it was too late (7 months later) to fight for my job back.

"Later, Jim Mortimer, ACAS Chairman, told me he didn't know of a single case where a victimised shop steward had got his job back through a Tribunal." Victimised British Leyland shop steward.

CLOSED SHOPS

THE PROPOSALS in the Employment Bill on the closed shop and union membership are a very direct attack on workers' ability to organise collectively. With the usual waffle of 'freedom of the individual' and human rights'. The proposals threaten the right of unions to refuse to work with non-members, but they do not question the fact that employers operate a blacklist and can victimise those militants they want to get out of the way.

Other results of the Bill's proposals include;

- * Making strike-breaking easier by allowing individuals to opt out of union membership.
- * We would be liable to court action if we refuse to handle the work of non-union firms. Nor will unions be able to refuse admission to past scabs.
- * In order for a new closed shop to be declared valid, it will have to be supported by 80% of those entitled to vote. Of course, no mention is made of the fact that governments are always elected by a minority - the Tories in the last election got 40% of a 75% turn-out (little more than 30% of those entitled to vote.) No Governments could even have been elected, if the 80% rule was applicable to general elections
- * A Code of Practice for closed shops that is likely to contain detailed advice on the role of shop-stewards, procedure agreements, and status quo clauses... an open cheque for making union organising more and more difficult.

EXCUSE FOR SCABS

If the bill goes through, +00 trade

see the issues from a management point of view. the worker is an economic asset belonging to capital, not a human being, who can miss a bus, or oversleep, or swear at a foreman.

LESS COMPENSATION

Even where the worker does win, the compensation is paltry - a few weeks' wages. (Half the payments are under £400, ¼ are under £750; the high payments are usually for sacked senior managers). Yet this is to be cut even further.

Already, last October, Prior increased from 6 to 12 months. the minimum period you have to have been working for a firm before you can complain about being sacked. Now he also wants to allow small firms to have incompetent industrial relations.

MILITANTS VICTIMISED

The new proposals make it easier for management to victimise militants. The Tories expect that in a period of high unemployment, workplace solidarity will be low. It is only by building up support for the basic principles of trade unionism that we will prove them wrong.

ATTACK ON UNION DEMOCRACY

The Bill also contains proposals to curb unions' control of their membership. People 'unreasonably' expelled from or refused admission to a union are to be given the right to claim compensation (payable by the union) if they work in an industry where union membership is required. Of course, no parallel sanction is to be imposed on employers who 'unreason-

SO FAR this Bill does not contain any provisions for extending the exposure of unions and union members to legal actions by firms in situations like sympathy strikes or other "secondary" action. Prior left this out of the Bill because he would rather leave it to the Courts, which under the leadership of Lord Denning in the Court of Appeal, have been doing a good job of making the unions and their members more vulnerable to legal actions. But Prior may be forced to show his hand because the ultra-conservative House of Lords has refused to do the government's dirty work for it. They have reversed the famous decision of Denning's court in the Express Newspapers v. McShane case.

UNIONS LIABLE

Denning is basically reviving the old hostility of the common law to trade unionism. In 19th century cases culminating in the famous Taff Vale case, courts held unions liable for causing breach of contracts. Political pressure led to parliament passing Acts in 1875 and 1906, which gave unions some limited protection from the common law. Basically, they are protected so long as they do it in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute. The effect of this is to confine union action to narrow "economism". For instance, it would leave out of statutory protection actions in solidarity with oppressed workers in South Africa or Chile,

unless there were a specific trade dispute. Now the courts, with Denning in the lead, have started to say that "secondary" or "sympathy" action may not be acceptable "in furtherance of a trade dispute".

EXPRESS TROUBLE

For instance, the McShane case arose out of the NUJ provincial newspaper strike in December 1978. In order to stop news going to the papers, the NUJ called out its Press Association (PA) members. But since not all of them were willing, the NUJ then called on its members in the national press to refuse to handle PA copy. The Express got a High Court injunction against this, which was backed by the Court of Appeal, on the grounds that the union's action

did not have a "reasonable prospect" of furthering the dispute, but was really in to improve the morale of strikers. The House of Lords rejected this view, since the obviously was in connection with a trade dispute, and not up to the courts to decide whether the particular action complained about would not "further" that dispute.

UNCERTAIN LAW

This decision puts the back in the government's since they are committed to the legal protection of trade union "secondary" action. The underlying reason for that, given the structure of monopoly capital in this last of the 20th century, trade union action if it is to be effective inevitably has a big effect on industry generally. This means that a strike is often more directly "political" - it can't be confined into the old economic "trade dispute" framework. To try to do so by excluding "secondary" action from protection will create great uncertainty and bring the law more often into industrial disputes.

INJUNCTIONS

The main legal weapon to employers in the injunction. To get this, a firm goes to (County Court or High Court) and says that union action (strike, picketing) is causing it of its contracts. The court give an injunction ordering action complained of to stop if it considers that the court has a case "on the balance of convenience". The judge actually decide the case (it actually be heard for many months). In fact, the court generally drops the case, since they know that getting an injunction ages out of the union or its members is going to be much more trouble than it's worth and by then the dispute will be long past. For instance, Unilever Biscuits dropped its picketing case against Reg Fall. But companies can and do get injunctions within 2 or 3 days that can directly affect disputes.



Photos: Big Flame

PICKETING

Even before this new Bill, Professor Wedderburn wrote "The only indisputably lawful pickets are those who attend in small numbers... and who keep out of everyone's way"

SECONDARY PICKETS

The only effective answer to this has been large pickets and "secondary pickets". Large pickets are vital for morale and to stop picket lines being broken by scabs or the police. "Secondary pickets" - pickets on other branches of the same employers, on the docks or on stockpiles - are vital to stop stockpiles, imports and other workplaces doing your work while strikers freeze on picket lines outside empty workplace

CONTROL OF DISTRIBUTION

In a world of militant multinational firms, any group of workers who don't

In 1980 control of distribution is as important as stopping production. Amongst the actions which will be illegal under the new Bill are:-

- * Patients and local people joining work-ins and pickets against the closure of hospitals and clinics.
- * Lorry drivers will only be able to picket their own lorry or depot, not other lorries moving their normal loads.
- * People who visit picket lines with donations and messages of support will not be able to stay to show support unless call themselves a demonstration.

- * The families of Dunlops workers and the local community in Liverpool who joined the struggle against closure in 1979.
- * Ford workers who picketed the docks in 1979 to prevent the imports of German and Belgian cars to break their strike.

- * Teachers and local authority workers who picket town halls or other workers who picket their head offices.
- * Chrysler workers who picketed stocks in 1973 built up by the R management as part of a well-planned lock-out.
- * pickets who physically prevent employers removing stocks and machinery as part of a factory or hospital closure.

BUT REMEMBER

The police already have extensive powers to arrest pickets if they like. They can arrest for obstructing the highway, having an offensive weapon, obstructing the police, threatening abusive behaviour etc etc. What the Bill does is to encourage them to use these powers to attack the solidarity essential to a strike. But the police know that the law can be ineffective against mass action as it was at Saltley coke depot where the picket was

aw

How not to win: the bakers in 1978 disregarded the importance of picketing; following police regulations their strike was weakened.

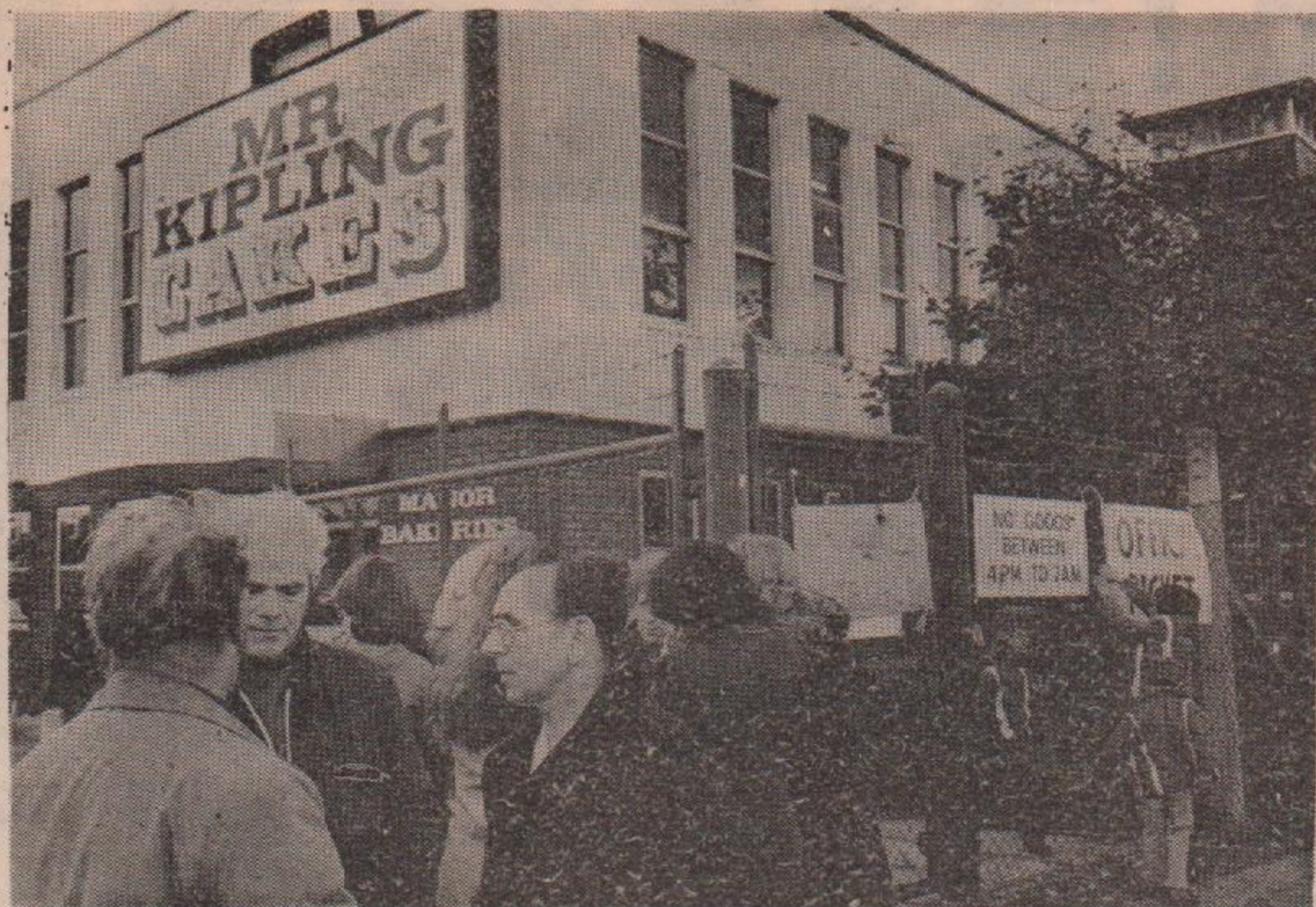


Photo: John Smith (IFL)

Women Hard Hit

THE PROPOSALS in the Employment Bill to whittle away the few maternity rights which women have achieved fits in well with the Thatcher governments general policy to deny women equal job opportunities and to solve the unemployment problem by forcing women back into the home.

PROVISIONS ROLLED BACK

Womens rights to paid maternity leave and job reinstatement were established by the 1975 Employment Protection Act. This Act gives minimal rights which are less than in most other European countries.

Neither the pay nor the length of leave is sufficient and the lack of nurseries means that many women have no chance of taking it up anyway. However the Act was an important step forward not least

because it recognises that women have a right to work and that a woman does not automatically have to give up her job and restrict her activities and interest to her home the minute she becomes pregnant.

NOT SAME JOB

The government proposals mean that a woman will not have the right to return to her job after childbirth if she works for a small firm which employs 5 or less people. As small shops and offices are traditionally a large area of employment for women this means that many thousands of women will no longer have any rights under this law.

Even more seriously damaging to women's job prospects is that proposal that any employer, large or small, no longer has to offer a woman her own or a similar job when she returns to work. The job he offers her can now be worse as long as the terms are not "substantially less favourable". This opens up a large loophole in the law at a time when women's job opportunities and career prospects are already threatened by government policy which is cutting women's jobs. Women's wages have declined in relation to men, from 75.5% in 1977 to 73.9% in 1979 and these changes in the law will make progress towards equal pay slower and more difficult.

The other proposals aimed at tightening up the procedures by which a woman can claim maternity pay and leave will make it even more difficult and bureaucratic than it is at the moment. The requirement to inform her employer in writing of the expected date of birth means that a woman will not be able to work for longer before the birth, and take more leave after the birth as many women would prefer to do.

WEAKEST HIT

A glance through the rest of the legislation shows that the workers worst affected will be the weakest sections of the workforce, those isolated in small workshops, the low paid and poorly unionised. Women who make up 41% of the workforce but only 28% of trade union members are of course represented in this group. Some of the bitterest disputes in recent years have involved women fighting for the right to organise such as at Grunwick.

