

Big Flame



Paper of the revolutionary socialist organisation BIG FLAME

No. 84 March 1980 109

A "Free and Fair" Zimbabwe?

At the Lancaster House talks, Britain's Lord Carrington always claimed to be the neutral referee, mediating between the Smith-Muzorewa government and the Patriotic Front (ZANU & ZAPU). He presided over a Settlement in which the opposing armies would withdraw to bases and Rhodesia would be impartially governed by Lord Soames for 2 months, free from foreign interference, until a "free and fair" election would return the first government of an independent Zimbabwe. Some people believed him. Since peace broke out: Over 20,000 guerrillas have assembled in the base camps.

35,000 police reserves have been called up for the election. 30,000 motley soldiers, who used to fight privately for Muzorewa, are now in the security forces keeping 'law and order' and campaigning for the Bishop. The entire Rhodesian Army has been left free to move and to take action against any guerrillas they find. More than 2000 S. African soldiers still operate in the Rhodesian Army. Soames has renewed the State of Emergency, left thousands of political prisoners in jail, and kept the 'protected villages'. The Selous Scouts (elite terr-

orist unit of the Rhodesian Army) have gone on planting bombs which are then blamed on ZANU. After 3 leading Scouts blew themselves up, the unit was left free to continue. Soames has banned ZANU MP's, removed ZANU's right to campaign in certain areas, and threatened to disenfranchise voters in areas of ZANU support. So how do the British explain their impartial attitude? As they tell us every day, not all the ZANU guerrillas went into the assembly points, or accepted Rhodesian authority. And Robert Mugabe (the ZANU leader) has not tipped his cap to Lord Soames. Meanwhile the media repeat, ZAPU are well disciplined moderates led by the gentle Nkomo. So ZANU has caused all the problems, and Soames is right to use the existing State against them.

In our nausea at this hypocrisy, we shouldn't simply reverse the BBC line and chant "ZANU good, ZAPU bad". Militants of both have been gunned by the Rhodesian Army since January. We don't blame ZAPU guerrillas for the opportunism of their leader, who was holding discussions with Ian Smith some time ago, and who has been a personal friend of Learo's Tiny Rowlands for years. The influence of the leadership may force ZAPU guerrillas into a fatal compromise with imperialism. But that has not yet happened. Nor do we believe that ZANU is about to start a socialist revolution in Zimbabwe. Their electioneering has stressed that they do not intend a full nationalisation of industry. The central committee has limited the number of women candidates to 5 out of 80. If the election results in a coup by the Rhodesian Army, supported by a S. African invasion (their military has recently reminded us of this option), then the guerrillas will be fighting a more difficult war than before. If the election brings a ZANU-ZAPU coalition, the govt will be badly constrained by the threat of a coup, by the Constitution, and by imperialism's ability to control the Zimbabwean economy.

But we don't demand that a liberation movement be a revolutionary socialist one, on the brink of victory, before we support it. The key point is that ZANU and ZAPU have been fighting against imperialism (mainly British--which has supplied the oil and technology and diplomatic cover throughout UDI, and is now proposing to keep its troops in Zimbabwe for 3 months or more...) and for a progressive goal (majority rule). As long as that continues, so will our support.

Photo: Big Flame



Pickets encounter Police resistance at Hadfields East Hecla Works.

Lessons from Winter 1980

MASS ACTION LEADS THE WAY

A quick look at class struggle in the winter of '80 shows:

British Steel workers are fighting - as solid as ever. Private sector steelmakers are also out, a bit reluctantly with some of them looking for a way across picket lines. Outside Parliament the magnificent mass campaign led by NAC looks to have held off the Corrie bill. At Leylands the management has the initiative. The sewerage workers knocked back a sell-out proposal and swiftly won 21½%. Miners in S. Wales voted against going first in strikes against redundancies.

A confusing picture?

Now let's take a closer look.

BSC's strike is a case of co-ordinated mass action. Rank and file militancy has knocked some backbone into a passive and inexperienced leadership

- brought the craft unions into line - organised mass pickets of private firms - got support from miners, engineers ... The action is controlled from the ground. It is forging links with other struggles. Despite the colossal stockpile of steel at the start of the strike, despite the legacy of past sectionalism haunting the private sector, despite the usual media assault on them, BSC workers are doing well.

At BL the opposite politics prevail: Derek Robinson's personal (= political!) record of heavy-handed authoritarianism alienated the rank and file and left him defenceless when the axe came. Was he let down by his union or has bureaucratic leadership dug its own grave?

The over-all picture is not as confusing as it first seemed. It's not just a case of you-win-one-you-lose-one.

The clear lesson is that to succeed you need mass action that's rank and file controlled. You need consistently to seek unity in action between different struggles, between different sections of the class. You need to cut across the lines that separate the fight for a living wage from the fight against redundancies, from the fight against cuts, from the fight for abortion, from the fight against closures...

All the action has to be based on the fullest working class democracy. Broad based solidarity in mass action can take on the Tories and succeed, where sectionalism, bureaucratic heaviness, reliance on a remote leadership are prescriptions for defeat.

Many socialists have been calling for a general strike. We agree entirely with preparing for a general strike, but we

need to be very clear about what this implies.

If we're calling upon the TUC to organise such a strike, we must realise that they'll want only a protest action - 'letting off steam' that retains TUC's credibility while avoiding a major confrontation with the government. (Thus they have lent on the Welsh TUC to withdraw its backing for a general strike in Wales from March 10th.)

We have little faith in token actions for their own sake. We should campaign for mass strike support for the TUC's 'day of action', and demand that it be brought forward from 14th May, and be extended. But we should do so only as part of building a generalised movement against the Tories, based on socialist politics independent of Labour Party leadership.

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BRITISH LEYLAND

and lots lots less than usual

Steel: Back to Basics

Valentine's Day was a critical one in the steel strike. Not for love, but for money. A mass picket of steelworkers and miners at Hadfield's East Hccla works in Sheffield forced the ISTC members there to reconsider their position. They decided to rejoin the strike. The next day, BSC craftsmen's delegates (NCCC) meeting in London overturned their officials' recommendation and threw out a pay offer very similar to the one previously rejected by the ISTC and Blastfurnacemen (NUB).

Both events illustrate two very basic factors which hold the key to a strike victory: solidarity and unity. It was the solidarity of the Yorkshire miners which helped close Hadfields. The Northern region of the TGWU instructed its lorry driver members not to cross steel picket lines--had this been done nationally from the start of the strike, it might have ended pretty quickly. S. Wales miners' delegates called for a strike against the threat to coal miners' jobs from the planned redundancies in steel at Port Talbot and Llanwern--on their own however it was difficult to push such action

forward. Sheffield engineers agreed to black Mill steel. All these examples of solidarity--despite their limitations, show how the steelworkers can be helped to hold out until the Government cracks.

UNITY

The way the craftsmen's full-time officials tried to sell out the strike exposed the weakness of the ISTC's isolation from the other unions in the BSC. What was significant however was that the links forged at a local level between all grades and crafts clearly had a major impact on the NCCC delegates, who were much more in touch with the strikers' mood than their officials. NCCC strikers in S. Yorks had already said that even if there was a separate national agreement, they wouldn't cross ISTC picket lines.

The private sector is a mere difficult nut to crack. Most private sector ISTC members did not want to come out. Whilst the mass picketing of Hadfields and other firms was essential to hold the strike together, it is clear that in the longer term, a such deeper unity is

required. The S. Yorkshire strike committee realised this. Straight after the Hadfields victory, they called for a statement from the ISTC executive pledging BSC workers support for any private sector pay dispute in the future.

The role of women in the strike is also important in this context. The media were making a lot of the steel workers' wives at Sheerness who were opposed to the strike. In Sheffield a group of strikers' wives and girlfriends, and women strikers got together and decided to go down to Sheerness to show their support for the strike.

The lessons of solidarity and unity are as old as the Trade Union movement itself. But the scenes of confrontation between public and private steelworkers helped the Tories and employers in their attacks on BSC strikers as "bully-boys".

The lessons need to be relevant by other workers. What is encouraging is the way strikers and their supporters have tackled the problems head on and given all of us more confidence in every other struggle against the Tories.



