

# Big Flame

15p  
for Socialism

Paper of the revolutionary socialist organisation- Big Flame  
No. 83 February 1980

THE CUTS- HOW WE CAN FIGHT THEM  
4 pages inside this issue  
The Cuts can be fought—but we need a completely new approach.

*"As a trade unionist I see Denning's decision (barring the ISTC from mobilizing its members in the private steel-works) as a fierce and unjustified interference by a senile ruling class geriatric into the affairs of the trade unions. I believe the unions must rally together to respond to the decision. However, many people in the private sector will see the ruling as a decision in their favour. The vast majority of shop floor workers on the private side did not rush to take part in the strike. However, personally, I believe the private side should get involved because BSC wages set a 'norm' for the private sector, because the dispute has become political, and because it will help to start changing the ISTC from a docile to a fighting union. The national executive should stick by its original decision to call the private side out and be prepared to go to prison. If that happens, the trade union movement should call a general strike to get them released and show Lord Denning what a political strike is all about."*

Chairman of shop stewards committee, Osborn's Steel.

## STEELING

# BACK THE POWER!

Nobody likes the Tories' medicine. But nobody's going to take a stand against it. That's how it seemed to a lot of people—until the steel strike.

The most remarkable change of heart has been amongst the steelworkers themselves. In Corby they were facing thousands of redundancies, but the strike could have changed all that: *'People are starting to realise that the closure will fast be a reality unless they do something. When you're all together on strike, you start to*

*feel different, more confident.'* (Mick Skelton, ISTC Coordinator, Corby.)

All over the country, the response to the strike has been tremendous. Strike committees have been set up to bring to movement of steel to a standstill. Hundreds of flying pickets have blockaded the ports and the private steel makers.

Ordinary men and women have been running the strike. With each passing day their confidence has risen. Workers who voted Tory last year stand shoulder to shoulder with socialists. Together they defy Parliament to tell them why steelworkers are offered 2% and thousands of redundancies whilst the policemen on the picket lines get 40% and an inflation proofed pension. And in the face of this united stand, miners, transport workers, and thousands of others have given their support.

Everyone wishes the steelworkers well in their unofficial claim for 20% with no strings. But we hope too that their victory will go further than that.

That they'll smash the Tories' secondary picketing laws before they get off the ground.

That they'll stop the closures that will destroy the jobs and lives of thousands of others too.

That they'll show this Government that the working class isn't down and out.

That they'll show the Tories cash limits for nationalised industry and the public services are only so strong as we are weak.

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

To do all that, the steelworkers need our support:

Money. Contact your area strike committee through the trades' council or contact ISTC HQ, London 01-837-6691.

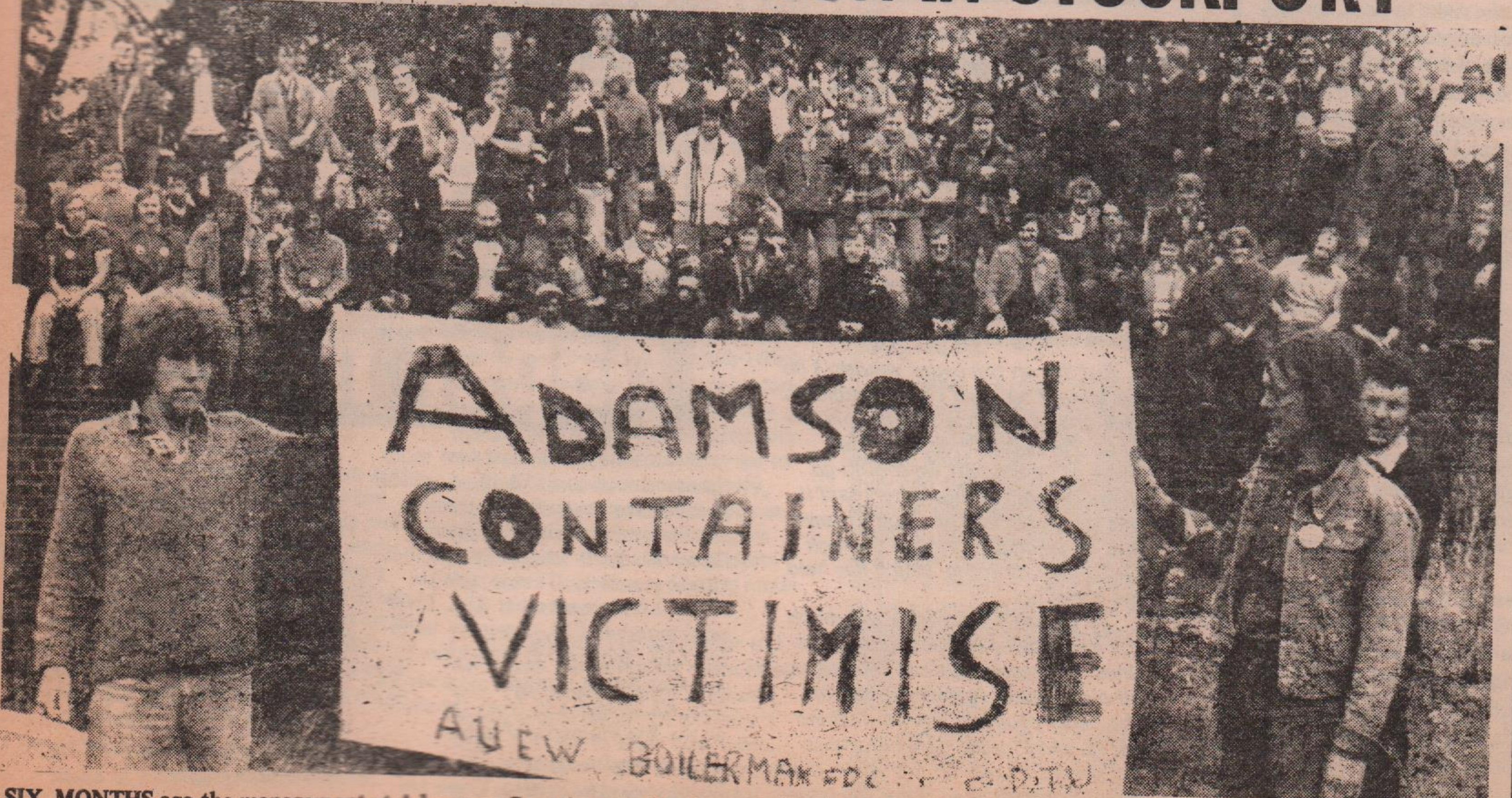
Stop the steel. Keep them informed of any steel movements.

Lay-offs. If your industry is likely to be affected by the steel strike, start organising now for the lay-off. Support the steel workers by demanding 100% lay-off pay. Then, you won't lose out and your boss will be squealing to the Tories to settle the strike.

### STEEL WORKERS AND THE LAW

What is the legal status of picketing? How does an injunction work? How can we defeat the Tories' trade union laws? All this and more in the Big Flame supplement on the employment bill. 5p from 217 Wavertree Road Liverpool 7. Add 9p postage. 25 copies for 70p.

## REDUNDANCY BATTLE WON IN STOCKPORT



SIX MONTHS ago the management at Adamsons Containers in Stockport announced 45 redundancies, including the entire shop stewards committee. The workers there answered by going on strike, their action has led to a complete victory. There will be no redundancies and no victimisations. FULL STORY: PAGE 4.



## Abortion: an Angry Offensive



AS WE approach the final stages of the Campaign to oppose the Corrie Bill, the overriding reaction for many of us involved can only be anger. Anger as women at the way in which our hard-won, limited rights might be legislated away. And anger at the way in which we are constantly being forced onto the defensive. We find ourselves having to respond to events, defending an Act we don't approve of, rather than being able to fight actively for a woman's right to choose and to really work out what that means in its fullest possible sense.

NOW TURN TO PAGE TWO

# Editorial

## On the Box

On *News at Ten* the other night, the newsmakers did themselves proud. Some distortions are standard fare: we expect to see Prince Charles parachuting across the screen for a few minutes before the newscaster speaks to camera, giving the details of a strike in a rapid monotone. We know the news will link a terrorist kidnapping with a story on the I.R.A. But on this occasion they made a special effort.

We began with a preview of Carter's State of the Union message: he'll bring back the draft registration and stand up to the Russians with any means necessary. This is fol-

owed by the Olympics and Sakharov. Then suddenly we are plunged into a documentary on the balance of forces in Europe. We are told that the Russians have so many tanks that in the event of a war, NATO would need to use tactical nuclear weapons. Britain, we see, depends on her Buccaneers, Vulcans, and Harriers. But, our last lines of defence are our four nuclear submarines carrying *Polaris* missiles (and we are treated to a view of a missile erupting!) These missiles, however, are now considered 'outmoded'. 'Experts' say we need new American *Trident* missiles at a mere £5,000 million

(one further eruption). Ministry of Defence officials admit this is rather a lot of money, but insist THIS IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY TO PREVENT A NUCLEAR WAR IN THIS CENTURY. This whole package, lifted off the shelf like the obituary of a politician appearing as if by magic on the day of the death itself, finally ends.

Next, we see refugees fleeing Afghanistan. And finally we have the Underhill report on Trotskyists and the Militant Tendency in the Labour Party. We are alerted to our own internal danger of communist infiltration, undermining the whole fabric of democracy as we know it.

The next day, by coincidence, Minister of Defence Francis Pym told Parliament

that the Government would spend £1,000 million modernizing *Polaris* now, and another £5,000 million on a new system later.

That's what the Afghan crisis is really about—a convenient excuse for the new Cold Warriors to stride forward. Systematically and cynically playing on people's fears of 'the Russians' or 'the communist infiltrators' the newsreaders and the government make it legitimate to buy bombs, bring back the draft, or move intervention forces round the globe.

*Big Flame* does not support the Russian moves into Afghanistan. Nor do we think that entering the Labour Party is the way to break with reformism. But we have to see clearly that the Russians and the Militant Tendency have been turned into myths.



**seeing red**

DID YOU HEAR the one about the film actors taking a bus person's holiday in Mosside? Warren Beatty is directing, Jack Nicholson and Diane Keaton in a film about the life of two people in Russia after the Revolution. They advertise for male extras, 40-45, in the local job centres — but wait for it....No blacks wanted. (If you've missed the joke, Mosside is full of high-rise flats in a strongly black area of Manchester).

**TORY CUTS:** One law for us, another for dogs and police.

Kent County Council are closing nine old people's and children's homes. School meals are going up to 50p by September.

Plus increased annual charges for school transport and 2,300 manual jobs like school cleaners are to go.

But....a private health insurance scheme for top officials costing a £4,700 premium will be exempt from the cuts, along with extra staff for the police... and £2,300 to be spent on breeding alsatians for the police force.

IT'S TIME something was done to stop the deterioration of the postal services. For the second time, a letter addressed to Roger O'Hara, secretary of Merseyside Communist Party, has turned up at the Big Flame Office. If you have any suggestions for improving the mail vetting system, can you send them on a post card to:

Superintendent (Special Branch)  
Merseyside Police,  
Hardman St.,  
Liverpool.

## Fist Fights at Langley

A funny thing happened at Ford Langley a couple of weeks back. It was the occasion of the elections for branch chairman, branch secretary, and branch committee in the TGWU branch covering the plant.

The elections happen once every two years—and this time the Left was standing a complete slate against the right wingers who've dominated the union for the past fifteen years.

An amazing atmosphere built up in the plant as the election campaign got going. It was a clearly political campaign—seen by most line workers (rightly) as a battle between the Ford Workers' Group (the Combine) and self-proclaimed 'moderates' who're seen by many as 'soft on management'.

The election was to be held

between shifts. Normal attendance at a branch meeting is between 30 and 50. To the amazement of everyone, nearly 600 members turned up!

The branch secretary tried to keep out those without 1979 membership cards. Previously he'd found every excuse to avoid giving out cards. Inside were 12 friends of the branch secretary who didn't work at Fords, but who had joined up 4 weeks earlier.

Then the meeting began—450 people packed into a hall that would take 300 at a push! The District Official announced the first election—for branch chairman. And on a show of hands, it was clear the Left had won.

The right went into a huddle. They announced that they weren't happy with the vote—it was

too difficult to count. Instead people would separate into two sides in the room.

And when this happened, it was clear to everyone. The Left had won 2:1 and Brother Bar was the new branch chairman.

The right winger accepted defeat, and his mates went into a huddle. Confusion reigned—as the District Official talked, refusing to announce the result.

Finally he stepped forward and said 'I'm not here to be popular. This election is null and void. We're going to conduct it by ballot.'

There then followed one of the most amazing scenes ever seen at a branch meeting. Chairs smashed. People kicked off the stage—and into the middle of this scene strolled a plod on a push-bike ringing his bell.

Now everyone on the shop floor knows what the 'moderates' mean when they talk of democracy. Heads we win, tails you lose. But it was a victorious defeat!

Ford Langley worker

## ABORTION: ANGRY AND OFFENSIVE

(continued from page 1)

The Third Reading of the Corrie Bill on February 8 will very much affect the future direction of the pro-choice movement. If the bill is passed we will be faced with the task of testing out the new law: determining precedents, finding loopholes, perhaps co-ordinating doctors' refusals to implement it, investigating positive legislation. At the same time we will be faced with the very urgent task of finding ways in which women who will no longer be legally eligible for abortions (if the Corrie Bill is passed, 2/3 of abortions currently performed will no longer be legally available) can be able to obtain them in as safe and supportive a way, whether through self-help or through alternative medical facilities.

### REAL CHOICE

In fighting restrictive legislation, such as the Corrie Bill, we in NAC can be diverted away from achieving an active understanding of a woman's right to choose and how to fight for it. We are forced onto a defensive terrain. Our politics then can become crude and narrowly pro-abortion, as opposed to pro-choice. We can talk little of our right to choose to have children and what real choice we can have without proper childcare facilities, paid maternity/paternity leave, better child benefit, more support for single parents, the right for lesbian women to have custody of their children, better housing, better health care, and much more. And in terms of the right to have children we can underestimate the role of forced sterilisation and dangerous contraceptives such as depo-provera in preventing black and particularly deprived white working class women from exercising the right to become pregnant. Moreover, we can become complacent about the present 1967 Act. Although undoubtedly, that act is a great deal better than the Corrie Bill, it in no way grants women the right to choose. Rather, it is the doctors and the state who decide whether a woman can have an abortion, what method is used, and whether she pays for it or not.

### DICTATING TERMS

In a sense, whatever the result of the vote on the 8th, NAC must go on the offensive. We cannot afford to have the terms dictated to us—we must dictate them ourselves. For the Corrie Bill is not an isolated attack on women, it is part of a whole onslaught. Women are bearing the brunt of the cuts. We are being forced out of employment and back into the home, where our work is even harder, due to inflation and the dismantling of the welfare state, and where we're subjected to coercive ideologies of marriage and maternal deprivation.

Our anger as women must be expressed. Expressed through organising consistently together as a real political force to be reckoned with. And the left must take up the politics of a woman's right to choose as central to a fightback against the Tories, as well as central to the socialist alternative. It will be time after the Third Reading to appraise the Campaign against Corrie and to assess future strategies. The outlook is very bleak if the bill becomes law, and it isn't rosy even if it doesn't. We're the women we've been warned about—our only possibility is outright offensiveness.

Member Brighton NAC and Brighton Big Flame



Ford Langley picket, Oct. 1978

## Deadlines

### Better, but...

Thanks to the many people who responded to our embittered appeal at 3:00 am Monday morning on the January newspaper and made an effort to get their copy in early. Things have gone a lot better this time. Some day we might even finish in time to get in a quick drink before closing time.

But life on the paper wouldn't be the same if we didn't have problems. This time the article we commissioned on Zimbabwe didn't turn up. Some of us thought we should go ahead without it, but others said it was too important an issue to leave out. So we had it phoned through on Sunday morning, which has held the paper up.

So we can't emphasise too much the importance of keeping to deadlines. Late contributions keep us up all night, make it difficult to plan the paper properly and do nothing for its good looks. Late contributors shouldn't rely on inclusion, however important they think the issue is. These are the deadlines for the March paper: Features—14 Feb, News—21 Feb. Ignore them at your own risk.

## subscribe

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

I want more information about Big Flame

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

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

## paper money

Donations for the last two months amounted to £158.45. A special Lenin Star goes to South London Big Flame for raising £45 from a Christmas Party and £16 from individual members. Thanks also to: North London member £10, Liverpool member £25, Coventry member £30, Sheffield sympathiser £1, another North London member £4, S.C. £2.25 and £25 from the raffle at the Big Flame Conference

A subscriber sent us 20p plus two Persil packet vouchers. These are greatly appreciated as they allow members of the Editorial Collective to travel up to Liverpool for the lay-out weekend free. Please rush us

some more before the offer closes on June 30th.

As for standing orders there are two new ones: £1 from D.A. and £5 from R.F., which gives us a grand total of £49.50 per month. Standing orders are by far the best way of helping us bring out the paper. Send them to the Big Flame Newspaper account no. 0008738 at Lloyds Bank, Water St., Liverpool (code no 30-93-11)

What!? STILL BANKING AT LLOYDS (typist)

Thanks to Steve and Ann for cooking for us this month and to others in Liverpool BF for putting

IF SOMEONE HAD said '6 months ago that there would be an all-out strike by steelworkers against the Tory Government's policies—many people would have laughed at them. If they had said that during that strike flying pickets would be organised, demonstrations would be held and that the ISTC would become the most effective and resolute union facing the Tory onslaught—they would have been dismissed as a lunatic.

But that's exactly what has happened. The demonstration in Sheffield on the 21st Jan was a celebration of the re-birth of a union. No more cap in hand, no more conciliation, productivity dealing and selling of jobs. Speaker after speaker spelt out the political nature of the strike and that the Tories had picked on the ISTC

as a 'soft touch'—but they have been rudely awakened. The determination, level of organisation and class conscious militancy of the steelworkers surprised everyone—including themselves. None of the 2000 people in the City Hall, nor the 4000 on the demonstration were in any doubt as to what they wanted or had any qualms about having to go through a bitter fight to get it—20% and a kick in the teeth for Tory policies.

The feeling of unity and strength was impressive. Scargill had everyone on their feet cheering and so too did a delegation of three German steelworkers who expressed solidarity and gave money they had raised in their factories.

However, when Bill Sirs spoke of an 'honourable settlement' the heckling and doubts quickly brought you back to your senses. The fight is an even harder one with a leadership of half-committed moderates such as Sirs.

# STEELING THE TORIES' THUNDER

**BIG FLAME** talks to two women at the Stocksbridge (Yorkshire) Strike HQ who are doing clerical work for the strike, about women's involvement in the strike.

