

AFTER TWO YEARS OF PAY RESTRAINT... Where's all the money gone?

Is this the last year of the wage freeze? It looks like it. Nobody is going to accept a cut in living standards when bosses are getting away with murder.

Take the case of GEC. What have they done for the sake of the economy we're always being asked to make sacrifices for?

▲ Thanks to rapid price rises they managed to put £350m away in the bank. Remember: we were told that wage rises were the cause of inflation. Less wage rises haven't stopped GEC putting its prices up.

▲ But what have they done with their record profits. Invested them in new machinery to create more jobs? Not likely. Since the triple merger of GEC, AEI and English Electric, 65,000 jobs have been "rationalised" out of existence.

▲ So where's the money gone? GEC has just announced a £178m hand out to shareholders. The wage freeze hasn't brought prices down and it hasn't led to

more jobs being created. Completely the opposite. Now the pressure to get rid of it is building up.

A Yorkshire AUEW official: "I'm fed up at having to go into negotiations with companies enjoying record profits, unable to extract what I know I could extract from them because of the policy. I don't know how national officials think we can go on for another year with living standards being eroded all the time."

British Leyland car workers have told the government that the wage freeze has got to go. They've asked for a joint effort to get rid of it with other workers.

THIS IS THE KIND OF INVESTMENT WE'RE GIVING UP OUR WAGES FOR

This year's stupendous company profits aren't entirely due to the wage freeze, although that and the prices free-for-all have helped. Here are some of the other ways fortunes are being created at our expense. Don't forget that there's supposed to be a shortage of money for industrial investment.

Mr. Cubes little deal

During the great sugar shortage two years ago, Tate and Lyle was actually exporting sugar abroad. To do that it borrowed sugar from the government's stockpile and never returned it. Parliament accountant, the auditor-general, accuses Tates of making illicit profits of over £6m. as a result.

Handouts to oil giants

North Sea Oil is going to mean big profits for the oil companies, none of them short of a penny in any case. The auditor general asks why they're also being given £160m; supposedly to create jobs. In fact, the jobs would be created anyway and now we're giving the companies the equivalent of £300,000 for every new job!

Biggest tax dodge of them all

Several big multinationals, including IBM, Hoover and Hoffman la Roche, have been caught fiddling their tax. They've agreed to return £22m. To avoid paying high rates of tax on profits made in Britain, they over-price goods sold to their British subsidiaries so that the big profits are made in countries where tax is lower.

Equal rises for all

- the answer to disunity

If the end of wage restraint is in sight, what should it be replaced by? A lot of trade unionists want to go back to 'free collective bargaining.'

And we agree. How else can we protect and raise our living standards? Especially when there are no controls on prices and profits.

But free collective bargaining has its drawbacks too, and they need thinking about. British Leyland

shop stewards illustrate what we mean perfectly. They say wage controls must go so as to restore the differentials for skilled workers.

They are trying to mount a campaign to do just that, but who's going to follow them. Skilled workers, certainly, but who else? If you want to unify people, you fight for a common demand, not for privileges for a minority. What's wrong with demanding high wage

rises for all?

Far better but there's a problem here too. Not everybody can fight as well as the carworkers. They have a long tradition of organisation and struggle, and a lot of political and economic power. In the days before wage restraint we allowed the government to champion the needs of the lower paid. Many working class people became so cynical about the unions that they

welcomed the wage controls.

So, if we want to prevent free collective bargaining turning out to be a recipe for disunity, let's make sure that there's also a national minimum wage, tied to inflation and tied to the rises won by the better paid.

But whatever happens, let's hear no more about differentials. We want equal increases for all. Skilled workers don't need more to eat than anybody else!

No more cuts say 4000



A demonstration in Aylesbury against the education cuts. It came in the same week as 7,000 marched through Hemel Hempstead to demand that a new hospital is built there. (see story page 2). The campaign against the cuts is growing deep roots. And so is the fight against redundancies as Sheffield has shown. The whole city has mobilised to prevent the loss of 480 vital jobs at Balfour Darwin's works (back page).

In Liverpool a conference to decide action on unemployment has been called by the Trades Council. Later this month, thousands of telecommunications workers will march through London against the cutbacks in Post Office orders. Growing hostility to the cuts in public spending is starting to drag down the social contract.

UNITY BUILT IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD DEMO

'It was fantastic - I've never seen a demonstration before which had people from every part of the community.' This was Christine Larter's verdict after 7,000 people demonstrated on 2nd February in Hemel Hempstead (Herts) against the decision not to build a much needed new hospital. Ms Larter, who chairs the Hemel Hempstead National Abortion Campaign, told *Big Flame*:

'We have tapped the amazing forces of energy in the community and the trade unions, but it was the women who played a major part. 900 women came from John Dickenson's print works, there were shopworkers and hundreds of housewives. There are lots of women on the hospital action group (HAG), including the Chair and Secretary, which is unusual in these sort of groups. I emphasised the fact that women suffer most from the cuts in my speech. For instance, the fashionable idea of community medicine really means spending less on social and health services, which means shifting the burden onto individual women in their individual homes, and women who are working do two jobs, one for money and one at home. Then cuts in transport, housing, education etc. add to our own work at home, which means worse childcare and more social problems. I also talked about abortion and the health service. 80% of the health service work is done by women - it has been built on the backs of a dedicated and underpaid staff, and that does not include the consultants! Because they won't take on more nurses, one nurse is doing the job of

two. The threatened closure of the Elisabeth Garret Anderson hospital is an example of how far they will go - and Hemel women will suffer because they use the EGA too. And now women's right to abortion is under attack again. If they make it illegal they'd better put more money into the casualty departments to patch up the effects of backstreet abortions. But SPUC and Life were silenced by the demo - and we collected 600 signatures in 4 hours against Benyon's bill and in support of NAC last week.'

Support

Reg Deering, Chairman of Hemel Hempstead Trades Council, told us how people had been mobilised for the demonstration: 'The hospital action group is very strong and has been working hard for two years or so, with the full support of the trades council. We collected 27,000 signatures for our petition, mainly in the shopping centre, but also in factories, and we took 2 or 3 coaches of people to meet the previous Minister of Health and hand

over the petition. So we had a lot of support building up, and on the day we had workers from dozens of factories, including Rolls Royce in Watford, Lucas Aerospace, Adressograph-Multigraph. Since it's a marginal seat for Labour, the Minister of Health, Roland Moyle, is bound to take notice, but this demo has been a real boost and we will certainly keep the pressure up.'

Just in case anyone forgets who can put on the pressure, note the action of school students at a Hemel Hempstead school. The headmaster considered the request that they had the day off to join the demo, and then said that would be illegal. But half of the students still went on the demo where they joined forces with the parents and teachers. Now the headmaster has given them all a day's detention. It will be up to the hospital action group to support them.

BIG FLAME & YOUTH A STATEMENT

There has been a hysterical response in the *News of the World* and other papers to leaflets put into schools in Birmingham and Leeds by Big Flame.

The response of the authorities - police, press - has been so hysterical because they realise how important it is for them to maintain their monopoly over the information reaching youth. Whenever this monopoly is threatened - as in Leeds, Birmingham or Newcastle (where the Socialist Workers Party distributed leaflets to a school and was similarly slated in the press) - the authorities come down hard.

The verbal and physical harassment that our members have received will in no way stop Big Flame's work around youth - a section of the working class too often neglected by the left.

This statement by our National Committee makes our position clear.

1. Big Flame is a revolutionary socialist organisation which aims to unify all working class people, whatever their age, sex or race, in the struggle against capitalism.
2. The recent leaflets created an amazing response, some of it hostile, some enthusiastic. At a time when education is under attack, with the cuts in spending on buildings, teachers, materials and even school meals, and with the criticism of progressive teaching methods, it is no surprise that conservatives get hysterical when opposition is mounted. And the leaflets touch a raw nerve in ordinary people, who may feel that their power is threatened when youth begin to organise.
3. Big Flame does not make indiscriminate attacks on teachers or parents. On the contrary, we seek to unite all sections of the working class.

Young people are part of the working class and must therefore be part of that struggle. Because of their specific oppression - lack of money, no work or boring work, schools which are geared to capital's needs instead of their needs, being ordered about by some teachers and parents - youth must organise itself so that it can unite with parents, teachers etc. on its own terms. Big Flame will leaflet youth, to oppose the propaganda they receive in the schools and media, to help them develop their power as part of the working class struggle for socialism. We support demands for sex education, free contraception and abortion for all as part of the struggle against the oppressive sexual patterns of today.

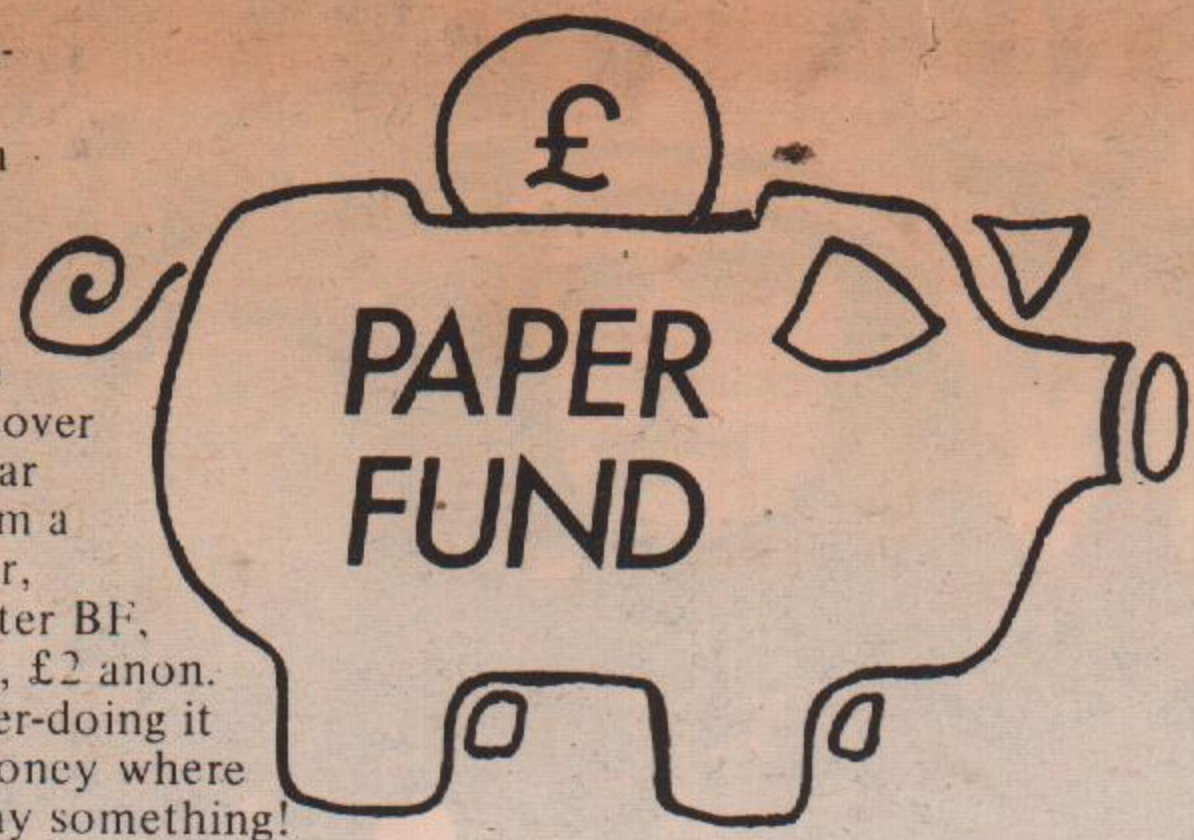
4. No leaflet issued without the name of Big Flame can be taken as representing Big Flame's views.



Against all odds, these young workers have just won themselves a £2 pay rise and union recognition. Their boss, C.W. Rubber, Liverpool, has also re-instated three workers he sacked during their week long strike. Not bad when you consider that only ten workers are employed altogether in this rubber re-cycling firm and the strikers had to mount 24 hour pickets to stop the stuff being carted away. A handling ban imposed by dockers and Dunlop workers helped to win the day.

We need to raise from donations about £55 per month £500 between now and Jan.

1978. Last month, we realise you all had to recover from the New Year blow-out. £3 from a Liverpool member, £5 from Manchester BF, £1 L'Pool readers, £2 anon. reader. £11 is over-doing it a bit! Put your money where your mouth is - say something!



Send donations to 'Paper Fund' Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool 7.

35 days holiday 35 hour week

The strike of ASTMS members at Birmingham University which began last September is now seriously affecting the running of the university. The strikers who have maintained an 18 hour a day picket on all entrances to the university have been able to stop essential supplies like fuel and chemicals needed for the labs. Behind the strike is the refusal of university management to implement the nationally signed 1974 holiday agreement which raised the number of basic holiday days from 15 to 20. The university is arguing that since technicians at Birmingham get more statutory customary days (15) than at other universities they are not prepared to implement the agreement. However, the agreement clearly states that the increase of 5 basic days shall not affect any local agreements which is what the statutory and customary days are.

Dispute

But behind the holidays there is the fact that management of the university is determined to have a go at smashing the ASTMS organisation in order to carry out cuts in (wo)manning levels at a later date. Over the last few years, ASTMS members have been in con-

stant dispute with management and recently an industrial relations officer (McCracken) was appointed to organise management's strategy.

PICKET MEMBERS TALK

How is the picket affecting the running of the university?

The disruption is serious. Some of the lectures have had to be cancelled and most of the practicals. NALGO have signed an agreement with the management that if the temperature is below 60.8 degrees their members can go home on full lay-off pay. The management hope to stop other unions getting involved by saying that 'any attempt to use the Factory Act would be deplored' but they have not had their way over this.

Are you getting the support of workers of other unions?

Yes. The electricians of the EPTU have refused to install the new electric heaters the management bought to compensate for the lack of coal. The NUM is blacking all coal supplies to the university and the T&G drivers are not crossing our

pickets. Of course, the university authorities are encouraging the academic staff and the postgraduate students to scab by bringing things in their cars. We caught one with highly explosive nitrogen gas containers in the car. There would have been a serious explosion if he had had an accident on the way! There is more to the strike than holidays?

The management used to use friendly repression as long as there was no organisation amongst technicians. Now that we are organised they are less 'friendly'. This issue is just one of a long series. For instance, they get our pay in the third week of the month but only pay us in the fourth - in December this means after Christmas. In fact, they loan the money with interest for a week to the Kalamazoo factory down the road - so they are making money out of our wages. So, they refuse to pay us earlier in the month. Our dispute is over holidays,

hours, the job evaluation scheme they want to introduce and the dismissal procedure. And behind all this there is the fact that in the next years, there will be less students coming to the university - so they want to get rid of our jobs.

Manchester

What support are you getting?

We are getting £15 a week strike pay. There is also a divisional levy and contributions to our strike fund are coming in from all over the country. Computer operators in Manchester are blacking work transferred from here. We need that kind of help because the universities are all supporting Birmingham because they know that what happens here is a test case. If we get the 5 days owed us from the national agreement, the 16 other universities who are holding out will have to settle. Ours is a very important struggle.