BL Plans Explained



The workers at the Longbridge have voted not to strike against the sacking of Derek Robinson. In this article an AUEW member at the Jaguar plant explains the nature of the Edwardes' proposals for the B.L. workforce.

Our pay claim on Nov 1st last year was for an increase of £24 for all workers; a further monthly increase to meet inflation; the payment of all outstanding parity money; substantial improvements in lay off and sick pay; an hour off the week now and another 1/2 hours by 1982; improvements in shift allowances and pensions.

The response from Leyland management was a derisory offer of 5% for the majority and 10% for the minority on the highest grade 1, plus the following proposals for reorganising the workforce.

The introduction of an incentive scheme whereby workers could earn up to £15 a week bonus. This sounds fine, but the reality is somewhat different. Workers at Rover produced the required targets and got laid off for 3 weeks. And the joke is that there are so many cars unsold that Leyland are proposing laying off between 50,000 and 60,000 people, who weren't even meeting targets.

DIVIDE

A new, contentious five point grading system, with complete mobility of labour between the grades, without any mutual agreement. This would mean the destruction of all traditional trade groups. It would also mean two workers being paid different rates for the same job thereby dividing the workforce.

Management want the right to time or retire any job at will.

No lay-off pay if the lay-off results from action in any B.L. plant (lay-off pay is currently 56 hours per quarter).

In response we organised a ballot on the Jaguar plants at Brown's Lane and Redford. Of

the 5961 ballot papers issued 5023 voted to reject the B.L. reply to the pay claim with only 448 voting for acceptance. It seemed that the tide was turning against the Edwardes' gang. The full-time union officials, still unsure of themselves, wanted a ballot of all B.L. workers. Although management thought a ballot unnecessary, they agreed and paid the £25,000 to the Electoral Reform Society to organise one. At the same time, they conducted a vigorous campaign to persuade workers to vote against their own unions.

On Jan 31st, before the result of the vote was announced, the stewards on the Jaguar plant were briefed by management on the new grades. The workers response was to ban overtime, which had been worked to meet targets. Management denied they had decided on grading, yet on Feb 1st each worker received a clock number and his/her new grade.

PITIFUL

What do the proposals mean in cash terms? In contrast to media claims about fantastic bonus and back-payments, the money on offer is pitiful. A material handler on grade 2 would be regraded to 5, receiving an increase of 85 pence (£72.65 to £73.50), and back pay of £11.50.

There have been walk-outs, stoppages and strikes section against section at the plant.

The question BL workers are asking the Jaguar board, in particular Mike Beasley, Director of Jaguar, is: did they anticipate a 2 week stoppage? Do they deny that in Oct/Nov of last year they made an in depth study of the effects of a strike? Did they make contingency plans to load the tracks with European models, instead of cars for the USA and Japan, the traditional market for this time of year?

Edwardes' objective is to divide the workforce and then smash it. The media is helping him to achieve this. The workforce at Jaguar returned to work on Feb 18th.

Photos: Pedro Vera



"I don't just want to see the Tory Government replaced by a Labour Government, I want to see capitalism replaced by socialism."

Tony Benn

"We're not asking you to attend more rallies and demonstrations, we want you to join us on the picket line."

Brian Molyneux, ISTC strike committee member

Extracts from some of the speeches heard by a crowd of 3,000 in Manchester on 18 February. They came after a march organised by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions against the cuts, unemployment, closures and the attack on trade unions.

A consistent theme of the speeches was an appeal to submerge political differences in the face of the Tory onslaught. But the problem was highlighted

when a leading Labour councillor or attempted to defend the axing of 800 teachers' jobs. And when a woman NUS speaker found herself on the receiving end of a stream of sexist abuse.

The last word went to the ISTC speaker who won applause with his call for mass pickets in Manchester - not just the best way to win the strike, but also the most effective reply to the Tories' attempt to stop effective industrial action.

Digging in at Massey's

Workers at Massey-Ferguson's Knowsley, Merseyside, plant are blockading £4 m. of stock in an attempt to stop closure. They have formed an action committee representing manual and staff workers to fight the firm's plan to transfer the production of tractor-digger-loaders (IDL's) to Manchester.

The Knowsley plant--only 10 years old--was once acclaimed as part of Merseyside's employment breakthrough. Now, job losses locally are approaching 10,000 a year. The Knowsley workers are conscious that they're fighting for their own jobs--and those of the community. They are supported by their colleagues elsewhere in Massey-Ferguson.

EXEMPLARY

A Combine Committee meeting with delegates from the other Massey-Ferguson plants quickly meeting in Liverpool has deci-

ded not to allow any movement of work from one plant to another.

The plan to close comes on top of Knowsley breaking all sales records in 1979. But the Knowsley workers have no illusions that this will save their jobs and are organising to fight for them. They've seen the Kilmarnock combine harvester plant close down despite the workers there showing themselves to be "exemplary" and production running smoothly. The closure of Kilmarnock, the threat to Knowsley and the notice of redundancies in virtually all M-F factories are part of the plan to streamline production and make even bigger profits. The Combine Committee recognises that the fight for 550 jobs at Knowsley is only

the tip of the iceberg. To help if win, Kilmarnock have passed on £4000 which was left in their

own defence fund.

STRONG

The Knowsley workforces are starting the fight in a very strong position. There's £4 million pounds worth of finished machinery on the site (IDL's at £22,000 apiece) and despite management's conniving they're not going anywhere until the threat of closure is lifted. The workers are keeping checks on their outside normal working hours.

At present the factory is working normally but the workers are preparing for any moves management may try. It's already making noises about laying workers off due to incoming parts drying up. The workforce are ready to step up their own action in this event.

Messages of support to:
HAYDYN BURNS
46 KRIMPTON PARK RD.
AINTREE, LIVERPOOL.



Edwardes' own propaganda against Derek Robinson in the recent victimisation campaign is now being used by Fiat to further discredit BL cars. It is also a reminder of the threat which new technology offers to working class struggle worldwide.

WARD & GOLDSTONE

...And a few yards down the road from Massey-Ferguson another group of workers is preparing to fight for their jobs. The Ward and Goldstone factory, which supplies electrical car harnesses to British Leyland is under threat of closure. Management want to move production to one of their other factories.

The 160 women workers received a 90 day notice, but at the time of going to press management has deferred it for 7 days. The announcement came as a shock to the workers (again production and industrial relations have been ideal from management's point of view) but they're now using the 7 days to organise themselves to stop the closure.

Since 1910, women all over the world have celebrated March 8th. as International Womens' Day. It was to commemorate a strike by New York women garment workers. Some of the events planned for this year are:

Armagh-International Womens' Day Demonstration. For further details contact Big Flame, Liverpool

Sheffield-International Womens' Day Fair. Promises to be even better than last year, with stalls photographic displays, books, clothes, plants and crafts for sale. Refreshments and childrens' play area. All day at Services Hall, Division St.

London-Anti-Imperialist Womens' March. Assemble at Clapham Common 1.00pm. Supported by Women in Ireland; Women Against Imperialism; Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent; Black Women's Group; and the Latin American Women's Group.



ARMAGH PRISONERS

Not many people expect to visit their mothers in jail. Belfast teenager Dominic Malocca probably never expected to do it either. But now he does it regularly. His mother, Rose, is in Armagh jail because she allegedly helped IRA volunteers in her home district of Ardoyne.

BRUISED AND FILTHY

But his last visit, a few weeks ago, was the worst shock of all. His mother was badly bruised and filthy.

She explained how it happened and he later phoned it through to a member of Big Flame in London.

ILL

One of the women prisoners had diarrhoea. But the prison officers refused to allow her more than the one permitted visit to the toilet in the morning. In her desperation she threatened that the next screw she saw would get covered in shit! As a result she was put 'on report', due to see the governor.

The following Friday, while going for a meal, some women were surrounded by male prison officers. A fight started again and the screws started batoning all around them. Many of the women were cut and

bruised, two of them badly. That was how Dominic's mother was injured.

PROTEST

As a protest against this attack the women began a 'no-wash' campaign. The prison authorities then refused to allow them even to wash their clothes. Many were moved to new cells, finding some of them with the windows blocked up!