"There's only about ten women doing picketing, a few of us in the strike office, typing picket lists, lorries that have gone through, letters for funds, and the catering staff doing food — mostly sandwiches for the flying pickets. We picketed in the first week and then we came in here. We come in every day, but we're going to Bradford for collecting tomorrow. There's a lot of women on strike who aren't really involved."

They thought this was partly with working full time, some of the women, especially those with kids, wanted to catch up on their work in the house, and partly because women hadn't really been encouraged to get

**We'd like to be where the action is**

involved in the union before, it had seemed to be mainly for the men.

"There's not many women stewards — only where there's a mass of women working. We don't even know who they are — that just shows how involved we are!"

We asked them if they'd been out on flying pickets — they'd been asked to go and they'd thought they'd like to, to be "where the action is",

but had felt a bit hesitant about it, and anyway their husbands hadn't been too keen.

What did the people round there think about the strike?

"Well the majority of people that live round here work in the works so most of them are sympathetic. All everyone's talking about is the strike — you can't get out for a drink without everyone's talking about it. People have been very good — the chip shop sent us down a big bag of potatoes."

Do you get anything from social security?

"We don't get any for the first few weeks — we're supposed to manage on our last wages, but we'd spent that at Christmas! It's worse if husband and wife are both on strike because you can't both claim. ISTC doesn't pay any strike pay, but I suppose if it was really bad you'd get something from the union. All the other unions are paying strike pay."

Finally their comments on BSC management:

"They're pigs — there's too many managers. If we got shut of them, we'd have our pay rise."



Over 2000 steelworkers marching through the snow in Sheffield showing the strength of the steel strike in South Yorkshire.

## Big Flame Interview NOT JUST THE STEELWORKERS' CLAIM -

THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS STANDS TO GAIN FROM A VICTORY

**SOUTH YORKSHIRE** has played a leading role in the steel strike, organising flying pickets from the start and pressing for 20% with no strings. *Big Flame* talked to 2 ISTC branch secretaries in South Yorkshire, active in the strike—Neil, from a staff branch, who is also active in the Rank and File group, *Real Steel News*, which is associated with the Socialist Workers' Party, and Joe from a manual branch.

**NEIL**—an ISTC staff branch secretary from Sheffield.

"There are several reasons for the strike. The Tories did a survey of the unions about 2 years ago, The Ridley Report, to see which industries they could handle strikes in most easily. The ISTC came out as one of the weaker targets.

### INCENSED

The latest round of closures and redundancies also means that the ISTC will lose about 1/3 of its members. It's going to reduce Bill Sirs' power on the TUC from having a major say to being quite a small union. I think he decided he had to do something. He realised the union probably couldn't win a strike over redundancies, but they might do so on wages.

The union's very fragmented because of local productivity deals,

but there is a lot of loyalty to the union. In addition, the 2% offer really incensed people.

### PICKETS

The strike committees were very good to start with—especially in South Yorkshire. They separated themselves from the officials—they contained people who were in contact with the rank and file. They made some mistakes, but generally they were much better than we expected. However more recently, there have been problems such as just going picketing for one day at particular firms. Some pickets feel some decisions are being made over their heads.

Bringing the private sector out will make the strike far more effective. The private sector produces nearly a quarter of the country's steel. It's also in their own long-term interests—BSC wages are used as a yardstick for private sector wor-

kers; also there are strong rumours that BSC, or parts of it, are about to be de-nationalised, which will adversely affect private sector workers.

You have to understand that rank and file contact in the industry is weak. For example there's no tradition of a strong Communist Party in steel, with low level officials, like in the AUEW. The Liaison Committee for Constitutional Reform started last year, but was heavily sat on by Bill Sirs and some of the people involved have been victimised. It has not been functioning during the strike.

### TACTICAL

However it's going to be hard to get support for the kind of action planned in South Wales on redundancies. Most people still don't feel they can fight what they see as the logic of the market, and stop redundancies. At the time of Upper Clyde and River Don (1971-2) the crisis wasn't so severe. There still seemed to be an increasing demand for steel. It was easier to organise against closures.

### POLITICAL

Everyone on the picket lines accepts that it's a fight against the Tories—there's no question about that so in that sense it is seen as a politi-

cal strike. But that hasn't been accompanied by people looking for a political alternative—the union structures have so far fulfilled what people wanted. We need to be harder on politics now.

I don't think the Government will intervene directly; they'll operate through ACAS. However, if we do win the 20%, it will still be seen as a big victory for the working class against Tory policies. It's especially significant, as a strike against cash limits, for other public sector workers. It's also going to influence the new Employment Bill. People see that to win the strike, there's got to be consistent flying picketing and they'll get involved in a campaign against the Bill.

### REDUNDANCIES

*Real Steel News* is fairly small but bulletins have been produced in the main areas like South Yorks and South Wales. We organised a national meeting with people from several areas. It involved members of the SWP and non-members. In Sheffield we've concentrated on more tactical questions and detailed information on what's happening. We want to come out of the strike with some kind of national rank and file organisation involving different groups and individuals, not just the SWP.

### COMMUNITIES

One thing that hasn't been done much is propaganda in the communities. It's difficult in a place like Rotherham because many workers and their families live a long way from the strike headquarters. But I don't think the strike committee sees it yet as a problem. They could call a meeting of women strikers and male strikers' wives.

I'm also a bit worried about support from other unions. I think left-wingers in all unions are feeling more isolated now and nervous about offering solidarity than they were before 1975."

**JOE**—an ISTC branch secretary from South Yorks.

"They're closing viable places down. Consett a prime example. I think the wage claim should be linked to closures and in no way should we return from strike until this closures and redundancies are put to one side.

### GENERAL STRIKE

I can see this developing into a general strike because now it's not just a steelworker's claim for a percentage increase. It's been turned by this government into a political struggle and if the steelworkers go down, we'll all go down. Other unions are starting to realise this and we're getting their support.

BSC calculated this strike. They knew it was going to take place—but they didn't expect the reaction they got. They underestimated the steelworkers.

### DEMOCRACY

After the Strike? One thing we want to do is democratise the union. But it will be a long hard grind, because of the way the hierarchy of the union is set up and the rule book. For example, to remove a person from high office requires a national ballot and then a 2/3 majority in that ballot. To try and organise something like that from the grassroots is virtually impossible—so it has got to be done by other methods—such as election of members onto the Executive Committee. And that is what we shall do."



# CHIX - Gummmed Up

NINETY SIX workers at the Chix bubble gum factory in Slough have been on strike since early October. They are demanding the recognition of their union, the G.M.W.U. The majority of those on strike are Asian women and until the strike, made up 95% of the workforce at Chix. The remaining 5%, who are still scabbing, are mainly white supervisory staff.

## HARD

"It's boring, hard and dirty work, but I don't want to change my job" says Mrs Brar, who joined the union about four months before the strike.

It is essential that Mrs Brar works, she has five kids and her husband is on social security.

"Men get more wages because they are considered to be responsible for families" she says... "Women are responsible too. I work as hard as a man, but I don't get wages as good as a man."

## SICK

A woman who began working at Chix last February started getting other workers into the G.M.W.U. because pay and conditions were so awful. Most of the workers were getting 95p an hour whereas the scabs have been getting £2.50.

They had to put up with racist abuse from the supervisors, short tea breaks, dirty toilets and generally nasty conditions. Chix does not provide sick pay or even a sick room and there is no pension scheme.

## PICKET

Mr Rose, part owner and managing director of Chix refused to recognise the union or meet officials. So the workers walked out. They have been on strike ever since. Jeremy McMullen, the GMWU regional official has been to see Mr Rose who has said he is quite prepared to take back some

of the workers, but not those in the union!

The women have picketed the factory gates every day since the strike began in October. They have asked for outside support on one day a week only realising that a lot of people can't get there every day. On Jan 16th a "Mass Demonstration" was called for by the strike committee and GMWU officials. About 400 people turned up including Jayaben Desai, Jack Dromey and Joan Lester M.P. This was good for publicity purposes but the scabs still got into work and one picket was arrested.

Supplies of sugar and starch are a big problem because of some non-unionised depots. Production has been drastically reduced but Rose is holding out. The women on strike are very strong and determined to win, but more support is needed. The G.M.W.U. nationally is obviously finding this a bit of an embarrassment, but regional and district officials seem more determined not to let this one be lost like Grunwicks.

Join the picket on Wednesdays from 6.30 am onwards, CHIX Fargham Rd., Slough. (Slough exit off M4, right at roundabout, then straight on). Or send money and messages of support to Chix Strike Committee, c/o M. Anwar 271 Goodman Park, Slough.

# Meccano: Special Case?

When Meccano decided to close down their Liverpool factory, they gave just 40 minutes notice of 900 redundancies, instead of the legal 90 days. Now the management are trying to justify this practice by claiming that they would have suffered losses by giving the usual 90 day notice.

Under the Employment Protection Act a firm can claim special circumstances and obtain exemption from the usual notice period. In the case of Meccano, the 'special' circumstances are the losses that would be incurred by working for 90 days with a workforce which knows it will be on the dole in a few weeks. Meccano say that such workers will not work very hard, and so the company will lose money.

If these circumstances are 'special' and are good enough to gain exemp-

tion from the legal requirements, what other company won't claim the same? Meccano's plans have gone badly wrong because of the occupation of the plant, but already other employers have been making enquiries about how to avoid giving the 90 days notice. If Meccano or any other firm can get away with this, the law will have been changed without any discussion and employers will have one more piece of help from the Tories.

When factories close the left are usually to be heard calling for occupations and a fight for the right to work. Well, the workers at Meccano did just that, but their problems are by no means over. Nationalisation is hardly a realistic option with the Tories in power, and an attempt to get the council to take it over has already been stopped by the Tories and Liberals in Liverpool. This leaves a workers' cooperative or a sale

to another company as the only options.

The Meccano workers are in a stronger position than most, since the firm has invested in some new machinery and still wants to produce Meccano and Dinky Toys in other parts of Britain and abroad. The workers stopped the management taking the machinery away and setting up elsewhere, but they cannot convince the parent company, Airfix, to start production again—and many of them would not want Airfix back after the last few months. But so far there have been few potential buyers, and those who have shown an interest seem to be non-union firms. While the workers hold the factory, the management have to try and sort something out, but it is not clear what kind of buyer will step forward. They occupied, they fought for their jobs, but what is the next step?

# KICKING UP THE DUST

WHAT'S WHITE, blue and brown... and deadly? No prizes for getting this one right — asbestos. This stuff has the reputation of reaching the parts other health hazards don't even know about.

A new book, "Asbestos: Killer Dust", published by BSSRS, exposes the grisly realities of asbestos and the distortions and downright lies put about for over 50 years by the asbestos industry, its customers and "friends".

Remember the 1973 Summerland pleasure complex fire on the Isle of Man in which 50 people died? Our old fire protection — asbestos was involved here! Official enquiries indicate that asbestos actually helped the fire.

## KILLER

It may be hard to overcome the habit of a lifetime's faith in the stuff but this book slams home the message that most people who've had contact with it know by heart — it's a killer.

Much of the book is based on case studies drawn from factories and building sites where workers have fought to get rid of the stuff.

One conclusion to be drawn is that you've got few friends when it comes to health and safety in the workplace. Management, factory inspectors and unions have a habit of ignoring such hazards and there can be a sting in the tail. The authors note the case of a GMWU safety rep who was victimised as a result of his 'interest' in asbestos on a site in West London. It's stressed that workers have had to take things into their own hands to gain some control over safety standards. What comes in useful is having a record of these experiences in a clearly readable style. There are loads of brilliant cartoons too.

## DUMPING

Backed up by a pushy advertising campaign, asbestos began its spread during the 1950s, into your council estates, hospitals, schools and public baths. The book manages to link up the presence of asbestos in the workplace with its use in the home and community environment. There are accounts of hospital safety struggles in Leicester, Nottingham and London; the local uproars over asbestos dumping in South London, Kent and Cork and the defiant fight of a group of Glasgow women to get decent compensation. One of their

placards just about sums it up: "For every share certificate there's a death certificate."

This book obviously won't give you all the answers but it does raise again some of the questions that socialists should be asking: just what are 'safe' working conditions? what constitutes a healthy environment? and so on.

Tom Hardy (Big Flame Industrial Commission and North London Branch)

Asbestos, Killer Dust — A Worker/Community Guide: How to Fight the Hazards of Asbestos and Its Substitutes.

Published by BSSRS, 9 Poland St., London W 1. Price: £2.25 inc. p&p or 5 or more: £1.20 (+ £1 p&p per 5)

Orders to Trade Union Bookservice 264 Seven Sisters Rd., London N4.



# Victory at Adamsons

After 6 months on the cobbles, the workers of Adamson's Containers, Stockport, have won a 100% victory over the A.C.R.O.W. empire, including the re-instatement of sacked convenor, John Taylor.

John walked into a jubilant reception at a 'Defend our Unions' meeting in Manchester. "The only remaining problem", he said, "is that the strikers don't want to call off the picketing."

The strike had lasted from 28th August, when management announced 45 redundancies and insisted they would name who was to go. The entire Shop Stewards Committee were top of the list!

Since the dispute started the company has attempted to rig a secret ballot, circulated strikers' wives with a smear letter about John Taylor, and offered him 'wages for life' if he leaves.

## STANDING FIRM TOGETHER

A.C.R.O.W. has lost over three quarters of a million quid in orders, so not surprisingly they came up with an offer—all holiday pay and stamps to be paid, a £150 loan to all employees, a new industrial relations officer and a non-victimisation agreement. The sting is these proposals was that John Taylor would have to give up his union activity and accept transference to another factory, and no workers would be allowed to sell political papers in the Stockport plant. Refusal of the offer meant the plant would close.

The Adamson's strikers threw this out by 3 to 1 at a mass meeting and waited for management's reaction. John and a full-time boiler-makers' official were summoned to meet management in London, where

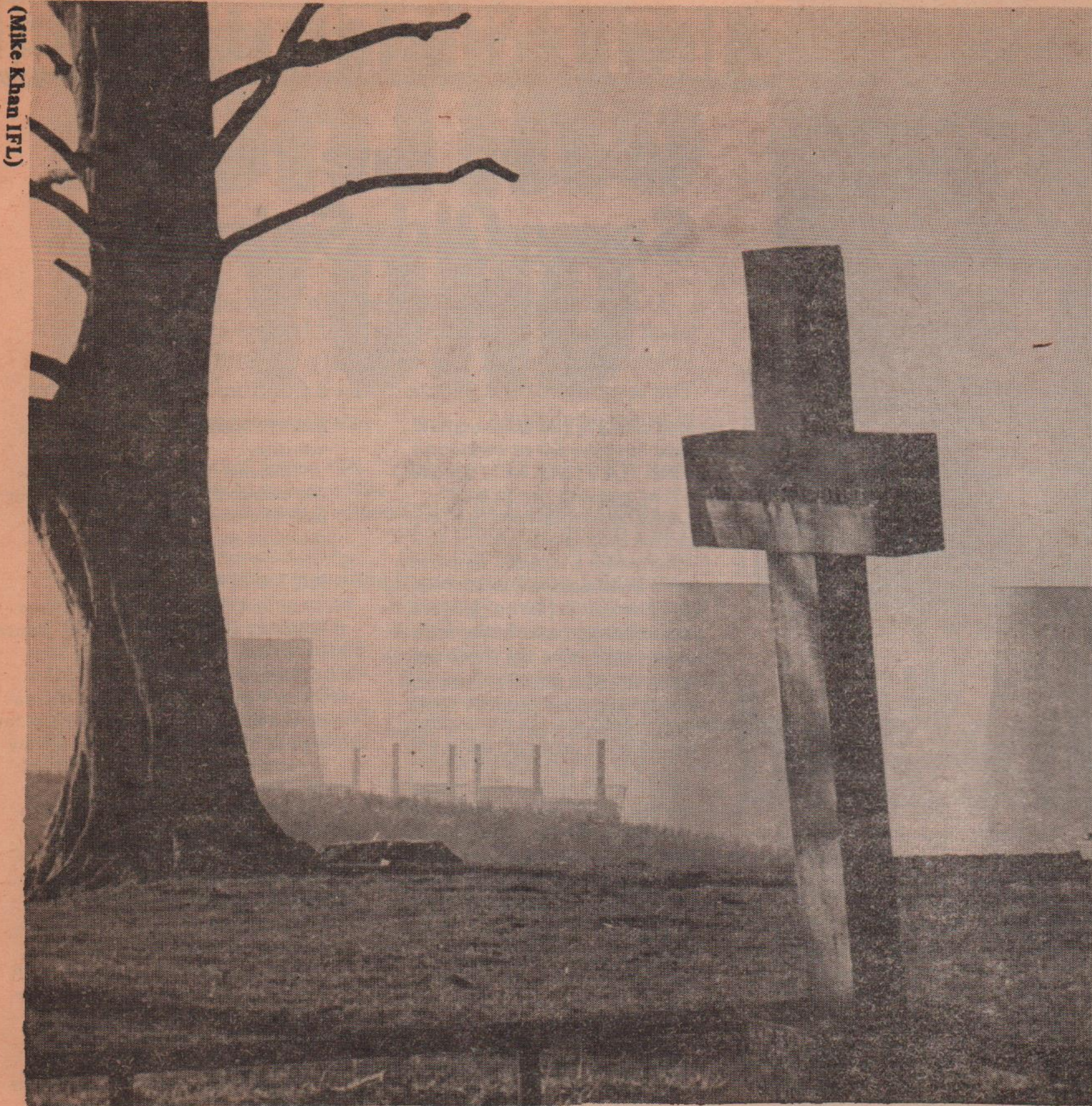
they were told 'Accept the offer or we close down'. John said 'No' and left the room for five minutes. He was asked back in and told 'O.K. we give in, you've won'.

## LESSONS FOR US ALL

Most workers would, unfortunately, have accepted management's offer: the stick and carrot typical of Capitalists using unemployment to re-structure production around a weakened organisation on the shop floor, but the Adamson's strikers have made a stand. They knew that their stewards were being victimised for their attempts to set up a Combine Committee, and the development of the dispute showed how vital this was: they got no support at all from other workers in the A.C.R.O.W. group; everywhere they went it was the same old story—'When we were out, no bugger showed solidarity.' That is the legacy of sectionalism; some group of workers somewhere has to break that tradition by showing solidarity with those who have previously refused it to them. Otherwise there will be more Derek Robinsons.

Adamsons workers showed that solidarity is the way to win—Gardeners, Masseys, Tameside Trades Council and other organised trade unionists kept them going with donations and help on the picket line. Manchester students gave a big hand, too.