WOMENS' UNEMPLOYMENT

These proposals contribute to the general climate of opinion attacking a woman's right to work. Women workers have already been badly hit by government policy which in cutting hospitals, schools, nurseries etc, is not only cutting women's jobs but also putting the burden of caring for the old, the sick, the handicapped and the children back onto women's shoulders. It is not surprising that unemployment amongst women has now risen to 29.4%. The Corrie Bill which will restrict a woman's right to choose whether or not she has a child will further deny women the right to control their own lives.

SUMMARY OF THE BILL

BALLOTS: The Minister for Employment is given the power to set up a scheme for making payments to trade unions for secret ballots held by the union for decisions relating to industrial action or the election of executive committee members or union officials.

CODES OF PRACTICE: The Minister is given the power to draw up codes of practice on any aspect of industrial relations. These would not be law in themselves, but would be evidence in any court or industrial tribunal, and must be "taken into account" when deciding questions to which they are relevant.

UNION MEMBERSHIP: A person who thinks s/he has been "unreasonably" expelled from or refused membership of a union can take the case to an industrial tribunal. Tribunal can award compensation to be paid by the union. This will be based on the actual money loss if the union backs down; if union doesn't, the case goes to the Employment Appeal Tribunal, which can award much higher compensation (but not reinstatement).

If a person is sacked for not being a union member s/he can also bring a case for compensation for loss of the job, against the employer. The employer can add the union or anyone else as defendant if he says they pressurised him to sack the non-union worker, and they can be made to pay some or all of the compensation for loss of the job.

CLOSED SHOP: Employer sacking a person refusing to join a union where there is a closed shop agreement amounts to unfair dismissal if the person concerned "objects on grounds of conscience or other deeply-held personal conviction to being a member of any trade union whatsoever or of a particular trade union".

In future, closed shop can only be brought in if approved by secret ballot obtaining more than 80% of votes of those entitled to vote.

Employers can't sack existing workers who refuse to join the union after the ballot.

Person objecting under the "conscience clause" to joining the union given right to have no action even short of dismissal taken against him/her.

UNFAIR DISMISSAL: will not apply for first two years to a new firm employing

less than 19 people provided workers are told when they start.

A fixed term contract can only exclude dismissal if it is for one year (and not two).

When deciding fairness of dismissal tribunal can take into account size of company; also, no longer up to company to prove fairness.

Compensation reduced: only half week's pay for each year worked under the age of 22; power to reduce award taking into account employee's conduct; and compensation must be reduced if employee "unreasonably" refused reinstatement.

MATERNITY LEAVE: lose right to maternity pay if don't inform employer (in writing if he requests it) at least 21 days before starting maternity leave. Lose right to return unless you inform employer in writing both 21 days before expected date of childbirth and 21 days before date of return, that you intend to return. Also, if employer writes to you at any time after 7 weeks after childbirth you must write back confirming intention to return.

No right to return if firm employs five people or less and it is not "reasonably practical" to take you back. Any firm can offer "suitable and appropriate" alternative work on terms that are not "substantially less favourable" - they don't have to give you your own job back.

PICKETING: limited to person "at or near his/her own place of work", and union official accompanying him.

If person works not at any one place, or at a place which it is impractical to picket, can picket any premises of his employer from which he works or from which his work is administered.

ACTION AGAINST UNION SHOPS: industrial action taken against work being supplied from non-union shop will be exposed to legal action for injunction or damages. This does not apply to refusal to work with non-union members employed by a different firm within your own place of work (in-plant sub-contracting).

ABOLISHES: ACAS trade union recognition procedures. Schedule 11 provisions for claims that employer is failing to observe the recognised or general level of terms and conditions in the same industry and district.

WHAT TO DO

If you do get an injunction handed out against you in a dispute, it's worth finding out exactly what it involves, contacting a friendly lawyer if possible (there are a few!).

Remember, an injunction only covers the people actually named in it (or their "agents".) So there is nothing to stop other people from carrying in on the action. After you've been given the injunction, you can be in contempt of court if you carry on doing what it tells you not to do. It usually gives a date when you can go to court if you want to object to it. At the moment, as long as the House of Lords decision stands, there are arguments that can be made that the court shouldn't give injunctions in obvious trade disputes. But you may prefer to ignore the law altogether (apart from anything else, it costs a packet.) It is up to whoever got the injunction to complain to the court if they say it is being broken. The court can then issue a summons to get them to court for a hearing to decide if they have broken it. If he thinks they have, the judge can decide the penalty (fines, jail). It's not a criminal matter, and the police are not involved unless the court issues a summons with a warrant.

DEPENDS ON STRENGTH

The task for trade union militants is to understand the law, so that decisions about action can be taken without fear or ignorance of the law. Sometimes action must be adapted to what (more or less) legally be done; sometimes we have enough strength to openly defy the law and the state.

Health Service: a special target

THE HEALTH Service is a special target for Tory plans. The Government is quite prepared to see people suffer and die as a result of cuts in health service spending.

But it will not tolerate disputes in the NHS - especially as large numbers of these disputes are against the spending cuts.

20 has been sent to all NHS management offering them detailed guidelines on handling all forms of industrial dispute from overtime bans to full strikes. Taken together with Prior's Bill and the Guidelines to managements re-

ANTI-STRIKE GUIDELINES
Already, Health Circular (HC79)



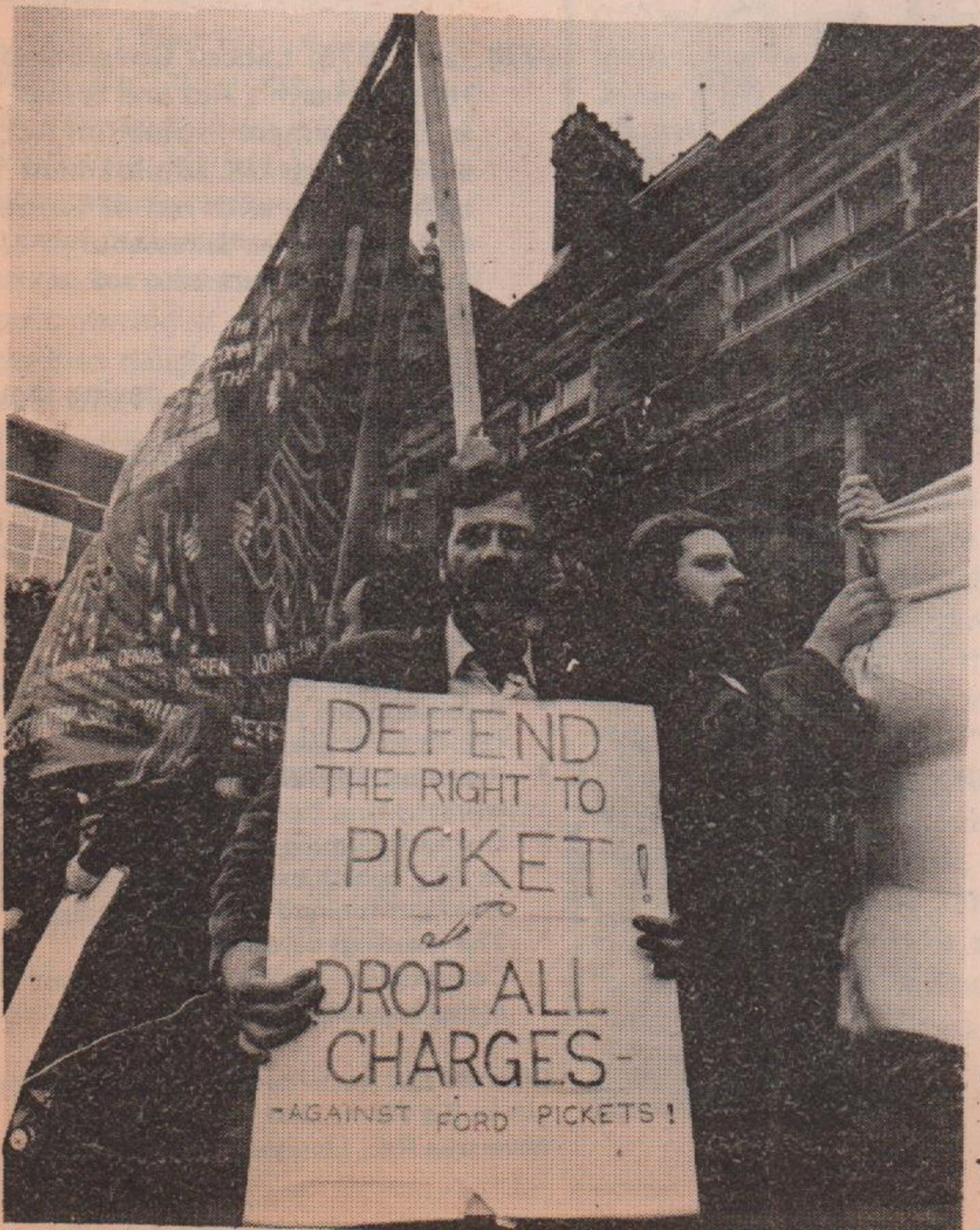
Big Flame Photo

Photo: John Stewart (Report) (2)

HELP FROM ARMY

The first section of the Guidelines claims that most forms of action are a breach of contract and local management can decide to withhold full pay if only part of the job is done (lightening strikes, etc) Pickets should not be allowed on NHS premises nor allowed to use canteen or toilets. Anyone refusing to cross a picket line should be suspended at once. Finally, health authorities are instructed to draw up contingency plans to maintain services during disputes by recruiting volunteers from existing staff, the general public, agency staff or contractors. They are also to prepare plans for assistance from the Armed Services.

For more information on struggles in the Health Service contact: FIGHTBACK, 30 Camden Road, I...



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

"BRITISH LEYLAND may reflect the shape of things to come, an aggressive employers offensive.....facing a defensive shop stewards movement.... As the industrial consensus continues to break up, BL may be a harbinger of a new kind of class war where union power is seen as illusory". (Observer 25.11.79) (Observer 25.11.79)

How can we stop the clock being turned back? How can we move forward without simply continuing the grim Labour-Tory circle of the last few years?

Lobbies, marches and leaflets may spread the word but won't stop the Act becoming law. Once it is law, many of the forms of struggle used against the cuts, against redundancies, against low wages and speed up will become illegal. But this is nothing new. Trade unionism has always had to fight the law and the state as well as employers. But the law is ineffective against a mass movement.

We know from past experience how the TUC and Labour Party will react to this — they will say we cannot break the law.

DEFY THE LAW

If we want to win the bread and butter struggles — not to mention defeating the Act there is only one starting point — we must be prepared to defy the law. This has been the fate of unjust laws in the past — it must be so again. The problem is this: who is going to defy the law and how will they succeed? We believe that it is not enough to:

- * simply replace "right wing" union leaders with "left wing" ones whose actions are often no more democratic or effective.
- * denounce the likes of Duffy as a traitor without explaining why it is they get away with their treachery.
- * produce totally correct "demands" (like the Rank and File Code of Practice — which we support) without explaining who is going to carry out such demands.

We do not claim to have all the answer to such problems. But we do think there are two issues which should be our starting point.



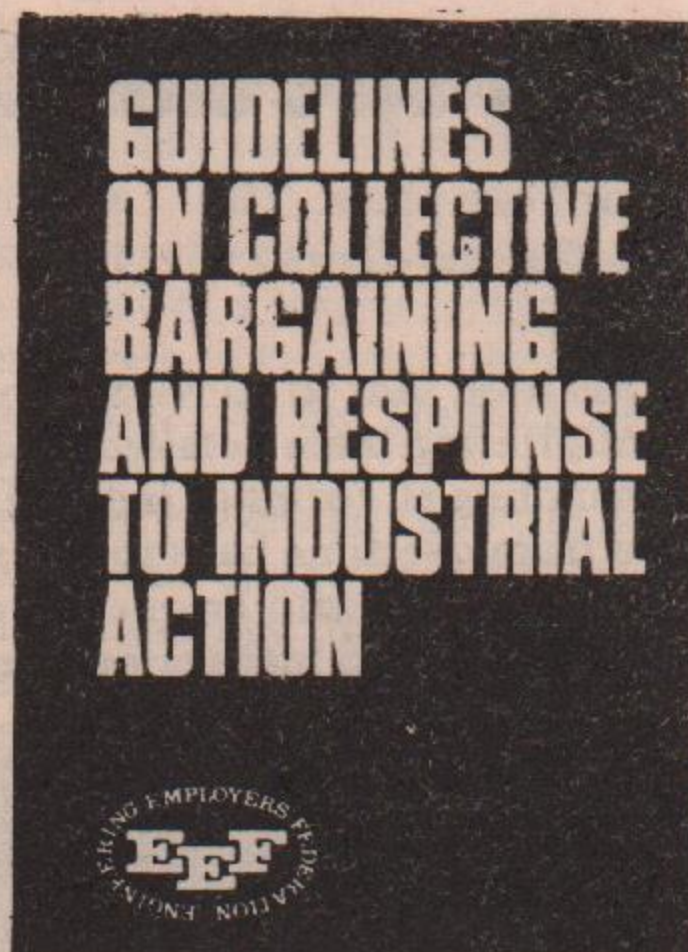
Miners picket Saitley coke depot.