HOSPITAL CLOSURE RESISTED

Although they'd just finished a hard night's work in the wards and were still in uniform, 8 nurses enthusiastically joined members of Leeds Socialist Women's Group in collecting signatures against the threatened closure of Selby Chest Hospital.

Selby, a small market town in North Yorkshire, has accommodated the 70-bed hospital for some years. Mining areas are notorious for chest complaints, so it's never short of patients, who would face the long journey to one of the big Leeds hospitals, and the prospect of few familiar faces or visits once they got there, should Selby close. Many of its employees - cleaners, ancillary workers, nurses, - are married women living in outlying farms and villages around Selby. A special bus goes round taking them to and from work. Loss of their jobs could mean a permanent loss of income and the chance to get out of their homes, since there's little alternative employment in the area.

Opposition

The Leeds Women's Group first heard of Selby's plight through a member working in hospital administration. The hospital comes under Leeds Area Health Authority at present, but Leeds wants to hand over to Wakefield or North Yorks., neither of whom are likely to take it on. If they refuse, it will close. Hearing of local opposition to the plan, the group went to Selby with leaflets early in January, and encouraged by a good reception, returned in force on Monday 24th to a stall in Selby market where they laid out information and petitions.

With the help of the nurses and other, 1,000 signatures were collected in the first hour and by the end of the day over 2,000 testified to the strong local feeling against the closure of the hospital. The petitions will be handed in to the three Area Health Authorities at their joint meeting in February, and further action depends on their response.

Leeds Socialist Women's Group contact phone no. is Leeds 620953.

COAL BOARD WANTS 20,000 LESS MINERS BY 1980

Early Retirement Deal cheaper for NCB than redundancies

BIG FLAME INTERVIEW

To find out more about the conditions under which the ballot was taken, Big Flame talked to Tommy Delamere, NUM branch secretary at Houghton Main, part of a large colliery near Barnsley. It was at Houghton Main that 5 miners were killed in 1975 in an accident - the inquiry into the accident proved negligence on the part of the NCB.

'It's a bad offer - there is no guarantee it will be implemented. We've voted on something we've no assurances about. In fact, I've been doing the sums and a miner who opts for early retirement at 62 will be worse off than a miner who leaves under the current redundancy agreement - in fact he will be £8 a week worse off.'

Why do you think that the offer was accepted by the miners after they had clearly mandated the leadership to go for retirement at 60 for all miners?

'The leadership have used the tremendous loyalty miners have to the union. Too many miners blindly follow what the leadership recommends. Let's face it, it was a clever offer - it got the support of the underground men with 20 years underground and the support of the old miners who can now retire. It is also very bad that it is the NCB not the government that will have to pay for the scheme - this means that the price of coal will have to go up.

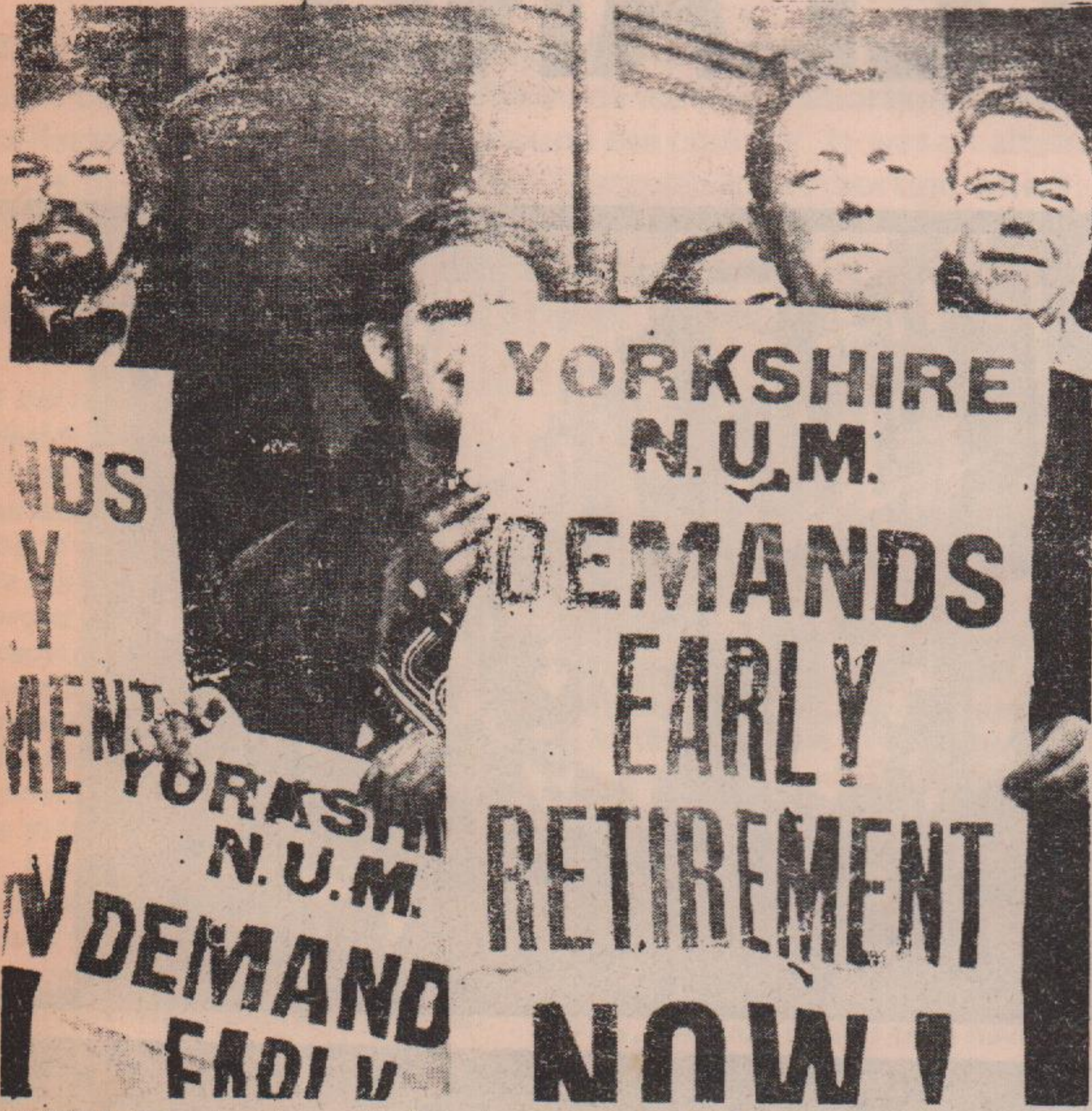
Do you think that during the recent

negotiations there was any discussion about re-introducing a bonus scheme?

No, but you must realise that it is the NUM that is preventing the re-introduction of the bonus. The bonus scheme suits the coal-board down to the ground - it would enable them to close pits. Under a pit bonus system in this area, wages would be much higher in high-yield pits like Selby and Houghton Main. The miners would all leave the smaller pits to go and work in the big ones. Then the NCB would close the smaller pits saying it couldn't get anyone to work there. Right now at Houghton Main, we could do with a hundred more miners but the wages are too low to get men to work at the pits.

You say that there is support amongst the rank and file for the re-introduction of the bonus, but isn't it true that since the introduction of the National Power Loading Agreement which got rid of the bonus, there have been less accidents?

That's true but when you hear of an accident happening you never think of it happening to you - they always happen to someone else. Unless the NUM wins a large increase in the basic wage, there will continue to be support for a bonus scheme. Let's face it: what men go down the pit for is money.



IT WAS their loyalty to their leadership that led a majority of miners to accept the National Coal Board offer of early retirement at 62 for underground workers. Miners voted to accept the offer despite the fact that in November they had voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action unless the NCB conceded retirement at 60 (then 55) for all miners as from January 1977 and including the 30,000 surface workers.

In the recent negotiations, the NUM made concessions to the NCB that are extremely bad for the miners and other workers:-

1. They agreed to exclude surface workers from the settlement. The government was forcing the NCB to insist on this point because it did not want the settlement to act as an encouragement to other workers to demand early retirement. In the offer, the NCB say that they will consider early retirement for surface workers when there is a general movement for early retirement in the country'. But this is so vague as to commit them to nothing. In fact the NUM leadership agreed to abandon 15% of mineworkers (the surface workers) to protect the government

from having to face more and more early retirement claims. They agreed to make the underground workers a special case at the expense of the surface workers - their own members!

2. There is no guarantee that the deal will be implemented. It depends on the outcome of talks over the third stage of the pay policy between the government and the TUC. The NUM leadership has made this 'concession' yet agreements over pensions and retirement are specifically allowed in the current pay policy.

By allowing the NCB to delay any introduction of early retirement they have also given them breathing space: time to plan the rundown of older pits. Because of this delay the NCB does not face the pressure of having to attract large numbers of new recruits immediately with higher wages.

3. Retirement money is based on no more than 80% of average earnings. In their last year - in the pit most men are on low rates. Illness and injury take their toll, so you probably don't work as many shifts as you used to. The NCB are getting their deal cheap.

INTEX OCCUPY SAYS TRADES COUNCIL

INTEX YARNS, a subsidiary of ICI in Ashton-under-Lyne, is threatened with closure. The union officials have been unwilling to support the action committee that has been set up in a situation where there is no clear focal point to resist management's plans, there is the danger that demoralisation will set in and the closure will take place unopposed.

The following letter was written by Tameside Trades Council. It is being distributed by the shop stewards to all the Intex workers.

Dear Colleagues, You might think that the Tameside side Trades Council has so far done little or nothing to help you.

Your Action Committee has been engaged in lengthy talks with top ICI management, the 3 local MPs, the Labour Party and Tameside Council who called a special meeting to discuss your case. What have you done? Overtime is still being worked at the factory - you haven't even supported your Action Committee by attending the Town Hall for the special Council meeting. The old say-

ing 'God helps those who help themselves' is very true in a situation like this.

You, all of you, at Intex are faced with a stark choice. You can accept the redundancy money and live on that until it is spent and then continue on your dole money OR you can get organised and fight. The method of fighting that has worked in the past in other mass redundancy situations is TO OCCUPY YOUR FACTORY and hold it as a bargaining counter. This is the only POWER you have got. ICI wants those CS 12's machines out of Ashton and it is up to you to stop them and bargain about your situation. ONLY YOU CAN DO THIS. You have absolutely nothing to lose.

Until YOU show some fight - the rest of us will continue to watch and sympathise. If you start the fight - we, in the Trade Union movement in Tameside - will back you up. You will only get from this life what you are prepared to fight for. Once you are out of those gates, nothing is going to get you back in again.

(signed) Bert Ellicott
On behalf of the Executive Committee of Tameside Trades Union Council.

Black workers want

An end to sweat shop

23rd week of Grunwick Film Processing strike

THE STRIKE for union recognition of the Grunwick film processing workers is now 6 months old.

The issue is quite simple - the Asian and West Indian workers want a union so that they have the strength to fight conditions like

- £25 for a 35 hour week for office workers.
- £28 for a 40 hour week for process workers.
- compulsory overtime.

When ACAS (the government arbitration body) was brought in to ballot the workers, the comment of the managing director was 'ACAS can only ballot workers, and the strikers are not workers, because we have sacked them.'

The strikers are maintaining the picket and main suppliers of the company like Kodak are being forced by their workers to stop supplying Grunwick.

However, since the company does most of its trade through the post, the action of the postal workers (UPW) that stopped the mail order work was very important. Now that the law (after the National Association for Freedom had taken the case to court) has forced the UPW to lift its ban on Grunwick, things are much more difficult for the strikers. As the Strike Committee Bulletin says:

'The eyes of millions of unorganised workers and their employers are on this dispute. So too are the eyes of the immigrant community. All bar one of the strikers are Asian or West Indian. We say that, if the commitment of our movement to the end of exploitation and the fight against racialism means anything, we cannot be allowed to be isolated and defeated, a defeat would be a severe setback for the whole movement and for the confidence of black workers in it.

We are more than grateful for everything that Len Murray and the TUC have done for us. But now, in the 23rd week of our epic struggle, we need your help more than ever.

1. We need the full support of the TUC to ensure that the company recognises our union and takes back all those who have been on strike.
2. We need your pressure on ACAS and the Secretary of State for Emplo-



Grunwick workers picket photographic shops to stop using the processing at Grunwick's

Michael Sheridan (IFL)

colour. With your support, slave labour at Grunwick can be ended and justice for sweat shop workers won!

Messages of support and donations to Grunwick Strike Committee, c/o Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 High Road, London N.W. 10.

ment to ensure that the ACAS recommendation is made at its next meeting on February 9th.

3. We need your continuing support through the TUC and your unions in respect of finance, publicity and the backing of any dealings with Grunwick or its subsidiaries, Cooper and Perason, Bonuspool and True-



PEOPLE NEED HOMES -NOT WASTELAND



THE BATTLE OF ST. AGNES PLACE — TENANTS AND SQUATTERS UNITE

The South London borough of Lambeth has got a big housing problem. There are over 17,000 families on the council housing list, and the number of homeless people is high. Last year it spent £½ million on bed and breakfast accommodation for Homeless families. Yet, last month it tried to demolish 26 large houses, capable of housing 73 homeless families, and turn them into 'temporary grassed areas.' So began the latest stage in the now well-known 'battle of St. Agnes Place.'

The Labour-controlled council's plans, however, backfired in more ways than one.

A campaign by Lambeth tenants associations, neighbourhood councils and squatters groups has so far prevented the demolition plans going ahead.

The demolition plans have created a major split in the Labour group on Lambeth council, and the controlling right-wing has suffered a major defeat from within the local Labour Party.

The fight to save St. Agnes Place looks like providing a major focus for a much larger campaign against Lambeth council's housing policies.

St. Agnes Place, with 49 houses, runs between two parks. The council's plan was to demolish it completely and turn it into landscaped open space. The main problem is that it doesn't have the cash to do this until the 1980's. As a result, houses capable of being rehabilitated would have become closed-off grassed areas for the next five or so years.

This crazy policy was nevertheless confirmed at the Housing Committee meeting last month. Then began a series of secret meetings between council leaders, the police and demolition contractors. These took place even behind the backs of most councillors. On January 19th demolition gangs and hundreds of police moved in to start wrecking work. Despite attempts by people squatting in surrounding houses in the street, the demolition gangs moved into empty house houses.

Then began the series of complicated legal wrangles which are still going on. Before the demolition men had managed to partly wreck more than 14 houses, a group of local residents had taken out a high court injunction against the demolition. At the same time pressure was building up within the Labour group on the council against the demolition plans and in a major victory for the 'Labour left',

the Labour group's commitment to demolition was reversed.

Not to be outmanoeuvred, the defeated Labour leadership 'called in' a Greater London Council district surveyor, who has now served the council with a Dangerous Structure Notice, suggesting that eight of the partly wrecked house should be demolished to first floor level, and a further four should have their roofs taken off. Lambeth's Labour leaders have, of course, denied any connection between themselves and the GLC surveyor. Nonetheless, despite the new no-demolition policy, they have, as we go to press, applied for a lifting of the high court injunction to enable them to carry out the surveyor's suggestions.

SQUATTING SCAPEGOAT

To people outside Lambeth it must seem like something of a storm in a tea-cup. Why should either local people or the council get so steamed up about 26 houses? The answer is that the 'battle of St. Agnes Place' is only the most recent in a long line of major battles between Lambeth Council and local squatters and tenants. To local tenants St. Agnes Place is one more example of the council's indifference to the housing problems of the area. To the council, the street represents yet another attempt by squatters to mess up its tidy plans for redeveloping Lambeth.