With any luck other workers in the A.C.R.O.W. group will see that unity works, and help Adamson's workers build that Combine Committee. There is a lot about trade unionism worth defending and we can succeed provided we show other workers that we are against narrow self-interest.



(Mike Khan IFL)

The story of the extraction of uranium ore from the Rossing mine in Namibia is sordid enough. (The 2000 African miners there are surrounded by 700 police). Now comes the news that British Nuclear Fuel's Capenhurst plant is to go over to military applications.

In previous editions (Aug '78 and Jan '79), we have revealed Britain's vested interest in the illegal mining of uranium in Namibia. 40% of Britain's needs are supplied from the Rossing open cast mine, in defiance of the UN decree which bans all mi-

ning by foreign companies until S. Africa ends the occupation of Namibia. The foreign company with a big interest in Rossing is Rio Tinto Zinc, whose board of directors included Lord Carrington until he became Foreign Secretary.

...AND ANOTHER STORY ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' COOPERATION.

## European Link-up Under Attack

ON FRIDAY JANUARY 11th, Ford Denmark sacked 7 workers in their spare parts depot which sends parts to Ford garages all over Scandinavia.

It wasn't a random sacking. All were militants. And one was MOGENS HEGELUND who had played a leading role in setting up the first shop floor organisation linking Ford workers throughout Europe, the Ford European Workers' Combine

The sackings—on the excuse of 'rationalisations'—are seen as a direct attack on the Ford European Workers' Combine. The shop stewards and safety rep's committee at Ford Denmark (which employs only 300 workers) were the hosts for the founding conference of the Combine in Copenhagen last October.

### COMBINE

Following that conference, Ford management broke off relations with the shop stewards' committee—accusing them of founding an organisation 'dedicated to the destruction of the Ford Motor Company.'

The sackings in Denmark come only four days after a meeting in Amsterdam of the secretariat of the Ford European Workers' Combine—a very successful meeting which saw the Combine extended to every country in Europe where there's a Ford plant with the exception of Belgium and Ireland.

Ford clearly see even these early steps towards European co-ordination of Ford workers as a real threat. That's why they've decided to make Denmark an example—a warning to

the rest of us.

### STRIKE

The response in Denmark has been swift. The whole plant has walked out on indefinite strike. And now they've been joined by workers from all other Ford main dealers in Denmark on a day a week basis. Latest reports say that the morale of the workers is very high

### SUPPORT

Now the process of winning international support in other plants in Europe is underway. Telegrams have been sent to Ford shop stewards' committees all over Europe to ensure that parts are not sent direct to garages in Scandinavia, and to prevent Ford permanently transferring their work abroad.

Money and telegrams of support should be sent to:

Erik Schan  
Offentligvej 71  
2450 SV

Kopenhagen  
Denmark

SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement, which opposes the foreign control of their country's natural resources, is now developing links with the trade unions involved in the uranium process. New revelations (*The Guardian*, 10 Jan.) about the uses of uranium in Britain could well strengthen the trade unions' support for SWAPO.

### CORROSIVE

The ore is hauled to Preston (after flying to France) by a scab firm, Edmundsens of Morecambe, and there it is converted to 'hex', a corrosive poison. Some hex is driven to Capenhurst, Cheshire, where it is separated, by centrifuge, into an active fraction and waste. According to the *Sunday Times* the rest of the hex goes by rail to Russia and some ends up in Iran! In any case, the active (and dangerous) hex in Cheshire is driven back to the Springfields plant in Preston, to make fuel rods for reactors. And so it all ends happily in Britain's safe nuclear power programme, keeping the lights on.

### HUNTER

Or so we were told until the *Guardian* article which gave BNFL's plans to expand the centrifuge plant at Capenhurst. It will be operated for the Ministry of Defence, and it will enrich the hex up to the 90% level (of U235) necessary for making bombs and missile warheads. The M.o.D. claim it's all to provide fuel for 'nuclear hunter-killer and Polaris submarines'. Some consolation. It would also come in handy for the next generation of submarine launched missiles: the American Trident (see p. 2, this issue).

These are the points which will concern Lord Carrington when he comes to make peace in Namibia, after his 'success' in Zimbabwe. It's up to us to support SWAPO, to oppose the expansion of Capenhurst, and to stop the transport of Namibian uranium.

### Contact:

C.A.N.U.C. c/o 188 North Gower St., London NW 1. (They are soon to publish a pamphlet *The Rossing File*)

NWAATU Liaison Committee c/o 59 Tintern Ave., Manchester M20 8ND (they print a trade union bulletin *LINKS*)

# ILLICIT Uranium for Brit Bomb?

## Southall Zindabad SPG Murdabad\*

THE TRIALS of the 347 people arrested on the day of the National Front meeting in Southall, West London on the 23rd April last year are nearly over. No more cases will be heard at the notorious Barnet court. There remain a handful of adjourned cases which will be tried at Ealing Magistrates' Court and 18 people charged with more serious offences who will appear at a Crown Court.

The last few months have produced, thanks to the work of the Southall Defence Committee and the Southall Campaign Committee, a limited measure of success. Unfavourable press coverage has resulted in a drop in the conviction rate. At one time it was 89% compared to a national average of 52% for the offences with which the defendants were charged. Now it is running at around 70%.

Recent magistrates like Bourke and Meier had conviction rates of 43% which is very different from those like Canham (93%) and Cooke (84%) who heard the first cases. They have been much more sceptical about some of the police evidence. At the trial in December of four people arrested at 6 Parkview Road, base of the People's United Cultural Centre, the police evidence was revealed to be extremely confused and badly rehearsed. The magistrate dismissed the case.

The same thing happened at the recent trial of Clarence Baker, manager of Misty, who was in hospital in a critical condition for 10 days after being assaulted by the police. A photograph taken by the *Daily Mail* showed he was wearing different clothes to those described by the police.

Despite this recent shift the conviction rate will still be very high. Already fourteen people have received jail sentences and the figure will certainly rise after the Crown Court cases. All this shows the state's det-

ermination to come down hard on any sign of militancy by black people. However the effect has instead been to increase the determination of Southall's Asian community to resist the growing racism of the British state: its immigration laws, its police, its courts.

The two committees have worked hard to provide legal defences for all those arrested and to publicise the Southall events nationally. They have been hampered by the decision for unexplained 'administrative reasons' to move the trials to Barnet, more than twenty miles from Southall. They have not been helped by the local paper the *Southall Gazette* which has ignored the trials. Apparently because it could not afford the cost of sending a reporter to Barnet for all the cases, it hasn't covered any of them. But this excuse does not explain their lack of coverage of local action.

The defence work is not over yet, it is estimated that as much as £100,000 will be needed to cover fines and defence costs. How about making a collection and sending the money to: The Southall Defence Fund 54 High St., Southall, Middlesex.

Member of the BF Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Commission

\*loosely translated from Hindi and Punjabi this chant heard at the pickets outside the courts goes: 'LONG LIVE SOUTHALL, DEATH TO THE SPG!'

## DEAR SPEECH

'If you want to draw a crowd in the shopping precinct remember to use your trumpet.' That is the implication of Ashton magistrate's verdict in a case involving two local anti-racists.

Dave Hallsworth and John Tummon have been fined £422 between them for the 'crime' of holding a public meeting in opposition to the detention of Gias Uddin, a Bangladeshi lad from nearby Mossley who has since been deported.

There is no doubt that the two were arrested for speaking out against state harassment of black people under the Immigration Act—the police said in court that they felt insulted by these 'allegations', and worried that the meeting would lead to trouble with drunken racists coming out of the pubs. Hence the charge of breach of the peace!

The magistrates accepted that the simple act of holding a meeting constitutes obstruction, and ignored the defence argument that the same could be said of Brass bands who play in the precinct.

'This verdict has disturbing implications for all anti-racists', John

Tummon told Big Flame. 'It effectively prevents us from holding any open meetings in the precinct or market; if we succeed in drawing a crowd, we will be charged with obstruction, and if we speak out against racism we will be 'provoking trouble with racists', and charged accordingly. If they can get away with this in Ashton, where we have a long tradition of holding outside meetings, they can do it anywhere.'

### FIGHTING BACK

'We want support for our demonstration on February 23rd. We are starting from West End Park, opposite the courts, on Manchester Road, at 1 o'clock, and marching to the Town Hall, where we will present a demand for a permanent speakers' corner in either the market grounds or the shopping precinct. We are marching against state harassment of black people and trade unionists.'

Rush donations to Bert Ellicott, Treasurer of the defence fund, c/o A.U.E.W. buildings, Margaret St. South, Ashton-under-Lyne.

Make cheques payable to 'Tameside Defence Fund'.

# IRELAND'S FUTURE IRELAND

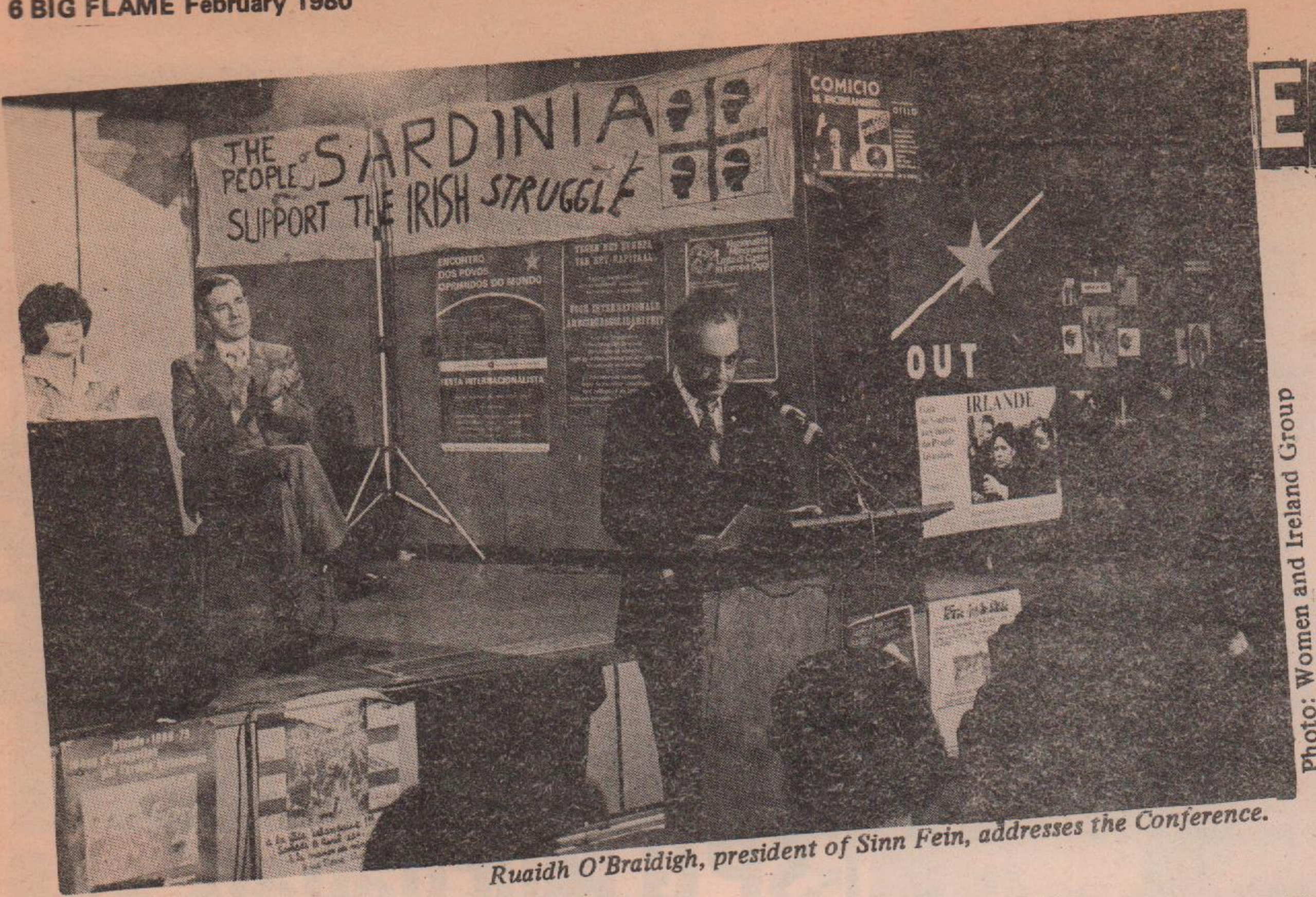


Photo: Women and Ireland Group

Ruaidh O'Braidigh, president of Sinn Fein, addresses the Conference.

## Sinn Fein Conference

# A New Ireland

TEN YEARS after the split in the republican movement, last month's Dublin conference (Ard-Fheis) of Sinn Fein showed clearly that it was the Provisionals rather than the Officials who had inherited the radical tradition from Tone, Lalor and Connolly.

500 delegates from all over Ireland supported the move to add a tenth point, by Connolly, to the nine principles of the republican movement framed by Pearse — SOCIALISM.

"We believe that the present system of society is based upon the robbery of the working class and that capitalist property cannot exist without the plundering of labour, we desire to see capitalism abolished and a democratic system of common or public ownership erected in its stead. This democratic system, which is called socialism, will, we believe, come as a result of the continuous increase of the power of the working class."

### RESISTANCE

It is clear that there is a healthy discussion within the republican movement as regards the re-evaluation and up-dating of their social and economic policies. The Ard-Fheis endorsed the need to build a diversified struggle on many fronts and supported the proposal to create an economic resistance cam-

paign. While some differences may exist, which could be roughly characterised as between the younger urban and older rural members, there is every optimism that these will be resolved as the struggle develops politically.

Emphasising this, Vice-President Gerry Adams said that the British realised there could be no military victory and it was time republicans realised this also, declaring that "... the slogan 'Brits Out' on its own, is not worth one day in Castle-reagh, one day on the blanket, one dead comrade or even one dead British soldier." This position has evolved from ten years of participating in active mass struggle, responsive to the day to day realities of the people, particularly in the ghettos of the north, and it has lessons that we can all learn from.

### PRISONERS

The struggles of the prisoners were discussed with justifiable emotion, and was referred to as attaining a new dimension in the age old history of the Irish struggle. Everyone

was urged to increase their activity around the struggles of the prisoners in the 'H' Blocks, in Armagh and in the prisons in England.

There was also a lively discussion on the position of women, with active participation from many of the women involved in the recently formed women's committee. A policy document is to be produced on women's rights for the next Ard-Fheis. It is also planned to have a youth conference.

### REVOLUTION

The Ard-Fheis was attended by many guests from all over Europe, including representatives from the organisations participating in the joint European platform against the EEC, of which Sinn Fein and Big Flame are signatories. Representatives from Britain were from the Troops Out Movement, Big Flame and the Women and Ireland group. Many solidarity messages from around the world were received, from the victorious Sandinistas in Nicaragua, SWAPO (Namibia), from Eritrea and East Timor. The guest of honour was, undoubtedly, General Otelo de Carvalho, one of the leaders of the April 1974 revolution in Portugal, who received a standing ovation and told the delegates that "... the Irish struggle is the most important struggle at present being waged in Europe, if not in the world."

## Atkins, Fitt, Hume, Paisley - Same Old Solutions

As exciting as a wet Wednesday in Workington. That's the latest round of talks in the north of Ireland aimed at finding a 'solution' to the war that will satisfy the British government. The response of the people of the 6 Counties has been positively underwhelming.

### THE RAVING REVEREND

They've seen it all before. The London government trying to get Loyalist and Irish nationalist politicians together. Such efforts have always failed before because the Loyalists won't give up their privileges in jobs and houses (and local political power) while the Catholics aren't prepared to carry on as second-class citizens in their own country. Especially when the British Army back up the Loyalists. But there is one difference.

Ian Paisley—the raving reverend—has actually turned up at the new conference. In the past he has always refused to consider plans for any new government in Belfast which gave Catholics even the slightest hint of power. But now he is talking to the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Catholic body that always turns up when-

ever the British announce another 'solution'.

It seems that he sniffs the remote chance of becoming Prime Minister in a new Belfast cabinet—if the talks should succeed.

### NOT FITT

In fact, it's amazing how these talks—so unimpressive at first glance—have upset certain Northern Irish politicians looking for cushy jobs. Gerry Fitt of the S.D.L.P. welcomed the talks from the start. (He stood a good chance of a top post if they succeeded). But his own party refused to attend. For too long they had promised the northern Catholics genuine equality in return for jobs. But the British and Loyalists never gave an inch. Fitt wanted to give the British colonial power another chance. The S.D.L.P. didn't. So Fitt—Britain's favourite tame Catholic—resigned. At which point the S.D.L.P. turned round and decided to attend the talks after all, this time led by high-flyer John Hume!

Parties that stab their own voters in the back have to complete some pretty amazing somersaults. The S.D.L.P. is no exception!

### THE GREAT FEAR

Paisley and Hume: the Democratic Unionists and the Catholic S.D.L.P. These apparently opposing people are brought together at the new conference by the great fear they share. Dominating the Irish scene is the staggering success of the IRA's military campaign. The British Army has no military solution. Soldiers and police are being killed in increasing numbers. And the campaign for political status for the prisoners in Long Kesh is attracting broad support throughout Ireland. Paisley fears that the British may—eventually—leave. That would signal the end of the religious discrimination in favour of the Protestant loyalists he leads. So he is busy trying to look 'reasonable'.

The S.D.L.P. fear the same thing. As a party they base their existence on getting a better deal for Catholics while the British are still occupying the area. If the British pulled out—or just carried on ruling from London—the S.D.L.P. would have little to do or say. So once again they are trooping loyally into another round of talks and promising the Catholics that something good will come of it (though few of them can actually explain what!).

### FAILURE

Fear of the Republican uprising brought these talks into existence. But that very uprising may well destroy them. The Loyalists grow frantic for more British military repression as the IRA campaign rolls on. They would follow Paisley—the hardliner—almost anywhere. But how long before the clamour grows for Paisley to pull out of these talks if there is no real improvement in the military situation (there won't be!).

And how long can the S.D.L.P. carry on talking when they have one eye looking over their shoulder at the Catholic community which demands action to end the festering, cess-pit conditions in the H-blocks of Lond Kesh camp?

What do these men fear most? The IRA, or the demands of the people they claim to represent?

As we go to press, the new Ulster talks are still staggering on. The British always insist on the two sides agreeing—with the British state still in occupation. Such arrangements have always failed. They always



Rita O'Hare told the Sinn Fein conference: "Attitudes (to women) are changing fast in society, they are not changing fast enough in the movement."

Photo: Women and Ireland Group

# BRITISH WOMEN SUPPORT ARMAGH SISTERS

IN AN expression of solidarity with women in the north of Ireland, six women from South Yorkshire joined others from all over the country in a trip over the water last month to attend the court case of the Armagh 11 and to make contact with women over there.