COVER UP

But at least visitors were allowed in to see the prisoners. In this way the truth began to leak out although it had received little publicity from the northern Irish or British media. At one time the prison authorities dreamed up the idea that the violence was caused when mysterious 'black uniforms' were found.

WHY?

What really sparks off the violence and regular beatings suffered by the women prisoners in Armagh and the hundreds of men in Long Kesh?

The 'diarrhoea incident' is a good example of the petty harassment by prison guards that leads to clashes.

Most prisoners are Republicans, fighting to end British military occupation of their country. Most guards are Loyalists. They want the British to stay. They hate the prisoners, refuse to treat them as prisoners of war. Instead they treat them worse than criminal prisoners. In Long Kesh the attacks on prisoners included random punching, spitting food and tossing the contents of lavatory pots over them during 'slopping out'.

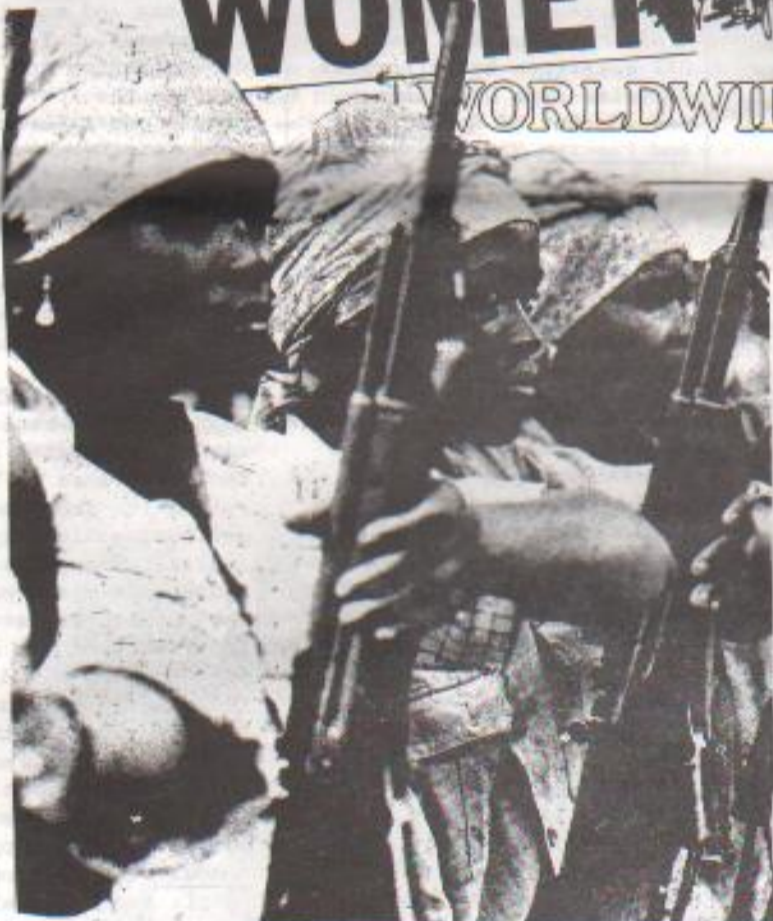
Eventually this has led to the present 'dirty strike' in the camp. The prisoners are demanding the restoration of political status. They no longer 'slop out'. Shit and waste food is left in a cell corner or smeared on the walls. That way the warders aren't too keen on entering the cells!

TERRORISTS OR SOLDIERS...

What the Republican prisoners want is the right to have their own command structures in jail, electing their own officers to negotiate with guards. The right to wear their own clothes and not prison uniforms. In fact all they want is the kind of life led by British P.O.W.s in Germany during the war.

For further information read "An Phoblacht/Republican News". Available in left bookshops or from 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1.

THE STRUGGLE WOMEN WORLDWIDE



SISTERS Vs SOAMES

In all the media attention on the election in the transfer to independence in Zimbabwe, no-one asks how all this affects the women in Zimbabwe.

In fact, their position is very much at stake in the choices that are now being made. Only a certain independent outcome will in any way liberate them from their oppressed position. In this article, two women currently visiting Zimbabwe take a closer look.

The racist system that has been in operation since Cecil Rhodes took the land from the people exploits women in a rather special way. There is a racial division of the land; the whites monopolise the best areas for farming and other resources plus the best jobs; and like S.A. there is also a system which relegates black workers to the position of unwelcome immigrants.

All this has a reason. These institutions are all designed

to make labour super cheap. Wages can be even lower than in S. Africa but only because women prop up the system. Most of them are forced to stay in overcrowded 'reserves'. Their lot is not just housework and child rearing but looking after the family farm and growing enough food for the kids and old folk. So none of these family costs and welfare provisions are a cost to the white employers or to the state. Cheap migrant (male) labour for the racists depends on the double exploitation of women.

Small wonder then that peasant women involve themselves actively in the guerrilla struggle when it really got going after 1972. Once the guerrillas began to politicise the people and draw them into the struggle the Smith regime was immediately put under challenge. And in this process women played a crucial role: in the ranks of

the guerrillas but far more so as providers of food, of intelligence, of refuge and hiding, as message carriers; and some even carried weapons all the way from Mozambique. Many suffered greatly, being very courageous in resisting the Rhodesian 'Security Forces'—even being brutally tortured in the end.

The hope was that the struggle would not just bring a new flag but a new society. And what Lord Soames' rigging is designed to do is to make sure that doesn't happen—that even if it has an independent govt., Zimbabwe will still be safe for capitalism and that would mean ultra cheap wages and still the women bearing the brunt of migrant labour.

This is what the choice in Zimbabwe is all about: will the liberation of Zimbabwe liberate its women?

Women, faced with Imperialist oppression, are no longer content to take a minor role in the fight-back. These pictures show some of the ways in which they are taking the lead - from peaceful demonstration to armed struggle.





KICKING OUT CORRIE

Caroline Laidler

THERE WERE TWO CONTRASTING EVENTS IN LONDON IN EARLY FEBRUARY WHICH HAVE HELPED TURN THE TIDE AGAINST THE CORRIE BILL.

RALLY

THE CENTRAL Hall in Westminster was packed and thousands more pushed to get into hear the speeches. Amongst the many speakers was Tony Benn who told women how to organise.

"When Tony Benn began to tell women that they should get themselves organised, I got up and left" said a socialist feminist from Sheffield. David Steel, who has since been in committee with Corrie to compromise on the time limit and the statutory instrument clause, received a standing ovation.

There were impressive and informative contributions from Nurses For a Free Choice and Diane Mundy from BPAS who put everyone straight about the difference between the £2 million turnover in BPAS and the £2 million profit that SPUC like to cite. The NAC speaker didn't get on to the platform until 7.50 despite the fact that NAC has given the impetus to the campaign against Corrie and has managed to sustain the support. Many feminists felt bitter that the politics of NAC took such a back seat.

Until then there had been no mention of 'Free abortion on demand - a woman's right to choose'. 'Defend the 1967 Act' was the dominant cry and we all know how inadequate that is! It is women who have initiated and worked hardest in the fight against Corrie, it is our lives which will be most affected by his bill and yet again the platform of Central Hall was dominated by men just like the TUC demonstration last October.

However mixed the feeling about the actual value of lobbying the sheer numbers were a powerful indication for parliament and the general public of the hostility to the bill.

member of NAC and London Big Flame

WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY

I've been working flat out with NAC against the Corrie Bill for months and this week really seemed the most hectic

On Tuesday I'd queued in vain for three hours to lobby Keith Joseph and had left frozen and frustrated. On Thursday I'd had a lot of responsibility for our own torch light demo in Leeds. The women's assembly was our day. I felt it was the day when women could express our feeling collectively against the Corrie bill and for our right to choose.

I was late in arriving at the Central Hall. The atmosphere was electric. The atmosphere grew tenser. Male photographers were aggravating many women

Then a rumour gathered momentum as it rounded the hall - 'Some women had been detained at the speaker's pleasure in the House' When we finally heard that a group of women had unfurled a banner over the public gallery saying 'women will not obey your laws' there was wild jubilant cheering, thunderous foot stomping and shining eyes all round.