Back in the 1960's, during Wilson's 'white-hot technological revolution', Lambeth's leading councillors laid out plans for the borough. For them socialism meant the 'technological revolution' and locally this meant planning. As the 60's turned into the 70's, however, these councillors saw their plans dissolve before their eyes. The planning didn't work. In their search for a scapegoat they turned on the squatters. Squatting, they said, had messed up their plans.

The real problem, of course, was that the plans had little connection with most people's needs. It is this that has now split the Labour group. Older councillors, from ten years or so ago, are still largely committed to their vision of 'planned social change'. A new, younger generation of councillors, plus a few older left-wingers, have latched onto the deteriorating housing situation as a stick to beat the entrenched leadership.

People in St. Agnes Place are somewhat cynical about this support. Some councillors, certainly, are genuine socialists, but many, it's suspect-

ed, are simply jumping on a bandwagon in the hope of furthering their careers. Nevertheless the split in the Labour group represents an important defeat for the right wing and leaves the 'left' with more influence than it's had for some time. What they'll do with it remains to be seen.

SQUATTERS AND TENANTS

But much more important than manoeuvres in the council chamber, is the growing unity between squatters and local council tenants, that has been forged over the future of St. Agnes Place.

Squatters in St. Agnes Place have been backed by surrounding neighbourhood councils, tenants from neighbouring council estates, the trades council and the local branch of the T&GWU. In turn, people in St. Agnes Place plan to back local tenants in a campaign against recently announced rent rises and increased repair charges. There are plans for a public meeting to get the campaign under-way. It may possibly create some badly needed unity in Lambeth.

NORTH PADDINGTON PROPERTY SCANDAL

In one area of London alone, 2,500 flats and houses lie empty, 953 of them for at least the last 18 months. These are the results of a survey carried out in North Paddington by the campaign against empty property.

At a time of growing homelessness, the Campaign demands that the council takes out compulsory purchase orders (CPO) to deal with the worst cases. But the Tory council has so far only got around to putting a CPO on one house after it had stood vacant for 13 years.

Apart from publicising the empty property scandal with sters and press statements, the campaign wants to exchange information and ideas from tenants and other groups around the country.

You can contact them at
WE-PAC
3 Croxley Rd.
London W9

FORGET THE TRUTH IF THE BOSSES SAY IT'S RIGHT, IT'S RIGHT

In a recent issue of 'Big Flame', we wrote about how Jack Sprung, a militant steward at the British Leyland Canley plant had been dismissed by management during the 'work-in' last April. Last month, Jack Sprung's appeal was heard and not surprisingly the Tribunal ruled in favour of management.

What is important about the case is not that the decision went against a militant - but the argument used by the Tribunal to ratify management's action. Citing the case of *Ferodo v Barnes*, the Tribunal ruled that it was not necessary for the reasons the employers gave for dismissing Jack Sprung to be true. All that was necessary was for the Tribunal to be satisfied that 'the employers had, at the time of dismissal, reasonable grounds for believing that the offence put against the applicant was in fact committed'. So, this means that dismissal is justified as long as it is 'reasonable' for management to think they have grounds for dismissal. **Whether their grounds are true or not is irrelevant! IT'S RIGHT IF MANAGEMENT THINK IT'S RIGHT!**

The incident for which Jack Sprung was dismissed took place on the 14th April, management notified the convenor of its intention to dismiss Jack on the 16th and he was dismissed on the 23rd **without having been informed of the charges against him.** This was because the convenor did not inform Jack of the charges against him. The Tribunal ruled that management had discharged its duty of giving 6 days notice of the charges and that it was not their fault that the union official had not informed Mr. Sprung. Since both the management and the union full-time officials both had a lot to gain by getting rid of Jack, it is not surprising that they worked together in his dismissal.

Despite the advice of management and the convenor, Griffin, Canley is one of the few Leyland plants that rejected the participation scheme that the company is still desperate to introduce. With militants like Jack Sprung out of the way, management hope to get acceptance of participation second time around. Right now with a succession of stoppages at Canley, management need participation more than ever.

The song 'Jack Sprung and Leylands Five Percent' was written by Coventry workers. It is sung to the tune of 'Charles Docherty'.

*Oh, we are all car workers
and Jack Sprung's my name
We work at Leyland of
state ownership fame,
John Cooper, Dave Suckling,
Geof Parker and more,
Fought the five percent
speed up from the shop floor.*

*Oh, this vexed the bosses,
they locked up the tools,
Took out the track fuses
and broke their own rules,
We undid their foul deeds,
we got working the track,
On the fourteenth of April,
Leyland workers struck back.*

*With the aid of their mafia,
the company won,
Put me to a tribunal,
false tales they spun,
It is a victimisation,
the facts they denied,
Bosses Hunt and Swain lied
and they lied and they lied.*

*Don't go to tribunals,
get workers support,
Organise smash the bosses
and mafia's rapport,
Democracy, direction,
a class conscious van,
We're a power for justice
in British Leyland.*

*Of management lackies,
workers take heed
Don't fall for their patter,
watch out for their greed,
Of political spivs
who in Parliament abound
Tear down their platform
and build on the ground.*

*Let's create a new party
that's true working class,
And drag ourselves out
of this bourgeois morass,
They won't give us privilege
to us at a stroke,
We must struggle on till the
system is broke.*

*So gather round workers
of class consciousness,
United with Lenin
we'll sort out the mess,
Let us all get together
in one bloody great throng,
That's the only sure way
that we'll right all that's wrong.*

ABORTION TRIBUNAL

TO PUBLICISE EVIDENCE ABOUT ABORTION FACILITIES FINDS:

This month the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) held a tribunal in London to publicise all the evidence about abortion facilities collected by NAC groups all around the country. It was an alternative to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Abortion which is entirely made up of anti-abortion MPs.

This select committee's restrictive proposals have been included in the latest attack on women's rights, the Benyon bill.

'I did manage to get a National Health abortion from my GP. It took a long time. . . there were a lot of unnecessary delays. Since then I've found out that it was given because he thought that his black patients 'breed much faster' and so he was ready to give me an abortion. Also he came out in favour of Keith Joseph's proposals about the working class. We also know that he doesn't give white women abortions or the pill because he thinks they ought to stay at home.'

Evidence like this, from Gail Lewis of West London, and much more about the suffering women face through unwanted pregnancies was given recently at the NAC tribunal.

THE LAW AT THE MOMENT

At the moment in Britain abortions are available under the 1967 Abortion Act. Provided two doctors agree, a woman can have an abortion if:-

a) continuing the pregnancy involves a greater risk to her life than an abortion. Or

b) continuing the pregnancy involves a greater risk of injury to her physical health or mental health than an abortion. Or

c) continuing the pregnancy involves greater risk of injury to the

physical or mental health of the existing children in the family than an abortion. Or

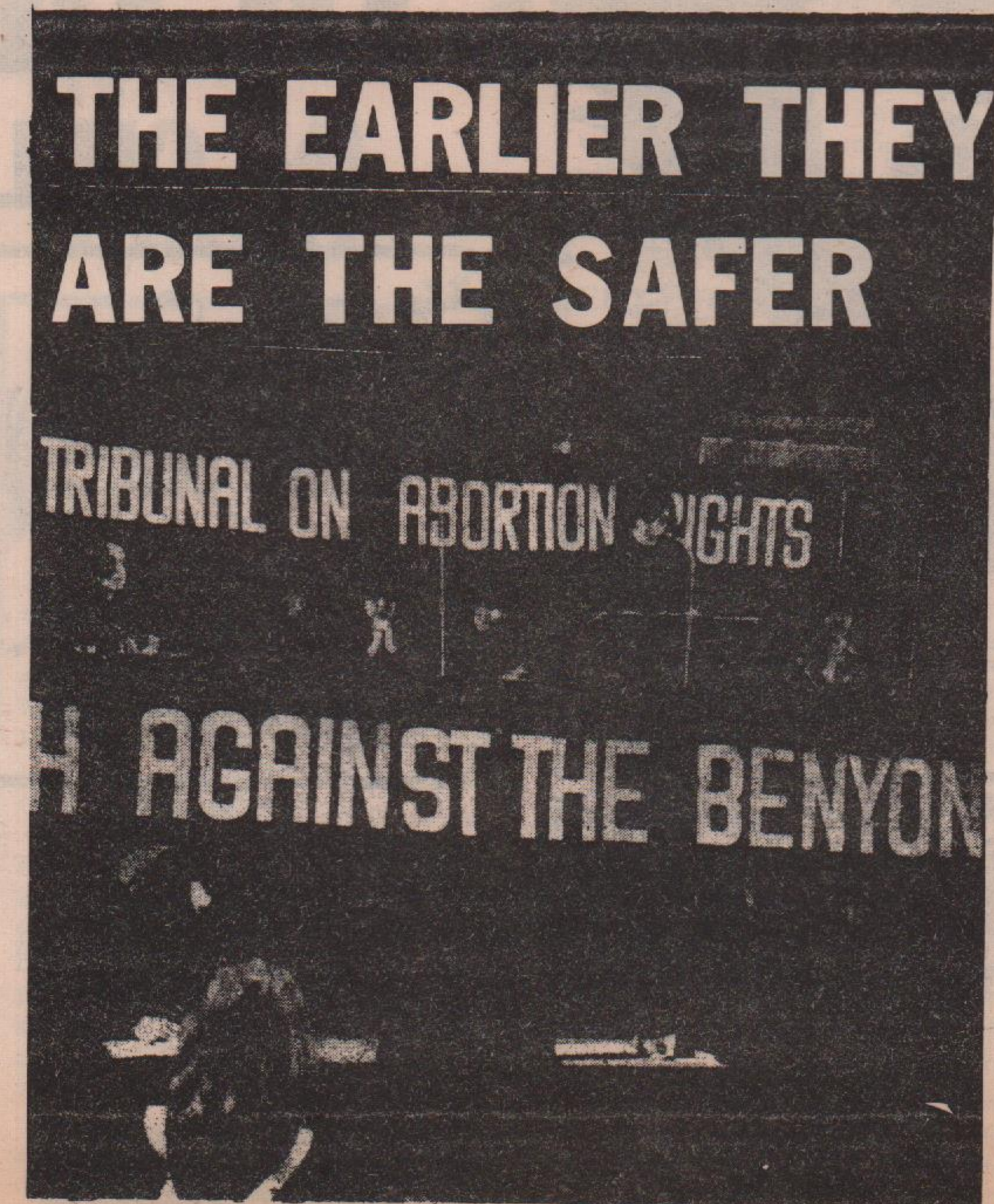
d) there is substantial risk that the child will be born seriously deformed. So it's still doctors who decide whether a woman continues an unwanted pregnancy. Many doctors won't agree, so lots of women have to go to private clinics like the BPAS and scrape up the money somehow. Even when an NHS abortion is allowed, there are still lots of delays and women are often made to feel guilty about it all. Abortions should not be delayed - the earlier they are the safer they are. Up to 12 weeks pregnancy, abortion is safer than having your tonsils out.

People must understand that the threat is real, that the fight is on. Battle must be waged.

Peter Huntingford

OTHER COUNTRIES

Speakers came from Ireland, France, Belgium, Italy, Chile and the United States to tell of the struggle of women against religious and moral pressure groups, against prosecutions, against



the results of backstreet abortions and for the right to control their own bodies. These women need to come to England while they cannot get abortions in their own countries. We must stop any attempts to restrict foreign women from coming here.

SOUTHERN IRELAND - NO CONTRACEPTION, NO ABORTIONS!

If you try to get an abortion in Southern Ireland, you could face a life sentence in jail. But the sale or distribution of contraceptives is also illeg-

al there, so many women face enormous hardships. 2,500 women women have to come each year to English abortion clinics.

THE NORTH OF IRELAND

The church also has a strong hold in the north of Ireland. Although contraception is legal, the 1967 Abortion Act does not apply. Pregnant women who have been raped or who already have up to 10 children have been refused when they've asked for an abortion.

IN BRITAIN

Speakers made it clear that abortion facilities in Britain are inadequate and unevenly spread.

Cardiff. While a brand new clinic remains closed, one thousand women a year are sent to Swansea for abortions in Victorian conditions. Many of them have to go back to hospital.

Liverpool. 69 out of 100 women have to find the money for a private abortion. Sometimes they have to get loans which take ages to pay back. Women in **Birmingham** also depend on local charitable agencies.

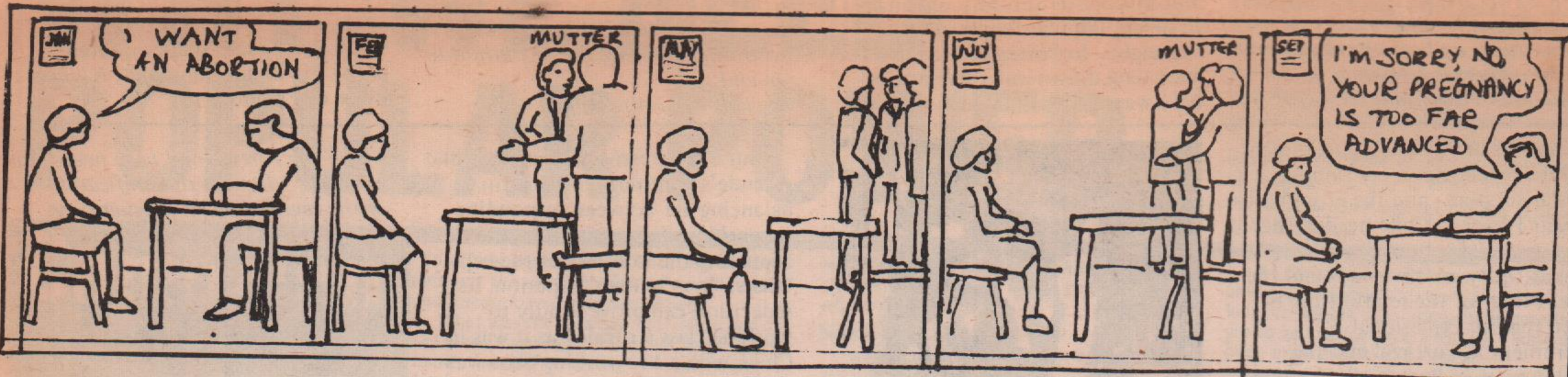
In **Camden** a survey of local doctors found one who didn't even know that an abortion law exists!

Glasgow offers the worst abortion facilities in the country, yet it also has the worst housing, the highest rates of deprivation and deaths. Abortions have been refused even in cases of probable deformity.

THE FIGHT BACKS

London. The Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital for women which used to provide an abortion service has been run down and now the authorities are trying to close it. Now workers are occupying the hospital to stop it being closed.

Nottingham. A day care abortion service has been going for 4 years. Soon a purpose built centre will be opened. Women are now getting safer, simpler abortions and waiting lists have fallen.



The National Abortion Campaign is fighting for 'free abortion on demand' and 'a woman's right to choose'. There will be a march to a lobby of Parliament on Thursday Feb. 24th 1977. Assemble 6p.m. Bressenden Place (near Victoria Station). Rally 7.30 p.m. Central Hall Westminster. NAC Conference, March 19-20th. National demonstration May 14th.