The eleven were appearing in court on charges arising out of a picket of Armagh jail on International Women's Day last March. They were picketing against the conditions for women prisoners — 23 hour lock-up, regular beatings, no proper medical care, sanitary facilities only provided at the whim of the screws — and as part of the growing campaign for political status (abolished in 1971).

Big Flame interviewed Ann, one of the women delegates from South Yorkshire

This was your first visit to Ireland, what were your first impressions?

We stayed in a university area of Belfast. It was mixed and had a lot of rented accommodation, it was quiet there. But we went to Andersonstown a lot. This was where some of those on trial came from. The army stayed in big concrete towers, covered with wire netting, with peep holes.

On the day of the H-block march, (police stopped this march on the 1st January before it reached the prison), the city centre was packed out with the army. They were

who looked a bit suspicious to them. The place was completely surrounded.

It amazed me how young the soldiers were, just young kids. We passed one who looked more scared than I was. He had a gun that looked four times bigger than him. We marched behind the Women Against Imperialism banner. When we got to the barricades I clambered up on a wall and saw 20 armoured cars blocking the road. Loads of RUC in bullet proof vests. On the flats there were lots of soldiers and guns and T.V.

### SEARCHED

What happened on the day of the trial?

We went by coach to Armagh. Half of the people were from England. A mile out of Armagh we were stopped by the Army. While they searched the coach and took names and addresses of everybody individually. We got off and sang "The Women's Army" and other songs. They kept us for an hour, it was obvious it was a delaying tactic.

The court was surrounded by R.U.C. and local T.V. cameras. They were really shocked on the gates of the court when they saw how many of us there were. There were 70 observers.

The barristers said it had been adjourned because the prosecuting counsel was ill. We thought it was because of all the support from England that they'd got that they decided to come up with that excuse. It was obvious.

### FARCE

The defending barristers said that because it was such a farce (the women were arrested in March 1979) that the charges should be dropped.

When the magistrate walked

defendants sat there singing and refused to move. Later we marched to the jail, followed by the RUC and the army plus the cameras and the Special Branch who stuck out like sore thumbs. The women inside broke the windows and waved hankies out of the cell windows.

The sang "shoot, shoot, the bastards". We didn't sing it because the women had got arrested for it, so we hummed it.

What plans has the Women Against Imperialism group got for the future?

Afterwards it was suggested that we have a big march on international women's day (March 8th) in Armagh. There seemed to be a lot of support for this.

What type of women are in the Women Against Imperialism group?

Ordinary working class women, a lot were single parents, a couple had husbands inside the H-blocks.

Provision was made for their kids just in case the women got imprisoned. The kids knew exactly who was going to stay with who. There were really well informed, they weren't bothered just really proud of their

# FIGHTING THE CUTS AND BEYOND

The government has forecast that in 1980

- \* living standards will fall by 15%
- \* inflation will rise to at least 17½%
- \* unemployment will reach 2 million.

At the head of this strategy for boosting the profits of big business is the wholesale destruction of services vital to the lives of working people. The basis for cuts in public spending was organised by the Callaghan government and the Tories are now cashing in on the "success" of Labour's attacks on the working class.

Although *Big Flame* has always recognised the importance of fighting the cuts, we also recognise that these policies will not be defeated with slogans and defensive actions. We must be fighting to rebuild the

Welfare State but in a way that is responsive to the needs of working people.

Much of our coverage in the last year has been concerned with publicising struggles around cuts and closures. There is a lot we can all learn from the experience of others in struggle and just knowing that other people are fighting for the same ends is a great boost to confidence. However, we cannot always make sense of these experiences without debate and discussion about the issues involved. Starting this month we hope to fill the gap by launching a debate on the cuts and the welfare state. We would welcome replies to any of the articles in this issue and hope that further topics will be raised for discussion in the coming months.

## Explaining the Cuts

EVERY ISSUE of *Big Flame* contains reports of cuts in particular sectors of public expenditure or in particular parts of the country and the struggles being fought against them. But just why does the Tory government, and the previous Labour government before it, cut public expenditure? Feargal O'Hanlon examines recent Marxist debates about the nature of the state, the crisis and the cuts, and explains why he thinks it is vital for socialists to have a proper understanding of them.

### TWO POSITIONS

There have been two major positions which attempt to explain the cuts. One can be called a 'class theory' approach and the other a 'capital theory' approach. The 'class theory' approach attributes the crisis to the successful struggle for higher wages by the working class which has eaten into the profits made by capitalists. The state is simply seen either as an instrument which represents the interests of the capitalist class or as an arena in which the struggle between capitalism and the working class is fought out. Cuts by the state, then, are part of the distributional struggle between capital and labour, in which the 'social wage' (that part of the wage made up of benefits and services provided by the state) is reduced.

The 'capital theory' approach sees crises as fundamental to the nature of capitalism. Individual capitalists aim to increase the quantity of surplus value extracted from their workers (that is the difference between what they produce and what they are paid) by replacing some of them with new advanced technology. Once their competitors have caught up by also using the new technology, there will be a drop in the average rate of profit in the industry because of the high cost of introducing it.

Marx called this process the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. The 'capital theory' approach regards crises as simple expressions of this tendency. The actions of the state are reduced to responses to the needs of the process of capital accumulation. According to this approach all public expenditure has the effect of reducing the amount of surplus value available to capitalists, because all labour by public sector workers, with a few exceptions, is 'unproductive'. Calling them unproductive means they do not produce surplus value, because

they do not produce commodities sold on the market. Therefore cuts in public expenditure are attempts to restore profitability by removing this drain on surplus value.

### INADEQUATE

Both these approaches are inadequate. The former neglects the importance of production for a focus on distribution and cannot explain changes in expenditure in other areas apart from welfare services.

The latter slips into functionalism, tends to ignore class struggle and limits its analysis of public expenditure to the distribution between productive and unproductive labour. Unproductive expenditure may help to secure the conditions for capital accumulation by keeping the labour force healthy and adequately housed and thus, in the long term, contribute to increases in the amount of surplus value.

There is another alternative approach. This emphasises the importance of examining the form of social relations between people. In a

capitalist society social relations are based on class. They are relations of exploitation and domination, arising from the fact that some people survive because they sell their labour power and others because they own capital. The capitalist state reproduces and reinforces these relations. When we receive benefits and services from the state the way they are provided confirms its control and regulation over our lives. These benefits are presented as individual rights in a way which obscures the fact that they were invariably won through collective class power.

### CRISES

Crises are periods in which the old pattern of social relations can no longer be successfully maintained. Some of the more inefficient capitalist enterprises collapse, exploitation is intensified and great efforts are made to secure a new acceptance of the present order of society. Cuts should be seen in this context. Reductions in the quantity of public spending are only the most visible manifestations of a much wider process of reorganisation or restructuring of state activity and apparatuses. There may be changes in the aims of expenditure in a particular sector, changes in the management system in a particular apparatus or the introduction of new types of expenditure or apparatuses.

Just how restructuring can create more favourable conditions for capital accumulation by reimposing capitalist forms on social relations becomes clearer if we take some examples. Local authority spending has come more under the control of central government both generally through the Rate Support Grant and in particular sectors through things like the Housing

teachers' curriculum similarly controlled. Regional aid has been made more discriminatory for specified projects only and there have been calls for education to be more geared to the needs of industry. There are returns to private provision of services with the dropping of direct labour departments and the extension of private medicine. The principle of making charges has been introduced for prescriptions. Attempts are being made to make the public sector resemble industry by introducing corporate management techniques and where possible bringing in a notion of productivity for workers. All these changes show how necessary it is to look not only at the level of state spending but also at what the money is being spent on.

### KEYNESIANISM

Capitalism recovered from its severe crisis of the 1920s and 30s through Keynesian management of the economy which involved a much increased role for the state in securing economic growth. Trade union leaders were now consulted in state planning and the whole working class gained through real improvements in wages. Since the 1960s and the onset of the crisis Keynesianism has been gradually modified. There has been little scope for material concessions and the trade union leadership has been increasingly relied on to discipline the working class as with the Social Contract.

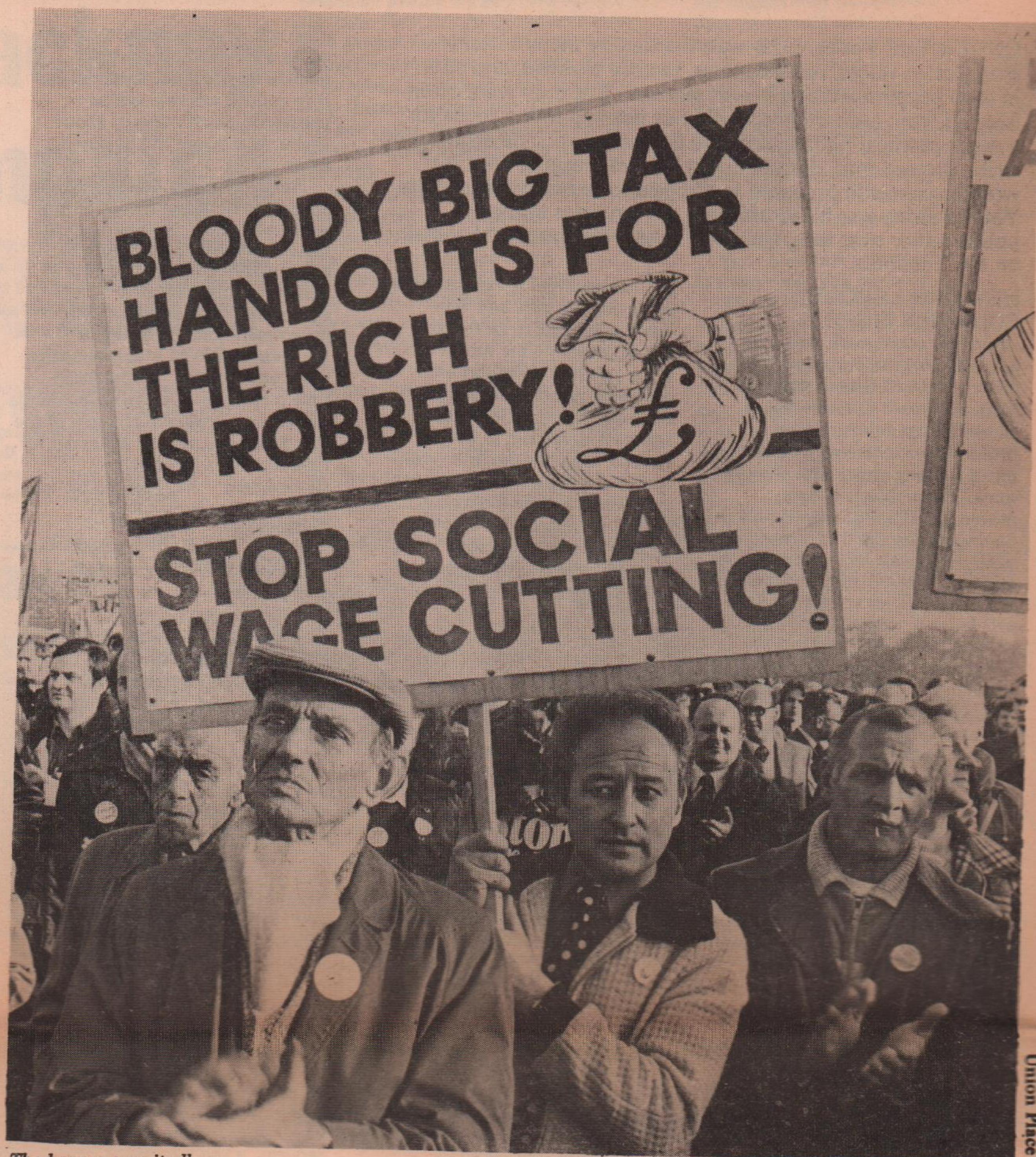
There has been no return to the stability of the boom of the 1950s and many capitalists call for the abandonment of Keynesianism. They support monetarism which attributes crises and inflation to the state allowing the money supply to increase faster than output. The

because of high public expenditure, it is argued. If state spending is cut then workers pressing for large wage rises will face the threat of bankruptcy of their firm and unemployment. So far the Tory government has introduced a watered-down, pragmatic form of monetarism and it seems unlikely that it would risk the widespread disruption of the economy and likely working class response that the full implementation of monetarism would bring.

### THE LEFT

It is very important for socialists to understand what has been happening if they are to struggle effectively against capitalist restructuring. There are two lines of argument against the cuts which fail to face their real nature. Firstly, there is the approach of the Labour Left supporters of the Alternative Economic Strategy, who concentrate their attention on finding faults with the government's arguments for cuts. In doing so they find themselves on the same terrain of capitalist rationality, arguing whether or not the cuts will restore profitability. They end up claiming to know better what is in capitalism's interest than the capitalists themselves.

Secondly, there is the approach of most of the left which wants to fight the cuts in a simple defensive way. However, most people feel very ambiguous about present state benefits and services because of the oppressive capitalist social relations bound up in them. Calls to defend them are likely to have a poor response. It is not just a question of quantitative levels, but of what is provided. A vital part of the campaign of socialists against the cuts must be to raise questions of alternative forms of state provision which



The banner says it all

HEALTH CUTS HOUSING CUTS EDUCATION CUTS SOCIAL SERVICES CUTS PENS

# FIGHTING CUTS : CAN LABOUR LEAD ?

UNDER THE Tories, 1979 was marked by many bitter struggles on wages, redundancies, factory closures, and cuts in local government and health services. But they were often isolated from each other and did not develop into a focus for a wider political fight against the Government. The engineering strike showed that, despite union leaders dragging their feet, workers were still prepared to struggle for a real wage increase. Yet the strike was hived-off from the struggles in the public sector over cuts, and the Tories were content to remain on the sidelines.

## HOW CAN LABOUR COUNCILS FIGHT?

May 1980 could mark the beginnings of the Tories' political crisis — but will Labour councils fudge the issue? Debates raging within the Labour Party and between councillors who think that this is a strong possibility. And some Labour Councils have proved this already. Manchester has made a 1% cut this financial year. Harringey, in London, has made a 2%, but is still £5million in the red. Other councils have avoided cuts this year by drawing on surpluses. The unevenness in the different situations of councils, starting from different financial bases, different demands on their budgets, and different rate income, creates the danger of an uneven response to cuts, compounded by differences between right and left Labour. Some Councils could be dangerously isolated if they refuse to implement.

The possibility of the cities being dominated by Labour councils elected on an anti-cuts platform, could provide the focus for the anti-cuts campaign to find the escalating political power and momentum to take the initiative, in a national way, and push the Tories onto the defensive. Of course, these Labour Councils will never defeat (or even fight) the Tories on their own. Mass action in the unions, hospitals

and communities is indispensable in forcing the pace and highlighting the cuts to be fought — and in providing the support to those Labour councillors who genuinely refuse to implement the cuts. It will be less easy for them to retreat, as 99% of Labour Councils did in the fight against the Housing Finance Act in 1972. This time the whole budget of a Council is involved, and a much broader range of organisations and working class people are affected and involved.

## TACTICAL CUTS?

Councils, even left Labour ones, can find various ways of avoiding an out and out confrontation with Government, since they are enmeshed in day-to-day financial and institutional contact with the central state.

In Lambeth, Knight, the Labour leader originally advocated "tactical cuts" to "give ourselves a breathing space", in which time a "campaign could be mounted to meet the Tory offensive." Other Labour councillors have advocated "deficit financing" — borrowing and borrowing to make up for spending not covered by income from central government, rates or charges for services — again with the aim of getting a breathing space for an anti-cuts campaign. But once the Council have announced its

intention of going bankrupt, banks and government would quickly stop lending their money. And council workers will be uneasy (to put it mildly!) about where their wages will be coming from.

Refusing to pay interest charges advocated by many on the Left could never be a "breathing-space" tactic. Councils would grind to a halt within a week. It could only be used as part of a spectacular confrontation with government and the banks, as the culmination of a long campaign using other tactics. In the meantime it remains a (useful) propaganda demand, pointing out the role of the City financiers, and an argument for future policies of a Labour Government — nationalised banks, able to make cheap loans to Councils.

## NO RATE INCREASES?

The biggest debate on the Labour Left has centred on the role of rate increases as an alternative to cutting services. Are they a tactical question, used to gain "breathing space", or as the only alternative to cuts or going bankrupt?

There is a danger that in a vacuum and from the sidelines, the demand "no cuts, no rate rises", is meaningless — unless Labour Councils that adopt this policy are backed up by an organised campaign capable of spelling-out the political implications and preparing those affected for its consequences. In a city where such a militant council and campaign does not exist, not to put up the rates equals cutting jobs and services. Rates have been increased in the past to account for inflation, and as part of a battle with Tory councillors for increased services. Even Clay Cross



The defiant ex-councillors of Clay Cross rally behind their banner after one of the cou

Council, who defied the Tories in 1972 over the Housing Finance Act, raised their rates to pay their workers over the wage limits and take on extra staff.

And anyway, the Tories are not going to allow rate increases of up to 70% without some counter-attack, which may produce a confrontation eventually.

## BROAD CAMPAIGN NEEDED

A council confrontation with the Tories cannot succeed, and will not take place, unless it is part of a general community and union campaign, and unless the Council seeks maximum support

for its actions and policies. They can do this by spending their money as "usefully" as possible — expanding Direct Labour Organisations, funding Women's Aid and Trade Union and Community Resources Centres, etc., and by involving workers and those in the community in how this money is spent. This has to be linked to independent activity and organisation outside the Council.

This situation would produce a campaign that would eventually force the Council to go "outside the law", despite the decisions of the Labour Party Conference and the line of the Shadow Cabinet. And it could lead,

as so  
Lamb  
resig  
dates  
a cle  
W  
or ca  
a pol  
the a  
the li  
cand  
as a f  
a fo

John  
Bi



Photo: Laurence Sparham (IFL)

## "THE STRENGTH OF OUR CAMPAIGN"

While other campaigns around the country are fighting to keep open their local hospitals, an action group in Hemel Hempstead are continuing their five year fight for a new hospital to serve the Dacorum constituency in the North West of Hertfordshire. Their fight has been built on involving thousands of local people around a promise made 31 years ago.

Hemel Hempstead is a new town, one of the two wings of their present hospital is converted from a work house, the hospital itself was built to serve a population of 40,000; today it is the only hospital in a constituency of 136,000 people.

The Minister of Health, Gerard

Vaughan paid a visit to Hemel on 23 January, he was met by 4,000 demonstrators, many of whom clocked off early on the recommendation of their shop-stewards. "He wouldn't have come if it hadn't been for the strength of our campaign", Julie Smith, secretary of the Dacorum Hemel Action Group told Big Flame.