This was the signal so many of us had been waiting for. It was spontaneous mass action - hundreds of us poured out of the hall, swarmed across Parliament Square causing havoc with the traffic. There was no sign of the police at this time and the first hundred pushed through the great doors of Parliament and into the hall. The doors were shut and those women immediately in front of the doors sat down. Women were joining us all the time. We were angry and ecstatic - expressing our demands and our power 'NOT the church, not the state WOMEN must control our fate 'OUR bodies OUR lives OUR right to decide'

The women inside were dragged roughly out and three arrests were made, the women being charged with assault, threatening behaviour.

Gradually we dispersed and went singing and shouting to join the torch light demonstration to Fleet Street. By this time we were irrepressible. Songs were being created and recreated on the waves of elation.

I staggered onto the train full of optimism in the power of women and a sense of strength, both individual and collective that such all too rare occasions create.

member of Leeds NAC and Leeds BF.

DONATIONS TO THE DEFENCE FUND C/O NAC London office, 374 Greys Inn Road, London W1

What Next for NAC?

The large attendance at the recent NAC planning meeting shows the level of interest in debating NAC's future. There was spirited discussion of whether NAC should be a single issue campaign or one relating to the wider issues of a Women's Right to Choose - contraceptives, sterilization. Further, should some events be women only? How can women get the support of the Labour Movement on our terms? What is the best way of taking forward the strong, active groups of women that have developed fighting Corrie? The next BF women's commission will be discussing this.

member of BF Women's Commission

THE PAST AGAINST OUR FUTURE

FIGHTING RACISM AND FASCISM

Big Flame have just published an ambitious pamphlet about fighting racism and fascism. It is the result of several years of collective work by members of Big Flame who have been active in local and national anti-racist and anti-fascist work, including the Anti-Nazi League.

This is a good time for the anti racist/anti fascist movement to take stock and examine the past as a basis of going forward. The ANL has lost most of its momentum. The state is stepping up the attack on black people through proposed immigration and nationality legislation.

The state is pressing on, using racism to support the employers' moves to restructure the economy and shift the balance of power firmly against the working class. There's little doubt that direct attacks on the black community--whether it's the political trials that have taken place in Southall; the use of Sus; the cutbacks in special educational provision (such as language tuition); immigration legislation or one of many other ways--are all intended to weaken the confidence of the black movement and encourage division in the whole working class.

The fascist right is in disarray. This is because both Tories and Labour played National Front cards during the elections, removing some of the NF's reasons to exist, and because anti fascists have won a significant victory over them in the last few years. Down they might be--but out they are not. The splinters are turning out to harass, threaten and fire-bomb. The recent EM attack on Sinn Fein's Bloody Sunday demo in Birmingham shows that they take Ireland seriously, even if most of the Left don't.

The white anti racist anti fascist movement still exists, but is weak. The lack of solidarity with the defendants in Southall shows how faint-heartedly many have taken this crucial issue. However, it seems that a period of rebuilding is underway.

The black movement, however, has shown its determination to challenge the racism that the state supports and on which fascism has fed. Last November's March against Racist Laws mobilised thousands of people and several campaigns are being waged against deportation and police harassment.

In the light of this, the "Black Freedom March" being organised by Bradford Asian Youth Movement and other black groups promises to strongly build the struggle of the black community and at the same time demand serious support for anti racist activity from white activists.

BLACK FREEDOM MARCH

On the 28th June 1980 there will commence one of the most

significant anti-racist activities ever mounted on a national scale in Britain. The Bradford AYM is organising a "Black Freedom March" which will set out from Bradford on the 28th June and finish with a massive demonstration in London on the 18th July.

This will coincide with demonstrations outside British Commissions and Embassies throughout Europe, the 'New Commonwealth' and Pakistan. Support groups are being set up in cities all over the country to raise money for the march (at least £30,000 is needed) and to gain political support.

Big Flame will be supporting the march and next month we will carry the statement of the organisers explaining the purpose of the march.

THE PAST AGAINST OUR FUTURE

40 pages. Many photographs and cartoons. Price 50p. Available from Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7. (Also from Big Flame, new reprint of *Sexuality and Fascism* 25p).

WHAT'S IN IT

Chapter 1, ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, examines fascist parties in Italy, Germany, and Britain from the 1920s to the Second World War. There is a discussion of fascism as a mass movement, of its relationship with big business and of the struggles of the working class to oppose it. We also consider fascist ideology showing how it is often no more than an extreme example of the ideas which are already commonplace in our society, including a recognition of the importance of sexual politics in to an analysis of fascism.

Chapter 2, ROOTS, traces the origins and growth of racism. It examines the history of imperialism. We show how images of blacks have changed along with changes in the system of oppression. These changes include the development from slavery and plunder to colonialism and notions of the 'Civilising Mission' and the 'White Man's Burden' to neo-colonialism and domination through unequal exchange and a puppet ruling class. We emphasize how black people have always struggled against imperialism and, for this, got labelled 'savages'.

This chapter also discusses the immigration of black people to Britain when the ruling class considered the labour useful, followed by successive immigration acts to limit entry. It looks at black people as doubly exploited members of the working class and how they have fought back. Finally, we consider a problem often ignored by socialists--the racism of the white working class. We argue that this is more than simple 'false consciousness' remaining from the past, but has a material basis now.

Chapter 3, UP AGAINST THE WALL, examines the role of racism and fascism in the present crisis. It argues that the crisis is not simply economic but also affects the community, family, and personal life, with a significant move to the right in ideas and morals. We assess the appeal of fascist ideology demonstrating how fascists recognise the fears and worries people are experiencing and seem to offer 'solutions'. Chapter answers the question how serious a threat the fascist actually pose. It then goes to reveal the racism of British culture and that of the state particularly its use of immigration laws to harass blacks.

Chapter 4, FIGHTBACK, examines the anti-racist and anti fascist struggles arguing for the importance of both. It stresses the importance of international solidarity work, particularly around Ireland and Southern Africa, as part of the anti-racist struggle. The importance of the contribution of the women's and gay movements to anti-fascist work is emphasized. We discuss the position No Platform for Fascists and No to All Immigration Control. Considerable emphasis is placed on the need to support the autonomous organisation of black people as essential if their needs are to be part of the struggle for socialism. We conclude with a consideration of the important tasks which the movement must take up in the future.

Big Flame



SPEAKING TOUR

During the next couple of months, members of the Big Flame AntiRacist AntiFascist Commission will be speaking at meetings aimed to consider what lessons can be drawn from the past and what plans should be made for the future of the anti-racist antifascist struggle. The meetings will be a forum for all those interested in this necessary re-evaluation. More details next month.

deportation under the immigration act after the present campaign to prevent the



BIG FLAME NATIONAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON AFGHANISTAN

SOVIET TROOPS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

THE
STRUGGLE
WORLDWIDE



BIG FLAME CONDEMNS THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN AND CALLS FOR THE IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM THAT COUNTRY.

We recognize that the Soviet Union had legitimate reasons to worry about intensive imperialist involvement in Afghanistan. For some time the United States has been supplying arms to the right-wing Moslem rebels. The US was threatening to invade Iran, which borders both Afghanistan and USSR. And the fall of a pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan would have threatened to surround the Soviet Union along its southern border with a network of right-wing, militantly anti-communist states allied with US imperialism and China. Nevertheless, this was not the main motivation for Soviet intervention. Nor can it justify a major power imposing its will on a small country.

We say this even though we realize that some of the policies of the Afghani regime (for example, the abolition of the bride price) are progressive. **BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SOCIALISM CAN BE IMPOSED BY FORCE, FROM ABOVE.**

WHY THE SOVIETS INVADED

The main reason why the USSR invaded Afghanistan had nothing to do with defending the welfare of the Afghani people or defending the Afghani left from right-wing or imperialist attack. Rather it was to prevent the overthrow of a 'satellite' regime and the threat this would have posed to the Soviet bureaucracy's control over its domestic population and over Eastern Europe.

The Soviet Union's first worry was with its own Moslem minorities. Iranian and Turkish-speaking minorities, such as Tadjiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmenis, inhabit the border regions of both countries and have strong cultural ties with their Soviet or Afghani brothers and sisters. Even though the Moslem peoples of the USSR have a higher standard of living than the Afghanis, the Soviet Union's Moslem minorities have a great deal of discontent against overt economic, political, and cultural discrimination. A militantly Islamic nationalist regime in Afghanistan would have provided a focus for this discontent and threatened the stability of the whole southern region of the USSR.