Day Care - The Answer

One of the most significant facts I learned from the Tribunal was how simple an abortion could be, given the right facilities. I had always thought of abortion as an 'operation' with anaesthetics, operating tables and a long time in bed to recover. As women demanding day care abortions, it is important that we understand what we are demanding and the implications of that demand economically, morally and health-wise.

Firstly, it is useful to know the terminology used. **Menstrual regulation**, also known as menstrual extraction, interception, menstrual induction, has been known about for a hundred years. It simply means emptying the uterus within 10 to 14 days of the first missed period. It can be done with or without a local anaesthetic.

This method is obviously the safest, least upsetting method of abortion. Unfortunately, there are few day care services available on the NHS. If you live in London, Nottingham, Bristol or Sheffield, your prospect of having an early termination is greater than the rest of us living elsewhere. You have to be in the right place at the right time, and know the right grapevine. Such is the unevenness of the current abortion service. It is a fact that the majority of women seek advice on abortion early on in their pregnancies - 85% within 6-7 weeks. Alas,

these women may have to wait many valuable weeks until they find the service they so desperately need.

As the pregnancy progresses the technique changes. For abortions up to 12 weeks the procedure used is known as **vacuum aspiration**. This is a similar technique to menstrual regulation except that the neck of the womb is dilated or opened.

Once the pregnancy is over 16 weeks, the most common technique used is the administration of a drug to the patient making her womb contract and push out the foetus.

The operation is only performed on women who are particularly desperate. One wonders how many women have to go through this process because they cannot find a sympathetic doctor - women who know very early on that they're pregnant but who are faced with a succession of doctors who drag their feet and obstruct the woman from having a service she needs.

Perhaps it is clear now that when we demand day care abortion we are demanding access to a procedure which would take up an hour of our time and five minutes of the doctor's. What could be simpler?

Alas, since the 1967 Abortion Act, few area health authorities have put money into abortion services. Because most NHS abortion techniques demand hospitalisation, the cost per patient is £80. The cost of a day care abortion would be £32. Pro-

fessor Peter Huntingford of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, a keen supporter of a woman's right to choose, estimates that the NHS spends £5 m on abortions. That £5m satisfies the needs of half the women seeking abortions. Given the comparative cheapness of day care abortions, the NHS could meet the needs of all women seeking abortions for £3½m. Huntingford continues to explode the myth that money blocks the NHS from providing a good service by pointing out that if five abortions per day were carried out by each area health authority the total need would be met.

DAY CARE ABORTION
Cost is not a constraint, it is the attitudes of MPs, GPs and the DHSS.
Peter Huntingford [Tribunal]

If a woman has access to an abortion the minute she knows she is pregnant, she is protected from the pain, both mental and physical, normally associated with abortion. Incidentally, easy abortion is not being used as a substitute for contraception, because abortion does carry greater risks than good contraceptive methods. It should be regarded as a facility to be used when contraception has failed.

BENYON - A Name to Remember

William Benyon is a Tory MP, sponsoring a parliamentary bill which will further restrict the right of women to control their own bodies. If his anti-abortion bill is passed it will be even more difficult for women to have free, legal abortions because:-

* **The upper limit would be reduced from 28 weeks to 20 weeks.** This gives women even less time to find a sympathetic doctor in a NHS service which is uneven throughout the country - too bad if you are not in the right place at the right time. . .

* **At least one of the two doctors authorising the abortion should have been qualified for five years.**

* **The two doctors should not practice in the same clinic.** This would have a damning effect on the charitable clinics who provide a service for 50% of women seeking abortions.

* **The advice agencies should be separated from the clinics.** This is another attack on the charitable sector who depend on the income from performing abortions to provide a counselling service.

Police would be allowed access to clinic records. Patient confidentiality would be destroyed. An anti-abortionist could complain to the police of malpractice in an abortion clinic, the police could see the patient's record, contact her family, her GP. Fear of exposure will be yet another inhibiting factor for a woman seeking an abortion.

The Benyon Bill could wipe out the gains of the 1967 Abortion Act - return to backstreet butchers?

This bill is due soon to come up for its second reading in Parliament. We must organise a mass independent movement which will defend a woman's right to choose. The National Abortion Campaign is in the forefront of this campaign. It needs the support of everyone who regards abortion on demand as a basic right and who sees abortion laws as yet another weapon to oppress women.



FIRST STEP TO SOCIALISM POPULAR POWER IN CHILE & PORTUGAL

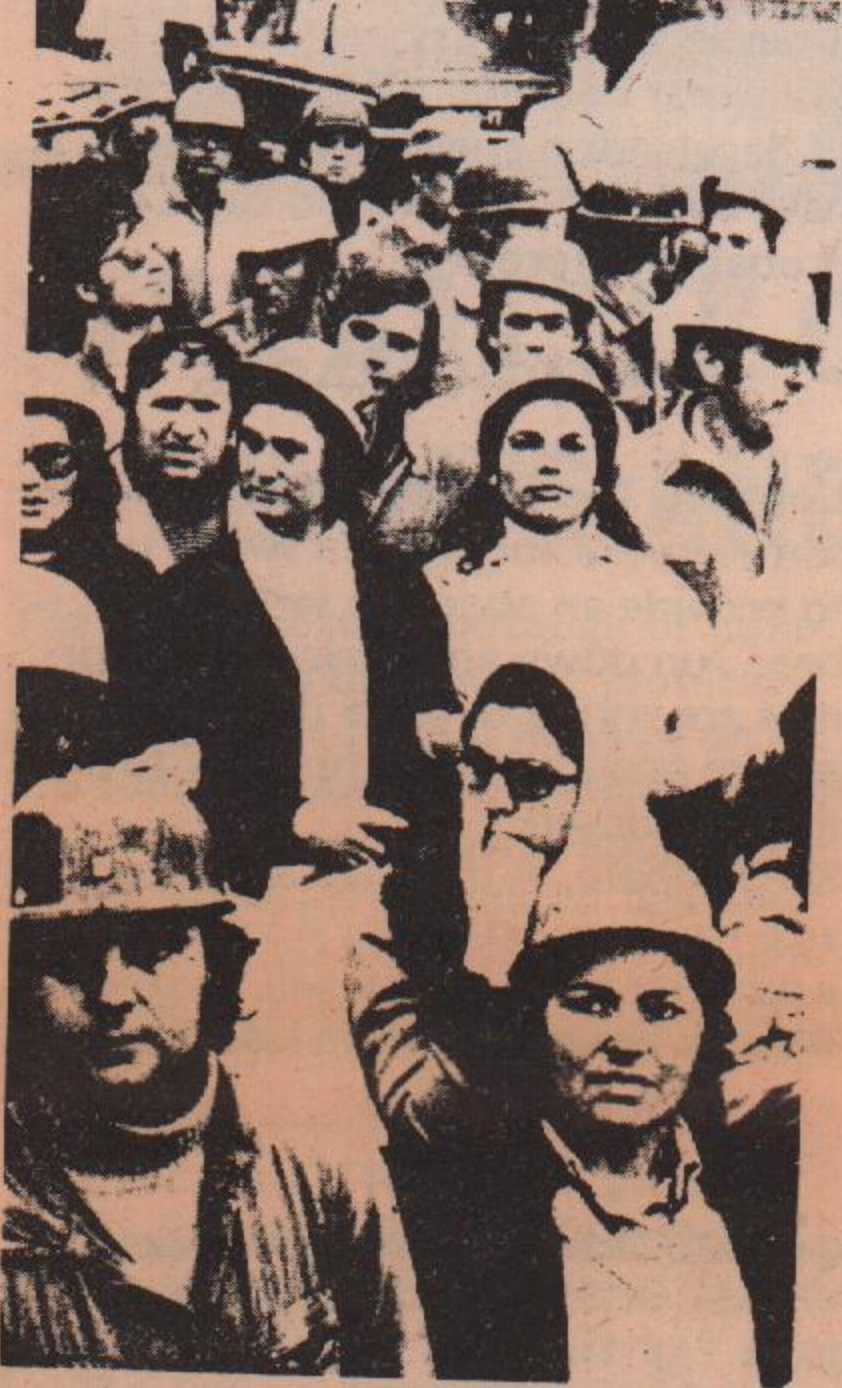


Always the prelude to the overthrow of capitalism has been popular power. When the bosses are growing weaker and when the working class is gaining in strength and confidence: that's when it happens.

When the capitalists withdraw their services, engineer food shortages and at the same time menace the workers with the army, then the working class starts to build its own state and to take hold of the economy..

Factories, farms and offices are occupied and taken over by the workers. The students take over the schools and colleges. The black market and rising prices are banished by taking over the shops and distribution system. And a workers' army is set up as a defence against the bosses forces.

Some or all of these things happened in Chile in 1970-73, in Portugal 1974-5, in France in May 1968, in Hungary during the 1956 uprising against the Soviet Union, in Spain in 1936, in Paris at the time of the Commune of 1871, and in Russia in 1905 and 1917.



SETTING UP WORKERS COUNCILS

The first step, and this went further in Chile than anywhere else in recent times, is to bring all the different sections of the working class together into one democratic organisation: the workers council, or soviet or workers assembly. The assembly has to carry out a lot of practical tasks: it has to take over the job of government.

The problems facing an assembly in Chile were described by a member of MAPU, a left-wing party: *'We have to set up defence committees inside the factories, to check all the trucks which transport the workers. To give priority to urgent journey, and get all the drivers and car owners on the road, under protection. Power industry workers*

have to be involved in the decisions about who gets petrol and fuel and who doesn't. In the shanty-towns, there are some immediate threats to be faced. Certain basic foodstuffs have got to be rationed so that stocks can be built up for emergencies. Shopkeepers who take part in the bosses' sabotage have to be cut off from supplies.

BATTLE FOR THE ARMY

But none of this can happen unless Popular Power has a solution to the problem of the state power of the capitalists. They know that all is lost unless they can take back by force what they have lost. In Chile, a bloody counter-revolution managed to defeat Popular Power almost overnight: In Portugal, the job has been long drawn-out. The bosses have waged a war of attrition to de-

moralise the working class.

So how can the threat of the bosses' army be overcome. Certainly not as was done in Chile by hoping, as did President Allende and the Communist Party, that the army could be relied on to stay out of politics. In Portugal it was easier. Whole regiments moved sharply to the left. Even that wasn't enough -

'An army can't be transformed from the inside. The commanders want strict respect for bourgeois authority. But the soldiers, the sergeants, the left-wing officers will fight for their rights.

They have a clear working class perspective - they are fighting for the building of mass meetings in the barracks and of people's education brigades (vital in a rural society with a lot of illiteracy). They want to confront the people in power who want to bring the revolution to an end.

This will only happen if our

struggle is linked to the struggle of



the workers committees, and the struggles in the towns and the villages. Only an alliance between the grass-roots organs of popular power and the soldiers organised in their regiments will change the structure of the army.'

(A Portuguese soldier quoted in the Big Flame pamphlet, A Blaze of Freedom.)

GOVERNMENTS AND POWER

In the past the great revolutionary movements of the working class rose up in or around world wars. The Bolshevik revolution took place during the First World War, and the greatest period of working class struggle in this country was between 1917-20. This was no accident. Those were times when the ruling class was weak, divided; when the working class sensed this and when the experience of war had forced them to consider radical social change. And above all, those were the times when workers, in their thousands, were armed.

But today there's no such thing. How can the working class find the confidence and belief in itself to take on and challenge the might of the state and the international armies of the ruling class?

Chile and Portugal are two vital experiences on this. In Chile there could be popular power because there was a popular government. Not a socialist government. But a government so tied to the masses that it gave them room to take up their struggles and create the popular power. The Allende government disorganised the bourgeois state and gave the mass movement the encouragement and confidence to go forward.

Similarly in Portugal. The existence of the left-wing Armed Forces Movement in those early days was the only reason why the Portuguese workers and soldiers could organise as they did. Like in Chile, the AFM meant the temporary freezing of ruling class power.

Often in an argument between revolutionaries, it is either a question of supporting Popular Power or supporting a progressive government but this is an absurd polarisation

The success of Allende's government in Chile depended on continuing popular support - and the growth of Popular Power in Chile needed the space provided it by Allende's Popular Unity government - and the same is true for the relationship between the 6th Provisional government in Portugal and the development of Popular Power there. The Allende government provided a legal frame-work which workers and peasants used to occupy factories and plantations. In some situations the occupations brought into existence the laws, in others it was the laws that facilitated the occupations.

'We are not saying that the government is not useful. In fact, today we managed to requisition and supervise all the lorries in the commune: this act is in opposition to the ruling class but supports the government.

THE PEOPLE AWAKE

HOW THEY BUILT POPULAR POWER IN PORTUGAL AND CHILE

Two pamphlets from Big Flame *Chile Si!* and *Blaze of Freedom* 40p each including postage from Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

But there have been times when to go against the ruling class, we had to go against the government because it was restrained by certain inhibitions while for us it is a matter of class struggle.

Anyway, I don't agree with the comrade: these things haven't happened because the present government is in power. The government was elected by a class which is in the middle of evolving and now that class has more maturity. The fact that the repression was stopped was not due to any government decision.



The comrade said the mayor gave orders which weren't obeyed.... it is a question of the balance of forces. We chased the Mobile Patrol Group to the hills and there were wounded. Peasants came out to defend their companions thought they were not part of the mobilization. They managed to catch some policemen and threw them into a neighbouring canal.

It is the strength of the class which has done that, which seems to be perfectly clear to all of us. If the government does not bend more often (to bourgeois pressure) then it is thanks to this strength. The deeper reason for all this is class consciousness: it is the class which progresses and creates conditions which allow the government to advance. If we relied on the government alone, I think we would have been blocked ages ago.'

POPULAR POWER AND THE PARTY

But a progressive government like Allende's continues to perform a balancing act between responding to working class aspirations and not alienating the interests of the capitalists. In a 'crunch' situation, its indecision can prove deadly to working class struggle - as it was in Chile, where the working class was unprepared for the attack of the counter-revolution.

Starting with the relationship between the Soviets and the Bolshevik Party in 1917, relations between Popular Power organisations and revolutionary organisations have been turbulent. In different historical situations, members of Popular Power organs have seen revolutionary organisations as out to manipulate them and revolutionary organisations have dismissed Popular Power organs as parochial, local committees without a firm revolutionary perspective.

Most of the fault in this historical antagonism lies with revolutionary organisations who have been unable to see that the development of Popular Power is only the beginning of the building of the power of the masses. And their attempt to divert this process into 'party-building' has cost the revolutionary movement dearly. Instead of providing these organisations of popular power with a strategy and perspective towards national co-ordination and centralisation, political organisations, like the Communist Party and UDP in Portugal, have tried to use them to their own ends. As we wrote in Big Flame Journal 2 about the popular period in Portugal: *'There was only one way in*

which the Party could have been constituted: through the unification of the revolutionary vanguards on the basis of a clear programme for the seizure of power.'