A sum of £3 million has been increased to £14 million over the life of the campaign, though this is also to finance a hospital for neighboring Saint Albans, the Dacorum Hospital would get £7 million of this as a first instalment for the new hospital. The campaign is worried that this sum is all they will see for ten years, following a recent statement, but

when Julie challenged the minister she was told there would be more to follow, how much more remains to be seen.

January's demonstration was not the first; several large mobilisations since the campaign's start have included a 10,000 strong turn out for a protest to the Area Health Authority. January's 4,000 turn out was nevertheless strong considering Gerard Vaughan chose to visit for a week-day afternoon. The next step for the Action Group is to lobby Parliament on February 27th. They have hired a train and will be marching from Euston station at 2:30pm. All those who can should be urged to show their solidarity and join the march.

# Unit Closed

THE TORY CAMPAIGN against public expenditure not only encourages penny pinching, but is also hostile to progressive, experimental ideas. In Birmingham, one such target is the John Connolly Hospital.

This is a small purpose built psychiatric hospital, opened 15 years ago, with an emphasis on individual psychotherapeutic treatment and special experience in dealing with Asian patients. They have made persistent demands for resources to carry out such treatment and have often won more resources by well-argued points.

The Area Health Authority (AHA) can't cope with a democratic and argumentative unit that refuses to run on a shoestring. They plan to close the hospital to in-patients, and, to give their plans an element of popular appeal, they will turn the hospital, at great expense, into a psychogeriatric day centre.

This is just robbing Peter to pay Paul; the JCH have no objection to such centres, they just don't want them to be opened at their expense!

## OPEN CAMPAIGN

The campaign to save the JCH has aimed for as broad a base as possible. The teamwork at the hospital is good, as the three consultants worked in co-operation with each other, and both patients and staff contributed to the functioning of

the hospital through open meetings. However there is a problem, in that both nursing and ancillary staff are administered from nearby Rubery Hill Hospital. This is an old-fashioned, large institutionalised hospital, which would absorb some of the units from JCH. They have already begun this process by rotating nursing staff, regardless of where they want to work, and victimising those who protest. This blatant disregard for people's skills has had a double edged effect. On the one hand, it has frightened people. On the other hand, it has stung them into anger, since they know that if JCH closes, they will be redeployed in psychogeriatric or community nursing, which are not the areas they have chosen to work in.

## IMMIGRANTS

Much support for the campaign comes from the Indian Workers' Association, because of the sensitive development of work in the immigrant community. There is going to be a picket of the AHA on January 24, when the plans for the JCH will be officially presented, and the campaign is also looking at the organisation needed for a work-in.

Please send all messages of solidarity and support to Maire O'Shea, 93 Solihull Road, Birmingham 11.



IONS CUTS NURSERIES CUTS FIRE CUTS DOLE CUTS HEALTH CUTS HOUSING

Big Flame Interview

Hackney Health Campaign

THE HACKNEY health Campaign was set up in June 1979 to provide a co-ordinated fightback against the continuing threat to health by cuts in the borough.

How was the campaign set up and in retrospect would you have gone about it in a different way?

The start was very formal - certain well known local people were invited to participate in the committee. I think it was far too bureaucratic but over the last few months anyone who wants to be involved can come along.

Is that the best way to start a cuts campaign, given that the cuts are so widespread. Maybe you need to mobilise people on more than just an anti cuts level.

Yes, but remember it's not always easy to connect the NHS and H & S problems, H & S is usually seen as centred around conditions on the job.

did approach local factories about the closure of the casualty dept but often H & S regulations aren't applied in these small places.

How can you link these local things in with a more national

directly affected? - that's the problem.

How do you go about arguing against the cuts? How do you build up people's confidence in starting to talk about the issues?

In Hackney there's not really this problem - people are generally against the cuts. Very few people believe there isn't enough money.

At the moment we're facing a lot of defeats, victories are few and far between. What short-term gains can you see being made especially after the recent events at St Matthew's Hospital Day Care Centre for the Elderly?

At St. Matthews the hospital workers threatened to work in against the closure of the centre and they'd made it clear that, as St. Matthew's provides dinners for the AHA and they provide all the catering for the AHA Xmas function plus the premises - they threatened to cut those things off

Harts Hospitals one of the ways you jump the waiting list is to see a consultant for the first time privately and then carry on through the NHS.

The Labour Party seemed to make a lot of capital out of the cuts march in November. Are the slogans they put forward the ones you would want to see taken up by a lot of people?

The whole slogan of "Fight the Tory Cuts" is totally opportunist and incorrect because Labour started the cuts. It's stupid as most people remember Labour started the cuts and cuts were made under Labour.

How does that affect work in a local area like Hackney?

The Labour Party has got quite a lot of support but in terms of mobilising a lot of people on the ground, for instance, over rent and rate rises, that there shouldn't be rent and rates rises - that question they're not prepared to face up to.



Photo: Chris Davies Report.

hearings councillors, for example, have said, to mass meetings, with Labour candidates for re-election on an anti-cuts platform. Labour Councillors refuse to adopt a policy of non-implementation, anti-cuts campaigns and should consider standing in the May elections for the campaign.

arrington, Liverpool lame.



Photo: Union Place

Would Labour cuts be any better?

context of fighting cuts and what sort of local arrangements can help with this?

It's very difficult to link in locally with national struggles. It's easy to talk about these problems and basically we're fighting the state. But there's no national leadership which is actually doing it as yet and it's hard to see which way round is best.

Would you say that the Campaign should set up workshops inside itself so that people could attend them?

It can do but people are so worn down, we also have to take that kind of thing out to people - onto estates and community centres/workplaces.

How do women's issues relate to the campaign?

In Hackney there's a women's health group which I'm involved in and one thing we were thinking about was to take up aspects of the cuts that specifically affect women.

this year and it had the desired effect - the AHA is not going ahead with the closure.

These sort of ideas about fighting back are what we need, more imaginative than say just striking - they hit the AHA where it hurts.

What do you think the limitations of trade union action are? Where can a campaign like this go beyond the confines of trade union work?

There are limits in terms of sectionalism. At Barts Hospital where they've taken action over non-filling of vacant jobs where invisible cuts do affect patients indirectly but hospital workers tend to see it purely in terms of defending jobs and conditions.

You have to aim to draw people in on certain issues. We can also look to people who haven't been involved - like Social services workers, there's often a direct link between cuts in the social services and health.

You can also talk about the connection between private medicine and the cuts. It's happening fast - Patrick Jenkin has said he'd like to see part of the NHS de-nationalised, for example, minor operations.

people will be concerned if their rates go up. Not just the right-wing residents' groups but the whole working class of a district.

What's the attitude to people who see themselves as independent or don't belong to a party or a group?

They're given very little credibility and in fact they're given zero credibility. If they continue to do it and think of people on the ground in that way, they're not going to get very far.

I think we should use their ideas on co-ordination and the fact that they've produced a newspaper with a mass circulation - we should have some sort of united campaigns against all cuts.

I do think, at the same time, you've got to be able to focus on specific things within that, like health, education, because otherwise certain things can get lost. For instance, what's happening in education - school meals, those specific things which are not necessarily considered key things can get lost and not fought around.



SCHOOL STRIKE

When the ratio of adults to children at Robert Mellors School Nursery approached 1:20 Eileen Crosby decided to work in such hazardous educationally unsound conditions. Notts County Council suspended her.

manding the maintenance of the present number of nursery places but to accept cuts while insisting on current staffing ratios. This strategy reflects a major weakness - DON'T CUT ME: CUT YOU - which is dismaying the parents whose children can no longer attend a nursery.

However, the 16,000 teachers gathered in a protest meeting during the one-day strike were a mighty force to stop the County Council riding roughshod over everybody and it seems likely that the planned 'rotating strike action' will eventually force the Council to re-instate Eileen.

by a Notts BF member

IONS CUTS NURSERIES CUTS FIRE CUTS DOLE CUTS HEALTH CUTS HOUSING

# Working for the State

"In and Against the State" is one of the latest pamphlets aimed at finding a strategy to fight against the crisis of the Welfare State. It's produced by the slightly mysterious sounding London to Edinburgh Weekend Return group of the CSE (Confederation of Socialist Economists). It's a bobby, optimistic pamphlet with a strong desire for theoretical clarity as well as material advance in the class struggle.

Their project is to understand the ways in which the state has penetrated our everyday lives and the way in which it perpetuates capitalist relations between people. Their aim in doing this is to both show the need for a socialist perspective in the fight against the cuts, and also point to ways in which that perspective might be formed. It's an ambitious project and so the pamphlet is not an easy read, although they have kept the language very simple.

## CONTRADICTIONS

The pamphlet is divided into three parts. The first section is a series of interviews with people in different relations to the state — as recipients of welfare, as state employees, as local councillors. They begin this way because of their fundamental belief that strategy in the class war has to begin with people's experience. What they find is that the Welfare State is ambiguous and contradictory. Although it gives material benefits to people, it does so in a way that they don't like. The state imposes certain relations on people, and keeps them isolated from each other, as individuals and as units of the nuclear family.

The second section, the most complex, moves from describing the contradictions of the Welfare State to analysing its structure and what purpose it serves. I can't really do justice to this section in a brief review, but it's a comprehensive historical analysis of the way in which the state has acted as a mechanism of social control. (Now, however, capitalism is in crisis, not just an economic crisis, but a crisis of the entire social structure. In order to make capitalist society profitable again, capitalism has to get the working class to accept new conditions of production, mass redundancies, unemployment. ".....the state has been remarkably effective in maintaining social stability. At the same time, however, this has been at the cost of delaying the restructuring of social relations, which is vital for the future of British capital.")

## OPPOSITION

All of which leads to their final section on new forms of opposition. This section is very good and full of useful examples. Their main conclusion is that "effective socialist opposition to Tory policies must involve helping

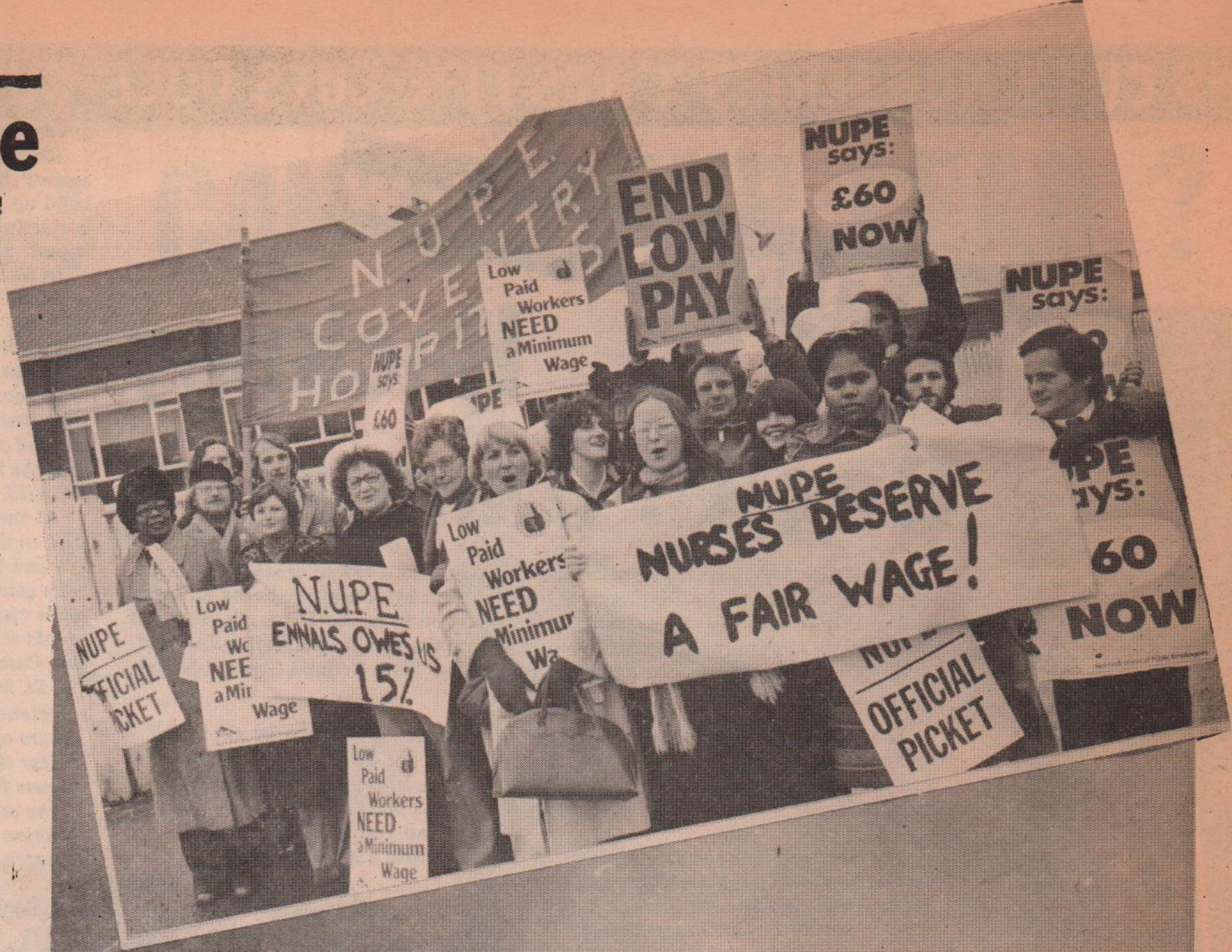
people grasp what socialist forms of organisation might be like."

What is new about this pamphlet is that the authors refer to the struggles of sections of the state that flourished in the '60's and early '70's; that is community workers, law centre workers, community health councils, as well as the larger institutions like hospitals and schools. The basis of their optimism is their belief that class struggle is present in every moment of our lives. If we don't fight back against the divisive relations of capitalism, we are overwhelmed by them.

## UNDER-ESTIMATION

The authors describe from experience the difficulties of organising within the state particularly in terms of the effect this often has on other sections of the working class. But they clearly believe that, with some audacity and imagination, we can build a collective response to the Tory shift from state concession to state repression. However, they emphasise the importance of concrete activity, not just institutional links between different sections of the working-class. They also see as necessary the struggle against privatised family in order to develop a consciousness of working class interests as a whole. I think they under-estimate the work needed to build the political culture in Britain for such a socialist opposition to the Tories, and they have also only made passing references to the contribution of anti-racist struggles. But these criticisms aside, the authors have done some hard graft in producing this pamphlet and it's well worth a read.

"In and Against the State" costs £1.25 from all progressive bookshops or from CSE State Group, Dept. of Politics, 31 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh.



# Nott An Asset

AS THE new Tory Housing Bill threatens to make council housing almost a thing of the past, Nottingham Alternative Publications have produced an important contribution to the struggle for decent housing for all. "Where have all the assets gone?"\* is the best researched pamphlet yet on council housing sales. The authors had to threaten to go to the High Court to make Nottingham's Chief Executive release figures that normally it is the right of every citizen to see.

## INVALUABLE

What will make this pamphlet invaluable to tenants, direct labour workers and others in fighting for council housing, is that it knocks flat on its back the Tory (and Labour) claim that council house sales are of financial benefit to the community. They are not.

## FINANCIAL DISASTER

Tory spokesmen have used Nottingham time and time again as evidence in their arguments. Secretary of State, Heseltine, claimed (19.4.79) that sales produced "a substantial surplus to the community".

He said "selling council houses saves public money. Since 1976 Nottingham's Conservative Council have sold £40 million worth of council houses and made a profit of £18 million over the cost of building them."

The pamphlet shows that this kind of claim is simply untrue. It fails to consider the long term financial aspects of sales and in the long term such sales are a financial

disaster: "Assets" also provides a very useful introduction to the complexities of housing finance.

Further it shows how council house sales are as much a part of the Labour Party's schemes as the Tories'. And that's because owner occupation divides tenant from owner, and owner from owner; part of the decomposition of the working class or what the Tories call "a more stable society."

## NORTH SEA OIL

And what will the government's council house sales plans do? They will cause an ultimate loss of £1,200 million for every 100,000 houses sold. And this is more than Britain's net yearly contribution to the EEC or equivalent to selling off North Sea oil.

While the authors do not pretend that the council house system is flawless they argue that "not a single council house should be sold" since costs are shared through the system of rent pooling and housing needs take priority over ability to

Big Flame urges tenants, direct labour and other groups to invite the authors of this pamphlet to speak at meetings.

Big Flame interviewed Roger and Nigel, two of the authors of *Where have all the Assets Gone?*

BF: Why did you publish "Assets"?

Roger: Simply to nail the financial argument that council house sales are an asset to the community.

BF: What response have you had?

Roger: We've sold out completely and had to reprint. We haven't had the response we would have liked from tenants and community groups yet, Labour Groups, like Birmingham, have been able to use it to weaken any support for council house sales among their own ranks. Nigel: There are several top level reports being written at the moment on the finances of council house sales. Heseltine, Sec State for the Environment, has just published one report—but he has deliberately fiddled the figures to make it seem as though there will be gains until the end of the century. There won't. This is the usual asset-stripper's con-trick. By the 1990's council tenants' will be having to pay more because of sales.

\* Nottingham Alternative Publications, 83 Beauvale Rd., The Meadows, Nottingham. — 50p (add 15p postage) available

# Understanding the State

DESPITE THE frequent references to the cuts by the left there has been until recently very little attempt to analyse what is going on. Things are beginning to change. The CSE 'State Group's' *Struggle Over the State* closely follows Ian Gough's *Political Economy of the Welfare State* and the London-Edinburgh Group's *In and Against the State* (also reviewed here).

The great value of *Struggle over the State* is that it combines theoretical analysis with empirical work on the changes in expenditure in a number of sectors. In particular, I would recommend the chapters on Personal Social Services, Health, Housing and Regional Policy. The method of approach is similar to that of *In and Against the State*, reflecting the overlap and membership between the two groups and the fact that both have been considerably influenced by long standing debates and collaboration within the CSE (Confederation of Socialist Economists).

Like any book there are also problems. There is a division within the CSE State Group between supporters of the Labour Left's *Alternative Economic Strategy* and those who belong to the revolutionary left. Not only does

this mean that there are important differences of approach between some of the sectoral studies, but also the introduction and conclusion tend at times to be very vague and unspecific. Also, while an attempt has been made to make the book accessible to a wider audience, it has not been quite as successful as the authors claim in the preface. Finally, although the political conclusions are fine so far as they go (they argue the need to go beyond defensive struggles, to campaign for socialist alternatives, for collectivity and democracy in all struggles, for creating links between state workers and consumers of state services and so on), what is said is still too abstract to be easily applied.