RESISTANCE

A second worry for the Soviets was Eastern Europe. There is no question but that the overthrow of a Soviet satellite in Afghanistan would have encouraged both right-wing and socialist dissidents in Eastern Europe. It would have shown that the Soviet Union's power could be broken, that resistance could succeed. In this sense, the invasion was similar to the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where the Soviets rushed to put down popular resistance before it spread to other countries that they control.

Thirdly, for the same reasons, the Soviet Union was worried that a defeat in Afghanistan would have encouraged discontent among its own non-Moslem population.

We should keep in mind that the Soviet invasion comes at a time of serious internal crisis for the Soviet regime. Its leadership is engaged in a power struggle. Its economy is failing. Popular discontent over these hardships, including shortages caused by the Olympic Games, is growing. The Soviet regime is using the invasion and the aggressive response by US imperialism to create its own 'war scare' and to whip up chauvinism. The invasion also forms part of a general pattern of increasing repression, which includes the recent crack-down on dissidents and a new, anti-working class law to tighten labour discipline.

WHY THE TROOPS MUST WITHDRAW

We reject the arguments of those on the Left who either defend the Soviet invasion or do not call for a withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Soviet Union did not intervene to defend a progressive, popular movement from being crushed. Nor was it answering a call from a popular regime to help it defend itself against imperialism (as the Cuban troop did when they defended the MPLA in Angola). We admit that a defeat for Soviet troops in Afghanistan (which is unlikely) would be a victory for Western imperialism. But their continued presence in that country is strengthening the Right throughout the Middle East and Asia and has no doubt done very great damage to the Left in countries like Iran and Pakistan.

MYTHICAL

Big Flame, however, also rejects the argument that the Soviets have violated some mythical 'self-determination of the Afghani people'. Of course we oppose attempts by big countries to impose their will on little countries. But had there been a popular and progressive movement in Afghanistan which called for assistance from outside to defend itself against imperialist interference, then we very probably would have supported it. Again, we take the example of Angola: Cuban 'intervention' certainly violated the 'self-determination' of the Angolan people, but we defended it because the MPLA was engaged in an important anti-imperialist struggle.

ROLE OF IMPERIALISM

Whilst condemning the Soviet invasion, Big Flame thinks that revolutionaries in Britain and elsewhere must do all they can to point out how Western imperialism is using events in Afghanistan to strengthen its hold over the Middle East and Asia. The United States and its allies are using the invasion to prepare public opinion to accept the renewed use of US troops to put down popular revolts which might threaten Japanese, American, or other Western capitalist interests. At the same time, they are using the invasion to bolster anti-

communism, and particularly hostility to the left inside their own countries. For this reason we will do everything we can to initiate or support campaigns against: the reintroduction of conscription in the United States, the sale of arms and other military equipment to China and right-wing states like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the establishment of US military bases in the Middle East and Asia, and the West's possession, build-up, or use of nuclear weapons.

NO OLYMPIC BOYCOTT

Big Flame also opposes any boycott of the Olympic games in Moscow. We have always stressed the connection between politics and sport. The call for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics is being used by the Right in every country to build an anti-communist crusade. These same forces did not oppose the Mexico Olympics in 1968 nor the World Cup in Argentina in 1978. Nor did they oppose the US's war against the Vietnamese with threats of similar cultural or economic sanctions. Neither is there any evidence that small groups of left-wing oppositionists in the USSR or Eastern Europe have called on socialists and the workers' movement in the West to build a boycott. If the Olympic games go ahead, we will use that opportunity to expose the brutal, anti-socialist character of the Soviet regime.

Big Flame National Committee
16 February 1980



**PORTUGAL:
LEFT BEHIND BARS**

24 members of the Portuguese left-wing organisation PRP (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat) have been in jail without trial since June 1978. Amongst the prisoners are two of the PRP leaders, Isabel do Carmo and Carlos Antunes, well known for their long history as militants of the resistance against the dictatorship of Salazar and Caetano.

Isabel do Carmo has been bringing up in jail her now two year old son, who has therefore known no other life.

The PRP prisoners are political prisoners and clearly recognised as such by the Portuguese judicial authorities. In the official indictment great weight is given to their membership of the PRP, an organisation which, according to the indictment, 'defended in its

programme the seizure of power by the workers by violent means.' This is used to justify the charge against Carlos Antunes and Isabel do Carmo of 'moral responsibility' in various crimes, including bank robberies and incitement to break military discipline during the period between April 1974 and November 1975. They are even charged with insulting the Prime Minister, Pinheiro de Azevedo, head of the 6th Provisional Government.

On the 2nd April 1979 the parliamentary group of the Socialist Party presented to the Legislative Assembly an Amnesty Bill according to which 'all criminal and disciplinary misdeeds of a political nature, including those subject to the military code, are amnestied' if they took place after April 1974.

The Amnesty Bill was pass-

ed by the Assembly by a large majority.

The Law was finally ratified by President Eanes in November 1979, following a 28-day hunger strike by the political prisoners of which this was one of the main demands.

Despite this the PRP members are still in jail, more than one and a half years after their arrest.

Yet all the members of the para-military fascist organisations ELP and MDLP who took part in bombing outrages after April 1974, many involving loss of life, have been freed.

All agents of the secret police of the Salazar/Caetano regime PIDE/DGS, responsible for hideous crimes of torture and murder of anti-fascist militants, have been freed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Get your organisation to write or send a telegram to:

The Portuguese Ambassador, 11 Belgrave Square, London SW 1., protesting at the continued imprisonment of the PRP prisoners and demanding their immediate release, with copies to: The Portuguese Political Prisoners, c/o Room 265 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC 1.

Send donations or help organise fund raising activities to help. We are trying to raise money to help the prisoners' families.

One hundred trade unionists met in London's Conway Hall on February 10th to launch a campaign to make the TUC's international programme accountable to the membership.

The speakers, who included Don Thomson (T&GWU), Roger Poole (NUPE), and Stuart McClellan (CPSA), attacked the International Department for its collaboration with the Foreign Office, the CBI, and many repressive governments overseas. The international programme receives £180,000 from the Foreign Office. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, ICFTU (through its Latin American section—ORIT) was an accomplice in the overthrow of Allende—but the TUC

(the ICFTU's biggest affiliate) refused to accept any responsibility. The TUC also refused to play any official role in the Chile Solidarity Campaign—despite the involvement of some other leading West European trade union centres.

FINANCE

A campaign programme was agreed to demand that 1. the TUC makes available to Congress the full financial details of both its own and the ICFTU's overseas programmes; 2. that all links with the Foreign Office, other Government agencies, and the

CONFERENCE ON THE TUC'S INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.

"Get out from under the CBI!"

CBI should end; 3. that the purpose of international work should be defined as assisting international labour against international capital; and 4. that the TUC should encourage membership education on international issues.

The steering committee elected at the meeting will be producing

leaflets, a campaign bulletin, and speakers for trade union and labour movement organisations to build support and work towards a delegate conference before the end of the year.

LEN VICIOUS

The importance of this campaign was emphasised by Len Murray himself in a vicious attack on Don Thomson's book 'Where Were You Brother?' and on those delegates to the TUC Congress and elsewhere who had demanded that the book's allegations be answered in full. Requests for further information, messages of support, and (much needed) financial help should go to Don Thomson c/o CCSA, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London.

write on



Improving Social Life

Dear Eds,
The letter on culture by Matthew Garth in the February issue of Big Flame raises some important points. It isn't just a case of having more cultural features in the paper but coming to terms also with, as Matthew says, "...culture's role in capital's domination and our resistance to it."
One of the advantages of having a monthly paper (there are a few) is that it is pointless filling the paper with short news items that are irrelevant to many of the readers. This means that articles on culture need not be ditched. If we cannot have good cultural coverage in a monthly paper, it seems to me unlikely that this situation will improve if we go fortnightly.
As a worker in a neighborhood advice centre in Chorley, Lancashire, I was involved in the organising of a number of social events to raise funds. One difficulty I found was working with people who refused to accept a collective responsibility.
This was partly because some of us saw the events as purely a means of raising funds, while others emphasised the importance of improving the social life of the community.
Finally I would just like to emphasize that a thorough analysis of culture should include a discussion of how we organise our own social and cultural events as well as reviewing what capitalism puts on offer.