FOR MANY years, the engineering and motor industry was regarded as a stronghold of trade unionism. In recent months, the employers (with not a little help from certain union officials) have been hard at work changing this.

GUIDELINES

In March 1979, the Engineering Employers Federation circulated to its members some "Guidelines" on dealing with disputes. These (originally secret) guidelines are a model of what Prior hopes every group of employers will produce. They suggest employers:-

- *insist on only "stewards with proper qualifications who are competent for office" (4.i)
- *bypass shop stewards (4.j)
- communicate directly with employees and organise secret ballots (4.k)
- *lock-out any employees imposing sanctions and other employees to turn them against those in dispute (5.b)
- *block income tax refunds during strikes (5.d)
- *under no circumstances do the work of strike bound plants or



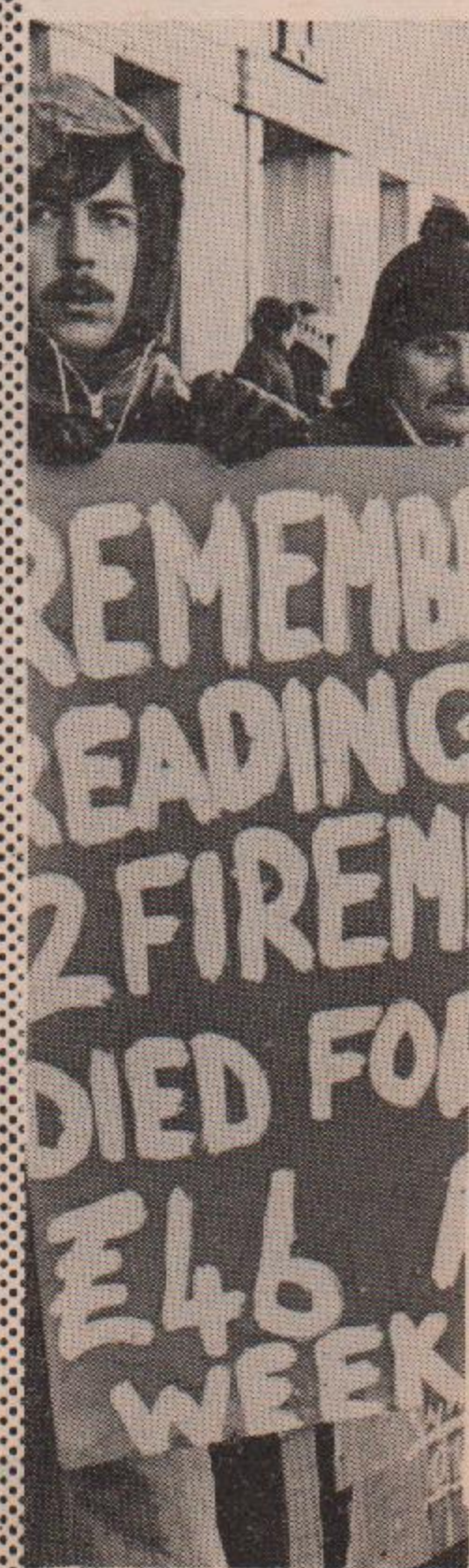
employ their workers during a strike or put pressure on strike-hit suppliers to settle (5.e)

MORE CONTROL

A number of companies (including non-federated ones) have followed these policies with great success. At Talbot and Vauxhall's long and bitter disputes were smashed (helped by full-time officials.) At both plants new

"agreements" were forced through which at a stroke remove many of the gains of 30 years of struggle by imposing total flexibility between grades, shifts and plants and almost writing the steward out of procedure. At Leyland, the sacking of Derek Robinson was part of a Leyland strategy to force through an 85 page document which gives management much more control over the labour process.

Such documents and Guidelines are very much part of the Government's policy. A good example of how employers (and many officials) will use Prior's Bill was the following letter - written by Grenville Hawley (TGWU official) to the Vauxhall TGWU convenor - and handed out by the Company: "I have to advise you that the present picketing of the ports and elsewhere must cease forthwith - that is immediately - bearing in mind that this is not an official dispute. You will, of course, be aware of the difficulties that can be created for the trade union movement with the thinking of the present Government on picketing".



Laurence Sparham (IFL)

Rank & File Code of Practice

The Tory Government is launching an attack on basic trade union rights. At the Defend Our Unions Conference on 23 June, 1,100 trade unionists delegates from 487 trade union organisations adopted the Rank and File Code of Practice for Disputes as a statement of basic trade union principles which must be defended against the Tories. The Tories say they want consultation before they shove their plans through Parliament. The best sort of consultation we can give them is a commitment to the Code of Practice from shop stewards' committees, trade union branches, trades councils and other organisations, throughout the whole country. Campaign in your union to get the Code adopted as the official policy of the whole union. Join us in the campaign to win support for the Code of Practice and against the Tory attacks.

- 1 No crossing of picket lines;
- 2 For the building, and defence of, 100 per cent closed shop. For sanctions to be applied against any individuals breaking closed shop;
- 3 For full rank & file discussion and decision making by traditional democratic procedures—no enforced secret ballots.
- 4 Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that picket lines are observed. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees.
- 5 All appeals for blacking and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out wherever practicable;
- 6 Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets;
- 7 No settlement of disputes without full report backs to, and decision making by, the members concerned.

UNION DEMOCRACY

Union democracy is key. We cannot hope that people will defend the unions until they feel they are their unions. From top to bottom — from General Secretary to shop steward or rep. — there are ways of organising which must be changed. Many members are cynical not only about outside officials but about convenors and stewards/ reps. The reasons for this include:

- * too many secret meetings with no report backs.
- * too many committees and mass meetings run undemocratically.
- * too many joint committees, participation bodies and long winded procedures which take stewards/ reps. away from the members but are often regarded as a "skive" by the members.
- * too much reliance on "clever" deals and tactics and not enough active involvement of the members — whether it be via gang meetings or on the picket line — the "leave it to us" syndrome.
- * Participation in unions is not made easy for women, black or young workers. There must be a fight for branch meetings to be held in work time — to make it easier for women to attend. And there must be positive discrimination for all minority groups.

The pattern of remote national bargaining and productivity deals which has spread rapidly has crippled trade unionism in many workplaces.

The union must become accountable to the members.

SOCIALIST POLITICS

Politics is the second key. When the Government and police are directly involving themselves in union affairs the old division between economics and politics is redundant. We cannot hope to fight redundancies or wage cuts when many workers think they are "necessary". We cannot hope to defy an unjust law when many workers think the law is "neutral".

Nor is it enough to be purely defensive. In struggles in hospitals, for example, workers have not only opposed the cuts but questioned the whole way the Health Service is run. Real socialist politics is central to rebuilding the unions into democratic bodies involving the whole membership. And only such politics can make sense of all the attacks on us and point a way out of the crisis.

The ways in which we work for this will vary. Health workers in Fightback and Fordworkers in the Ford Combine are two examples of how we can start to rebuild the strength of our movement. Many other forms will be built — some official, some unofficial, but all aiming at control of the union in the hands of the members as the only basis for a real fightback against Thatcher's policies and Prior's Bill.

TEN YEARS OF UNION LAWS

PRIOR'S BILL is only the latest of a series of legal attempts to control the rank and file membership of unions. The Tories have learned from past struggles. We must do the same.

1969 Labour Government introduces "in Place of Strife" to trim the power of shop stewards organisation with compulsory ballots, controls on official strikes and fines for striking in breach of procedure, and "cooling off periods". Proposals withdrawn after union pressure including unofficial one-day strike.

1971 Tory Government (Heath) brings Industrial Relations Act with Registrar of Trade Unions, a special court and compulsory ballots. TUC organises one march and one day of action. Bill becomes an Act and unions stampede to Register and appear before National Industrial Relations Court despite Congress policy. "Left wing" TGWU pays £55,000 fine imposed without taking any action. Two groups of workers take action that puts the Act into cold storage.

1972 First of all, five jailed London dockers are released by a mass unofficial strike movement in July 1972.

1973 Secondly the AUEW refuses to pay a fine imposed over a recognition dispute at Con-Mech (Woking). A series of one day strikes is called ending in unlimited strike call until seizure of unions assets stops. On second day of strike an "anonymous" donor pays fine imposed and lets Government off the hook. This signals end of use of Act (1973).

1973 Three building workers jailed as part of Shrewsbury 24 trials for alleged violent picketting Charged under the 1875 Conspiracy Act, months after the alleged offence, they are convicted. No official support from their own unions and unofficial support too small to free them.

1974 (and 1975) Labour Government repeals Heath's Act and brings in Employment Protection Act which brings UK employment rights in line with rest of Europe. Refuses to free Shrewsbury building workers who rot in jail.

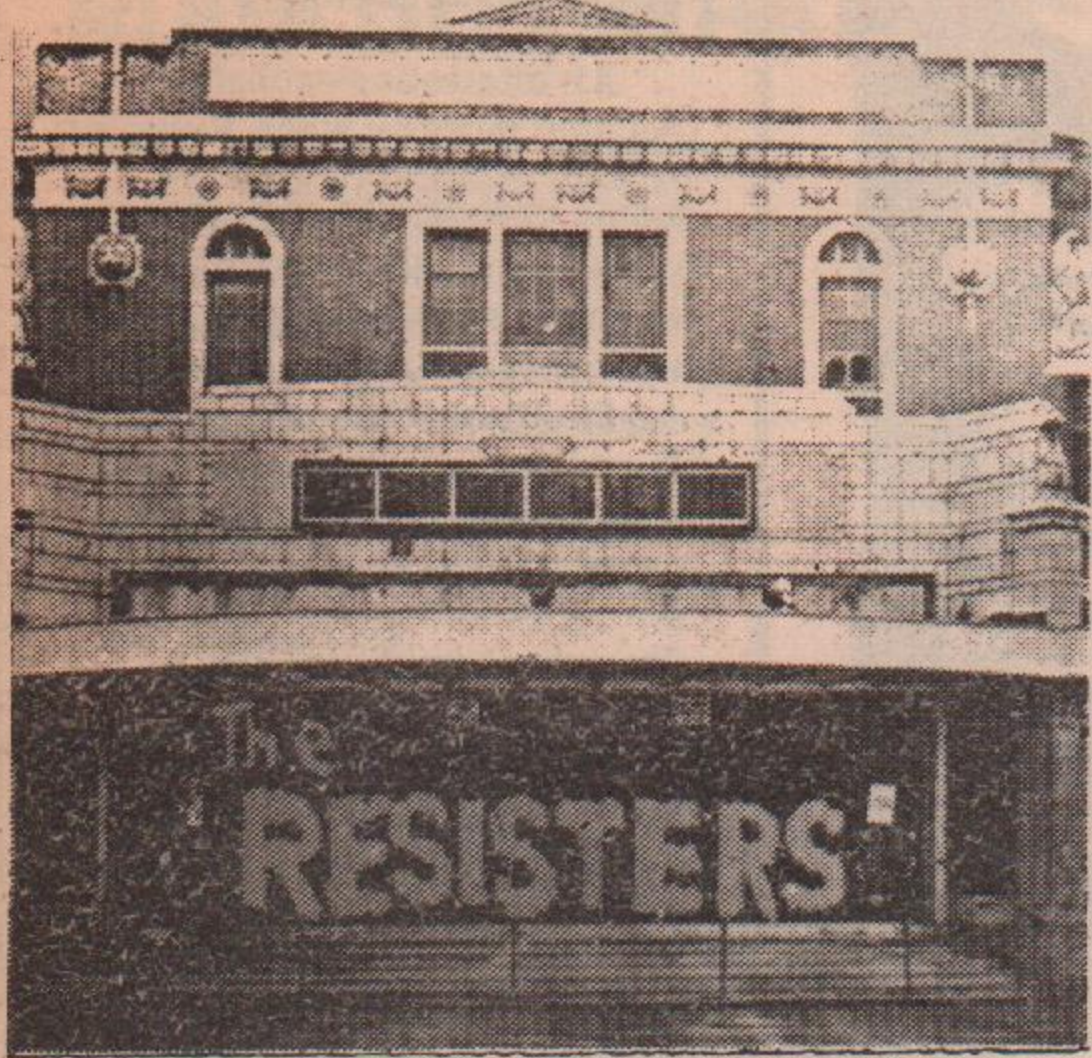
1979 Concordat signed — paving the way for Prior's Bill.

This broadsheet is published by Big Flame, the revolutionary socialist organisation. You may be interested in:

- * Further copies of this broadsheet (5p per copy, £1 for 25, £3 for 100)
- * A subscription to our monthly paper. (£2.75 for a year)
- * Knowing more about our ideas and work.
- * Our forthcoming pamphlet "Organising to Win" which expands on some of the ideas put forward in this broadsheet.
- * The meetings on our Industrial Commission - contact our Liverpool office for details.