All in all this book deserves to be widely read. There are no comparable books or pamphlets which combine theoretical discussion with detailed empirical analysis. More work needs to be done to develop the positions outlined in the book further, but it is an extremely useful starting point.

CSE State Group *Struggle over the State: Cuts and Restructuring in Contemporary Britain*. (CSE Books, £2.50). Available from bookshops or CSE Books, 55 Mount Pleasant, London WC1E 6JH.

# Film that tells more LIES ABOUT VIETNAM

TEN YEARS AGO WE WOULD HAVE BEEN PICKETING THIS FILM: BUT NOW...

Like the *Deer Hunter* that preceded it, *Apocalypse Now* is a film about Vietnam, based on a lie. In both films it's the same lie—that the Vietnamese won the war because they were more ruthless, evil and determined than the Yankees

*Apocalypse Now* is a reworking of a theme dear to American literature. It's the theme found in many West-

erns—upright newfrontiersmen going out West to wall-op the Indians. Only in Vietnam the theme turned sour—

the 'Indians' successfully fought back and the U.S. cavalry returned home limbless, doped out of its mind and with not a few neurotic psychopaths.

The film's plot centers around the army's need to get rid of ('Terminate with extreme prejudice' is the double talk used) Kurtz, a U.S. colonel who has reuni-

ted an army of Vietnamese mercenaries and begun a crusade of murder and torture.

The army officers take Kurtz to be mad: but in the film, he is the only one who seems to know how to defeat the Vietnamese. He is the heroic 'loser' hemmed in by the army bureaucrats who stifle his initiative. And who, in the end, will lose the war.

## NASTY

*Apocalypse Now* is a mean and nasty film. More important than what's in it is what isn't in it. For instance, no

mention is made of the fact that Kurtz's mercenaries were Montagnards, a mountain tribe whose yearly crop of heroin was bought by the C.I.A. and sold in the States. In the film, the Vietnamese seem to be in Vietnam by accident—in fact it is their country. And they won the war not because they were more brutal than the Yankees (they weren't) but because they fought a people's war which involved at all levels total commitment from the great majority of Vietnamese men and women.

If *Apocalypse Now* had been released ten years ago, we would have been able to picket and leaflet its showings. But now, the left has other priorities and, in any case, many of us have been troubled by the recent Vietnamese acts of aggression in Cambodia. It is important to remember that if the country had not been so totally destroyed by the U.S. war machine (cluster bombs dropped by the Americans are still going off today and defoliants make large tracts of land uncultivable), the Vietnamese government would not have become so dependant on the Soviet Union. Perhaps, all we can do is to tell as many people as possible that the Vietnam of *Apocalypse Now* never existed. As an 'anti-war' film that ends up glorifying war, *Apocalypse Now* is a big hype.

(quotes and visuals from an article in *Mother Jones* by Deidre English called 'Coppola's Politics'.)



Lennart Malmer/Ingela Renner Photo



Above: in Hanoi, a "one-person bomb shelter." Inset: from the film, helicopter is emblazoned "Death From Above."

## ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS Muzorewa -Nkomo Axis?

From the moment of his arrival, Lord Soames, Britain's temporary Governor in Zimbabwe, set about tearing up the myth of Britain's neutral role in the peace settlement. The delay in ending martial law and restrictions on Patriotic Front electioneering were just the beginning. Since then we have seen several incidents where PF guerrillas have been killed; the flagrant use of the Rhodesian military and police to independently enforce the ceasefire; Muzorewa's auxiliaries being allowed to move into areas vacated by the PF; and the continued presence of S.African troops in the country.

This was all to be expected. But now there's a more ominous development. The regrettable decision by ZANU to campaign separately from ZAPU has given the West a golden opportunity to try and split the liberation movement. Suddenly Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU, is being de-

scribed in Salisbury and in the press as a respectable statesman. The way is being prepared for a possible Nkomo/Muzorewa alliance after the elections, and Nkomo has hinted at the possibility of this. For Britain it's a better bet than backing Muzorewa alone, as his popularity in the country has slumped in the last year.

Meanwhile the pressure is on ZANU to either accommodate Western business interests or face a grim future. Already much of their election material has been refused entry into the country, and Soames has talked of banning them altogether. Within ZANU, there are fierce battles going on about strategy: whether to keep the guerrillas in the camps, how radical or moderate a manifesto to produce, whether to support the demand by ZANU women to have 25% of the candidates (so far, this demand has not been met). The internal strains are severe, and Soam-

es has played on this by his demand for the release of the 71 ZANU members detained in Mozambique.

Anything could happen next, and should a future ZANU or ZANU/ZAPU government decide to ignore the Constitution and return land to the starving rural population, we can expect a reaction from the Rhodesian military and perhaps a South African invasion as well. In this situation the need for solidarity with the liberation movement remains vital.

The Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign has called for a picket of the Foreign Office at 12 noon on Feb 23. At the same time, there will be regional demonstrations in Nottingham and Manchester.

In the evening in London, there is a rally at the LSE at about 5pm, followed by a benefit.

The slogans for the London rally and picket are:  
Support the Liberation Movements  
No Rigged Election, End British Colonisation  
South African Troops Out

Finally, ZECC is still £900 in debt, even after Anti-Apartheid contributed £1000. Donations to ZECC c/o A-A, 89 Charlotte St., London W1. In Nottingham, contact the Zimbabwe Solidarity Group c/o 37 A, Mansfield Rd., Nottingham.

## Apocalypse Now FACT...

"The people's help allows the regular forces to move about and set up their positions rapidly. Within a few hours, a heavy gun is hauled into position in the midst of protective trenches and shelters; its crew is saved a multitude of jobs. When the time for fighting comes, local people come to help the gunners carry ammunition, and even

replace them should they be wounded." These words are from a dissection of the war, entitled *The Impotence of American Technique in Face of People's War*, by Vietnamese scholar Nguyen Khac Vien (Hanoi, 1966). "No psychological recipe, no mechanical discipline, can form such combatants," he wrote.

## ..ANDFICTION

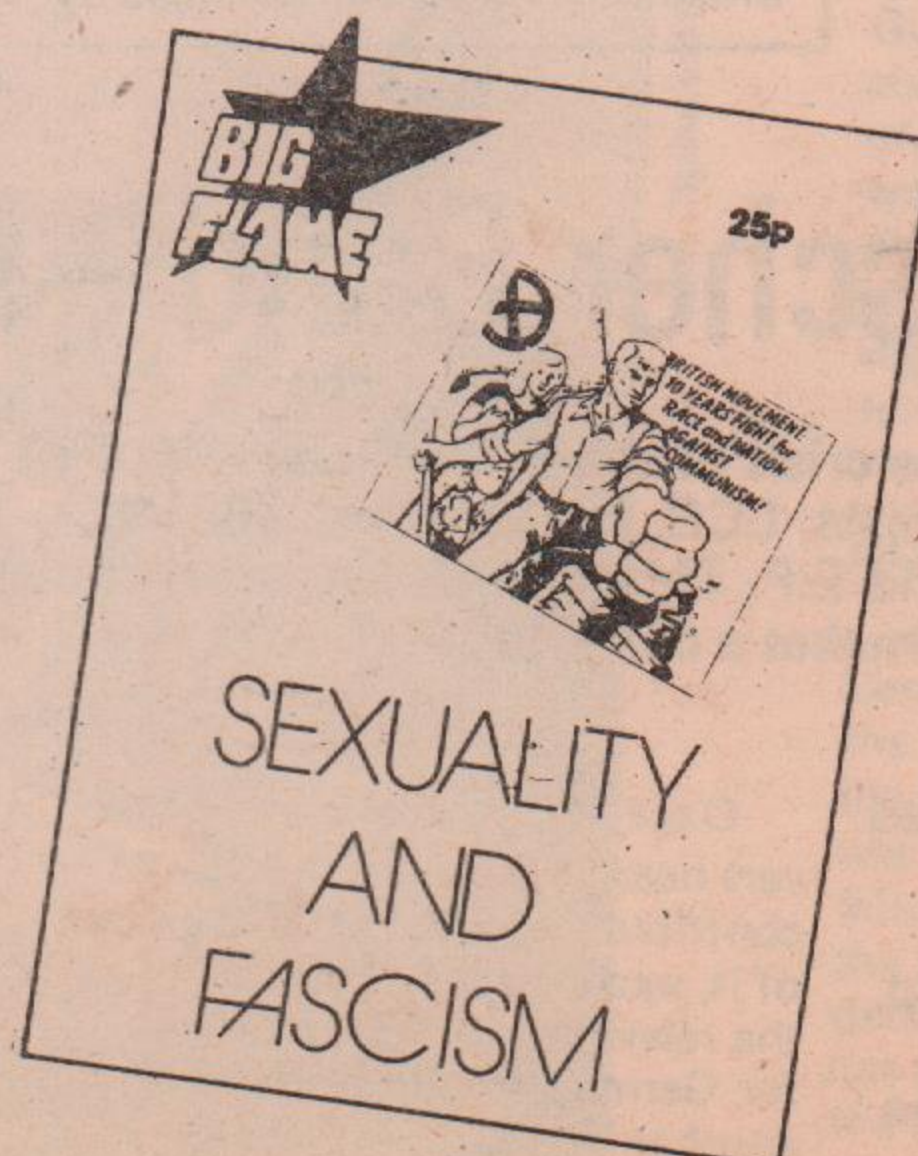
"We went into a camp to inoculate some children with polio vaccine. It seems a thousand centuries ago. And we inoculated them all. And then we left—and this old man came running after us, and he was crying, he couldn't see—we went back there. And they (the Vietnamese communists) had come and hacked off every inoculated arm. There they were, in a pile, a pile of little arms—I cried like some grandmother. I wanted to tear my teeth out, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was so filled with—there's no word for that, there's no

word that describes that. And I want to remember, I never want to forget it—I never want to forget. And then I realized, like I was shot, like I was shot with a diamond, a diamond bullet right

through my forehead. And I thought, my God, the genius of that. The genius, the will, the masterful knowledge, the wisdom, the information to do that—perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure.... Then I realized that they were stronger than we, because they could stand it."

(Kurtz's speech)

## sub advertisements



### RECENT BIG FLAME PAMPHLETS:

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

ERITREAN Evening, with Songs, Dancing, Music, Slides. Africa Centre, King St., London WC1. £1.50 Friday Feb 1.

ERITREA Liberation Struggle. Seminar to discuss recent developments. Africa Centre, King St., London WC1. Sat Feb 2 11am-5pm. Entrance 75p (50p wageless)

CHARTIST: Journal of Marxist Studies. Contents of Jan/Feb edition include: Feature: John MacLean and the British Communist Party; also: Focus on Labour Left and the L.C.C., Freud, 'Beyond the Fragments' debate, Social/Sexual Revolution, Media and Marxist Economics. 32 pages, 55 p from Chartist Publications, 60 Loughborough Rd., London SW9

The Past Against Our Future: Fighting Racism and Fascism. 50 p. Superb 40 page pamphlet with plenty of photos and nice cartoons which gives a detailed history of Imperialism, racism, and fascism, their role in the present crisis and the struggles against them.

Sexuality and Fascism. 25p. Papers from a Big Flame dayschool on Women and Fascism, Women and the NF, and Masculinity and Fascism.

Both available from Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool 7. Include 15 p per copy for postage.

THE SOVIET Union was drawn into Afghanistan because, within the context of its blinkered but ambitious power politics it had no other choice. Afghanistan had effectively come under the Soviet sphere of influence and, as Ben Johnson and Peter Anderson argue, the more the Russians intervened to stem opposition, the more they needed to intervene.

**AMERICA ARMS THUGS**  
Imperialism, of course, has been able to exploit the situation to the full. Already some time before the Afghan crisis, and especially during the Iranian crisis the American Government was becoming increasingly belligerent and restless. Hundreds of millions of dollars were put towards a special strike force for intervening in the Middle East. The defence budget was raised by 66% to allow for a whole variety of schemes to be developed. There was talk of military intervention in Iran to secure the release of the hostages — and all the time the Shah, the cause of the problem, was being protected.

**PAKISTAN**  
The danger now is that far too many reactionary rulers are being armed to the teeth by a puffed-up, red-neck America. Pakistan, ruled by the murderous General Zia, is soon to receive ultra-modern planes and tanks to match its newly-acquired nuclear capacity. Egypt is being armed fast and furiously, with the intention (now official American policy) of it becoming the new policeman of the Middle East, now that Iran has gone astray; and China, subject to so much imperialist venom during the years of the Cold War, is now being armed by imperialism — an appropriate follow-up to America's support for its invasion of Vietnam.

**COLD WAR?**  
But are we witnessing the beginning of a new Cold War? On the one hand, the trade links between the West and the USSR, the links which formed the essence of detente, would seem too strong to allow any real breakdown of relations. But then — and here's the rub — the vested interest in detente is not shared equally. While the Soviet Union could not dispense with the high technology (especially in computers) that it gains, or the wheat, or the complete Fiat and steel plants, or the help with massive oil and gas exploration projects, western imperialism can see it two ways.

**SURPLUS**  
The West gains a huge balance of trade surplus from post-detente trade, and the wheat sales are not to be sniffed at (the boycott on wheat sales has cost at least £2.5 billion in subsidies). As a cold-war monger, on the other hand, there is the prospect of a "Carter doctrine" equivalent to the post-war Truman doctrine, which would mean large parts of the world accepting American (and German, French,

Japanese and British) domination and exploitation in return for "protection" from the widely acclaimed "World Enemy No 1" the USSR. If this were combined with the further demise of democratic rights in the West (which is certainly on the cards, either way), and with a new arms build-up, the prospect may well seem no less lucrative than a continuing detente.

**MOMENTUM**  
The two strategies are not incompatible, but they cannot be evenly balanced. And the danger is that a power-hungry Carter, avidly picking up votes with a

new belligerent, better-dead-than-red image, will create an unstoppable momentum in the direction of aggression and repression.

This danger is still greater, of course, while Soviet troops remain in Afghanistan. Their presence aids imperialism's strategy to dominate the region, and by uniting the opposition, aids the reactionary Islamic forces which imperialism supports in the country. At the same time, it fundamentally denies the Afghan People's right to self determination. We have, then, no alternative but to call for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops, just as we condemn in the strongest possible terms the imperialist backlash.



**SOUTH AFRICAN ATTACKS ON ANGOLA**

*SOUTH AFRICA continues its land and air attacks on Angola. The photograph shows civilians killed by an air raid in Cunene province. Many more have died in similar raids, through mines placed on the roads or by troops attacking villages.*

*The troops have taken cattle away with them showing that their main aim is to destabilise the Angolan economy. The raids are in retaliation for Angolan support of SWAPO's struggle for national liberation in Namibia, officially a United Nations' Protectorate, but under South African control. South Africa claims to want the Angola/Namibia border converted to a demilitarized zone—containing South African bases!*

*There are still South African forces in Zimbabwe, showing how the S. African government is determined to maintain its system of white supremacy in the continent through military interventions in neighbouring countries. These have received scant mention in the British press, which calls Angola an example of 'Russian expansionism in Africa'!*

MPLA Photo

# IMPERIALISTS CAPITALISE ON SOVIET BLUNDER

## AFGHANISTAN & THE USSR: A BRIEF HISTORY

The gradual but consistent development of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan can be traced as follows:

1950's — 60's: Authoritarian Islamic monarchy in Afghanistan. USSR is by far the biggest trading partner. Military links start up, with many Afghan officers trained in the USSR. Oppositional (Moscow oriented) People's Democratic People's Party formed in 1965.

1973: Coup by Soviet-trained officers brings in Mohammed Daud as new leader. As a lesser member of the royal family he changes little, but moves away from initial Moscow-orientation.

### ATHEISTIC

1978, April: Coup by essentially the same officers. Taraki of the People's Democratic Party is the new leader. Officially the regime is Islamic, independent and nationalistic, but the ties with the Soviet Union are clearly evident in the "revolution-from-above," a crude attempt to win a popular base (after the acquisition of power) through the implementation of land reforms and democratic measures such as the abolition of the bride-price.

Islamic mullahs, many of them wealthy landowners, are soon able to whip up opposition to what they portray as an atheistic Russian-dominated regime. This opposition is fuelled by Islamic upheaval in Iran and elsewhere, and later given material support by the USA and China.

1979, Sept: As more and more provinces come under Islamic control, the regime seeks desperate remedies. With Soviet prompting, an attempt is made to remove General Amin, an unpopular and powerful hard-liner, in order to soften the regime's image. Amin wins the shoot-out, Taraki is killed, and the new regime takes an uncompromising line on the need, on the one hand, for reform and, on the other, for heavy repression.

1979, December: The Soviet Union sees Afghanistan slipping from its grasp, as Amin's regime loses support on all fronts. After a month's planning, the troops go in. Babrak Karmal is flown in from Eastern Europe as the new leader, and a clumsy attempt is made to justify the invasion by "inviting" the Russians in after the event.

### REBELLION

Neither the Soviets nor their PDP allies really understood the Islamic religion, the sort of society that made it an integral and vital part of day-to-day reality for most of the population, or the potential it held for anti-state rebellion. In particular, the PDP, having failed to develop a mass base to bring it to power (which would have required a far more long-term strategy) neglected to make the sort of alliances — especially with the land-owning mullahs — that would have allowed for reforms from above.

The more the Russians intervened to stem opposition, the more they needed to intervene. In the end, their invasion became a foregone conclusion, a leap into a trap of their own making. And as such, of course, it is a damning indictment of the short-sighted, unsocialist nature of Soviet foreign policy.

## Kommunistischer Bund — First National Conference

IMAGINE A conference on the crisis of the British left, attended by BF, SWP, IMG, RCG, Chartists, LCG, the Leveller, CPBML, Spartacists, Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson. Everyone comes on Big Flame's invitation and makes a contribution, with Big Flame generally in control.

Something similar was achieved believe it or not, by the German revolutionary organisation, Kommunistischer Bund, (KB), on the third day of its first national conference at the beginning of January. KB, which has for some time had links with BF, has itself been through a major crisis, leading to a split in December, and courageously decided to test the willingness of other organisations to admit their own difficulties.

Over 250 delegates and observers heard a fascinating array of contributions. But little came out of it, except a confirmation of the relevance of KB's politics for German conditions, and another "Crisis Conference" has been suggested for the Spring.

### NEO-FASCISM

But the main part of the Conference was concerned with finding a clear direction for KB's future following 18 months of decline, confusion and demoralisation and following the sudden departure of about 20% of its 1,000 members.