In solidarity:
Steve Rose
BF member, Preston.

'SEXIST CO-ENJOYMENT' AT ANL GIG

Dear Big Flame,
This letter concerns the recent ANL social and fund raising event held in Bedford House, Liverpool on Friday last.
"It should be clear that fascism is very concerned with sexual politics. To create a 'master race', fascists must, and do, combine their racism with (a) vicious sexism..." 'Big Flame', 'Sexuality and Fascism', December, '78.

Over one year later, and yet we still find the 'Left' playing sexist games. And worse, whilst attempting to further the aims of the ANL, actually allowing money to be made from sexism.
To be confronted at a social and fund raising event by a group of totally sexist musicians called 'ASYLUM', a person would almost be right in assuming a lack of knowledge about sexism on the part of the organizers of the event... To know that the relationship between the ANL and Big Flame is rather good in Liverpool, a person could be forgiven in the belief that information is being shared between the two organisations...

At an event concerned with togetherness, I did not expect after being made to feel really good by enjoying two non-sexist performances concerned with solidarity, to be insulted by the sudden presentation of an absurd situation--namely: the sexist co-enjoyment of each other of the group 'ASYLUM' and the 'LEFT'. Not only did people sit and listen: they actually danced to the rubbish; political integrity be-

ing thrown from the room.

Some brothers and sisters became, rightly so, very upset. Members of Liverpool's Women's Movement, Gay Alliance, and Anti-Sexist men. We became annoyed with not only the form and content of the music, but also with the way a number of brothers attempted to explain away the booking of the group concerned and their own sexist enjoyment.

Agreed, it is difficult to fully confront sexism in everyday life. But we should not allow ourselves to be used as passive agents for it; nor should we allow it to flourish inside our organizations.

Yours fraternally,
Will Savage

NOTE:

In place of a full reply--which I hope will be ready for next issue--I'd like to say for the benefit of readers, that I think Will's letter is misleading. It cannot be stated so blandly that Asylum are "totally sexist", let's hear Will argue that point. Secondly, it wasn't "the left" versus women's liberation, Gay Alliance, Men Against Sexism, for or against "Asylum". A majority of the members of Women's Liberation and of the gay people at the gig did not agree with the protest, even when canvassed on their views. This is not to say there is no discussion to be had on the sexism that is implicit in such of rock/pop culture... But I can't accept Will's "shock, horror" depiction of this particular gig.

Steve S.

The Newspaper Collective regards the letters page as one of the most important in the paper. That's why we didn't drop it when we were only able to produce an 8-page issue. Help us by continuing to send your letters in. Maximum 400 wds. Send them to Big Flame Newspaper, 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool 7.
Many of the letters on this page have been cut.

'Apocalypse Now' Review: Glib and Simplistic

Dear Big Flame,
I would like to comment on last month's review of *Apocalypse Now*. I lived with and taught Vietnam veterans in the early seventies who were united in a common awareness of the absolute insanity of their situation in Vietnam, as individuals and as a nation. Their alienation was such that they referred to America as 'the world', Vietnam being an entirely separate and, preferably, stoned reality. *The Boys in Company C*, a low budget feature, caught the feeling best when the platoon arrives in a Vietnam that seems a cross between a stage-set, a fairground, a rock festival, a butcher's shop and a coney island inhabited by slant-eyed aliens. A totally distorted view, of course, but this is how eighteen year old black and white conscripts, not educated, middle class, clever or, perhaps principled enough to flee to Canada, saw the war. One of my best friends chopped off his trigger finger rather than go, but he was 'lucky' enough to have concrete political opinions as well as physical courage.
The camerawork in *Apocalypse Now* is exceptional, as are the

sound effects with the ominous thwacking of the blades of a Cobra gunship about to lay waste to a village and Morrison and Hendrix, in a sense also casualties of Western society, wailing in the background. The absolute MADNESS of the Wagner-accompanied chopper attack on the NLF beachside village is partly so terrifying because events not dissimilar actually happened.
Apocalypse Now is one of the most accurate American films about the American experience in Vietnam. The airborne attack on the village was for me at once appalling and yet exhilarating, the difference being that I was praying for the NLF anti-aircraft guns to hit a helicopter. I was glad, then sorry, when the Vietnamese girl threw a grenade into the medical chopper airlifting the US wounded, although it was trying to save, albeit American, lives. You could argue that I was just fucked-up and emotionally confused, but, in that case, so are a lot of other people.

I feel that your review was far too glib and simplistic. The juxtaposition of Kurtz's quote about NLF atrocities next

to a heartwarming Vietnamese endorsement of people's war trivializes the issue. Kurtz's tale shocked me and I don't believe it. However, armed struggle and people's war, like any other war, is a cruel, bloody and atrocious business. It is not a lefty picnic or a benefit pop with guns. The NLF did shoot people, and the extent to which innocent people died is obviously a matter for debate, but die they did. To gloss over such matters all too easily leads to the evasion of truth--and as such does a grave disservice to the struggle for socialism.

The immense complexity of the Vietnamese struggle and its consequences cannot be overlooked and *Apocalypse Now* in a confused, manic, yet inspired way presents one aspect of the American experience. I don't believe the film glorifies war nor do I believe it attempts to justify the American role in Vietnam. John Wayne did that kind of thing much better. The profound pessimism of *Apocalypse Now* can be countered only by confronting the questions that it raises, rather than evading them or pretending that they don't exist.

The paper seems to be improving all the time, particularly Brother Goose. Keep it up.

Roger Lewis

NO NEED FOR PICKETS

Dear Big Flame,
I very much enjoyed your review by Rosewell Rudd of Jean-Marie Brohm's book, "Sport - A Prison of Measured Time" which is heavily criticised for symbolising "the vulgar, mechanical Marxism which cannot cope with contradictions" (like living in a world not of our own making?) and was therefore saddened to read your review of "Apocalypse Now" which, I feel, should be criticised for the same reason. I do not believe that this film would have had us picketing showing 10 years ago

Like "The Deer-hunter" (which suffered a similar fate at the hands of your film critic) I think that "Apocalypse Now" is a powerful and thought provoking film about the effects of war

My major objections to the review are:-

- 1) The film is not based on a lie - the Vietnamese did win because they were more ruthless and determined than the Americans.
- 2) The film does not suggest that the Vietnamese were more "evil", imply that war is,

3) No one denies that the V.C. fought "a people's war" but let's not get too romantic about warfare. Surely the Vietnamese are as entitled to get as dehumanised by years of killing as anyone else. (I thought it was only John Wayne who killed people without getting his hands dirty!)

4) The film does not end up "glorifying war" but tries to treat it on the level at which it affects most people caught up in it - the personal. Much as we may like people to see warfare on an economic/political level for many (combatants and audience alike) it exists on a psychological/emotional/moral level.

As a result films are forced to do battle (and raise issues) on the ideological level.

For me the film keeps very much to the Conrad novel (*Heart of Darkness*) which it prompted me to read. They are both essentially horror stories concerned with selfishness, dedication, moral corruption and human hypocrisy.

Don't rely on quotes pilfered from "Copula's Politics", go and see it for yourself!

Yours M. Cart



"All that will be involved will be the drilling of about a dozen holes each 4 inches in diameter into a rock mass extending over several miles."

Behind this bland disclaimer by the Atomic Energy Authority lies a determined attempt to create a dump in Scotland to begin to solve Britain's growing nuclear waste problem.

The Authority, desperate to sink a 24 year build-up of nuclear waste into the ground, has chosen rural Scotland to drive in the thin edge of a big wedge.

But a campaign is underway to fight the AGA over dumping as they've previously been fought over uranium shipments (see

photo--a demonstration in London, July 1977) and new nuclear power stations.

The problem, according to SCRAM (Scottish Campaign to Resist the Nuclear Menace), is that even if subterranean dumping were safe, the transporting of the waste itself is potentially calamitous. Up to six train loads of used fuel travel through Lancaster every week. Just imagine what happens if the track welding is faulty.