LIMITS OF POPULAR POWER

The organisations of popular power develop locally - they tend to represent the interests of only one sector of the working class. In historical situations, the local committees have not been able to unite the working class either geographically or politically. To unify the working class, a political organisation of a different type is needed. When popular power and a revolutionary party or parties have been interlocked, as in Russia 1917 - the Soviets and the Bolshevik Party - and in Cuba 1958 - the 26th July Movement and the revolutionary committees in the cities - the revolution has been successful. The lesson is clear - it is up to us to learn it.



The involvement of women has been an important aspect of Popular Power today.

BRITISH LEFT IN CRISIS

In next month's Big Flame you can read a report on the three day Popular Power Festival organised by the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee and the Chile Solidarity Campaign Cultural Committee.

The Festival, (on February 18th-20th at Conway Hall, London) aims to bring together the experience of Popular Power in Chile and Portugal and compare it to what's happening in Britain. Above all, it will be looking at the cultural side of Popular Power. There will be plays and films and discussion.

One of the lessons we can learn here about what happened in Chile is the importance of building revolutionary mass media to reply to the bosses. But, less obviously, the Portuguese and Chilean socialists have shown how song and theatre can become useful weapons in class warfare.

We hope that the Festival will be a good opportunity for militants of every political tendency to talk about how to advance Popular Power, especially in Britain today.

(Details of the Festival from PWCC, 12 Little Newport Street, London WC1.)

What does popular power mean in Britain today? For us it means fighting for:-

- * Independent self-organisation of the working class. Organisations built in the heart of struggle that can carry the fight beyond the traditional structures and are willing to do so.
- * Full involvement of all sectors in leading their own struggles. Too often lack of involvement leads to defeat, as leaders get isolated or struggles in a factory are not spread to the community around, and vice versa.
- * Clear anti-capitalist policies, based on the needs of the mass of the people, not outworn formulas developed outside the unfolding of class struggle and consciousness.

NEED FOR ALTERNATIVE

We have only to look around us and see how the working class is generally on the retreat in the face of the crisis to grasp the importance of a popular power perspective. Our struggles in Britain have been crippled by too much dependence on traditional organisations and ideas. We have seen the trade union leaders, right and left, capitulate. But many sectors have been so used to relying on these leaders that they've not been able to pose an alternative and resist the retreat. The anger and militancy of the British working class is there. What is absent is the means and tradition of developing its own power and organisation.

THE LEFT

The revolutionary left should be consistently posing these alternatives, but often does not. In practice much of the left gives little emphasis to developing independent organisation and mass involvement. Instead it spends most of the time building its own organisations. There is nothing wrong with recruiting, but it's often done at the expense of time put into building wider working class power. Initiatives over the cuts, racism and many other issues are often cut short by sectarian attitudes and heavy handed interventions.

Another weakness apparent on the left is that it spends too much time buried deep inside the union structures and also for some - the Labour Party. The result is that less initiatives are taken amongst the mass of the working class. Because, despite what some might think, the union structures and the Labour Party are not identical with the working class: especially often ignored sectors like housewives and indeed many women in industry. One of the great lessons of popular power is that it can only be built on the power of the whole of the class.

LIMITATION

The limitations of the normal approach can be shown by looking at the anti-cuts committees. Many are paper bodies linking dormant union delegates. They degenerate into talking shops incapable of mass action. Yet the illusion is often kept up that such bodies are representative of all that could be involved in the struggle. The committees need to be open to activists as well as delegates, users of services as well as workers in them. The potential power this could unleash was shown in the national demonstration against the cuts and the recent Hemel Hempstead hospital march.

BIG FLAME

The forces that could push for a popular power perspective in Britain are relatively weak compared to Portugal, Italy, France. We think Big Flame represents the most organised and conscious expression of this tendency for the development of a mass politics. But we are only part of a wider tendency. For historical reasons those activists who agree with and work within such a perspective have not come together in a large general organisation. Instead they are fragmented into a number of local groups, autonomous movements, cultural activities and in traditional left wing groups.

NEW ORGANISATION

Realising that Big Flame alone cannot bring together this tendency, we are now committed to a new initiative. Our last conference decided to investigate the possibilities of forming a new revolutionary organisation that would bring together the many fragmented militants and groupings working in similar ways in different areas of activity. This will obviously require a great deal of discussion and political clarification to test whether there could be a politically unified basis for a new organisation and on the character of such a political tendency on the left.

MANIFESTO

In the coming months Big Flame will be contacting militants and circulating a manifesto for discussion. If you are interested we will send copies of the documents and set up meetings to discuss this and any other issues. The Popular Power Conference provides a unique forum for debating many of the political issues which are at the heart of building a revolutionary movement in Britain today. We intend to take that opportunity.

WHY WE NEED POPULAR POWER

Campaign for More Jobs & Less Work

'You'll not get anywhere until this division amongst the working class of employed and unemployed is broken down.'

That was the message that came out of the seven showings of the film 'Unemployment, the Gaffers' Strike' in the South Yorkshire area. If all the meetings arranged in the national tour go like those in Sheffield, Barnsley and Rotherham, then the tour will have achieved its purpose - a national investigation into the possibility of setting up a campaign on the lines of 'Less workload for the employed - more jobs for the unemployed'.

S. YORKS COALFIELD

The meeting in Barnsley, in the heart of the South Yorks. coalfield, commented mainly on the question of the mines and early retirement:

'Early retirement was supposed to be a way of making more jobs, but the way things are with wages and conditions so bad there's nobody wants to know about the pit. We're going to have to pay for this

retirement deal through higher productivity and harder work. We've got nowt out of the Coal Board...'

SHEFFIELD

At the meeting in central Sheffield a guest speaker from the National Committee of the Right to Fuel Campaign spoke of the need to prevent cut offs of people unable to pay fuel bills: 'A warm, well lit home is everybody's right. It's up to the government to provide that service.'

A bloke who had grown up through the thirties talked about the 'scrounger campaign' that went on then; turning working class people against each other:

'Everyone is in this together, and we've got together to get what we want.'

Workers from Laycocks (a GKN subsidiary) said that GKN had hardly ever given redundancy money - yet the workforce was shrinking all the time.

'If they want to get rid of people they just move them on to a bad job where you can't earn much money. After a few weeks or months of being messed around people just leave of their own accord.'

At the meeting at Manor Top, Sheffield, amongst council estates people from the local claimants union and single parent group agreed to work with Big Flame on joint initiatives in the future.

Student meetings at Richmond College, Sheffield University and the Polytechnic provided good discussions about what future there was after college. Medical students, trainee teachers etc were only too aware of the unemployment or boring, routine work they faced after they got their 'qualifications'.

ROTHERHAM

A guest speaker in Rotherham, a steward from International Harvester (Doncaster) spoke of the myth of 'investment'. Investment today doesn't go into creating jobs, but destroying them. New machinery such as numerical control tools are being introduced to save labour. Technology we would welcome if it were under our control, but as it stands it's just being used to keep the working class on its knees

MANCHESTER

The last meeting was in Ashton-u-Lyne where the presence of workers from the threatened Intex factory (see page 3) gave the meeting a direct focus. At the meeting it was decided to take initiatives to resist the closure. Not helped by the blizzards, the meetings in Manchester were not well attended - but in all of them there were good discussions as to how to carry forward the fight against unemployment.

UNITED CAMPAIGN

Building a campaign around unemployment, however, needs more than films and good discussions. Few people had answers as to how to fight. Others were cynical about the left - its splits and internal wrangling. But the film tour is showing that these divisions can be broken down. Big Flame is clear on this: we are trying to build a campaign that breaks through sectarian divisions. People from claimants unions, the Right to Fuel Campaign, Socialist Workers Party and Communist Party came to our meetings as well as unaligned people who just wanted to get on with something. We hope that we can follow up the tour with joint activities.

BIG FLAME IS...

BIG FLAME IS A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST ORGANISATION. Socialist because our aim is to build a society which the working class, the majority of the people, run in their own interests. Revolutionary because we believe we'll only reach that goal by completely

changing society, not by patching it up or by piecemeal reforms. At the moment the working class produces the wealth and the ruling class takes it. In a socialist society we will get all the wealth and the power to control our own lives.

WE STAND FOR GENUINE MASS INVOLVEMENT. Every struggle must be controlled and run by the people concerned. We want to put the means of struggling - propaganda, information, ideas and organisation into the hands of the majority of the people. Not just a handful of militants, however committed. Only when people join together and fight do they work out where their interests lie and use their imagination to achieve them.

CAPITALISM OPPRESSES THE WHOLE OF OUR LIVES. We are not only exploited at work, we also have to pay high prices and rents; make do with bad housing, schools and hospitals. And it not just those sections of the working class with great economic power, like the miners or

engineers, who can fight. Housewives, hospital workers, the unemployed have all proved they can fight - and win!

THE RULING CLASS TRIES TO DIVIDE OUR CLASS BY SKILL, SEX, RACE AND AGE. It encourages divisions...skilled and unskilled, black and white, women and men, old and young... to prevent us fighting for our interests as a whole. We recognise these divisions, but try to develop unity among the working class against the common enemy - capitalism.

CAPITALISM IS INTERNATIONAL. The struggle for socialism in other countries attacks capitalism internationally and helps the fight in this country. For countries dominated by imperialist powers, the fight for national liberation is a progressive fight and usually inseparable from the struggle for socialism. This is the case in Ireland, a country oppressed by Britain for 800 years. We support these struggles and try to spread information about them.

WE TRY TO BUILD A MARXIST MOVEMENT FOR TODAY'S NEEDS. We try to learn from the various Marxist traditions, but we firmly believe in the need to create a politics and organisation which grows out of today's situation.

We believe that Big Flame's job is to help the whole working class understand and learn from its power, and so strengthen that power. We see the need for a revolutionary party of the working class that will lead the fight to defeat capitalism, but such an organisation can only be built out of the struggles of the whole of our class.



We fight for higher wages, shorter hours, a lighter workload and for full pay whether there is work or not.

We oppose incomes policies, productivity deals, redundancies and speed-ups.

We encourage links between factory and community struggles, the opening up of factory occupations to the community,

and the taking of rent and housing struggles to the workplace. We back the fight of council tenants, private tenants and squatters against rents and for decent housing for all.

We support the struggle for state-paid community-controlled facilities like nurseries and playgroups, which provide a better life for our children, and are part of the struggles of housewives against their unpaid labour in the home.

We fight against sexism and racism and support the independent organisation of women and black people for their own power.

We support struggles for sexual freedom. Freedom from the law and freedom from social prejudices. In particular we support the independent gay organisations.

We oppose British involvement in Northern Ireland, and support demands for troops out now, for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole, and for a united socialist Ireland. Against the army and the British state we give basic support to all the republican and socialist groups fighting in Ireland, whatever criticisms we may have of their political strategy or tactics.

We support and work in the National Abortion Campaign, the Troops Out Movement, the Portuguese Solidarity Movement and local anti-fascist committees.

We want people who agree with us to work with us and join our organisation.

More Meetings

UNEMPLOYMENT FILM TOUR Showings This Month

- Thursday 10th Feb. NORWICH Students Union University, 7.30 pm
- Thursday 17th Feb. COLCHESTER Students Union University, 7.30 pm
- Friday 18th Feb. COLCHESTER Technical College, 7.30 pm
- 22nd - 24th Feb. CENTRAL LONDON Phone 01.659.3895 for details
- Friday 25th Feb. LAMBETH Town Hall, Brixton, 7.30 pm
- Wednesday 2nd March. BATTERSEA Library, Lavender Hill, S.W.11

For more information, contact, Big Flame, 131

BULLOCK REPORT - WHAT IT MEANS FOR US

VIOLENTLY attacked by the bosses and just as violently defended by the majority of trade-unionist leaders, the Bullock Report has been a highly controversial issue since its publication last month.

Its publication comes at a time when the opposing camps are establishing their positions for the next round of negotiations over wage restraint. With the Bullock Report, the government have a bargaining tool that they plan to use alongside tax concessions and the appointment of Health and Safety officers.

Is the Report a Direct Threat to the Capitalist Economy?

Bullock himself is clear on this point. He says "The report starts from the assumption of a mixed economy and it is my firm belief that nothing will do as much to guarantee the continuation and increased efficiency of such a mixed economy as change along the lines we have proposed."

Lumber

The purpose of the Report is clear - to provide a reconditioned engine for an economic system that has been losing power (and burning too much oil recently!)

Its purpose is to use the concept of worker directors to further lumber the trade-unionists with responsibility - to improve the efficiency of the companies they work for.

If the Bullock Report and worker directors pose no threat to the capitalists, why are they getting so

aggravated about them?

You might think that their opposition is a careful deception that in fact they want the report implemented. However, they are not well enough organised for deception on this scale. The truth is that the proposals of the Report, if implemented could lessen the bosses' control of production and provide the workers with information useful to their struggle.

Bullock's proposals are double-edged in that they propose workers should sit on one single board which has 'real' power and not split them off, as in Germany, into a nominally higher 'supervisory' board, which has no real power. Bullock says that the worker-directors should all be Trade Union based: they should be shop-stewards from the work-place rather than full-time officials; and they should not be paid a separate fee by sitting on the board.

Lose touch

And the Report makes clear how important it is that the worker-directors do not lose touch with the workers they 'represent'. Bullock doesn't want to repeat the farce of the worker-directors in British Steel who have been notorious even among management for their lack of concern for the workers they are supposed to represent. So, he thinks the worker directors should come from the shop-floor rather than the full-time union officials who, as he recognises, have lost touch with the rank-and-file.

But of course, the problem for the Report is that the more it tries to make the worker-directors real the more it runs the risk of their using their knowledge and power on the side of the workers.

The need of capital is for increased productivity to give greater profits, which are the life-blood of the system. To do this they have to get workers to identify their company so that they work harder, lift 'restrictive

practices' etc. Bullock's proposals are the latest in a long line of ideas on how to do this.

The trade union movement is divided over the Bullock Report why is this?

Supporters of the Report included Jack Jones and Clive Jenkins who have always been in favour of extending downwards the involvement of trade unions in decision-making procedures. Opposition comes from Hugh Scanlon and others who argue that they do not want the Trade Unions to be involved in the running of companies. But the fact is that the TUC has for years been more and more incorporated into the running of the economy. And

the line taken by Scanlon and others is leading to the worst possible solution - TUC collaboration in overall economic decision making and no Trade Union control in individual factories.

What will happen to the Bullock Report?