At the centre of KB's politics is the 'fascistisation thesis', which is similar to our 'strong state' theory in its view of recent authoritarian, anti-democratic developments in the capitalist state. The ban on radicals working in public services, computer files on everyone, spying arrangements in factories, special police units to operate against the Left: recent developments in West Germany seem to bear out KB's theory.

Anti-fascist work is even more of a priority now with the emergence of the neo-fascist Strauss as a leading candidate for Chancellor in the elections this Autumn, and for KB it will take equal priority in the coming period with work in the women's movement, in the anti-nuclear movement and in the unions.

### ELECTIONS

The main point of dispute at the conference was electoral work, which has become a key issue with the dramatic rise (now 10,000 members) of the new, ecology-oriented Green Party — not least because this proved to be the main cause of KB's split.

KB is very wary of the Green Party, which is dominated by right-wing elements whose main concern is to squeeze out the Left and win more supporters from the Right. As a result, the Left, which forms a strong and active minority in the party, may well be forced to split off once the General Election is over.

### COMPROMISES

Consequently, KB, which has worked hard for years to develop an effective radical electoral

alliance in Hamburg, Berlin and elsewhere, is peeved at the success of the Right and angry at the Green Party's rejection of a pro-abortion position and a stand against state repression. It is now more concerned to keep its radical electoral alliance together as a guarantee that the Left will maintain its strength in at least some areas. The fraction which split off from KB has, for its part, decided to enter the Green Party wholesale, and has consequently been able to win some compromises to maintain some effective Left influence in the Party for the time being.

But there is little chance of a reunification of KB, even if the differences over electoral strategy are resolved. For the differences go much deeper and revolve around attitudes to feminism, leninism and how best to intervene in the mass movements.

Ben Johnson, South London  
Big Flame.

# CENTRAL AMERICA - THE DICTATORS FALL

# THE DICTATORS FALL

A YEAR AGO right wing dictators ruled the roost in Central America. Conservative and reactionary generals held power in four countries — El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. But the victory of the Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua in July 1979 has been a spur and inspiration to the popular movements and a chilling warning to generals, throughout the region. Already, two ex-dictators — Somoza of Nicaragua and Romero of El Salvador — are looking for new homes

Although probably a majority of the Sandinistas favour a Cuban type model for Nicaragua, the harshness of the immediate economic situation rules out any quick advance towards this goal. Progress in agrarian reform has been rapid and over 50% of land is now owned by the state, but in other areas capitalist enterprises still operate and foreign investment is permitted in certain circumstances.

The need to maintain production whilst reconstruction from the war proceeds means this may remain the situation for some time. And the urgent problems of reconstruction mean that Nicaragua must tap every possible source of credit and aid. In all this there clearly lies the danger that bourgeois interests will reassert themselves within Nicaragua and that the country will be driven into dependence on the US or other capitalist powers.

But for this to happen either the Sandinistas would have to lose their political influence or the growing radicalism and anti-capitalism of the Sandinistas would have to be reversed.

The Sandinistas have considerable strength in the state. They control the army, the police and much of the administration. Their control of radio, television and one daily newspaper, 'Barricada', gives them influence within the mass media. In addition their power within the provisional government is growing. When the first provisional government was announced in August it contained many representatives of the moderate opposition to Somoza — the pro-capitalist 'moderates' whom the US hope to control. But recent cabinet changes confirm the growing influence of Sandinistas like Daniel Ortega, Tomas Borge and Jaime Wheelock.

The Sandinistas have consolidated and extended their grass roots influence since taking power. The Sandinistas' political organisation the FSLN dominates the five main mass organisations. These organisations — the Sandinista Workers Central, the Association of Nicaraguan Women, the Sandinista Youth, the Association of Rural Workers and the Sandinista Defence Committees — work to contain the level of mobilisation and involvement that was built up during the civil war and direct energies towards the tasks of reconstruction. The Defence Committees are organisations based on working class communities and could well become the basic organisations basic organs of grass roots democracy and participation. The Sandinistas see them as enormously important and say that at this stage they are the 'eyes and ears of the revolution.'

### COUP

The impact of the Nicaraguan revolution has been dramatic in El Salvador. In the two months that followed the Sandinistas' victory, there were unprecedentedly big struggles there. The three revolutionary left organisations — the Popular Leagues of the 28th February, the Popular Revolutionary Block (BPR) and the Front for

United Popular Action (FAPU) — all gained in strength. The Block, for example, claims a membership of 100,000, many of whom are manual workers linked to it through its control of unions in the countryside. These unions, amongst coffee workers, cotton workers and teachers, themselves have grown rapidly in recent years.

Mass pressure built up to such a point that by October of last year many felt an insurrection was on the cards. Instead there was a military coup by liberal officers, which forced President Romero into exile. Supported by the moderate opposition, including the Communist Party, these officers have established a government that has promised widespread reform. The revolutionary left condemned the coup as an imperialist manoeuvre, designed to divert the mass movement.

### OCCUPATIONS

Their tactic was to maintain pressure on the government to keep its promises. In the weeks following the coup there were a number of mass actions — including demonstrations and church occupations. When these were met with repression three ministers of the new government were kidnapped, and as conditions for their release far-ranging social and economic demands put forward. These demands included 100% wage increases for some workers, reductions in the prices of basic foodstuffs and the release of all political prisoners. After three weeks the government met many of the demands. But after a period of relative calm it now seems as though a further period of confrontation is probable, especially since the resignation of the social democrats in the government.

Guatemala, too, has been influenced by the Nicaraguan victory. In October, in Guatemala City, 20,000 people — trade unionists, peasants, students and shanty-town dwellers — marched openly at a time of increasing repression. The march was a clear sign of confidence that reflects the growth of combative unions and popular organisation. Guatemala's guerrillas — the Guerrilla Army of the Poor — are also increasingly active in the north of the country. The military are worried. Their position, like that of the military in Honduras, is further weakened by the collapse of the regional defence force, CONDECA, following the exit of Somoza from the Central American scene.

### BULWARK

CONDECA linked together the Central American armed forces with the US to form a regional anti-guerrilla force. Somoza's National Guard was a bulwark of this force, and the failure of CONDECA to act against the Sandinistas and their subsequent defeat is a blow that for the moment has crushed the alliance. Likewise the Central American Common Market has been disrupted by events in Salvador and Nicaragua. The market had been important, particularly to the bourgeoisies of Guatemala and El Salvador. Its disruption could worsen the economic crisis in both countries.

Richard Lapper (Contemporary Archive on Latin America)

Big Flame Photo



Church occupations in San Salvador during the popular uprisings of October and November 1979.

The present situation in El Salvador is very serious; the country is on the brink of civil war. On Sunday 20 January more churches — 300 of them — were occupied after morning mass by members of worker and peasant groups. The following Tuesday 200,000 people marched on a huge demonstration called by the now unified left. There were 22 deaths.

Faced with increasing hostility from the right and especially the right-wing private sector, the four main left-wing popular groups have joined forces to form a coalition called Revolutionary Unity. As this massive march shows, their support among the people of El Salvador is substantial and active.

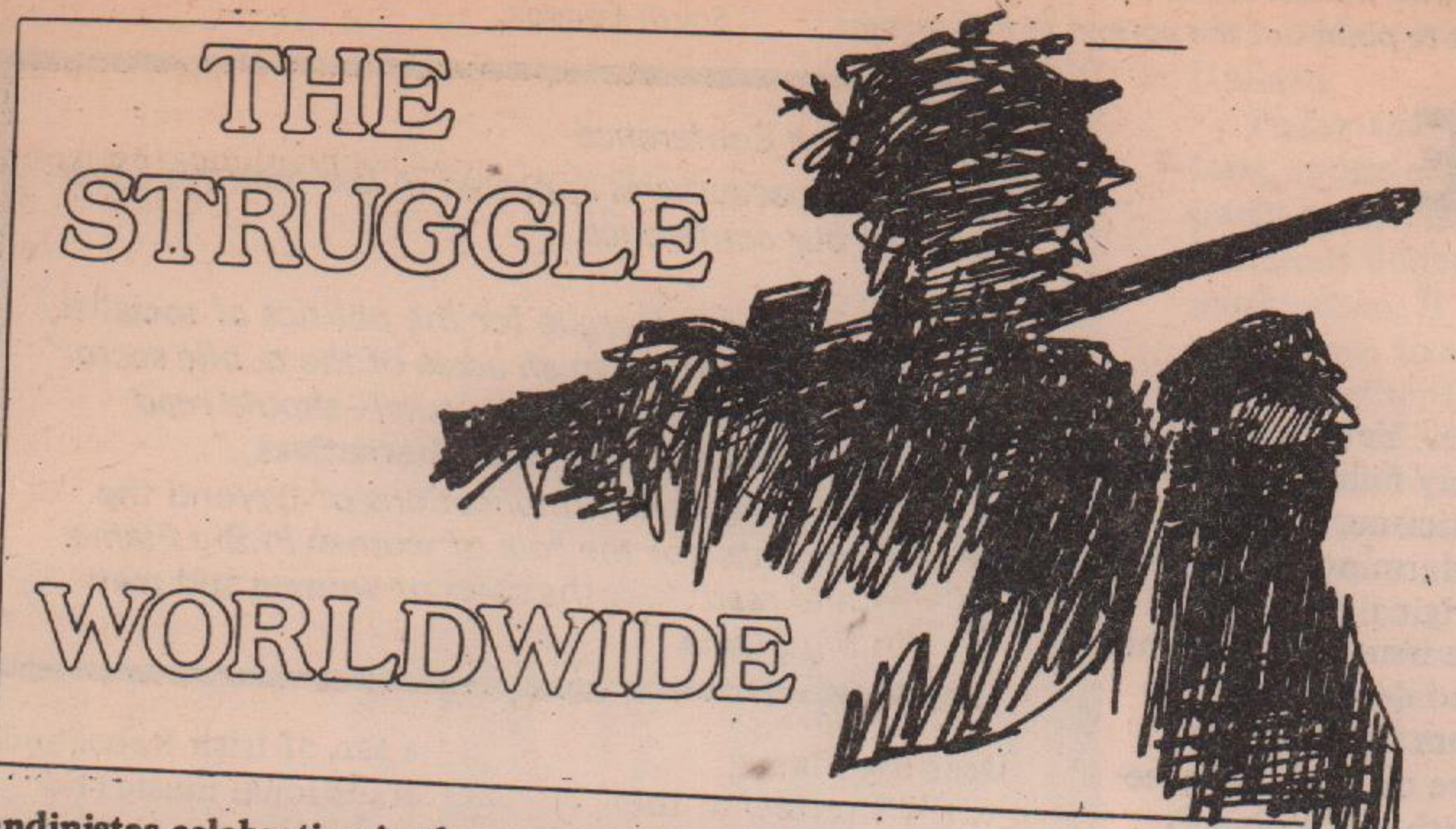
## Puerto Rico: A Target for the West

"WE STRONGLY protest participation of two English warships in manoeuvres Readex-80 (Operation Springboard) They are bombing Vieques, an off-shore island of Puerto Rico."

The telegram, to the London-based Committee for Puerto Rican Independence, was sent last month by a priest Father Alberto Gonzalez, active in the campaign for the colony's freedom. The UN has called again on the US to take the necessary steps to decolonise Puerto Rico, but the American response is to press on with the annual NATO ship-to-shore firing exercises, Operation Springboard.

In previous years the Vieques Fishermen's Association has managed to disrupt the firing. They and their supporters have now camped in the firing area, but NATO manoeuvres have gone on regardless of their risk to Puerto Rican lives.

Puerto Rico is a nerve centre of American and NATO naval power in the Southern hemisphere. Committee for Puerto Rican Independence. Contact Zulma Wickenden 01.485.8300.



Sandinistas celebrating in the streets of Managua.

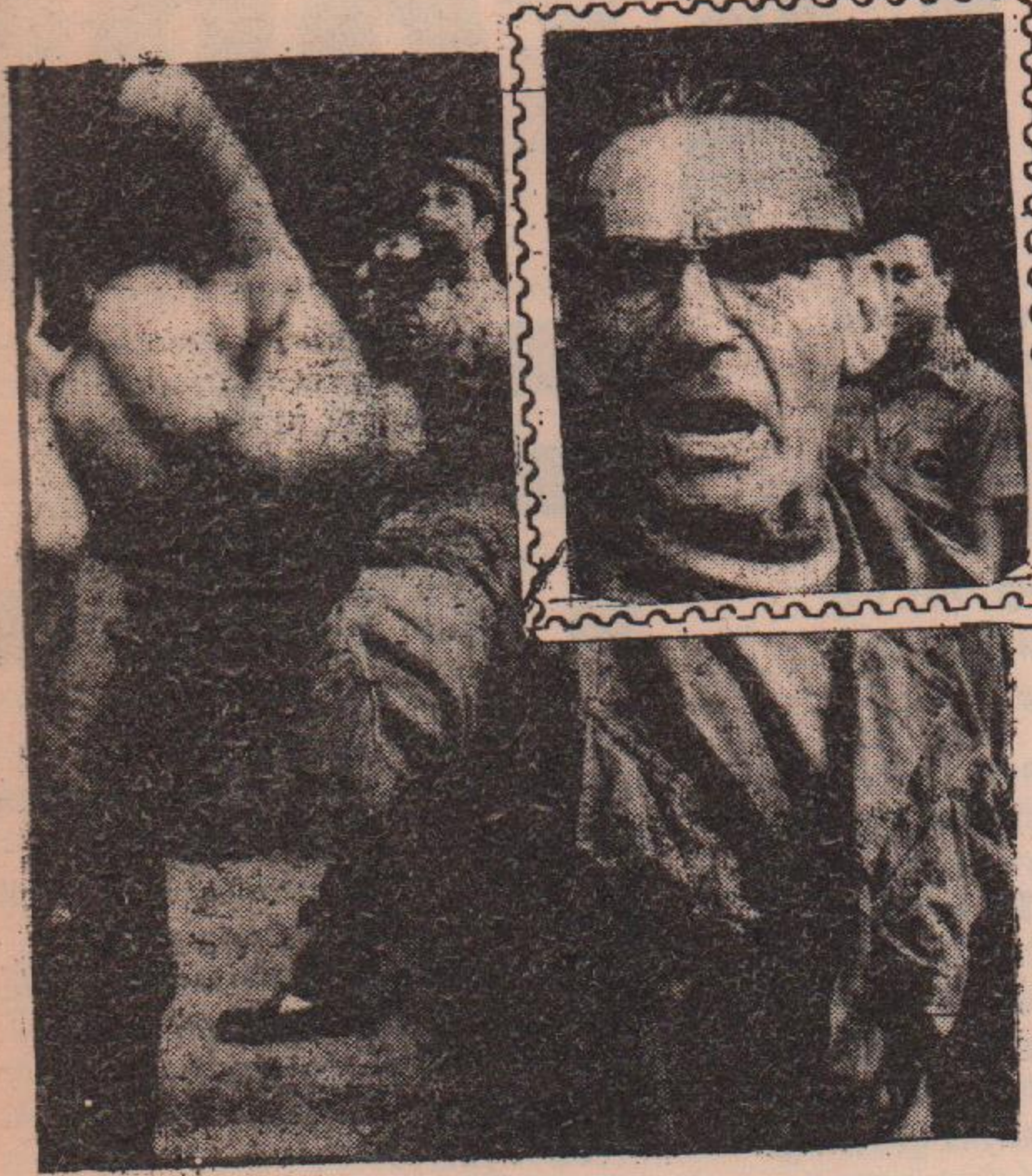


Camera work.

**write on**

Send your letters to  
The Editors  
Big Flame  
217 Waverley Rd.  
Liverpool 7

But beware, letters over  
400 words may be cut.



## Anne Maguire

Dear Comrades,

The tragic suicide of Anne Maguire whose heartbreak loss of her three children gave rise to the 'Peace People' (Nov. 1976), has moved me to write this letter. Like all republican socialists here in British-Occupied Ireland I feel extremely saddened by the death of this unfortunate woman, yet at the same time angry at the way in which the media uses her demise as propaganda for the British war machine.

In the summer of 1976 the British army of occupation adopted a policy which has become known as 'Kill First—Questions Later'. It was the direct result of this policy that led to the death of the three Maguire children, due to the fact that a republican soldier was shot dead at the wheel of his car by a British patrol which out of control careered into the Maguire family. Within

minutes of this incident, the dead driver was being accused of 'murder' even though his own death was due to a British assassin's bullet. The British media and the army propaganda hacks, as they did following bloody Sunday, got to work at their usual cover-up tactics. Once again it was blamed on the I.R.A. and the real truth was speedily swept under the political carpet.

Their lie machines may fool some of the people part of the time, but not all of the people all of the time. Anne Maguire, like her children and hundreds of other innocent victims, died because of British imperialism in Ireland. That fact no one can deny!

Yours fraternally,  
The Editor,  
SEVEN STARS  
c/o Connolly House  
8 Chamberlain Street,  
Derry City

## WOMEN, THE TUC AND THE ABORTION MARCH

Dear Editors,

Big Flame has always prided itself on the fact that it takes women's autonomy seriously. Why then in the December issue, when we were faced with a concrete situation where the issue of women's autonomy was raised, did the Editorial Collective feel it necessary to disassociate itself from this position?

The article about the 28th October demonstration on Abortion, "Who's Right to Lead?" stated very clearly the views of the Big Flame women's commission. Why did the Editorial Collective feel it necessary to undermine the article by its disclaimer?

While we recognise the historic importance of a TUC demonstration on abortion, and that abortion is a class as well as feminist issue, and that it is a victory for trade unionists to recognise this, we also feel, as the article stated, that there were serious problems caused by the TUC's failure to recognise that it is women who must lead the struggle for abortion rights.

We need mass support against Corrie, but it must be on women's terms. The struggle to get the TUC to

will be a long one. How long will the Editorial Collective take to recognise it? They have still not made clear what their original disagreements with the article were. The article made many very important points which are based on our position on women's autonomy. The issues raised on the march are vital and must be discussed.

We felt that the letter in the January paper from Terry Flynn made important criticisms of the Editorial

We are anxious that what might appear to be a note of antagonism between the Women's Commission and the editorial collective be cleared up.

When the article was published no discussion had taken place in the Women's Commission on that particular issue. We were not prepared to pre-empt that discussion especially as there had been a lot of disagreement in the Women's movement.

Having said that we accept that there are inconsistencies in the way that we credit articles. In general if an article is the agreed position of a commission then we state that, if an article is from an individual or reflects

Dear Comrades,  
I felt impelled to respond to your heartfelt plea for more feedback. I think it is important that readers realise the difficulties of producing a paper without full-time staff. We should always temper our criticisms to take this into account.

I think the paper has, in general, improved considerably since it went to 16 pages.