More information from SCRAM
2a Ainslie Place
Edinburgh 3
031-225 7752

ACADEMIC MARXOLOGIST

Dear Big Flame,
Last month's centre 4 pages on fighting the Cuts--like the feature on the Tories' Employment Bill the previous month--was very useful for activists. Just the kind of coverage Big Flame could do with much more.

A pity it was marred by Feargal O'Hanlon's unnecessary

badly written article (was this an unintended joke?) *Explaining the Cuts*. How about this--
Just how restructuring can create more favourable conditions for capital accumulation by reimposing capitalist forms on social relations becomes clearer...
O'Hanlon clearly believes that an idea isn't worth its

salt unless it can be expressed unintelligibly for all except a handful of university trained marxologists.
Wasn't it Big Flame the newspaper that prided itself on its ability to make complex ideas accessible to all?
Yours,
Puzzled Frown
Ashby-de-la-Zouche.

The New Leaders ?

John Warrington's article (Feb B.F.) "Can Labour Lead?" is to be welcomed as an informative look at the limited options open to the Labour Left. But for some reason, he fails to come out with the necessary answer "NO, LABOUR CAN'T LEAD"

And on top of that he falls into the trap of seeing the mass movement as only backing up the Labour Councils that are prepared to fight.

This is putting the cart before the horse; there's a need to put the strategy for fighting the cuts firmly back on its feet. Yes, Labour Councils should be made to take a stand against the cuts, but they certainly can't lead it. And what about the impact of the Labour Left when their effect is to

drain energy from cuts campaigns?

HOW CAN WE FIGHT?

We need to build an independent movement of mass resistance to the cuts that unites public sector workers and the users of services as well as industrial sector workers.. It will need an eye to long-term national organisation and a strong socialist dimension (drawing in Labour Party activists). How do we go about building this? Here's some ideas.

Fighting cuts every day. So much of what needs to be done is to rescue jobs and services that are disappearing every day, usually unnoticed, in a

thousand little incidents. "Natural wastage" is a major problem. Cuts campaigns will have to do more than organise token demonstrations or one-off lobbies; a network of support and information must be built that reaches into every hospital, school, housing estate, housing department etc, and beyond them to other workplaces.

Public services belong to all. "DON'T CUT US CUT THEM" ideas can be shown to be self-defeating. For example, strike action by Nottinghamshire's teachers has made the County Council reinstate a teacher suspended for refusing to teach an oversized class. Yet there is anger over the NUT's possible acceptance that children must be excluded,

from the nursery to reduce the class size. This could lose the NUT valuable support and may weaken their ability to oppose the next round of cuts. Users often bring new demands and ways of fighting to struggles.

Women's "natural" load. Few campaigns accept that the main push of the cuts is at the expense of women being sent, jobless, to care for the sick, young and old, for free at home. On some occasions women have led campaigns that are militant and public and also bring issues about childcare, community control or health, right out into the open. This can only strengthen the overall campaign.

Socialist ideas need to grow within the campaign and the Tory emphasis on private practice and charity funding bring such ideas sharply into focus. The opportunity also exists, while fighting to build the general organisation of the class, to combat the racist "anti-scrapper" and other ideas gaining strength at the moment. And to argue for socialist ones.

NATIONAL AND POLITICAL FIGHT

If the main task is to develop strong united campaigns in every sector and area, building to a national anti-cuts movement then where might the confrontation be? I doubt that it will be around a Clay Cross of the 1980s. The political will of the Tory government is more likely to be tested over industrial action and mass protest—whether its against cuts, anti-union legislation or perhaps immigration restriction. So, for example, during the steel strike we should not only establish solidarity with the strikers, but make it clear that it is the same monetarist policies that cut public spending and wind down the steel industry.

Only a class-wide response can defeat the government and victory by the steel workers can be a victory for the whole class. We need to set about the long hard task of building these links and, eventually, reversing government policy on cuts. Pete Shipstone (NUPB shop steward)

Leeds Resistance



Hundreds of Labour councillors are pledging themselves to fight the cuts to the death—just as they fought the Tories' 1972 Housing Finance Act! It's as true today as it was then that any stand taken by Labour will be only so firm as mass pressure on them is strong. That's the basis of Leeds Resistance, a local anti-cuts campaign whose growth has been rapid and impressive.

What made Resistance news was the challenge they issued to Labour councillors and can-

didates to take a clear public stand against the cuts—or face determined opposition in the local elections. At present under minority Tory control, Leeds could easily go Labour in the May elections.

BROAD BASED

The weekly distribution of Resistance News in shopping centres is helping to create a broad-based, publicly known campaign.

Resistance has put forward a programme to fight the cuts:

1. Link expenditure in key areas to inflation
2. Make the accounts of local authorities and services open to the inspection of trade union and community representatives.
3. Grasp the nettle of rate increases and find means to make the better off pay more..
4. Stop spending which makes the rich richer. Such as subsidies on hotel and office buildings; the road and motorway schemes that are for the benefit of the road haulage brigades.
5. Defy government limits and spend what is needed.
6. Cancel payment of interest to the City financiers.

If they can get a clear undertaking from Labour to fight the cuts, Resistance offer their support to work for a Labour win in the local elections. If not, they will field anti-cuts candidates themselves in May.

Contact Resistance at 6 Graham View, Leeds 4. Phone(evngs) Leeds 780719

Women and Cuts

When Thatcher was electioneering, much was made of the female vote. She argued for the need for firm government, and a 'common sense' approach to economics. Much of this is based on old myths of femininity: that a woman's place is at home, looking after the family. Thatcher never really spelt out that to balance the books meant increasing the workload on women, but that is exactly what is happening now.

After 10 years of the women's movement, there is certainly a different to the rights of women. Much progressive legislation was passed in the 70s to further women's rights and this increased women's confidence, even though it often proved difficult to get the law carried out. One way the Tories are hoping to cut public spending without creating massive social unrest is by withdrawing women from the labour market and getting them to take up without pay the work created by the cuts. As part of this plan, the Tories also have to demolish the ideals of women's liberation; otherwise, the women's movement will become a focus of struggle against the Tory government.

There are four main areas under siege. The first is women at work, both in waged work outside the home and unwaged labour inside the home. Second, there is women's role in bringing up the next generation, teaching them how to be human beings. Thirdly, there is women's reproductive powers; and fourthly, women's sexuality.

As far as work is concerned, the public sector workforce is mostly female. The public sector unions' record in defence of women's jobs, usually unskilled and part-time, is poor. Instead women are sent home, perhaps to do the same work as before, but for the family. The cuts in education mean fewer teachers and more restricted opportunities. Equal education is basic to men and women working in the same jobs, but unless girls are given the chance to take up subjects usually seen as belonging to boys, they will not be able to do jobs traditionally seen as male.

Putting women back in the family is another plank of Tory strategy. Closing nurseries means fore and more women and children stuck at home.. Children need to learn to play and share with others, and women need time to themselves. In addition to being forced back into isolation, women are also carrying a heavier financial burden. Family allowance has been frozen, and the move to increase maternity grants to a realistic level has been defeated in Parliament. Control of our reproductive

powers is a major issue at the moment as yet another attempt at anti-abortion legislation makes its way through Parliament. If the Corrie Bill becomes law, abortion will become harder to get. There is growing criticism of the forms of contraception available to women. More money is needed for research into a safe, reliable contraceptive, but contraception is low on the list of priorities for public expenditure and so our biological role in reproduction is used against us. Instead of control of reproduction—every child a wanted child—being a matter of social concern, sex becomes an individual game of roulette.

This leads onto the subtler effort at putting back the clock; an attack on women's sexuality. Increasingly, the virtues of femininity are being played up. Ads encourage women to look glamorous and impractical. The implication is that the successful woman is one who looks glamorous, is sexy, and copes with a family and rising prices without relying on the state. The political climate of anti-feminism is set by the Tories. The primitive philosophy was expressed by Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of Social Services, "If the Good Lord had intended us all having equal rights to go out to work and to behave equally you know he really wouldn't have created man and woman. Woman has been created as....I mean these are the biological facts of life that young children do depend on their mothers."