Cheques and postal orders should be made out to Big Flame, and sent to 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool.

The Resisters



WRITING REVIEWS is not really my cup of tea, (come to think of it writing anything is a bit of a strain) but when this album fell into my hands I thought I'd got to tell the world.

REAL

These are real people on the record, real people enjoying themselves singing songs about real people. Why didn't someone think of it before? It's a record that the industry would find impossible to promote, even if they wanted to they wouldn't know where to start. It's hard hitting, very punchy and impossible to ignore. I had to take it off the turntable so it didn't distract me whilst writing this review (I can think through Mahler and Ian Drury, but this is something else). Touching on the loneliness of coming to London, on the press,

"It's a laundry machine - keeping the government clean", on the curb crawler "What would you do if they did it to you", and a whole lot more. A lot of the record isn't about the main political questions as reflected by most of the left press, it's about people's lives, and this approach is used on mainstream issues as well. Instead of dismissing the fascists as rats they point out a closer reality:

"Your publicity stunt for the National Front is just an affront to my friends, I got no use for your negative views, I know where it ends".

ROCK

Most of the record is a very hard, very fast, rock, that

reviews

conveys enthusiasm, being part of something exciting, which is what struggling should be about. The Resisters look at the positive side of life:

"No more surrender, We're on the attack, the dispossessed are fighting back."

The Resisters.
Price +.50 3 25p p&p
from: 27 Corbyn Street,
London N4

Robbie Rizla



People of No Property

This new record is a must. Hot from the presses somewhere in the 32 counties, it contains new songs from the Irish struggle - and a few others.

This is the fourth album from the People of No Property, a loose and anonymous (for security reasons) group of northern Irish people. They used to call themselves the 'Men of No Property' - taken from Wolfe Tone's famous remark that 'the only men who will never betray Ireland are the men of no property.' I suppose people kept pointing out there seemed to be women on their records as well.

There is a great tradition of political song writing in Ireland, where singing and listening to new songs is still popular, and unencumbered by the hype and amplification that now seem inseparable from the idea of music in our more 'advanced' England. With strong roots in the traditional music that people still know and love, it's an object lesson in what a real anti-capitalist culture could be.

The group sing about the struggle of the blanket men and the exploits of Rose Dugdale and Eddie Gallagher. They also take a wider perspective with songs about the Angry Brigade and the Hull Jail riot.

Like their other records, I'm sure I'll wear the grooves through to the other side.

BRITS OUT! Irish revolutionary songs by the People of No Property
Price £3.50 + 25 p&p from Troops Out Literature Committee, Box 10,
2a St. Paul's Road, London N1

C.W.

Continuity Press



BRIAN: A MISCONCEPTION

Monty Pythons "Life of Brian" the subject of media overkill tactics, attempted crucifixion and much hysteria from the followers of one Jesus Christ (born in a nearby stable at the same time as Brian of Nazareth) opened recently in London's West End. A few days previously I'd watched Malcolm Muggeridge and the Bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood, gibber incoherently on TV. They appeared, from their general demerour, i.e. pained expressions and much waving of crucifixes, to be less than delighted with the Python teams finely honed satire. While the good Bishop could only declare how very proud he was to wear his highly ornate crucifix and trust it at number three camera, Muggeridge frothed lengthily about the distress and offence the film would cause to the fans of J.C. (No, not John Cleese). I would hazard a guess that a considerably greater number of people are distressed and offended at the continued existence of Malcolm Muggeridge; but he has done a splendid publicity job for Brian, so perhaps we can afford to tolerate the old fool until he heads

for that great unending chat-shop in the sky (known as hell in Christian mythology).

BRIAN

The plot, such as it is, centres on Brian's (Graham Chapman) involvement with the Peoples Front of Judea (Official) and its main activities of holding meetings, being raided by the centurions and ineffectually attempting to chuck out the Roman invader. Their task is greatly hampered, despite the charismatic leadership of the great Reg (John Cleese) by the existence of the appalling Campaign for a Free Gallilee and the traitorous Judean People's Front.

The P.J.F. and the Free Gallilee mob both meet (accidentally) on a mission to kidnap the Emperor's wife and proceed to beat the shit out of each other. "Stop, stop" cries the anguished Brian, "We should join together, we should be fighting the real enemy, not each other". The fighting stops, momentarily, as both sides cry "The Judean Peoples Front!", "No, no, the Romans" shouts Brian. The Battle continues, watched by two puzzled

centurions, until Brian is captured, the sole survivor. He later escapes, however, much to the chagrin of Reg and Co., who have just voted to accept him as "a probationary martyr".

QUINS

Much of the films' humour is understated, and probably needs a second viewing to appreciate properly, some of the best lines are within very fast little quips, seemingly incidental to the main action, or not expressly stated at all but implicit in the characterisation, as in the buffoons of the Peoples Front of Judea. Another example: Brian is trying to get rid of a large crowd of people who have decided he is the messiah, despite all his protestations to the contrary. "You don't have to follow anyone" he tells them, "you don't have to listen to what I tell you, think for yourselves". the crowd responds in perfect unison: "Yes, we must think for ourselves". "You're all individuals", Brian goes on despairingly "You're all different". "I'm not," calls a solitary voice,

whose owner is rounded on by members of the multitude.

NOT FUNNY

The comedy slips badly in one scene centred around school boy giggles over such devastatingly witty names as Biggus Dichus and Incontinentia Buttocks. I didn't find it funny, just a bit too predictable, and neither did very many other members of the audience. The Pythons can get away with a lot, but not a slipshod piece of writing like that.

That single mistake is more than made up for by the brilliant and minutely detailed comic observation contained in the rest of the film, however, Brian's Mum to the three wise men: "Thanks very much for the gold and frankincense but you needn't bother with the myrrh next time." Or again when Brian



THIS IS OUR LIFE

and Mum go off to the stoning of a blasphemer and pause by stall selling stones. Vendor: "Sharps very cheap today mam", "Alright, we'll have two sharps, two flats and a bag of gravel", not everyone's idea of big laffs perhaps, but the idea of selling stones in the middle of a rock strewn desert appeals to me.

The film is a far more sustained and successful comedy than "Holy Grail", which was a series of highlights linked by a rather tired running gag. I think that most socialists will enjoy the movie, despite the fact that much of it is having a go at the left. Except those, of course, whose pomposity and delusions of grandeur are all to accurately nailed by this spiffing slice of satire.

Mike Simpson

CONVEYOR BELT TO THE H BLOCKS

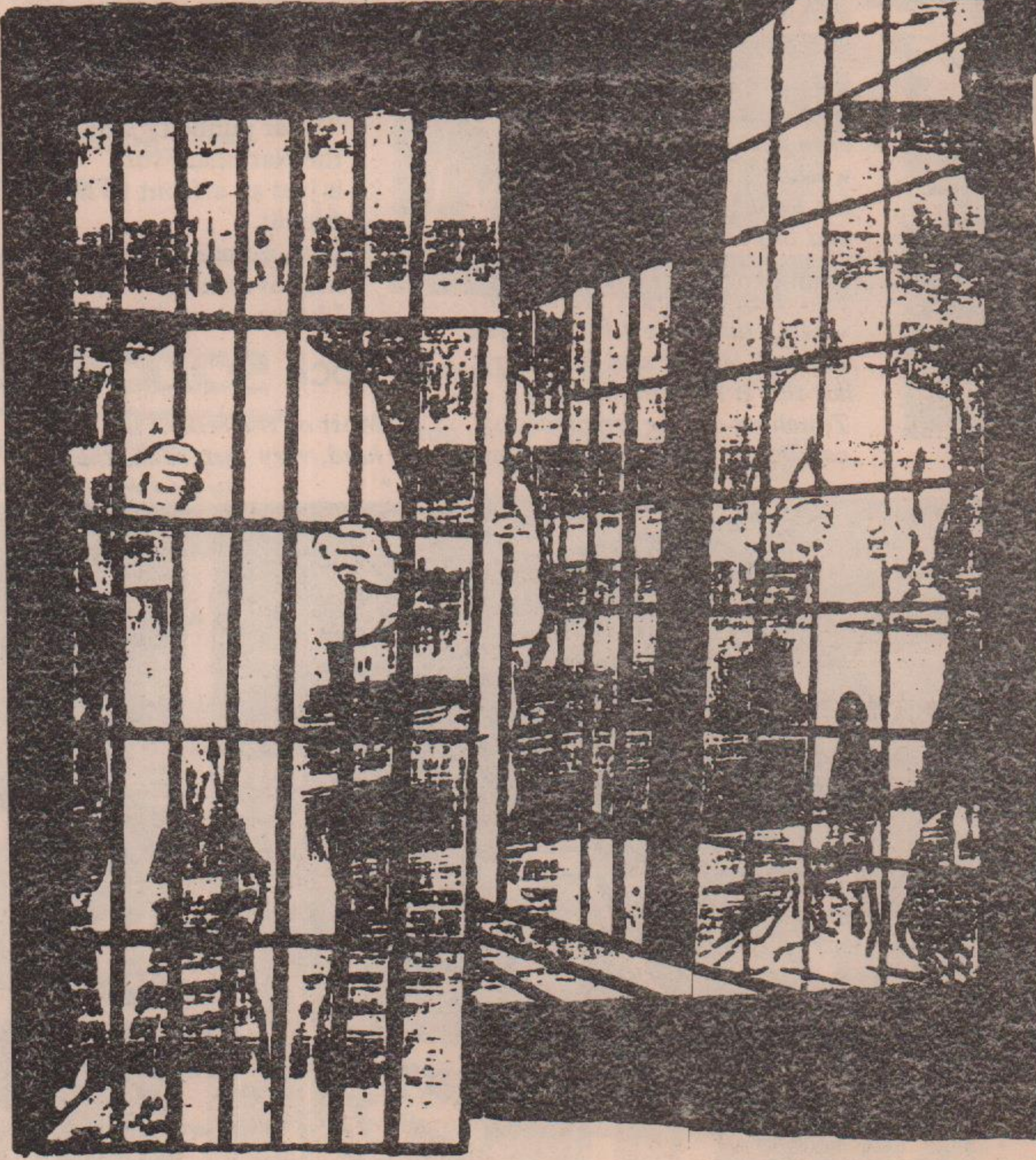
That is the title of one of the articles in a new 'magazine poster' from Information on Ireland. At 10p it is excellent value and should be made as widely available as possible, through bookstalls and street sales.

The conveyor belt system of British justice is detailed and clearly shows how some 400 Republican prisoners have found themselves on the blanket. The conveyor belt starts with an extremely sophisticated system of intelligence gathering, then comes the torture of 'suspects' many forced confessions are obtained which guarantee convictions. Before their trial the prisoners are remanded, often for over a year, remand is used as a form of internment - no trial is necessary. Republican prisoners are given the choice of pleading guilty and a speedy trial date or facing an indefinite period on remand. If charged with a political offence, the prisoner will eventually appear before a Diplock court, administered by a single judge without a jury, a recent study showed that 94% of those brought before these courts are convicted. Lastly the conveyor belt takes the women to Armagh jail and the men to the H blocks, although they are

sentenced in special courts, they are denied political status, the men refuse to wear uniforms - and so the blanket protests begun, they are denied physical exercise and fresh air, locked up 24 hours a day.

Elsewhere an article from an H Block mother declares "the British will always be wrong as long as they set their feet here and put shackles on my people". A third article draws parallels between the British occupation of Ireland and their previous colonial record - specifically Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Aden: "The key elements of British counter-revolutionary strategy are repressive 'Emergency' legislation, psychological warfare and 'dirty tricks', co-ordination of army and policy operations, a large intelligence gathering network, the strengthening of the local police and armed forces, and various forms of imprisonment to isolate the freedom fighters from their popular base"

The magazine, which told out into a large well illustrated poster, is available from Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14. one copy 10p + 10p p&p. 15 copies



Intelligence-gathering

An interesting exchange occurred recently when Humphry Atkins, Minister of state for Northern Ireland (sic), held a press conference in the heavily fortified Stormont Castle. He was asked by a reporter from An Phoblacht/Republican News: "... will the British government consider instigating Lancaster House type talks with the equivalent of the Patriotic Front in Ireland - the IRA? When Atkins replied "No" the reporter asked for an explanation. Atkins reply, "Because I don't talk to terrorists". only lead the reporter on: "But that's how the Tory Party and the British media have referred to the Patriotic Front. And indeed Mr Whitelaw spoke to the Republican Movement in June 1972, and in fact flew them into England for talks. . .". "Yes, but look" Atkins replied, "first of all I am dealing with Northern Ireland not Africa, and secondly this is 1979 and I am sitting here and I am not going to talk to the Provisional IRA."