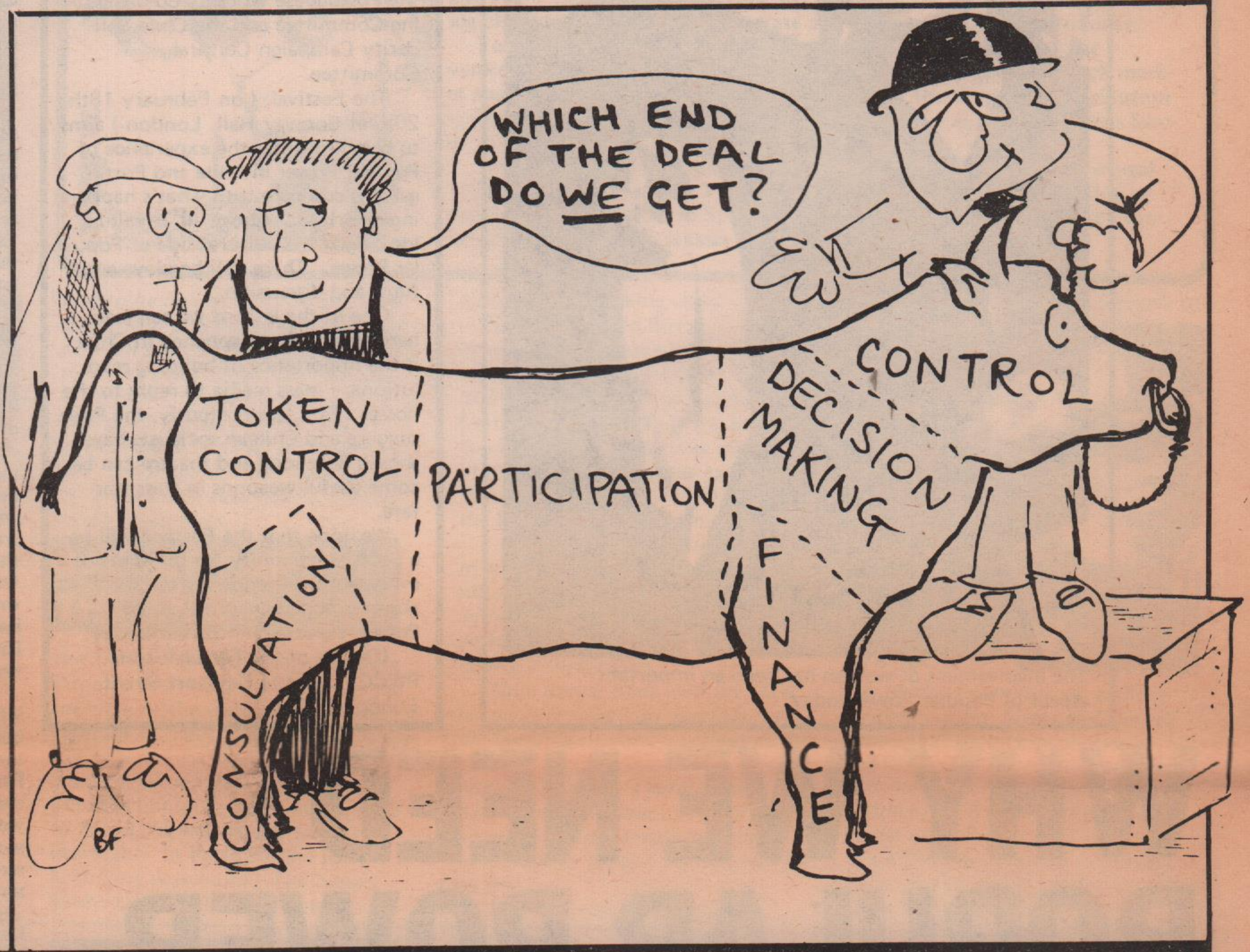
There is no doubt that if Labour remains in power long enough the Report will be implemented in some watered down form. The changes made will reduce the power of worker directors and reduce the power of Trade unions in their selection.

What should our response be?

The socialist idea of workers control has little in common with Bullock. We have in mind total

working class control of the whole economy, with managers directly elected by the shop floor and recallable by it. That's quite different from the limited say in the present system which Bullock proposes.

Yet Bullock is echoing the growing desire for greater control over industry felt by many workers. The CBI are evidently scared that worker directors will tend to encourage the widespread idea that the workers could do the job better than the bosses. There's something in that. Meanwhile the debate about Bullock has brought to millions of people, maybe for the first time, that the bosses have no god-given right to command.



MANCHESTER WOMENS AID

THE REFUGE for Battered Women in Stockton Road has been open since April 1974 and so far we have sheltered many women and kids. Our house originally started as a squat by women who had come to Manchester Womens Centre to escape from their husbands and was bought for us by an anonymous woman and handed over to us when we became a registered charity in October 1974. We have always functioned independently and our only sources of income are donations, money from fund-raising and Social Security rents for women living in the house. We believe the women in the Refuge should be as closely involved as possible in the running of the house. Our support group consists of about 8 women living locally and women who have lived in the Refuge for relatively long periods of time (2 months or more) and who have been rehoused.

Since we first began, we have gone from strength to strength! Through our own fund-raising efforts and a generous grant of over £1,000 from University Community Action, we have always managed to keep going and have even been able to pay for extensive improvements to the house. In July we obtained money from the Job Creation Project to employ a children's worker who runs a playgroup, organise trips out and plays with the kids. We're just

workers and now employ a house and after-care worker as well. FHA are hoping to buy another house for us in Stockton Road and this will be ready for use in 1978.

In spite of the high numbers of women passing through the house, on average we have 4 families there at any one time, we have to turn away a woman and a family a day. Often, all the other Refuges in Greater Manchester are also full, so there is nowhere at all for these women to go. We can only guess what happens to these women and that is that they are forced to return to their husbands to be terrorised and beaten up yet again.

In the light of this obvious lack of provision for battered women, and the Council's unwillingness to provide more Refuges, we find it hard to understand the Council's attitude towards us. In 1975 we applied for an Urban Aid grant to improve our property and this was approved by the Home Office in March 1976. The Council still refuses to hand over this money which is ours by right. Meanwhile our property deteriorates and the Council do nothing to help our plight, or to provide more Refuges for all the women we have to keep turning away.

If you sympathise with our problems, or if you would like to help, please come along to house meetings on Tuesday nights. Our

IRISH FRONT

Dear Friends and Comrades,

The establishment of our movement during the last three months, has marked an important juncture in the struggle against British imperialism in this city. During this period area committees have been established in all of the republican ghettos to propagate the agreed aims and objectives of the Front. At present the political groups and tendencies represented in the Front are: The Provisional Republican Movement, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the Nationalist Party, ex-members of the Republican Clubs, Political Prisoners Aid Committee, and other individuals with republican and socialist views.

The demands of the Irish Front are as follows:

- 1) End harassment, torture and repression.
- 2) Full support for political status leading to an unconditional general amnesty.
- 3) Repatriation of all Irish political prisoners in British jails.
- 4) Withdrawal of British Troops and an end to interference in Irish affairs.

The Irish Front has set itself the task of mobilising support amongst the people for these demands. This in effect means the creation of a mass movement which will agitate publicly on the programme of the Front. The central idea behind the area committees is to lay the organisational foundations for such a mass movement. The logic being that a mass movement cannot be realised unless the necessary groundwork is first carried out.

The purpose of this communication is to inform our many friends and comrades overseas of our existence, and to ask for messages of support to be forwarded to the undersigned at an early date, so that regular

LETTERS



contact and information can be established between us all in this struggle. These messages of support will be published in local and national press, republican publications, and read from the public platform at Guildhall Square, Derry on March 6th, where prominent anti-imperialists from throughout Ireland will address a mass rally in support of the demand for the re-introduction of political status for all Prisoners of War. We would ask you, where possible, to give the Front publicity in your publications, and in turn we will forward a regular newsheet to all individuals and organisations who forward us messages of solidarity.

Yours in the Struggle of a Democratic Irish Socialist Republic,
Seoirse Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh,
Irish Front, External Affairs Secretary.

Ed. Send messages of support to Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7, for forwarding to Derrv.

22p AN HOUR!

Here we print an account from one of our readers telling of her experiences working as a canvasser in Leeds, for 22p an hour!

"On Social Security you couldn't manage to live if you stood on your head they just don't give you enough. I first went canvassing because the hours were convenient for school."

I canvassed from 9.30 - 2 pm for five days a week. I got £5 a week plus a small commission. That's about 22p an hour. The most commission you were allowed was £5. But it was impossible to get that! You got 25p for each repair you secured.

You had to tell people they could have a free Hoover check up. I did mind telling them that - it was a con, nothing is free. Firms use canvassers because they are so much cheaper than advertising. The canvassers make the contacts ('leads') which the salesmen follow up. One person benefits from it all ways - the boss.

The boss has no responsibility to his workers because all he has to do is pay your stamps and (if it's a 'good' firm) give you Bank Holiday Monday, Christmas Day and New Years Day.

I've never lied at the door you've only really to ask if they are interested. A lot of canvassing firms want you to work a week in hand and if the salesmen don't sell after you've visited you don't get any money. Therefore they'd often get two weeks 'free' canvassing. If you get a lead the salesman can go back

at any time and make a sale - you'd never know and never get commission. It's really bad these firms have no offices - they use your house as an office. They book a room in a Hotel for interviewing prospective canvassers. That way you've nowhere to complain to if they decide not to pay you. With no card you can't go to a wage tribunal.

It's very hard work, it's mentally and physically exhausting. You had to have so many leads a day to make it worth your while. In summer it was the worst - sweat used to run off me.

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



With the success of the revolt it remains to be seen what will happen. Certainly Egypt's stability is threatened. And this is important not just for Egypt but for the Middle East as a whole. Since the defeat of the left in Lebanon the picture has looked pretty bleak in this region. Hopefully the recent events in Egypt mark a turning point.

Riots stop price rises in Egypt

When they revolted against rising food prices, the 'dispossessed', the workers and students of Cairo, took the opportunity to make their feelings clear about the other ills of Egypt. They demolished night clubs, luxury shops, expensive cars. And they burnt the trains and buses, symbols of the chaotic and time wasting public transport system.

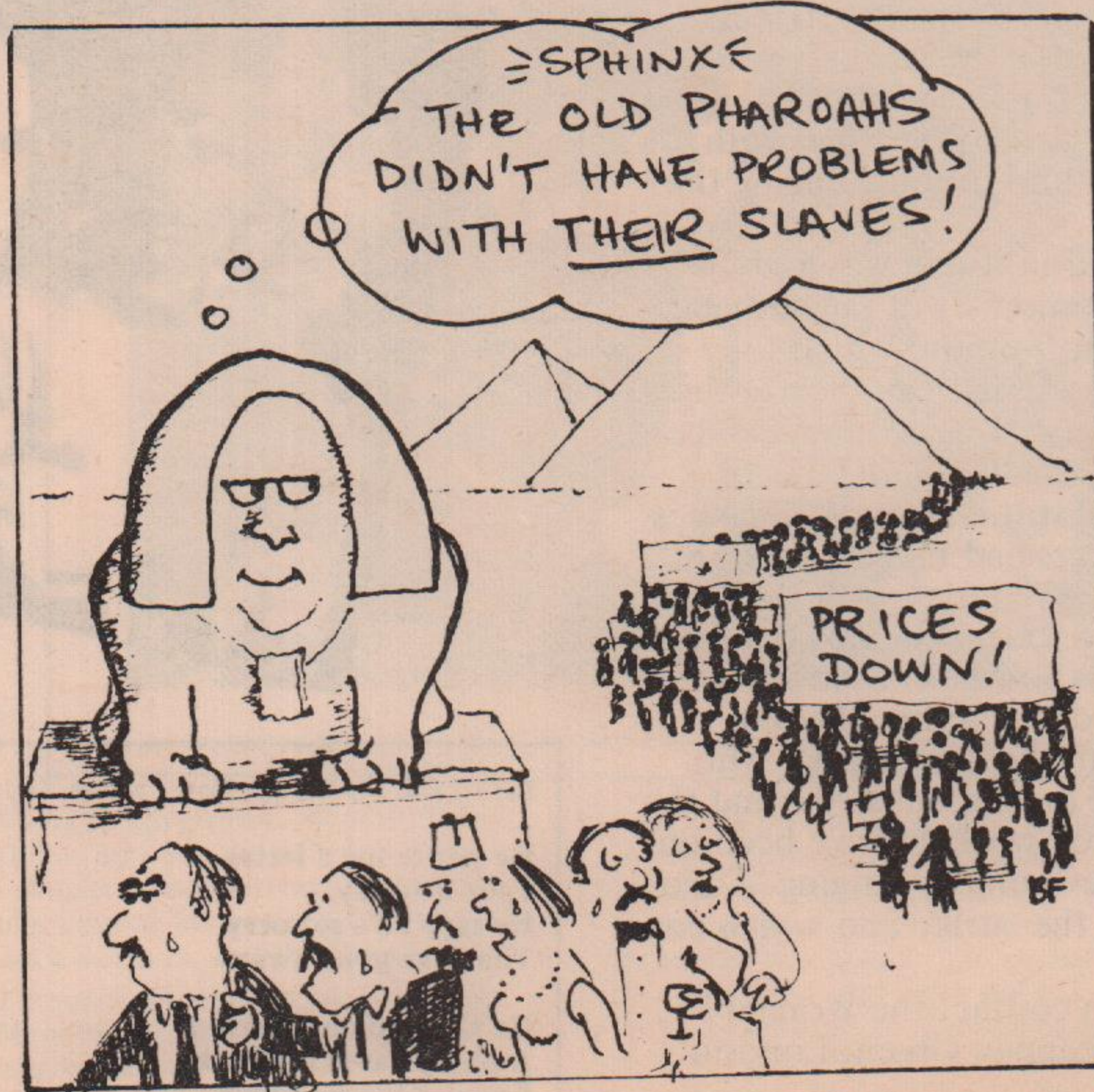
In the middle of January Cairo was rocked by massive rioting. The outburst quickly spread throughout Egypt. Its extent is an indication of the widespread popular feeling against the regime of Sadat. The day before the rioting started increases in the prices of basic foodstuffs had been announced. This provided the spark for revolt. In the next two days anger and frustration erupted into violence. In Cairo 120 buses were burned and throughout the country many buildings were damaged. Particular targets were nightclubs between the Pyramids and Cairo. The regime's response was repression. 79 people were killed, 800 wounded and 2,000 people arrested. But the revolt severely jolted Sadat. He backed down over the price increases and must now look elsewhere for solutions to the regime's economic problems.

Egypt's masses, particularly the unemployed (the 'dispossessed'), who eke out a hand to mouth existence, live in bitter poverty. Traditionally they have been quick to go on to the streets. The causes of this outburst lay in the chronic living conditions but more particularly in the undeniably rightward drift of the regime since the 1973 war, which has worsened these conditions.

The economic policies of Sadat favour a return to the capitalist free market. A main aim is to attract foreign capital. This coincides politically with an alliance with the USA rather than the USSR as had been the case under Nasser. They call it the 'open door'. But it seems it's only open for the foreign capitalist and the Egyptian elite. Though completely ineffective in developing the country these policies have strengthened the position of the rich.

Not only are the rich very, very rich, they also like to let everybody else know it. When you're only earning £12 a month, as a vast number of the working class are, the excesses of the rich are a daily insult. In Cairo at the New Year banquets were advertised which cost ten times a worker's average monthly wage. While the poor live in shanty towns made of cardboard the rich live in scenic apartments on the banks of the Nile — rent £2,000 a month. At the same time the economy is rapidly approaching crisis. Egypt's foreign debts mount daily. Its public services are in chaos. Cairo's bus and train networks have long since broken down.

All this must be seen in the light of the man whose regime preceded Sadat — Abdul Nasser. Under him



there was state direction of the economy and foreign capital was discouraged. Egypt established links with the

USSR. Nasser was no socialist. There was no democracy and no real control by the working class. Nevertheless

the standard of living of the masses rose considerably. In the countryside the old traditions were liberalised and peasants enjoyed an unprecedented degree of freedom.