Dear Big Flame,

There is a pressing need to shift the focus of campaigning against the Immigration Laws away from pressurising 'decent minded' Tories into voting the right way in the Commons, and towards the white working class. The J.C.W.I., A.G.I.N., and the Commission for Racial Equality have concentrated on the Tories for too long.

One Tory M.P., Fisher, described the government's white paper as 'contemptible', and then voted with Thatcher in the division lobbies!

Dear Big Flame,

Congratulations on an excellent first paper for the eighties.

I would, though, like to take up and comment on the simplistic and ill informed letter in the January issue entitled 'No Reviews for straight publishers?' It is not true to say that 'Macmillan is an extremely reactionary company that refuses to deal with trade unions'. They themselves have felt the winds of change over the last few years, and one of those winds of change has been the increasing level of trade union organisation in the publishing industry. There are at present three Unions—ASTMS, NUJ, and SOGAT who have bargaining agreements with the company. The workers there have been as well organised as many in the publishing industry in recent years and were, for example, quick to take action, through sympathetic blacking, in solidarity with the workers at Blackwell's Bookshop in Oxford in their struggle for union recognition a couple of years ago.

For all the political defeats of the last few years one area of growth for the left has been in the production and distribution of left wing and feminist books and pamphlets. In the main this has been achieved by the growing number of independent socialist publishers, bookshops and distributors like PDC. Bourgeois companies like Macmillan, Penguin, etc have at different times climbed on this bandwagon, realising that marxism is a marketable and profitable commodity. For sure this is why Macmillan have developed a large and wide ranging marxist list over the last few years. Your correspondent is right to point out the politics in this process

Collective. Yet their reply completely failed to answer these criticisms and once again undermined the point of the original letter. We think the issue is important enough to demand a statement from the Editorial Collective on their disagreements with the Women's Commission. Then Big Flame can have what we feel is a very necessary debate on the matter.

signed,  
Big Flame Women's Commission.

using in the organisation then the article is credited to that individual. Clearly in some cases that breaks down.

We think your request for the Editorial Collective to state its disagreement with the article misunderstands our disclaimer. What we said was that the article did 'not necessarily' represent the views of us all. The collective does not have any single position on any issue and given all of the pressures of a layout weekend, we were not able to have a full discussion about the events of the March. We are glad that the necessary discussion has now taken place in Big Flame and that the position of the article is now recognised as that of the Women's Commission.

es. I have particularly liked the Pic of the Month feature (especially last month's), Brother Goose, and some of the foreign features, and I've found the cuts coverage useful in my trade union and other political work.

However, I still have an uneasy feeling about the overall image of the paper. I have to admit to a reluctance at times to push 'mass' sales (e.g. in pubs) because I've

Winning promises from Labour M.P.s is just as useless—witness their betrayal of Party Conference commitments to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act. By the time the next Labour Government comes in, the Tories will have made substantial additions to the existing Immigration laws;

Labour will no doubt repeal some of them, and turn round to the black community and say "We may not have done all you wanted, but just look what we have repealed". The 1971 Law will remain, untouched.

The fact of the matter is that neither party will tamper seriously with racist legislation on immigration unless they are convinced that there is no longer any political mileage in 'allaying fears.'

Anti-racists can only go so far by pointing to the abuse of civil rights involved in existing Immigration controls. We have to take on the argument that Immigration laws are necessary to keep out black people, and take it on where it is most virulent—in the hearts and minds of the white working class.

Bill Morgan,  
Manchester.

we must either publish the articles in full or else consult the writer before making alterations.

Keep up the good work!

In solidarity,  
Phil North

('Socialist Republic' of South Yorkshire)  
p.s. I'm working on the coffee percolator—I'll see what I can do!

Bill Morgan,  
Manchester.

## Who Cares?

Dear Big Flame,

I am writing to say how unhappy I am with the coverage of culture in the newspaper. When the 'new' Big Flame was launched in May last year I did hope that replacing the appallingly titled Time Off with the This is Our Life section meant that culture would be taken more seriously and that the definition of it would be extended beyond 'the arts' to include many more aspects of our daily life.

But look at what has happened. In the nine issues of the 'new' newspaper up to the January issue, there has been no This is Our Life page in four of them. Presumably it had to be left out because the space was needed to cover more 'serious' political issues. The articles that have been included have nearly always been film/novel/music reviews. This isn't to deny that some of them have been interesting—the article on Worker Writers and the centre page feature on the political music of Lin-ton Kwesi Johnson, Karaxu, and Mustapha el Kurd for example.

However the one article which did cover a different area is also the one about which I have heard the most favourable comments from readers. This was the review article of Penelope Leach's book Who Cares? about ways of bringing up children. Why can't you print more articles like that one?

What has really motivated me to write this letter is the Life of Brian review printed in the last issue. This article expressed for me all that is inadequate in the way most socialist newspapers treat culture. It was no more than a fan's rave about the film with an extended summary of the plot plus a mild objection to the Biggus Dickus jokes.

We need to critically examine culture's role in capital's domination and our resistance to it. Big Flame is far from being the only left paper which is inadequate in this way. But surely we have got beyond the stage where cultural coverage is a light filler to break up the more 'serious' political analysis in the rest of the paper.

Big Flame Conference

Two inaccuracies appeared in last month's coverage of our conference.

'Big Flame will argue for the politics of socialist, class alternatives in all areas of the public sector' (from the motion on the cuts)—should read: '... socialist, feminist, class alternatives...'

'(To)... discuss the implications of Beyond the Fragments for the role of women in Big Flame.' should read: '..... the roles of women and men in Big Flame.'

Dear Big Flame,

CW's review of the "People of No Property's" new LP "Brits Out" was spoilt by a sudden puritanical bout of musical chauvinism (cop that for a mouthful)

Irish rebel music is part of an anti-imperialist struggle (tradition) that is still being waged in Ireland today. From a country that has been ravaged an exploited for nearly 800 years it is hardly surprising that so many of their songs are of battles, deaths and loved ones lost. From a country whose inhabitants have faced transportation and mass emigration, whether at the end of a bayonet or the end of an empty stomach—it is hardly surprising that their tradition is full of sad songs about leaving home or dreaming of home. The tradition of Irish rebel music is far from dead. As for an English rebel folk tradition having any real relevance today as street music or rebel music—I'd say No chance! No chance whatsoever!

However, despite being

a fan of Irish Rebel and traditional music (I'd go so far as to argue for it to be included alongside the predominantly Roots, Reggae and New Wave mix at RAR gigs and discos) it would appear that anti-imperialism can, in the Irish context also find an outlet within other musical forms. Despite the confusion of bands like "Stiff little Fingers" who prefer to close their eyes to the institutionalised racism of the Northern Ireland statelet (i.e. the guaranteed protestant ascendancy), recent campaigns like Rock against Repression have shown clearly the puritanical chauvinism of those who seem to see New Wave in Northern Ireland basically as an imperialist plot or conspiracy (exported to divert young minds—as if these young minds are empty sponges waiting to be filled).

Love and solidarity  
E.D.  
(Ed: for reasons of space, this letter has been cut)

Solidarity,  
Matthew Garth  
North London Big Flame

# NO OLYMPIC BOYCOTT!

We should oppose the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (to say nothing of the South African invasion of Zimbabwe or the French invasion of Central Africa). At the same time 'We're suspicious of the politicians' motives,' as David Bedford said in a TV debate about the Olympic boycott. He and other athletes want to know why Carter and Thatcher have chosen this moment to take their stand against the Soviet Union. And why the Games must be sacrificed—and with them, the energies and aspirations of all those who have been training for them for so long now.

Mrs. Thatcher is the most unlikely supporter of sporting boycotts. Keep politics out of sport is the slogan of the right, and it's been a hard fought position when it suited them—over South African rugby tours and fox-hunting. But now it's different. 'In an ideal world,' says Mrs. Thatcher, 'I would entirely share the philosophy of the Olympic movement that sport should be divorced from politics... For the Soviet Union, the Olympic Games are a major political event which will be used to boost Soviet prestige in the world.'

## DISSIDENTS

The change in the traditional right wing attitude to sport has less to do with a concern for the independence of the Afghans or even the human rights of the Soviet dissidents but a lot to do with great power politics. And that's why we say: No Olympic Boycott! Soviets out of Afghanistan!

## MENACE

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is a pretext for a hard line. It is no more dramatic or critical to the world power balance than Hungary was in 1956 or Czechoslovakia was in 1968. On the other hand, capitalism itself is in crisis across the world and desperately needs an opportunity for flexing its muscles. Carter aims to restore confidence in himself and in US military power the cheap way—by taking umbrage at the events in

Afghanistan, and calling it the biggest threat to World Peace since the Second World War. At the same time, he hopes to regain the American foothold in the Persian Gulf by posing as the defender of the Muslim cause in Afghanistan. There is no sign that anyone is impressed. Saudi Arabia won't be going to the Olympics; but the decision had been made long ago and had nothing to do with the Red Menace.

The suspicion that David Bedford refers to of the politicians' motives isn't confined to athletes. The scepticism is widespread. There are now very few people prepared to believe that America, or Britain's record of respect for the rights of whole nations or oppressed minorities is any better than Russia's. Suez, Ireland, Puerto Rico, Pakistan, Iran, Chile: all these would provide at least as valid a reason for boycotting the Games as Afghanistan, for someone seeking an excuse.

Yes, the Olympics should go ahead. The athletes have an opportunity for demonstrating their distaste for US-USSR power politics by boycotting the nationalistic trappings of the Games. Ridding the Olympics of the flag waving and the national anthems would be the best possible way of resolving the debate about the boycott. It could also be a smack in the face for Carter, Brezhnev, and Thatcher.

George Hains.



## Socialism - A Sporting Chance?

IS SPORT simply a new opiate, the modern equivalent of the Roman circuses that provides a safe outlet for working class frustrations? Or is it a vital part of working class culture which expresses a desire for a more complete human existence? Rosewell Rudd takes a look at these two positions and agrees that sport is more than simply a game.

Is it possible to come out as a sports fan and remain a socialist? There's a recent book by Jean-Marie Brohm called *Sport - A Prism of Measured Time* which brings together most of the arguments against sport. It has little difficulty in demonstrating the clear link between organised sport and capitalism.

Today sport is big business — with advertisers, sports equipment manufacturers and pools companies deeply involved. Many governments deliberately use sport to encourage nationalism. It perpetuates sexism, by limiting women to some games — gymnastics, skating rather than others — boxing, wrestling. You only have to go to a football match to find chauvinist, sexist and racist attitudes being reinforced. Male football supporters place great emphasis on virtues of aggression and toughness. All this is true, but is there any more reason to expect sport to be cut off from the capitalist society that surrounds it than television or going on holiday?

## TRIVIA

Are there ways in which sport helps maintain capitalism, rather than simply being affected by it like every other aspect of our lives? Brohm argues that sport helps industry by allowing workers to recuperate and return to work the next day refreshed. He also says it diverts and neutralises the working class by increasing discipline and their respect for authority, turns them into morons absorbed by mindless trivia, and makes them an undifferentiated mass of 'cheering machines'.

Of course, leisure under capitalism is going to help people recuperate — what does Brohm want — everybody sitting around tired and miserable until the day of revolution? All his other points can be challenged. Rather than accepting discipline workers have a chance to hurl abuse at authority figures like football referees. Rather than being morons they can become experts with greater knowledge and understanding than media pundits. Rather than being a passive mass, they can develop together a sense of collective pride and power. Sport allows space to express dissent, to fight out class and racial feelings denied other outlets. In countries like Pakistan cricket matches provide an opportunity to vent anti-police feelings or for a banned group to demonstrate. Go to the Oval for an England versus West Indies Test Match and you will see expressed the aspirations of black people in Britain.

VULGAR



of justifying the established order. 'Sport is a positivist system and as such always plays an integrating and never an oppositional role.' This book symbolises for me the vulgar, mechanical Marxism which cannot cope with contradiction and sees the working class as totally conditioned and never able to struggle back.

Brohm's book has been hailed in some quarters as the first systematic Marxist study of sport in English, but that ignores one of my favourite books — C.L.R. James' *Beyond the Boundary*. James gives a vivid description of the way cricket is integral to life in the West Indies, intertwined in a multitude of ways with class and race. At the same time, James, unlike Brohm and many other socialists, sees pleasure and enjoyment as important. He really brings alive the excitement and aesthetic pleasure of cricket.

If Brohm doesn't make a very good case against sport, this doesn't mean that these aren't questions we still have to ask. It's all right saying that the present form of sport is inevitably distorted by capitalism, but are there aspects of it which are inimical to socialism? What about competition?

## COMPETITION

The problem of competition is a tricky one. All the best forms of art involve contradiction and struggle, and the excitement and drama in sport comes from competition. While many forms of competition obviously have undesirable effects, I still have to be convinced that it must be removed from every aspect of life. As long as people are not made to suffer or feel inferior, it is possible for all to gain enjoyment from the experience. For the moment, at least, I see no reason to choose between sport and socialism, and until the day I have to make that choice I'm not telling which way I would jump.

Jean-Marie Brohm, *Sport - A Prism of*

worth  
talking about

Community Press



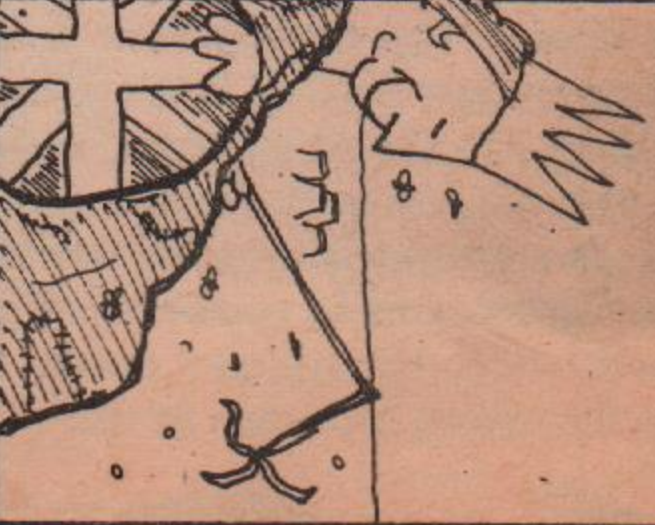
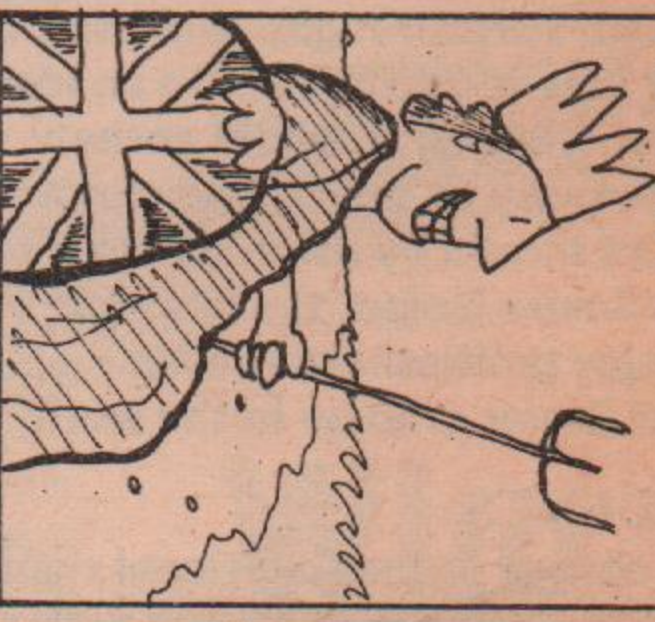
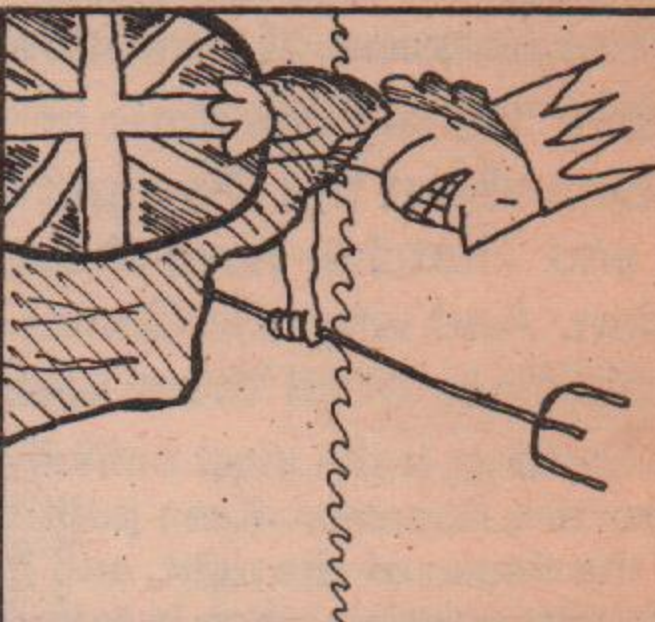
# brother goose

1841 • BRITAIN INVADES AFGHANISTAN ...

1917 • BRITAIN AND USA SEND TROOPS INTO RUSSIA ...

1954 • USA INSTALS DICTATORSHIP IN GUATEMALA

1964 • USA INVADES VIETNAM ...



1980 • RUSSIA SENDS TROOPS INTO AFGHANISTAN BRUTES AGRESSORS

STOP THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS!!! where will they be held? probably in South Africa!

omigod... im going for a drink

A LONDON ALE-HOUSE THIS AFGHAN BUSINESS IS JUST TO DISTRACT US FROM THE ECONOMIC CRISIS!

WHITE PAL=SHIC= OUT FOR THE POLICE...

NEXT MORNING IN PARLIAMENT... BRING BACK DESCRIPTION!! HERE HERE HERE HERE

but what about the russians? why dont you go so if up, keep it on

I will!

A MOSCOW ALE-HOUSE THIS AFGHAN BUSINESS IS JUST TO DISTRACT US FROM THE ECONOMIC CRISIS!

WHITE PAL=SHIC= OUT FOR THE POLICE

THEY'RE AS US! THE SAME AS US! THEY'RE JUST NORMAL! THEY'RE WORKING CLASS FOLK!

IN THAT CASE, WERE DEFINITELY BUYING THOSE NEW MISSILES!!!

TONIGHT A DISSIDENT RUSSIAN GOOSE WAS JAILED... there's a few of us about still!!

# Big Flame

15p No. 83 February 1980

## CUTS ONLY HALF THE PROBLEM

"The cuts arise because firstly we have to put emphasis, rightly so, on law and order, more for the police and more for the armed forces.

So in other areas you have, in fact, to make cuts". Maggie Thatcher, 'NOW' magazine, Oct. 5th 1979.

£60