A few minutes later a reporter from the Cork Examiner asked: "Excuse me sir. What is the difference between the Patriotic Front and the IRA? Atkins attempted to reply: "I don't know. . .", he was interrupted by widespread laughter, then continued, "I am the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland you see and I don't know anything about the Patriotic Front". (source: An Phoblacht/Republican News).

BRITISH IMPERIALISM

IRELAND

ZIMBABWE

"GAD, CARRUTHERS! I can't stand the heat, I tell you!"

Yes, British troops are back in occupation of other people's countries in Africa, like a re-run of the good old Empire. But will the British troops in Zimbabwe be really fair? Not taking any sides?

IRELAND '69

British soldiers were sent to the North of Ireland over 10 years ago. We are still being told they are there to keep the peace. Yet the war carries on.

British troops in Ireland made no attempt to alter the conditions that led to the Catholic revolt. Religious discrimination in jobs and housing remains. The employers, civil servants, and politicians who keep Catholics out of jobs in the 6 Counties are in no danger from the troops or from the British governor, Atkins. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, nearly all Loyalist, is defended, praised, and armed by Britain. Overwhelming evidence of murder, torture, and brutality by Ulster police and part-time soldiers is ignored or suppressed. Within a few months of troops arriving in Belfast and Derry they were busy guarding Orange Lodge marches, which deliberately took routes near Catholic areas so they could hurl religious and political abuse. Soon massive arms searches and curfews took place in Catholic areas. The I.R.A. was being portrayed as the "terrorist" enemy. But the campaigns of the loyalist murder-gangs, the UDA and UVF, are ignored. Today the bulk of army forts, patrols and searches are in Catholic areas. Loyalist areas are almost soldier-free.

BLOODY SUNDAY

Nothing showed how quickly the Army became one-sided more than the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry in 1972.

The Catholics refused to accept second-class status. A massive demo

for Civil Rights in Derry was driven from the streets by a hail of bullets from British paratroopers. 14 people died. The British government says they want peace in Ireland. But they want no mass movement from abused, misused and oppressed people. That has to be crushed. The area must be kept "stable" for the sake of big-business profits.

ZIMBABWE

And now, British troops have flown out to "help keep the peace" in Southern Rhodesia, as the country temporarily becomes a British colony again. As in Ireland, there is no chance that British troops will be neutral; or that they will help defend black supporters of the Patriotic Front from attacks by Muzorewa's private army, the white Rhodesian troops, white vigilantes, or the South African army.

Of course, there are many differences between the two situations. The Provisional IRA began their struggle after the British troops went into Northern Ireland in '69, and they are fighting the British Army itself. The guerrillas of ZAPU and ZANU have been fighting against the Rhodesian Security Forces since '66. The British have maintained the settlers mainly through sanctions busting and economic support for South Africa. In Ireland, British occupation is the main obstacle to peace. In Zimbabwe, the threat of a military coup by the whites, supported by South Africa, will remain if the British leave. Even the Tories don't want to get dragged into a civil war in Zimbabwe. They may well pull out the troops quite quickly (no sign of this in Ireland,

alas!). And, most important, British troops have gone to Zimbabwe after a Conference supported by Western imperialism as a bloc. The Settlement has been imposed on the Patriotic Front by a coordinated strategy, operating since 1976, which succeeded when Rhodesia and South Africa carried the war into the Front Line States, on whom the guerrillas depended for bases, refugee camps, training...

PARALLELS

But there are some striking parallels. Acland, the British commander, is fresh from duty in the 6 counties as well as Aden, Kenya, Cyprus, etc. The Rhodesian Army has a long tradition of joint work with the British. After UDI, the Rhodesian SAS kept in contact with the British SAS, and military intelligence continued to flow back and forth. General Walls served with the British in Malaya. British soldiers, often with Irish experience, have fought brutally as mercenaries in the Rhodesian Light Infantry.

NO CHANGES WANTED

Like in Ireland, the British want "peace" without changing the conditions that led to war. Lord Soames is currently directing the Rhodesian Security Forces. Mercenaries and South African troops remain, as does the Rhodesian police force. Before elections, the best land and the well-paid jobs are for whites only. After elections, the agreed Constitution states that land cannot be given back to the peasants without (massive) compensation for the (white) owners.

The British will want to see no mass movements by black people against the racist set-up. If the ceasefire breaks down, it could be because Zimbabweans have begun to take over the white farmlands, or to break

out of the "protected villages". Or because some guerrilla units are not prepared to give up fighting. It's certain that there will be attempts to assassinate P.F. leaders, like the attacks on Mugabe's relatives in Salisbury.

ELECTION

But our government is not in control of Zimbabwe. If the elections go ahead, the British will probably not be able to stop a Patriotic Front victory, despite every effort to split the PF. It will be unfortunate if ZANU and ZAPU stand separate candidates. But even so, with their immense support inside Zimbabwe, the result should be a PF coalition government. And we should welcome the demand by ZANU women (on their leaders) that 25 of the ZANU candidates be women. Similarly we welcome the

growing political strength of women in Sinn Fein, as well as the formation of Women against Imperialism.

TROOPS OUT!

Whatever the differences, British troops in Zimbabwe, like Ireland, can play no progressive role. The most they can do is to give military intelligence to the Rhodesian forces, to shift the balance in favour of the settlers. Our government is mainly keen to protect the interests of British companies—like Lonrho, RTZ, Shell, BP, Turner and Newall—who have survived UDI but would prefer to operate in the open.

That's why we say BRITISH TROOPS MUST BE WITHDRAWN FROM IRELAND AND ZIMBABWE IMMEDIATELY. SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH AND ZIMBABWEAN PEOPLE.



November demonstration in London in solidarity with the Patriotic Front.

BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION

DEMONSTRATE IN BIRMINGHAM

JANUARY 27th 1980

RUDI DUTSCHKE

"It is not a question of saying at this stage exactly how things will develop. It is a question of realising that we have failed in the past by thinking that democracy was a luxury that could be dispensed with. In fact, it is the lifeblood of the revolutionary tradition we are part of."

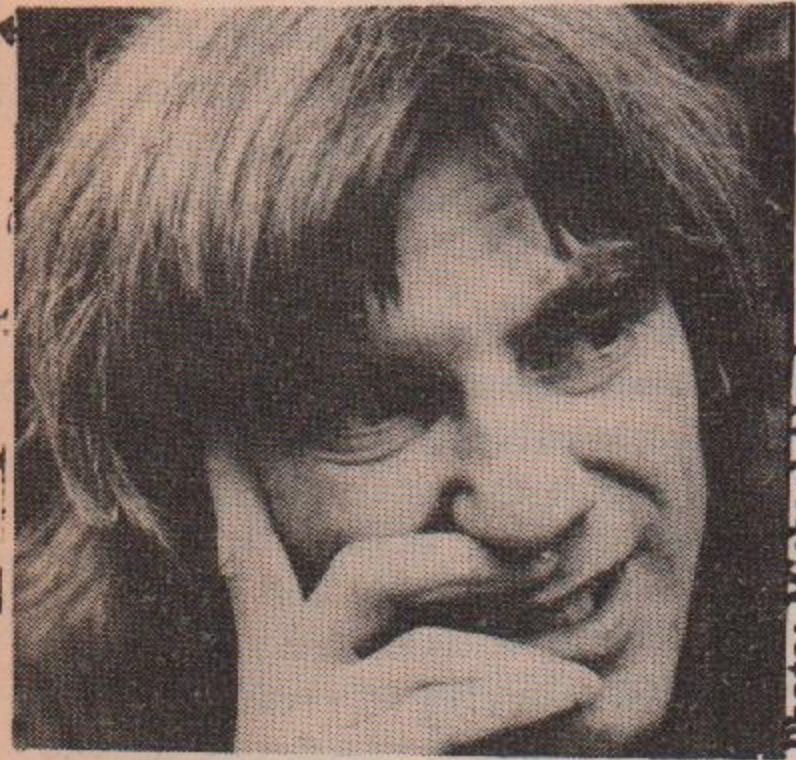


Photo: Michael Abrahams

LAST NOVEMBER, Big Flame carried an interview with Rudi Dutschke, the German revolutionary, who was in London for a conference. Over Christmas, Rudi had an epileptic fit in the bath and died. There are a few things I think it's important to know about Rudi's death and his life.

Let's get it clear Rudi died, but he was also murdered. The epileptic fit he died of was a consequence of the bullet Joseph Backmann shot him in the head with, in 1968. And Backmann shot Rudi because he didn't like communists and Rudi was a Red and the newspapers of the Springer press (Germany's Rupert Murdoch) whipped things up against "Rudi the Red" whose life was constantly in danger. Certainly, the Springer press murdered Rudi and they had as an accomplice: Heath's government who kicked Rudi out of this country when he was convalescing after the brain operations he had here — they said he was a "national threat."

"And remember, the principles of socialism is mass mobilisation. If you give this up, you are giving up socialism."

Individuals don't make social movements, but Rudi's death is a tragedy. Because he held a political position that is too rare amongst revolutionary socialists. Rudi was firmly convinced of the need for revolutionary organisation as long as it learned from (as well as taught) the social movements it worked with. In fact, at the time of his death, Rudi was in the process of moving from Aarhus in Denmark where he had been living, to Bremen in West Germany, which is the political base for the new "green" anti-nuclear party that had just had its first conference at which Rudi made a key contribution. Rudi was essential to the anti-nuclear party getting off the ground because he was trusted both by members of the anti-nuclear movement and by members of the revolutionary groups.

"Nuclear power is, you could say, the expression of capitalism at the height of its destructive powers. There are those of the Left who say that nuclear power represents a new and neutral productive force. Yet, as Marx says, there is not only production, there is also destruction, and nuclear power is nothing but a destructive force."

At the time of the US defeat in Vietnam, Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary, said that what we had to do "was create one, two, many Vietnams." In 1968, with his lover, Gretchen, Rudi had a son they called Che. Maybe it is symbolic of a generation that believes that the "personal is political" that at the same time as creating more Vietnams we have also been creating many Ches (and Rosas for that matter).

Like his teacher Marcuse (who also died last year), Rudi's life was an experience of so many of the things we are fighting — from his birth in the Eastern part of a country (Germany) divided by World War Two, to his political commitment against nuclear energy which was to be his last. (Pete Anderson)

TOMMY DOYLE

WE ARE sad to report the death of Tommy Doyle, a much loved figure of the socialist and working class movement in Liverpool, last month. The members of Big Flame share his family's loss.

Tommy was reared in the North End of Liverpool between the wars. Although he remained part of this hard, working class environment all his life, part of him developed and became something special. In his forties, he stepped from community action on behalf of his neighbours to take part in the broader political fight for socialism; for the rest of his life, he linked the two activities together. He played an active part in the rent strike, the Tenants Campaign and the development of a People's Centre for Scotland Road, as well as numerous other battles.

He was special because his enjoyment of socialism, and his terrific sense of injustice, meant that he never took part in political action as a matter of duty or routine, but because he wanted to.

He was special because of his curiosity, which took him to plays, study sessions, meetings and the Scotland Road writers' workshop where he began his — alas — unfinished autobiography! In the last few years of his life, you would always see a pile of books by his armchair as he pursued his interests in socialism, Che Guevara, Cuba etc.etc.

We print below a poem by Tommy as one of the best of many possible epitaphs.

"I'm leaving these stinking shores
And going far away:
I'm sailing on an Irish Trumper
that comes from Galway Bay.
I'm leaving this stinking old city
that suffers from decay,
where work is none, and food has gone
and money still the same.
Oh I hate to say to buddies
that I know so well,
I'm sorry to desert you
and, that is hard to say.
So I've got to leave you Liverpool
Before I've turned to grey,
So I'm sailing on the ocean,
Sailing far away
to sunny, sunny Cuba
Hip Hip Hooray!"

Mary Doyle and the family wish to convey their thanks to the comrades of Big Flame for their sympathy and concern.

Carter's Fenland Cruise

Some time just before Christmas, the British government offered the British people (us!) a present. We were all so busy in the Christmas rush that we didn't notice the present — all except for a few party-poopers who weren't into the Yuletide spirit. What was this present? — it was 160 cruise missiles that NATO is going to station in this country. Well, I say NATO, but in fact it's the US government who will decide whether or not the missiles are ever fired — the British government has no say in the matter — this country is just the garage.

Now these cruise missiles are nuclear and deadly and they are being 'deployed' by NATO. NATO wants to station 460 missiles in Europe and since NATO countries like Holland and Belgium are not at all keen to have them — Britain may well end up with more than its allocation of 160 which is already the largest. It's the Americans who have been pushing the hardest for European countries to accept the cruise (and Pershing) missiles. Because they want Europe to be the 'theatre' over which the nuclear shoot-out takes place rather than an intercontinental shoot-out with them and the Russians lobbing ICBMs (inter-continental ballistic missiles) at each other. Theo Sommer, a German journalist, put it like this in *Newsweek* (26/11/79). "The European members of NATO will have a nuclear cover that increases their vulnerability (by making them a target) without strengthening the credibility of the US nuclear guarantee." As Sommer puts it, it would be extremely naive to think that a US president who is reluctant to use ICBMs against the USSR will be inclined to give orders for the IRBM (inter-regional ballistic missiles) cruise and Pershings to be fired. Sommer concludes "how could the

billion to install a radar system capable of detecting the very low flying cruise missiles whose flight programmes are guided by computers in satellites. The fact is that the Russians already spend 12% of their Gross National Product on defence and would dearly love to reduce their military expenditure — especially given the mess their economy is in.