The recent drift rightwards has meant more power to the big land-owners and capitalists. Where workers and peasants have resisted they have paid heavily. So, when Sadat's government announced the price increases last month it was the last straw. The increases were up to 45% for basic necessities like rice, tea and bottled gas. The excesses of the rich were left untouched; the corruption of the bureaucracy was conveniently forgotten. It was the working class who were going to be clobbered.

With the success of the revolt it remains to be seen what will happen. Certainly Egypt's stability is threatened. And this is important not just for Egypt but for the Middle East as a whole. Since the defeat of the left in the Lebanon the picture has looked pretty bleak in this region. Hopefully the recent events in Egypt mark a turning point. They remind us that even under a dictatorship the working class and the peasants have ways of making themselves heard and felt.

TEA, LUV?

Last month at the Lancia factory near Turin, management came across two workers who, during a tea-break, were 'in a position that morality disapproves of' — in fact they were making love. Management immediately sacked the two workers on the grounds that tea breaks were not for making love in. The woman, Fiorentina Caldoni, a shop floor delegate has taken management to court and is demanding reinstatement. She is being supported by her union on the grounds that 'workers are free to use their free time as they want.'

Somehow it's hard to imagine Jack Jones or Len Murray sharing the Italian union's attitude.



Phil and Angela Agee at the Tribunal

Mr Clark, ex-US Attorney General, said at the Agee Hearing: 'I hope we understand what is really at risk here. I remember when Martin Luther King was called a security risk. That's the surest way to end our free society. Far more than the right of this individual not to be deported is involved here. Finally, it's the right of the people to know the truth. I plead for a fair hearing for Mr Agee and if there is any evidence, let's see it, so we can examine it critically.'

EURO-REPRESSION

Anti-terrorist convention signed by 22 countries

NOW THAT Britain is in the Common Market, the British Government follows the lead of the rest of Europe. And the EEC wasn't just set up to create wine lakes and butter mountains, but to make sure that Europe would remain safe for capitalism. That means keeping the working class movement down — through repression if necessary.

West Germany is not only the strongest country in the EEC economically, it is also the most repressive. But the other EEC countries are falling into line. The recent signing of the 'Anti-Terrorist Convention' is one example of this.

On the 27th of January, the 22 member countries of the Council of Europe (which includes all the EEC countries) signed the Anti-Terrorist Convention. The main instrument of the Convention to combat 'anti-terrorism' is extradition, which becomes a mere formality between countries whose government has signed the convention. To make sure that extradition becomes a formality, the Convention does away

with the notion of a political offence (separate from common law), the right of asylum and the controlling powers of the judiciary. The Convention makes clear that for member countries the following acts will not be considered political 'piracy of the air' (i.e. hijackings), kidnappings, the taking of hostages, sequestrations, the use of bombs, grenades, automatic fire-arms'. Another list includes any serious action against property or material goods. It should be quite clear that the two lists in fact virtually eliminate the notion of a political offence and at the same time the notion of political asylum that follows from it — there are no longer any European frontiers in the man-hunt for militants. In the Convention, the powers of judges are drastically reduced. Liberal judges will no longer have discretionary powers to decide what is or isn't a political act.

The project of European integration is now being pushed by the industrialists and the bankers. Their prime

need is for 'Law and Order', but they are astute enough to make sure this 'order' is clothed in democracy — we are seeing the development of repression with a human face.

But it will not be an action replay of the 1930's. Today's repression will be more sophisticated, less obvious. There will be no charismatic leaders, no Fuhrer, no Mussolini — it will just be a conscientious bureaucrat carefully doing his job as defender of 'order'.

Within the liberal democratic society there are certain freedoms which are in fact the result of working class struggle. To-day all these freedoms are disappearing, crushed by the demands of 'law and order'.

This triumph of 'clean' repression is dictated by the needs of monopoly capitalism.

In no way will the 'new technological order' that is being developed tolerate any opposition — dissident elements will be made to conform.

And the model for this Euro-repression is the most powerful economy in Europe — West Germany. Germany, an economic superpower, needs Western Europe for economic, political and military reasons. And it intends to make sure that its 'order' is extended. The signing of the Anti-Terrorist Convention is an important step in extending the 'German model' throughout Europe. In this country the new anti-terrorist methods will mesh in cleanly with the Immigration Bill (which is trying Agee and Hosenball without telling them what their charges are), the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and Criminal Trespass Law.

It should be remembered that this new repressive order needs 'bourgeois democracy' to give it an appearance of freedom. In Germany, voters have the non-choice of choosing between the CDU and the SPD. In this country we can choose between Callaghan and Thatcher.

Next year this appearance of freedom will be added to by the elections to the European Parliament. In fact, the Governments of Europe have made their priorities clear: first the signing of the Anti-Terrorist Convention, then elections to a European Parliament. 'Euro-repression' is more than an ugly word — it is now ugly reality.

Coca-Cola..nisation

U.S. foreign policy 'in perfect harmony'?

In the December issue of *Big Flame* we wrote about the important role the Trilateral Commission had played in the promotion of Jimmy Carter. In the new US government, apart from Carter and Mondale (Vice-President) Trilateral Commission members include Vance (Secretary of State), Blumenthal (Secretary of the Treasury), Brown (Secretary of Defence), and a 'mad bomber' during the Vietnam war, Califano (Secretary of Health), Harris and Brzezinski (in charge of 'Internal Security').

The British members of the Commission include the chairmen of Dunlop, Shell, Warburg Bank, Barclays Bank, the Director of Chatham House, Reginald Maudling and the editor of the *Financial Times*.

Two key points in the analysis of

the Commission are that US foreign policy has always been beneficial for the world and that multi-national corporations are instruments of prosperity and stability and will take over from bodies like the United Nations, in which the third world now has too much influence.

The Carter government reflects this world view. Among its members are three directors of IBM and five lawyers whose firms have represented most of the major corporations. Coca Cola, which lends Carter its jets, is particularly well represented. Its past president has become Secretary of Defence and two of its lawyers are in the government. As a description of US foreign policy the term 'Coca-Cola Colonisation' has never been more suitable.

TIME OFF

A new play about equal pay 'COSTA DEL TRICO'

'COSTA DEL TRICO' is a great new play by the Women's Theatre Group about the 21-week Equal Pay strike at Trico. Most of the action of the play is on the picket. The play, crammed full of excellent songs brings up many of the problems the strikers had to face during their five month struggle - the workers who continued to work, the violent attempts of management to smash through the picket, the problems the women strikers had with their husbands, many of whom gave them no support during the strike.

At the performance I attended in London, there was a discussion after the play in which male trade-unionists in the audience accused the play of being anti-men and anti-union, which they probably take to be the same thing. These criticisms clearly show how threatening a successful strike dominated by women can be to men in the labour movement. In fact the 'Costa del Trico' is neither anti-men nor anti-union. The point it is trying to make is that in going out on strike, women workers had taken a militant initiative - it was left to the men to show solidarity with them by coming out on strike. The play also makes clear the positive part played in the strike by the West London (Southall) District Committee of the AUEW, who supported the strike all along.

Also in the audience were women from the Trico strike who talked about the difficulties experienced during the strike and the way that, since they have gone back, Trico workers have been on the offensive. They ended a wonderful evening by singing 'Trico Flag' which was written by them during the strike and which continues to be sung on the shop-floor.

If you want to book the play, you can contact the Women's Theatre Group, c/o Julia Meadows, 27 Stepney Green, London E.1. Phone 01-790 7649.



Women from the play

TWO SONGS FROM THE PLAY

If you travel one day
Down the Great Eastern Way
You may hear of a strange tale
that's told
Of some bold senioritas
Strange, savage creatures
Whose dark eyes are death to behold
If you go down that track
You may never come back
Cause it's just like a scene out of
Psycho (sorry)
For it's there that they say
Is the grim hideaway
Of the women of Costa del Trico.

A bad caballero
Who owns that place there-o
Would not give his women fair wages
The law said he should
But the law - she's no good
It's so many typewritten pages
They could bear it no more
So they said "This is war"
And they finally came out on strike-o
They spat in his eye
And cut off his supply
Those desperate women of Trico.

Come to the Costa del Trico
Land of laughter and wine
Take care what you do
Or we'll cut you in two
If you put one foot across this line.

Don't be tempted, young men
Don't you tangle with them
For these are not commonplace
ladies
Their fury when goaded
Their wrath when exploded
Escapes like a bat out of Hades
Now you have to decide
Whether you're on their side
If you're not you can hop on your
bike-o
Cross them once you young men
You won't cross them again
The notorious women of Trico. OLE!!

Copyright: Jean Hart, Women's Theatre Group.

LETTER SONG (follows scene 10)

He wrote me a letter
I got it today
He says he's so sorry
That I've gone away

He's so broken hearted
And he wants me back
Because it's so lonely
At the old Trico shack

He misses my nimble fingers
Wiping his troubles away
Though he swears he'll share his whole life with me
He won't give me equal pay (no he won't no he won't no he won't)

He says he'll protect me
From the bad folks in town
He'll hire a policeman
To follow me around

(SPOKEN)

His words were always like honey
He sure was a sweet talking man
But now that I've read between the lines
He won't double cross me again (no he won't no he won't no he won't)

I've kept all his letters
I'll treasure them all
Tied up in a blue ribbon
On the lavatory wall

ADVERTISEMENT

South Africa: the crisis in Britain and the apartheid economy, Dorcas Good & Michael Williams, 50p, Anti-Apartheid, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1P 2DQ.

Good and Williams don't believe that multinational firms can contribute to changing the conditions of the South African blacks. They want a block on foreign investment into South Africa. They argue that a crisis in Britain actually reinforces the apartheid economy, showing how much greater the returns on capital are in South Africa

than here. Cut the flow of capital out of Britain and you help the working class here and there is their conclusion.

Verboten 10p. from the Campaign Against Repression in West Germany (35 Wellington Street, London WC2)

This first bulletin of the Campaign (see last month's Big Flame for a report on the situation in Germany today) contains articles about political prisoners, the post-war origins of the stringent strike laws and the political sackings of left-wingers.

THE BLACKLIST...

IT'S STILL GOING STRONG



Forerunners of 'The Front': (inset left) director Ritt today; (right) screen writer John Lawson refuses to testify.

'THE FRONT' is a film made with Hollywood movie-money and it's a fair bet that the monopoly companies that run the film industries are not going to provide millions for a left-wing political message to be put across. The only way to get finance for the film was to make it into a comedy. The director, Martin Ritt, says: 'We felt that we had the chance of doing a very difficult subject and giving it a chance to be popular entertainment, which is really what we wanted to do. That's why we laid it out very simply so that people would understand exactly what was going on'

'The Front' is about TV-industry blacklisting in America in the early 1950's. It stars Woody Allen as a 'front' for blacklisted communist writers who can no longer work under their own name. The scripts that Howard Prince (Woody Allen) submits to the TV companies become more and more popular. Then, Howard Prince is requested to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to condemn communism and to shop any communist friends he may have. In his appearance before HUAC, Prince says to the Committee 'Go fuck yourselves!' The film ends with Frank Sinatra singing 'Fairy tales can come true, it can happen to you . . .' on the sound track as the closing credits flash by in the form of an honour roll of the formerly blacklisted.

Like all recent liberal exposures there is an air of smug self-praise in the 'Front'. Like the exposures of Watergate and the CIA the makers of the film are saying 'Look how wonderful things are now - we are able to criticise the past.' But it

should be made clear that the blacklist is still fully operational in Western 'democracies'.

* In the United States Marxist teachers get fired from colleges, revolutionaries are blacklisted in industry.

* In West Germany, membership of a left-wing organisation means automatic sacking from any job in the public sector; from teaching to tram-driving.

* In this country it is well known that each employers federation keeps a blacklist to keep out 'trouble makers'. And from Robin Blackburn at the LSE onwards any 'subversive' teacher finds himself (or herself) blacklisted. Of course, the existence of a blacklist is never admitted - it is always a question of 'we haven't got the right job for you'.

OPEN

'The Front' is not a hard-core, left-wing film - it does not depict the blacklist as an essential feature of the 'democracies' we live in. It is a left liberal film that fulfils the useful function of bringing out into the open what our rulers would prefer remained hidden. As Abraham Polonsky, another blacklisted film maker says:

'What we consider socially aware in America is a sentimental attitude towards the goodness of man, and getting together and working things out right, and getting rid of injustice. That's a political attitude, of course, but it's generalised, like breathing as opposed to not breathing. It can hardly be called a definite political attitude'.

LESSONS OF AN OCCUPATION

MASSEY -FERGUSON

FOR ALMOST three weeks last month, the Massey-Ferguson tractor plant in Coventry was taken over and occupied by its 1,200 assembly line workers. They were fighting against repeated attempts by the management to force one section, building a major new type of tractor to work harder and harder. And following the suspension of individuals and then whole groups of workers — they decided to take action.

entrances and lit bonfires behind the gates to keep the gate pickets warm. And then they took over the telephone exchange, radio room, and the 15 storey European headquarters of International Harvester (the multinational which owns Massey-Ferguson). This crippled the company's ability to co-ordinate and manage the rest of their plants in Britain and Europe.

The vast machine shop, and the maintenance and toolroom areas in the factory were still working crossing the pickets on the gates. But within a week, a combination of strong internal picketting and forceful argument brought the whole plant to a standstill.

From the first day, the occupation was run on the basis of mass participation

- * Weekly mass meetings
- * Weekly bulletins with the latest news on blacking, support from other plants, negotiations with management, social security claiming.
- * Daily meetings of the committee of assembly-line stewards and their strike committee.
- * Occupation duty for every worker on strike one day in two.

"We were building about 41 tractor sets a day. They said we could do 48. They know, that the struggle over this new model is going to decide our wage rates, and how hard we have to work, for the next few years. So before Christmas, they started suspending people right, left and centre."

(Massey Steward)

The factory has a militant tradition. (It's the only plant in Coventry that rejected Measured Day Work, and stuck to Piece Work.) And following the suspensions, they decided that instead of going out on strike, they would stay in on strike — and lock the bosses outside the gates.

Following a mass meeting of assembly workers on January 3rd, the gates were taken over and locked. They built butts beside the pedestrian

"The mass meetings weren't what you normally get — a speech from the convenor and no chance for the lads. The meetings were chaired by one of the most militant stewards, and there was always a good discussion with perhaps 30 or 40 blokes speaking from the floor."

(Massey steward)



A previous struggle, in 1975, at Massey Ferguson. John Sturrock (Report)

Visits to Liverpool, Manchester, Dover and Southampton docks brought a commitment to total blacking of Massey tractors by dockworkers, and the Massey-Ferguson plants in Liverpool and Manchester agreed to a ban on any work moved from Coventry. Morale in the occupation was high: they knew it was going to be a long strike, but they were certain they would win. The company was increasingly worried.

On January 18th, the company applied to the High Court for a writ to have the occupation ended. (At present, it's not a criminal offence to occupy a factory or a hospital — or to squat an empty house. So bosses or landlords can

only end an occupation or squat by a civil action in the High Court, and getting the police to enforce. And the workers or squatters can't go to gaol for simply occupying or squatting. But with the Government's Criminal Trespass Bill, which is now going through parliament, occupations and squats will become illegal, criminal offences — for which workers can be imprisoned or fined.)