The ways in which cuts in public spending affect women are very complicated. To carry the cuts through, feminism has to be defeated both economically and politically. Economically, because the fight for women's liberation has exposed the hidden cost of bringing up children, doing the housework, caring for the old and sick, freeing our sexuality from our biological powers of reproduction. Politically, because feminism is fighting for these areas to be given equal importance with the productive sector in our society. The first hand and practical budgeting that Thatcher promised has turned out to be male-dominated and to rely on the sweated labour of women. The cuts in public spending go right to the heart of our everyday lives.

Member of Birmingham WF

NEXT MONTH we continue our cuts debate with articles held over on a strategy for fighting the cuts and a guide to the big words economists use. Please send us your contributions.

BIG FLAME'S TENTH BIRTHDAY

The first Big Flame appeared in January 1970. For sixpence (this was the pre-decimal era when fish and chips could set you back 1/100) you got four pages of news about Herebyshire struggles and the odd item of national or world news.

Need after a T.V. play about a dockers occupation of the Liverpool docks the paper was unexpectedly successful during its short life. Virtually the entire local left - Maoists, Trotskyists, Communist Party and libertarian-attended the readers meetings, as well as prominent labour movement figures.

PILKINGTONS

Eddie Roberts, then a convenor at Ford Halewood, signed a front page message in an early edition appealing for trade unionists to write for and sell the paper. And they did. When the Pilkington strike exploded in St. Helens in the spring, Big Flame promptly ran an account of the struggle, written by one of the militants. We sold 4,500 copies of that edition, at mass meetings and around the pubs.

Yet, politically the paper was already on its last legs.

The July edition was the last. The paper which re-appeared during the dock strike two years later was very different even though the title was the same. In the intervening period, a new political group began to take shape, called Big Flame and including some of the founding members of the 1970 newspaper.

SOCIALIST AND FEMINIST

In the last eight years, Big Flame has grown from a local group to a national organisation, as such we are drawing on a more varied experience of mass struggle, within which our politics are rooted. Big Flame's politics have developed alongside an awakening of socialist and feminist ideas in the 70's. Our newspaper is a reflection of these politics - neither dogmatically tied to the words of past revolutionaries nor tarred by the brush of reformism.

Thanks to technical problems, this issue bears a superficial resemblance to the earlier issues. Let's hope that in ten years time we will have established a paper that can really serve the needs of a larger readership.

Sub advertisements

CAMPBELL AGAINST IMMIGRATION LAWS Conference at Waterloo Action Centre, Baylis Road, London SE1 to consider the way ahead for the campaign. Saturday March 15th, 10-6. Further details, phone 01-720 3385.

40 Years of Big Flame. Events to celebrate the first edition of the newspaper. Liverpool: Saturday 15 May, 8 pm, Stanley House. Social with Snailforce and the film of Jim Allen's TV play, The Big Flame. 50p. (30p unaged). Birmingham: Sunday 2 March, 7 pm, Arts Lab, Hill St, film: The Big Flame. The film will also be shown in Manchester at a later date.

Easter Sunday London: Sinn Fein March. Assemble 2:00, Sunday 6 April, Speakers Corner, march to Kilburn Square for Rally.

ISSUES. An independent monthly magazine bringing a radical new approach to world events. Cut 1st March. 3 month trial £1.25 (£3.00) free 96 Gillespie St., London N5 1LN

A.N.S. counter demonstration against the NF march in Glasgow, 15th March (their slogan is "smash the I.R.A.") details of transport from local A.N.S. branches. (London, 11:00 pm Friday 16th—York Way, Kings Cross).

Manchester: Chilean Films and Video, Fri. March 21, 7:30pm Chile: The Most Painful Hour (1977 documentary by J. Bishley). Plus 'The New World' (recent videotape with Chilean refugees). Sat. March 22, 7:30pm. The Spiral (recent French film analysis of coup). Both at M.A.R.E., 61 Moon St, MCR. Tickets 200p (Boots: Fri. 75p, Sat. 1.00). Proceeds to Chile Solidarity Campaign.

Socialist Scotland No. 4. 45p free Box 5. 43 Woddy St. Edinburgh.

Sheffield WF Public Meeting on "CUTS, JOBS, & NAUDES" with Kate Truscott (Fightsback) at 7:30 pm Thurs March 6 Hare & Hounds Pub, Nursery St.

FUND DRIVE

Unlike many socialist papers we have actually been gaining readers in the last two years. If we're to build on our advances, we are going to need a lot of cash.

Every reader should consider signing a standing order to give us a regular contribution. And Big Flame groups should plan a regular fund-raising event. On a more immediate level we must raise £150 by the end of March—if every reader gave £1 we'd be rich, so it's not a too ambitious target.

Big Flame has been around for 10 years because we've had something useful to say. Help us to say it louder. Send us cash. Help us to avoid another breakdown.

Deadlines

Features—anything other than news! must arrive in Liverpool by 13th March (this includes reviews, and if possible letters). The remaining copy—mainly news—must arrive by 20th March.

Big Flame

Top
No. 24 March 1980

in Armagh,
even
solidarity
is denied

SUPPORT



Pauline McLaughlin who is ill - possibly suffering from anorexia nervosa. When sentenced in February 1978 she weighed nearly nine stone but latest reports indicate she weighs six stone ten pounds and suffers frequent vomiting and diarrhoea. Despite this the prison doctor, Dr. Cole, cruelly keeps insisting on declaring her "fit to work".

OUR SISTERS

In Armagh jail, Northern Ireland, women are held prisoners of war, but like the men in Long Kesh (Hibbocks) they are denied P.O.W. status by the British Government. At present 33 of them are locked in their cells 24 hours a day. They have been refusing all prison work as part of their protest for P.O.W. status. Most have been able to see and respond enthusiastically to pickets outside, because their cells on the top floor of the jail overlooked the gates. (One of these pickets, on International Women's Day last year, was brutally attacked by police—see p. 7).

On Feb 7th several cells were searched and the women attacked by about 40 male screws (imported from Long Kesh). The screws claimed that they had found Republican uniforms in some cells and the governor used these charges as a pretext for moving all the women to a ground floor wing. The intention is to deny these women the growing outside support in solidarity with their struggle. All Republican Prisoners suffer extreme hardship and isolation—it is very important for them to hear of solidarity actions on their behalf. We can all take up their struggle 365 days of the year.

On International Women's Day there are events where women will show their solidarity (details of some on p. 3) But it is for all socialists to join in the fight of our Irish comrades, especially in 1980 when Ireland is on the agenda; we must build support for a just end to the war.

...more Armagh News on p. 3...

brother goose

"HE WANTS TO KNOW THE ANSWER"

AT LAST, A SCAB IS FOUND...

15 FOUND...

DESPERATE MAN!

What's wrong, pal?

MY EDITOR WANTS ME TO FIND A STEELWORKER WHO DOESN'T WANT TO STRIKE...

AND I CAN'T!!

WHAT'S GOING ON???

MY EDITOR SAID: FINE! AND I CAN'T OPPOSITION...

WHAT'S WRONG NOW? THIS IS THE STORY OF THE MONTH!

YOU SEE - JOURNALISTS, AS A SHOW BOTH HAVE TO MAINTAIN A BALANCED VIEW AND PAY OFF MY MORTGAGE

BUT WHEN I'M IN CHARGE, MY THINGS WILL IMPROVE...

YOU SEE - AS THE EDITOR MUST PAY OFF MY MORTGAGE AND SCHOOL CHILDREN'S FEES - THIS MAINTAINS NEWSPAPER'S INDEPENDENCE...

EDITOR!!!

OH... THE ADVERTISERS... SHAREHOLDERS... GOVERNMENT... POLICE... INDUSTRY...

people! what people?

SO YOU OWN THE PAPER...

YES... AMONG OTHER THINGS! SHOPS HOTELS SHOPS

YOU SEE - AS OWNER, I WANT TO MAKE MONEY! SO I WANT THE PEOPLE

A SHOCK FOR OUR READERS

A mechanical breakdown has set us back very badly this month—as regular readers will have noted. Much of the paper has been set on an ordinary typewriter and we have been forced to cut back to 8 pages to meet printers' deadlines. We expect to return to our normal format next month.

All this has highlighted a long-running, deep-seated problem common to British industry. We are undercapitalised! We need more cash. We need better equipment. We plan to improve the newspaper with more investigative reporting and broader coverage, but none of this is possible without your help. SEE FUND DRIVE, p. 7