Kissinger doesn't often say much that is true — this quote from his memoirs is an exception: "The Soviet leaders fear above all things the effects of a new arms race on their economy — they would prefer to go for arms limitation. . . ." And when, as recently, the Russian leaders withdraw tanks from Eastern Europe this is portrayed by the Western press as some kind of con. In fact, on top of its economic troubles, the USSR spends plenty on armaments to defend its border with China and for its various imperialist sorties (the most recent one being Afghanistan). So, it is unlikely to have any military designs on Europe (except keeping hold of the countries it has already grabbed e.g. Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia) and would certainly be prepared to negotiate a military

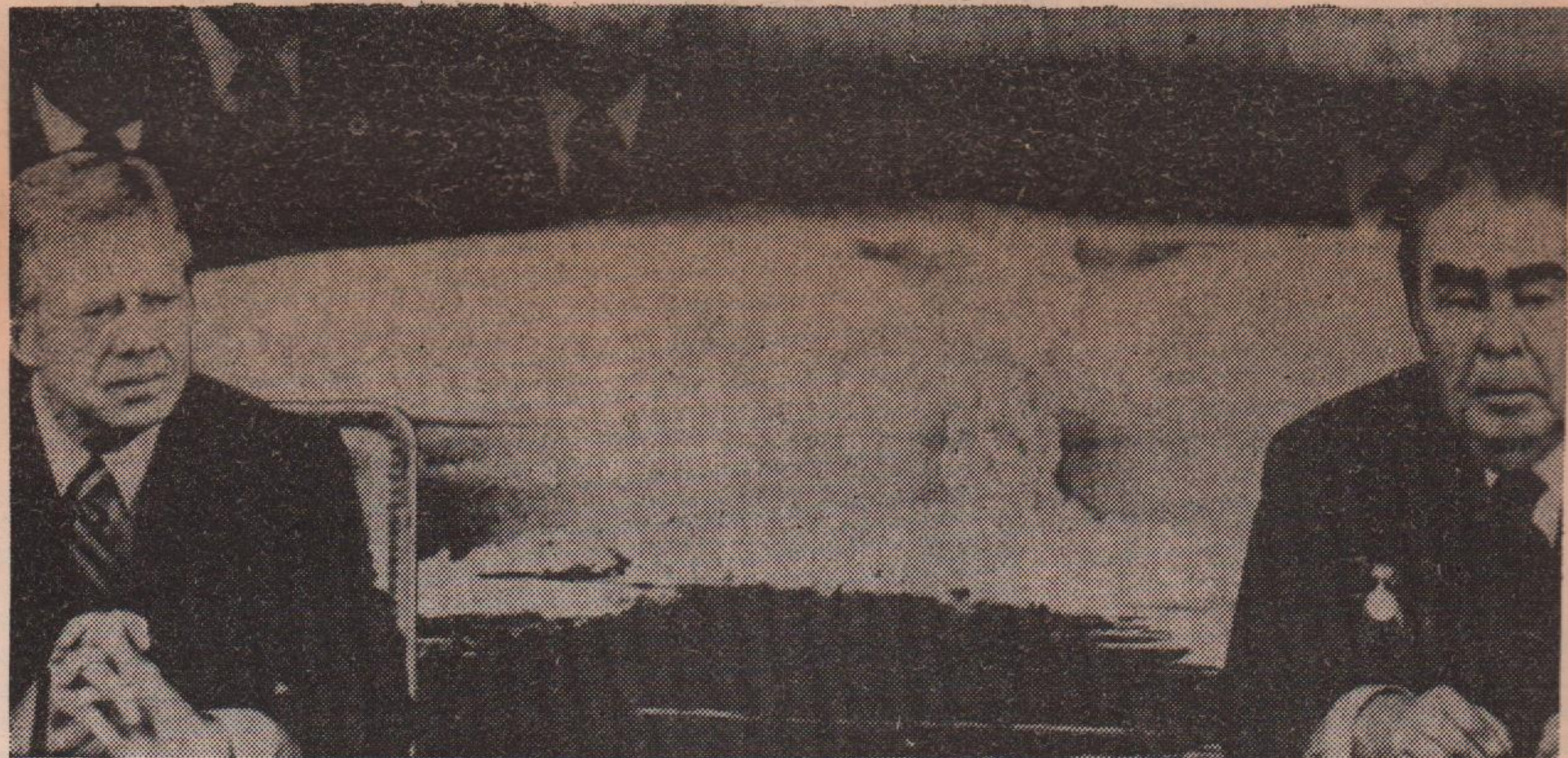
meetings of Callaghan, Owen, Healey and Mulley (a 'moderate' gang of four) which were briefed and attended by senior civil servants. The discussions had to be secret to make sure that there was no genuine debate. As the Times (Dec. 4) put it: "In Mr Callaghan's judgement the matter was too delicate to put before the (shadow) cabinet's Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, upon which sat one or two sticklers who might have reminded him of his party's manifesto commitment."

Once again the trick of democracy is played and there is an 'all party consensus' for the deployment of the missiles (as well as for the replacement of the outdated Polaris nuclear submarine missiles with the Trident system which will cost thousands of millions of pounds). And no public debate on an issue explosive (!) enough to have caused a government crisis in Holland and Belgium.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Given the complete lack of debate in the media and between the political parties over the cruise missiles, it is going to be very difficult to even get the issue raised publicly — which is the first step in getting a campaign off the ground. Unfortunately, the recently formed Anti Nuclear Campaign (ANC) decided to limit its attentions to nuclear power and not include nuclear weapons.

On a more optimistic note, in East Anglia, where many of the missiles are to be parked, a campaign against the missile bases has been set up, whose support includes the



president know that as retaliation for the destruction of Minsk, the Russians would limit their retaliation to Munich and not Minneapolis?" European countries gain nothing by having the missiles stationed in Europe — what NATO has done is to give the US and the USSR another option in their game of nuclear chicken.

THE SOVIET THREAT?

In order to justify the deployment of these missiles the press published statements from politicians about Russian military superiority and the 'need to close the gap'. As far as forces in Europe go — the Russians have a clear advantage in the numbers of troops and conventional weapons (tanks etc.), it also possesses some sophisticated weapons e.g. the Backfire bomber and the SS20 missile. But it is quite clear that the USSR lags far behind in electronic equipment — for the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980 it had to order a computer from IBM. As far as computerised weapons are concerned the USSR is nowhere near developing the equivalent of cruise missiles, nor the A-10 planes (called 'tank-killers') which are the reason why NATO chiefs in reality are not worried by Soviet tank superiority — though they don't say this in public) or the very sophisticated *Wild Weasel* plane which can destroy radar systems but also performs an offensive role. It has been estimated that it would cost the Warsaw Pact countries £40

disengagement in Europe. By agreeing to US demands to install cruise and Pershing missiles, the European, NATO countries in Europe have removed any possibility of negotiating with the Russians over disengagement.

THE RESPONSE OF THE PARTIES

In this 'democracy' we are so lucky to live in, we had no say in whether or not we wanted cruise missiles parked all around the country. It comes as no surprise that the Tory government who are so desperate to arse-lick the US president should have been to agree to the installation of the missiles — but what about the Labour opposition — surely it could have insisted on a debate in Parliament on the issue. At the 1974 Labour Party conference, the motion passed which remains the policy of the party, stated: "We have renounced any intention of moving to a new generation of strategic nuclear weapons." And even the weak election manifesto of 1979 claimed that: "We reiterate our belief that this (i.e. renunciation) is the best course for Britain. But many great issues affecting our allies and the world are involved, and a new round of strategic arms limitation negotiations will soon begin. We think it is essential that there must be full and informed debate about these issues in the country before any decision is taken." Surprise, surprise, this 'full and informed debate' was secret

Cambridge Trades Council, the East Anglia region of the TUC and the Cambridge Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is quite clear that if the bases are attacked the nuclear fall-out will not have the courtesy to stay in East Anglia — we need to make the campaign national against the missile bases and to break the consensus that has led to a situation in which the USA and the USSR already possess enough nuclear firepower to obliterate each other's countries ten times over. We have until 1983 to do something — that is when the missiles arrive.

DEMOCRACY DEAD

The total lack of any public debate over the siting in Britain of the NATO missiles shows the terminal condition of democracy in this country. 20 years ago, nuclear weapons were the subject of major contention in the Labour Party. The way Gaitskill and the leadership of the party at that time dealt with the majority inside the party that opposed nuclear weapons is responsible for the lack of opposition to nuclear weapons today. In the meantime, the possibility of nuclear warfare in Europe has greatly increased.

(Some of the information in this article can be found in an excellent article by E.P. Thompson in the *New Statesman* (21/12/79).

The address of the Cambridge Campaign Against the Missile Bases is c/o Freda Knight, 28 Park Parade, Cambridge.)

BIG FLAME'S national conference, held in Leeds last November, provided a test of the organisation's ability to deal with the problems thrown up by the election of the Tories.

Two political factors dominated the conference. Firstly there was the recognition that the change from a Labour to a Tory government would require the development of new ideas and a new strategy from the revolutionary left. It was generally recognised that the Thatcher government represented a break with the recent period of "consensus" governments and that the Tories intended to roll back some of the "accepted" features of the British state, e.g. the NHS.

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVES

As a weapon against this strategy, socialist alternatives were seen as important.

Big Flame will argue for the politics of "socialist, class alternatives" in all areas of the public sector.
(from the motion passed on the Cuts).

At the same time it was also clearly seen that socialist alternatives and alternative plans can be a tool of convenors, senior stewards and left labour to recuperate struggle. Therefore their place was seen as inside an overall rank and file fightback:

From our propaganda about alternative plans for production, we should both stress the positive aspects of such plans and the dangers if there was any attempt to implement such plans before a general transformation of society. And we should warn of the ways that such plans have been used (e.g. Dunlops) as a substitute for struggle. For us, militant struggle, notably occupation and "secondary" picketing are the main way to fight closure and redundancy.
(from the motion passed on Socialist Alternatives).

REFORMISM

Connected with the debate on Socialist Alternatives was a discussion on Reformism and

Social Democracy. It was felt by a majority that since an analysis of reformism was central to the development of a revolutionary strategy in advanced capitalist countries, further discussion was needed inside Big Flame before a vote was taken. It was left up to the National Committee to organise this discussion before the 1980 conference.

It was argued that the political priorities for Big Flame in the coming period would be:

- * the development of our work-place work, which is co-ordinated by the Industrial Commission.

- * a continued consistent presence in anti-fascist and anti-racist work, especially in campaigns around the immigration laws.
- * involvement in international solidarity campaigns: in particular over Ireland (TOM) and Southern Africa.
- * developing our participation in women's struggles and rebuilding the feminist perspective in Big Flame
- * work around the cuts.

At the same time, it was felt essential to integrate these different aspects of our work into an overall perspective. And this could only be achieved by the development of an education programme and a more collective practice of Big Flame branches.

THE FAR LEFT

Secondly, there was the question of the relationship of Big Flame to other groups on the revolutionary left. Since our last conference 18 months ago, Big Flame has been involved in political activity (e.g. in the Socialist Unity electoral alliance), that took us into very close debate and discussion with other political groups - especially the ISA and the IMG. And we took very seriously the proposals for revolutionary unity that were linked to "Socialist Challenge". In this period the ISA collapsed and we rejected the IMG proposals for fusion since we did not believe that there were sufficient signs of a genuine openness on their part.

This means that in the coming year, whilst Big Flame will continue to be open to all calls for unity in action, we will also make a priority of recruitment and the building of Big Flame groups. And with that in mind, a motion was passed with the aim of making the func-

tioning of groups more collective and supportive of members.

MINIMUM POLITICAL AGREEMENT

It was accepted that there was the need for a statement of the minimum political agreement for membership of Big Flame.

- * socialism requires the destruction of the capitalist state by the self-activity of the working class and its replacement by a system of proletarian democracy. Socialism cannot be won unless a socialist perspective is integrated with a feminist one. There can be no socialism without women's liberation.

- * the achievement of a socialist revolution requires the formation of a revolutionary party. Big Flame is not such a party or its embryo, but in its activity in the class struggle and in its relations with the rest of the left it is trying to create the conditions for the development of one.

- * recognition of the specific oppression of women, black people and gays. Support for the political and organisational autonomy of these oppressed sections of the population.

- * support for anti-imperialist struggles and the right of oppressed nations to self-determination.