On January 24th the High Court writ was issued. And with it came the implicit threat that unless the occupation ended, the plant would be invaded by a huge force of police. This, the stewards felt, could only be resisted by a 24 hour picket around the whole 1½ mile perimeter of the factory — something that they could not do without massive and active support from working class people in Coventry. Organising this kind of support had not been a priority of the stewards' committee.

On January 25th, the stewards decided to end the occupation, but to continue the strike until they'd won all their demands. At a mass meeting the next day, feelings were running very high. Some of the lads thought the occupation should have continued — even if it meant taking on the police. They voted not to meet for two weeks — to show the company their determination not to give an inch. And they forced the union officials at the meeting to send immediate telegrams to their headquarters recommending that the strike should be made official. Within a week, the AUFW Executive made it official — perhaps influenced by the energetic picketting of the Executive meeting on February 1st, by Massey workers.

It looks like being a long and important struggle. For International Harvesters, the issue is clear: they want harder work and less money for the workers, and more profit for them.

FORD HALEWOOD 8 day strike - For what ?

"We had them over a barrel, and then the stewards gave it all away." A body plant worker's comment on the 8 day strike at Ford's Halewood plant which should have ended as a rout of management, but didn't.

The strike at Halewood was ostensibly about trade union rights, but underlying it was the companies attack on shopfloor organisation with the ultimate aim of greater productivity and a lower wage bill. The fact that the strike was never conducted on this level was just one factor in the failure of the strike to take the struggle forward.

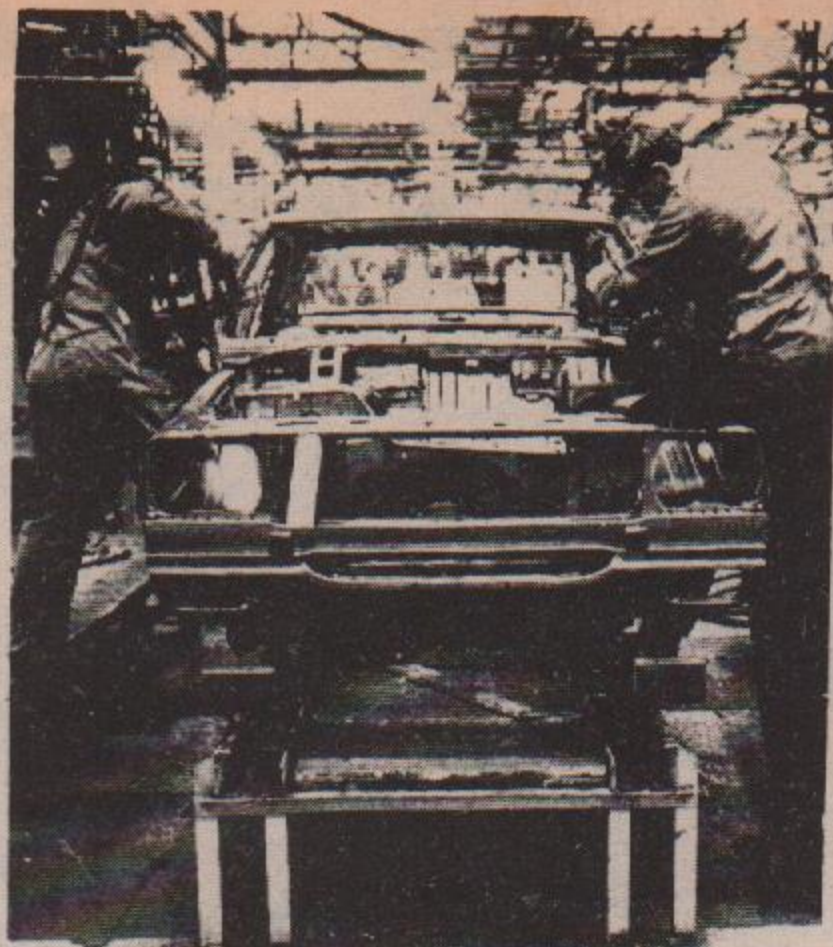
DEMANDS

After months of attacks on the shopfloor, with sackings, suspensions and constant harrasment as their weapons, management had achieved little except uniting the shopfloor in its determination not to be beaten. The shopfloor was strong and although everyone was skint, the spirit was there to take on the company. After years of co-operating with management many of the stewards turned back to the shopfloor during the companies attack. But with a few honourable exceptions they did not realise that it was the strength of the shopfloor that would win the battle with management. Instead, as their issue, the

stewards chose the question of shop stewards rights of representation as the basis on which to take on the company. This is an important issue, but it is only one of many, and because it seemed such an exclusively steward oriented issue the vote to go out on strike, though huge, was unenthusiastic. So, right from the start the strike was turned into a narrow struggle about trade union rights. The sackings, suspensions and attempted speed up — the crucial issues for the shop floor were hardly mentioned. Obviously the question of trade union rights is vital and it can be expanded into a broader struggle, but the convenor and senior stewards made this an impossibility.

ORGANISATION

By confining the organisation of the strike to themselves, the shop stewards effectively silenced any shop floor doubts about the demands and tactics of the struggle. The stewards cut themselves off from the masses, and so, cut themselves off from the strength that mass involvement gives to any struggle — so, it was no surprise when they called for a return to work only days away from bringing Fords U.K. to



a standstill.

TACTICS

It is quite clear that the stewards had no intention of winning the strike. Right from the beginning their intention was clear, negotiate and come to a reasonable compromise agreement. A few years ago this might have worked e.g. going for a £10 rise and getting £5. But times are different now. To get anything you have to go out and win; making soft deals means losing. And this is what happened.

RESULTS

The 'Back-to work' agreement suits nobody except the company and perhaps the stewards. Fords manages to turn the tables and foist a new disciplinary agreement on the shopfloor. Moss Evans, the T&G national organiser and heir apparent of Jack Jones, the major architect of the Social Contract, threatened all kinds if the stewards didn't accept and Palmer the district official hailed it

as a "great step forward". Unfortunately this is not the case. All the good bits, e.g. guaranteeing rights of representation, totally depend on the company's "good will" whilst the 'bad' bits seriously curtail the rights of shop-floor workers to take independent 'unofficial' action. This has always been the one weapon that consistently gets things done. Meanwhile the sackings and suspensions continue, the shop floor is still strong, but it is now obvious that the stewards are going to have great difficulty in getting the men out again unless they are willing to listen to the real issues and willing to go out and win.

"As appears from the photographs, the entrance roads inside the Gate contain 'Shanty towns' around which the occupiers congregate and light fires with Massey-Ferguson property to keep themselves warm."

Industrial Relations Director David Llewellyn Terence Jayne, in his submission to the High Court.

"I do not know anywhere in the world where we can invest a dollar and get a better return. In the UK, we will continue to produce high quality tractors at a lower price than anywhere else in the world."

Jack Smith - Managing Director of International Harvester (UK)

WHAT YOU FIGHT FOR YOU GET

FORD VALENCIA

VALENCIA: Ford workers have inflicted a heavy defeat on the company in the first strike since the new Spanish plant opened.

Ford has agreed to pay increases of £75 per month for the lowest grade and £63 per month for other grades. There will also be a cost of living rise of about 10% in July, making a 38% rise in all. Since tax levels are much lower in Spain than here the £63 a week Ford workers were earning before the rise meant about £50 take home.

Far from being cheap labour, with their four weeks holiday and one months extra pay a year, the Valencia workers could well look on their English counterparts as undercutting them.

What you fight for you get. The Spanish workers came out solidly from the start and in the course of the strike were involved in several violent clashes with police. They blocked the main coast road for some time. Together with the building workers, the Ford workers acted as the detonators of a region-wide struggle.

With the strike gradually closing down all industry in Valencia, Ford was compelled to back down. This makes a victorious first not just for Ford workers but for the whole city. Throughout the Franco years, Valencia had been famous for industrial tranquility. Fords must now be wishing they's built their factory somewhere else.

meetings

REVOLUTIONARY Songs from Portugal (Zeca Alfonso) and Chile (Patricio Manu) Stanley House, Upper Parliament Street, LIVERPOOL 8 Tuesday 15th Feb. 7.30 Wednesday 16th Feb. 7.30 at Reynolds Building, UMIST, MANCHESTER

ALL LAMBETH ANTI RACIST Movement speakers: A soweto Student, Editor of Searchlight, A. Sivandan, editor of 'Race and Class' BRIXTON Centre, 2 St Matthews Rd, LONDON, S.W.2. Monday 21st Feb. 7.30 pm

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CRIMINAL TRESPASS LAW Speakers include: 1 May Stone (Big Flame) Matty Wake, Convenor, Coles Cranes, Sunderland Durant Hall, Elison Place, NEWCASTLE Monday 28th Feb. 7.30

ANTI-FREEZE Heating Action Group Leeds Church Institute, Albion Place, LEEDS Tuesday 15th Feb. 7.30 pm

LEEDS COALITION AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM DISCO with singers from M.I.R. Chile, black cabaret group, Lipman Building, near Dental School, LEEDS Thursday 24th Feb. 8pm

STRUGGLES IN ITALY Since 1969 Marcello Dall'Aglio Odd Spot, Bold Street, LIVERPOOL 1. Sunday Feb. 20th 7.30 pm

MANCHESTER National Abortion Campaign speakers include Sheila Abdulla WHEATSHEAF, High Street. Monday 21st Feb. 7.30 pm

LIVERPOOL TRADES COUNCIL Open Conference on Unemployment. Open to all Trade Unionists, political parties, pensioners and community groups.

DELEGATES Credentials 25p from Liverpool Trades Council, Victoria Street, Liverpool 1. Conference at: St Georges Hall, Lime Street, Saturday 20th Feb. 11. am.

MARCH against UNEMPLOYMENT organised by Liverpool Trades Council Starting from Islington, L'Pool 3. Time to be announced Saturday, March 5th

WOMEN AND IRELAND Report Back by women on the Troops Out Movement Delegation to Ireland BRIXTON Town Hall, London, S.W.2. Friday Feb. 18th. 7.30 pm

BIG FLAME

Support Grows For Balfour Darwin

Sheffield's Biggest Jobs Battle for 5 Years

pute had also had their own regular meetings. One worker who'd received his redundancy notice made the point that whilst

other workers in the group could choose whether or not to return to work, he had no job to return to, unless they won the strike.

The key to victory now seems to lie in stepping up the blacking (there is already talk of British Leyland laying off workers as a result), and further local solidarity actions such as the massive stoppage and march in Sheffield on January 12th. If nothing comes from the negotiations, some stewards in the confederation are likely to push for a district overtime ban and a 24 hour strike of all engineering workers.

However, as the strike committee itself recognises, everyone involved is facing financial hardship. Although donations have been pouring in (including £1,000 from workers at Govan shipbuilders) and these have given the strikers a tremendous morale boost, the money doesn't go far amongst 2,500 people. More is still needed and can be sent to the address below.

LOCAL PRESS

On January 28th the Sheffield Star gave nearly a whole page over to letters hostile to the strike, all anonymous. The Star claimed these were representative of the feelings of the families involved and that they'd been 'deluged' with similar mail. When pressed by a deputation of strikers about this, they admitted that in fact they'd only had 16 letters altogether! One of the main ways in which local press coverage has been misleading is over the question of 'alternative jobs' offered by the firm. The strike committee points out that many of the 'alternative jobs' offered don't even exist, in that they're not available till September. Of those that do exist, all involved substantial reductions in wages and many are completely different from the jobs workers made redundant had been doing.

One problem which the Star episode did highlight however was the lack of involvement of women and the male strikers' wives in the dispute - a problem recognised by some of the strike committee too. One suggestion has been to invite the wives down to the strike headquarters to explain to them exactly what is happening. Meantime, the Claimants Union has been working really hard fighting claims and appeals for benefit.

The dispute is the most important in Sheffield since the British Steel River Don 'Work-In' in 1971. Already another local firm, Millspaugh (owned by Swiss multinational Sulzer) has announced 570 redundancies. Thousands more local jobs have disappeared in steel and engineering in the last few years. A victory at Edgar Allen Balfour would really help turn the tide in the fight against redundancies, for worksharing and shorter hours without loss of pay, and for more jobs for the unemployed.

Donations can be sent to the Strike Committee, c/o New Inn, Carbroke Street, Sheffield 9.



Future of a City at Stake

WITH 480 jobs at stake, workers at Balfour Darwin, Sheffield have voted 3 to 1 to continue their 8 week strike until redundancy notices are withdrawn.

The solidity of the strike may have forced a back down by management. A new committee to be put to a mass meeting as we got to press. The size of the vote to continue the strike has come as a surprise to management.

Shop stewards and union members active in the dispute were pleased with the result, seeing the meeting as an important clearing of the air. 'It was a good meeting,' one of the stewards said. 'Everyone was given the chance to express their opinion. A few got up and said why they were against and how they'd not had a chance to vote. But they were immediately followed by others who argued for the continuation of the action.' In fact, as another shop steward pointed out, this was the fourth mass meeting where members could vote. And most factories involved in the dis-



LONDON: 1 500 people marched from Shepherds Bush, west London, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of Bloody Sunday when paratroopers shot dead 13 unarmed civilians during a demonstration in Derry. Mark Rusher (IFL)



Hotel Workers at Centre of Sheffield's other Strike

'UNREASONABLE TO PICKET ON SUNDAYS' was the excuse given by police to arrest 4 pickets outside the GROVESNOR HOUSE HOTEL.

The strike at the hotel started when management, in line with Trust House Forte's policy, refused to recognise the union (T&GWU). Since then the 46 strikers have picketed around the clock. Despite this, management have succeeded in re-staffing the place. Over Christmas, University students 'recruited' by the National Association for Freedom of

Around 2,000 workers marched through Sheffield on January 12th in support of the strikers at Edgar Allen Balfour. Many thousands more responded to the call of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and stopped off work for 4 hours, causing most of the major factories in the city to be shut down. Prominent on the march, which was protesting against the planned closure of the Capital Tool Works and the loss of 480 jobs, was a group of workers involved in their own strike at the Grosvenor House Hotel for union recognition.

of so-called 'freedom lovers' were used to do the strikers' jobs. Bouncers at a night club, which is part of the hotel, have been seen carrying iron bars and wearing knuckledusters. This was reported to the police, but they refused to do anything. Yet, at the mass picket of the hotel's staff party 4 people were picked up for 'obstruction'. The 4 people accused of 'unreasonable' Sunday picketing are remanded on bail until May 2nd.

The catering industry which is made up of small units of production is notorious for its low wages and bad work conditions. Many of the workers are immigrants and many living in

losing their work permits and 'tied' rooms. Even the large employers like Trust House Forte want to delay as long as possible their workers becoming unionised.

Over the last few years in the London area there have been many successful strikes for unionisation - often led by the International Branch of the T&GWU. Now the movement for union recognition is spreading through the country and at present there are strikes and pickets at Trust House Hotels in Oxford (Randolph and Linton Lodge) and Sheffield (Grosvenor House). This account of the picket in Sheffield shows the deg-

BIG FLAME

I want to subscribe to the paper
I want more information about Big Flame

£2.25 per year Britain and Ireland
£1.10 for six months.
Abroad £3.00 and £1.50

NAME and ADDRESS

BIG FLAME, 217 Wavertree Rd., LIVERPOOL 7