At the same time, we recognised the importance for revolutionary strategy of the themes raised in "Beyond the Fragments" and a motion was passed that commit us to encourage a public debate on the book and "discuss the implications of Beyond the Fragments for the role of women in Big Flame". We are still very far away from a situation in which men and women comrades participate on an equal footing in the internal life of the organisation and the proposers of the motion expressed the hope that debate around "Beyond the Fragments" could help remedy this.

DECISIONS

Other decisions passed at the conference included:

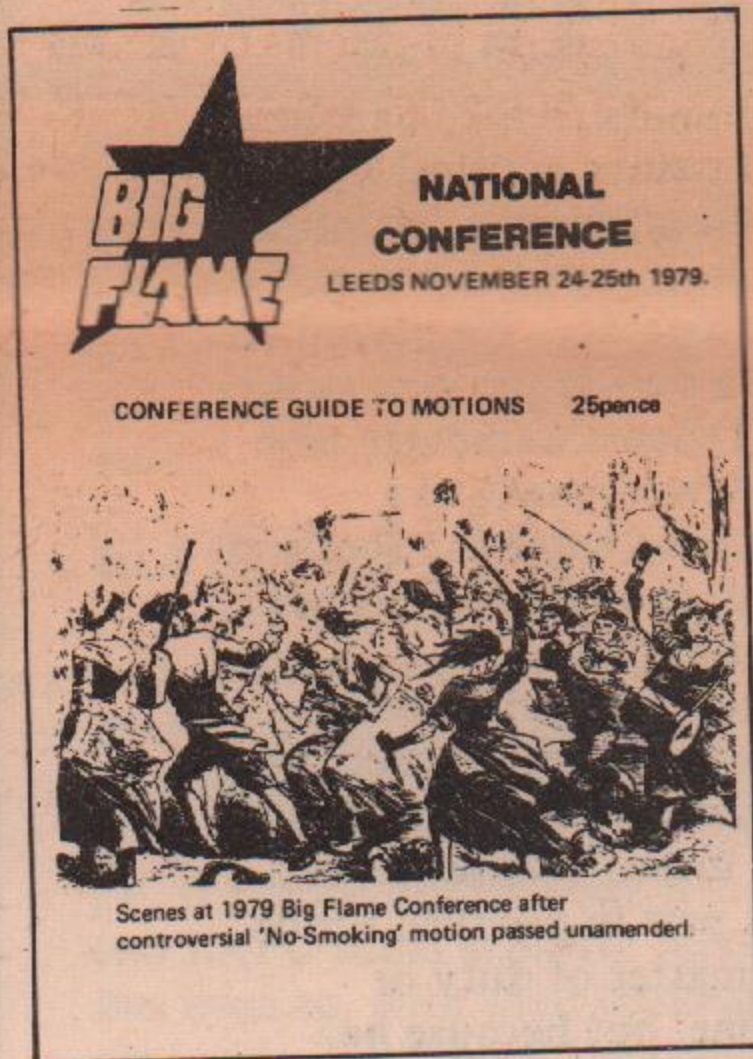
- * our opposition to nuclear energy and support for the anti-nuclear movement.
- * a commitment to make the Big Flame newspaper fortnightly.
- * agreement on the publication of a series of short, snappy pamphlets.
- * support for the principle that where possible documents be produced collectively.

At different points of the conference members felt the need for further discussion on some topics. In the next twelve months, we will be having day-schools and discussion bulletins on topics such as party, class, and movements, new technology and nuclear power, immigration controls. State collectivism and reformism

Thanks to excellent work of the Conference Organising Committee, the people from Chapeltown who did the creche and everyone who works at Beechwood, the Conference ran extremely smoothly. The participation in the work-shops and plenary sessions of comrades from KB (Germany), MIR (Chile) Sinn Fein (Ireland) and LCG (Britain) were extremely helpful in giving added dimensions to our discussions.

Messages of solidarity were received from PLS (Belgium), VS (Denmark), OCT (France) IRSP (Ireland) and IMG (Britain).

Given the limits of time and the large number of motions, there was an obvious limit to how deeply we could discuss issues at the November conference. But the value of a conference lies not only in the correctness of the decisions taken, but also in whether it opens up discussion in a political organisation.



NO REVIEWS FOR STRAIGHT PUBLISHERS?

Dear Big Flame,

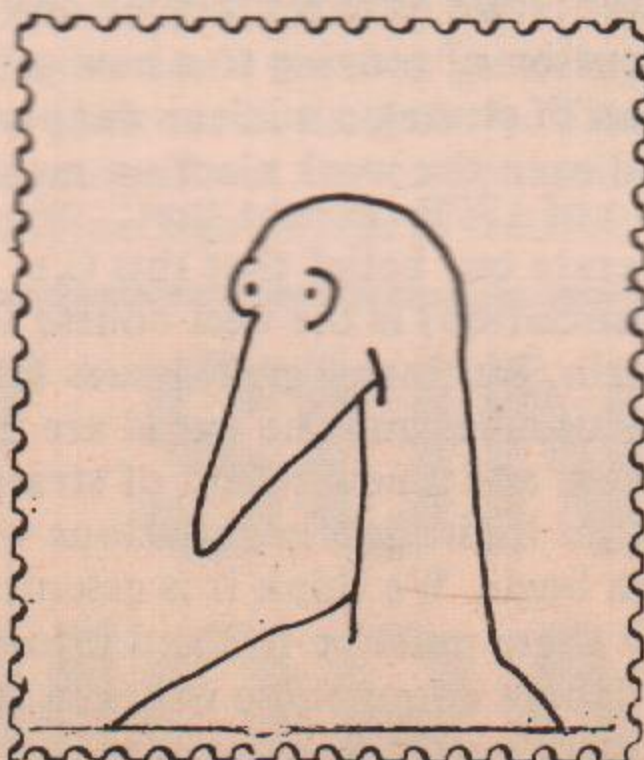
Last month you printed a review of a book ('Media, Politics and Culture') that was published by Macmillan. Macmillan is a family firm belonging to the family that gave us 'you never had it so good' Harold. It is an extremely reactionary company that refuses to deal with trade-unions.

I know that lefties looking for a publisher can't be choosers. Still, there are now many progressive publishing companies around and I think that it is important that left-wing writers make a political commitment to them. And it's not even the case that 'straight' publishing companies do a better job getting the lefty books they print into the bookshops - there's been many a Macmillan paperback I haven't been able to find.
P.A. (Birmingham)



WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LEAD: WHO DISAGREES?

Dear Big Flame,
In December Big Flame, I was relieved to read a clear criticism of the behaviour of the male hierarchy of the TUC



on the October 28th Anti-Corrie march.

The impact of the article was under-mined by the Editorial Collective saying "this article does not necessarily reflect the views of all of us."

Why didn't the editorial collective write to the paper if they disagree? I feel it was a serious political error and it also made me very angry.

It was an error because the whole left press as well as Fleet Street had failed to criticise the male heads of the TUC when they tried to prevent women from leading the march.

The right of women to lead the march would not be questioned by anyone in Big Flame. The article states the need for women to control their fertility, to determine what sort of facilities are needed and how they should be introduced.

Who in Big Flame disagrees with those fundamental points, whose views doesn't

the article reflect? The criticisms of the TUC and the emphasis on the importance of women to lead the march are important not because the rest of the left has failed to make them, but because they are politically correct. I felt it was important that the article was seen as the organisation's analysis of the demonstration, the editorial collective's note prevented this from happening.

Yours,
Terry Flynn, Leeds BF.



We feel that the disclaimer was a clumsy device for making a necessary point - that the article did not represent an agreed Big Flame line on this issue. At the time of publication there had been very little time to discuss the principles involved following so quickly after the demonstration.

An assessment of the TUC's actions at the demonstration was tricky and it would have been wrong for us to foreclose a debate which has been carried in the pages of Spare Rib and other women's movement publications since the last issue of B.F. (Editorial Collective)

MEDICINE OR HEALTH?

THERE IS always the danger for those of us on the left that we spend so much of our time and energy defending against attacks by the government and the ruling class that we have little time to think about what it is we are defending. And this is certainly true of our work in Cuts Committees and campaigns to save threatened bits of the NHS. But a new book, 'The Political Economy of Health', forces us to look closely at the NHS we are defending and its relationship to the socialist health system that is our ultimate goal.

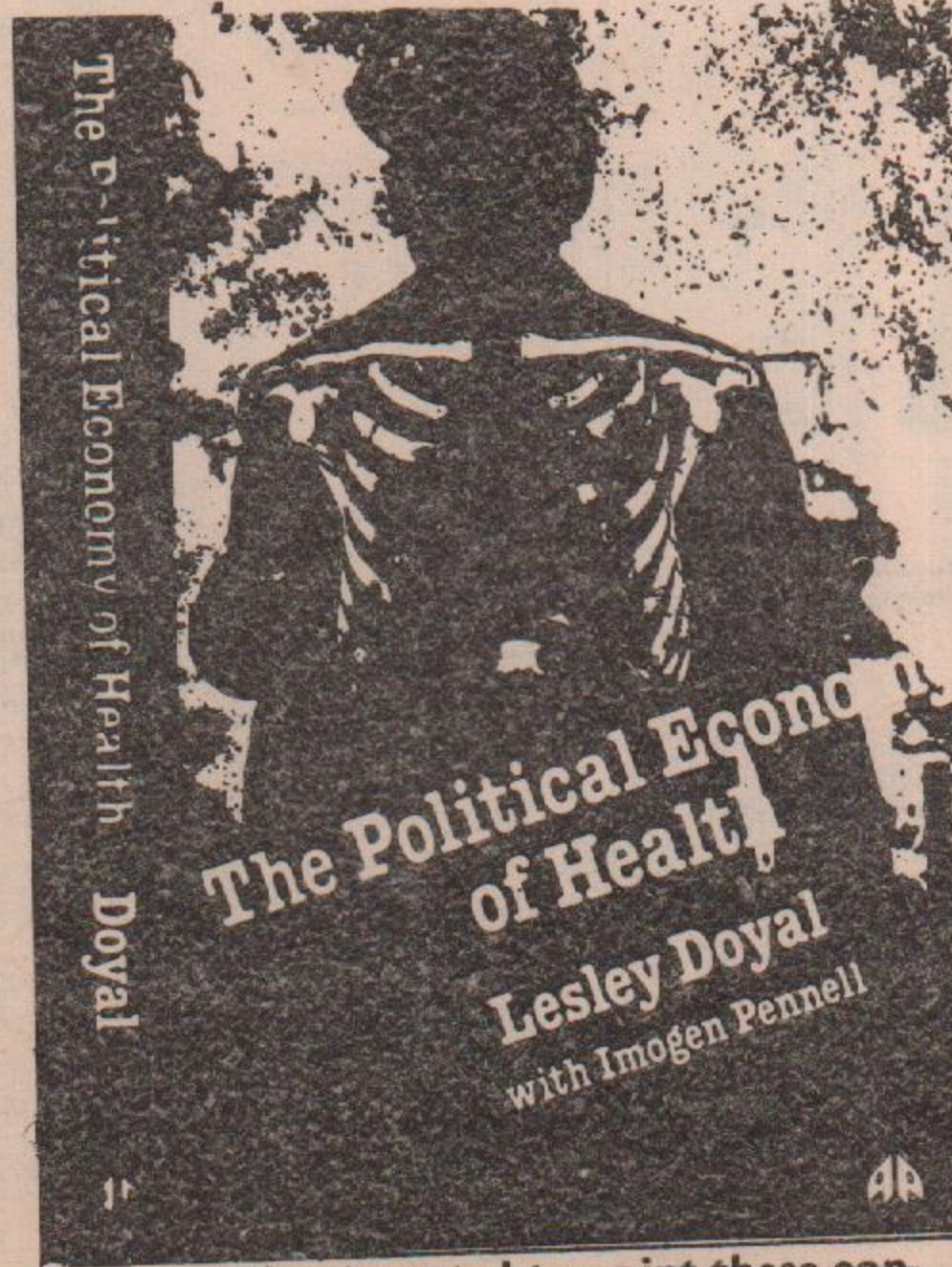
The interview that follows is with the authors of the book — Lesley Doyal and Imogen Pennell, who are both active in the Politics of Health Group (POHG). The interviewer is Mich Carpenter who is also active in POHG

The Political Economy of Health seems an unusual title. Why did you choose it?

Lesley: People usually think that medicine and health are scientific issues - best left to the experts' - and not political or economic questions at all. We called the book the Political Economy of Health rather than the Political Economy of Medicine because we felt that the social causes of health and illness is an extremely important issue and one that needs to be considered separately from questions about the organisation of medical care.

Your book doesn't deal very much with the issue of cuts in public expenditure. Aren't cuts in NHS expenditure the major problem?

Lesley: Obviously the fight against the cuts is a struggle of major importance which we all need to support. But if our struggles remain purely defensive, we run the risk of ignoring fundamental problems with the NHS which existed before the cuts were implemented and would remain even if levels of expenditure were restored. We wanted to show that although the introduction of the NHS was, in so many ways, a progressive measure for working class people, it did at the same time serve capitalist interests very directly. It is important that we don't think of the NHS as some kind of socialist island in an otherwise capitalist society. Sexism and racism for example, are only too obvious if you look at the way the NHS



works, and we wanted to point these contradictions out.

Imogen: It is basically poverty and malnutrition that lie behind the enormously high rates of sickness and death suffered by people in underdeveloped countries. So far as the health problems of people in the developed countries are concerned, there is obviously a sense in which they are the result of 'affluence'. But to talk about the 'diseases of affluence' in this way is a dangerously simple view. For instance, although an

improved standard of living has meant increased life expectancy and higher standards of physical fitness for the whole population, there are still tremendous class differences in health. For example children with parents who are unskilled manual workers are still four times as likely to die in the first year of life as children with professional parents. Of course, many people in our society are neither healthy or affluent!

One of the implications of your book is that the left needs to make prevention of ill-health a priority in the struggle for socialism. How can this be achieved without interfering with people's freedom to consume commodities, like tobacco, that are harmful to them?

Lesley: I don't think we should talk about peoples 'freedom' to consume harmful commodities without looking first at why such things are produced, and here of course we're basically talking about the profit motive. Second, we need to look at the pressures of people to consume these things. For example, we need to understand the ways in which the smoking habit is shaped by advertising and reinforced by the alienated nature of many working class lives. I don't think we should assume that people would be forbidden to risk their health under socialism - people would presumably choose to take an informed risk under certain conditions to achieve something they valued. But what we would assume is that much of the incentive for both producing and consuming dangerous commodities would be removed.

Your book highlights the fact that health issues have occupied a central place in the women's movement. Why do you think the left as a whole tends to see them as secondary?

Imogen: The feminist critique of medical care obviously stems from the broader nature of feminist politics - the emphasis on personal politics for example - as well

basically sexist medical system. So far as the left as a whole is concerned, the failure to see health as a serious political issue reflects the traditional idea that 'welfare' issues are fundamentally reformist and that struggles need to be concentrated at the point of production. Of course these ideas are changing, especially in the face of the cuts.

Presumably people will always become sick, grow old and die, even in a socialist society. Do you think that these problems will be dealt with very differently from now?

Lesley: I would certainly hope so. A socialist health care system would not only have to provide equal access to medical care, but would also have to take seriously such problems as how to demystify medical knowledge and how to break down barriers of authority and status both between health workers themselves and between workers and the users of health services. But it would also have to go further than this to re-evaluate both the theoretical base and the technologies of 'western scientific medicine' to assess their usefulness - or otherwise - in achieving health under socialism.

Finally, you say in your preface that your writing benefitted from your involvement in the Politics of Health Group, What is POHG?

Imogen: A group of mainly non-aligned socialists and socialist feminists - health workers, academics and others - concerned with explaining the relationship between health, medicine and socialism in both practical and more theoretical ways.

The Political Economy of Health by Lesley Doyal and Imogen Pennell is published by Pluto at £4.95. The address of the Politics of Health Group is 9 Poland Street, London W.1.

Charing Cross - What the other papers didn't say

THERE CAN be very few people who are unaware of the bitter dispute at Charing Cross Hospital last month. Stories of "stone-hearted pickets", "patients' lives at risk" and "angels of mercy to the rescue" dominated press and TV coverage. "Bush News" a West London socialist paper, went down to the hospital to find out what was really going on.

Since December 1978 engineers at Charing Cross had been working to rule and banning overtime in protest at cuts in the works department. Because vacancies had been left unfilled, staffing levels had fallen so much that there were only a couple of trade assistants to cover the department - insufficient for every shift. This meant that workers were expected to do the work normally done by unskilled workers as well as their own work.

SACKED

When in late October two workers were sacked for refusing to do work normally done by labourers, 55 of their colleagues, members of the AUEW and EPTU walked out in support. Their demands were simple: that management reinstate the two men pending an appeal. Management were not prepared to negotiate and so a 24 hour picket was put on the back gate of the hospital to control the movement of supplies.

THE PICKET

The pickets made it clear that they did not want to shut down the hospital or restrict the delivery of supplies. Their dispute was with management, not with patients or fellow workers. At no time did they stop essential medical supplies from getting to the hospital. However, the course of the dispute centred round the control of oil supplies and the response of management. The

pickets decided that they would allow the hospital to replace its daily oil consumption preventing the building up of stocks. The engineers monitored oil levels to ensure that the hospital always had sufficient supplies.

Management then began to run down the hospital - admissions were halted, the accident and emergency departments were closed, heating supplies to the nurses' residences were restricted. Having notified the press and TV of their actions, management sat back and waited.

PROPAGANDA

Inside the hospital patients and staff alike became increasingly concerned. They could see the picket line outside the hospital. They could not fail to notice the running down of services. The media gave daily reports of pickets turning away oil tankers. The hospital management had ceased to accept any responsibility for the dispute - all attention was on the picket.

Leaflets began to circulate inside the hospital attacking the pickets. Although many patients and workers were sympathetic to the engineers, the initiative was taken by the hostile minority. Consultants and the media fed off each other to create ever more emotive horror stories, exploiting the predicament of patients.

On Monday 26th November, management ordered two tankers of oil. The first was held up at the gates by the pickets. This

provided the signal for about 100 doctors and nurses to storm the picket line, jostling, pushing and cursing the engineers. Their shelter was ripped down with some of the pickets still inside. One engineer described the crowd as a "lynch mob". Meanwhile the second tanker drove into the hospital.

SETTLEMENT

The engineers abandoned the picket line and spent the week in discussions with management. On the Friday, ACAS were called in to arbitrate in the dispute. After eight hours of discussions a plan was agreed to. This provided for:

- * a return to normal working on the following Monday
- * the two stewards will receive full pay pending their appeal but are still officially dismissed.
- * A series of talks to be set up between union officials, the two sacked stewards and management.
- * both stewards will be able to appeal directly to the Area Health Authority; whatever the result, there will be no victimisations.

The fate of the dismissed men will be decided at a tribunal this month.

ST STEPHENS HOSPITAL

Not far from Charing Cross Hospital, patients are being turned away from the accident department of St Stephens Hospital, Fulham Road. This is because 70 of the 350 beds there have recently been closed, due to cuts in the National Health Service.

For the press, this story is much less "newsworthy" than the dispute at Charing Cross Hospital. They, along with hospital management and Margaret Thatcher (in a statement

to the House of Commons) have accused the pickets of jeopardising patient care. Yet some 3,000 beds have been lost from London hospitals due to the cuts. Where are the headlines?

Thanks to Bush News for this story. Their next edition is in February. Write to them at Box 692, 1 North End Rd., London W.14.

APPEAL FOR money for Women's Aid. Just before Xmas, there was a fire at a refuge in Manchester in which three children died. We are now trying to raise money for smoke detectors and a head stone. We need at least £400. All donations to 16 Raker Ave., Longsight, Manchester 13.

FIGHTBACK has produced a fund-raising 1980 Calendar. Each month has a photo commemorating an anti-cuts struggle from the past three years. It contains plenty of space for making notes of your future meetings, demonstration; and other activities. It measures 12"x 16". Price 60p (or two for \$1.00) from Fightback office 30 Camden Rd., London N.W.1. (Add 11p postage or 17p for two)

CAIL NEWS The newsletter of the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws is available from CAIL, c/o Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London S.E.5. at 10p a copy. This issue contains articles on the Tory Immigration laws, overseas students and Nasira Begum.

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. 50p from all radical book-shops or from BF groups

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IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW An independent journal of research, analysis and discussion which deals in depth with the present situation in Ireland and its consequences for the British Labour movement. Number 6, Winter 1979-80 out now. Articles include "The debate on Ireland at the Labour Party Conference 1979; Ireland in the world economy, plus reviews. Price 50p (incl postage). Sub. for one year (four issues) \$2.00. Send for your copy to ISR, 60 Loughborough Rd., London SW9. (cheques payable to Ireland Socialist Review)

BIRMINGHAM BIG FLAME: Discussion Meeting by Stanley Aronowitz: 'The Formation of the Working Class in the United States'. Friday 18th January 7:45 pm. Labour Club, Bristol 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)

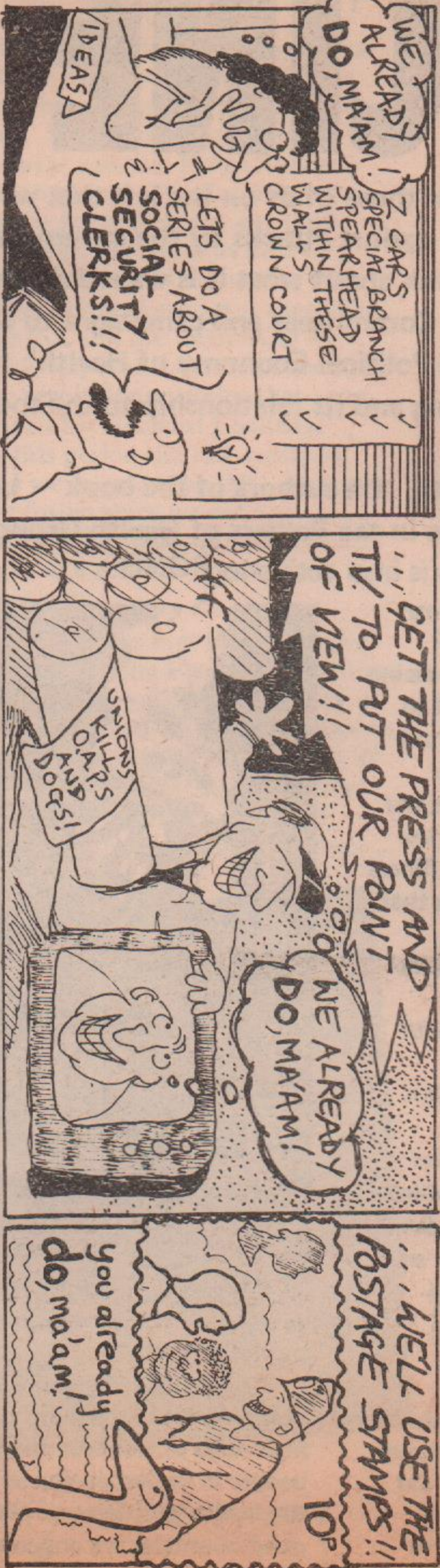
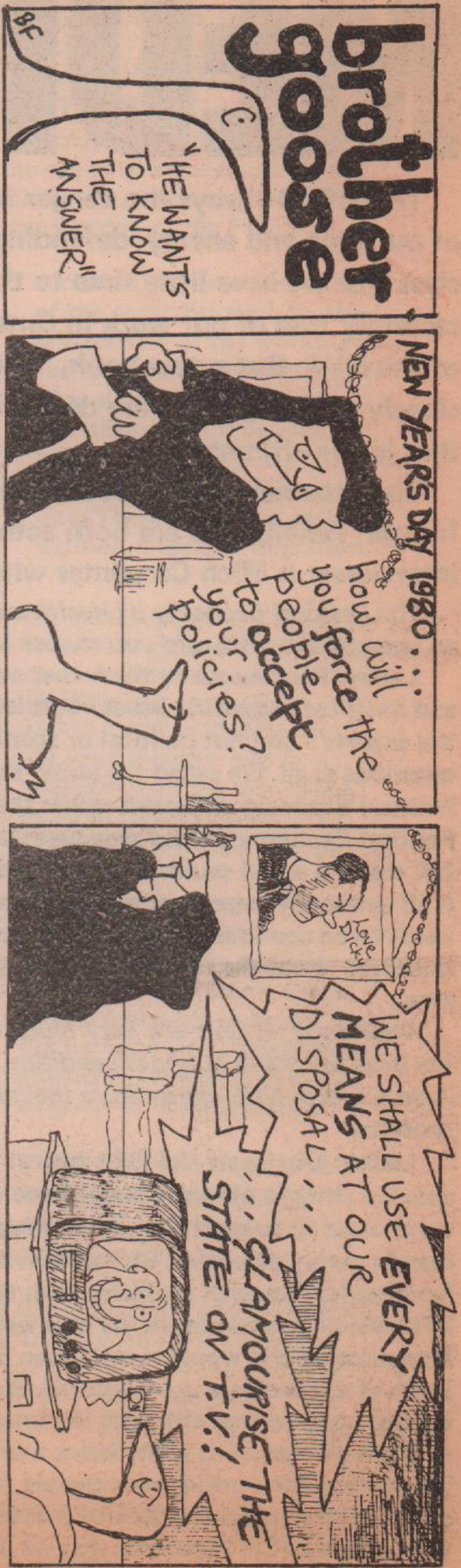


photo: Michael-Ann Mullen



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'NO MORE SURRENDER, WERE ON THE ATTACK'

THE EMPLOYMENT BILL, THE CORRIE BILL, CUTS, IRELAND AND ZIMBABWE

