

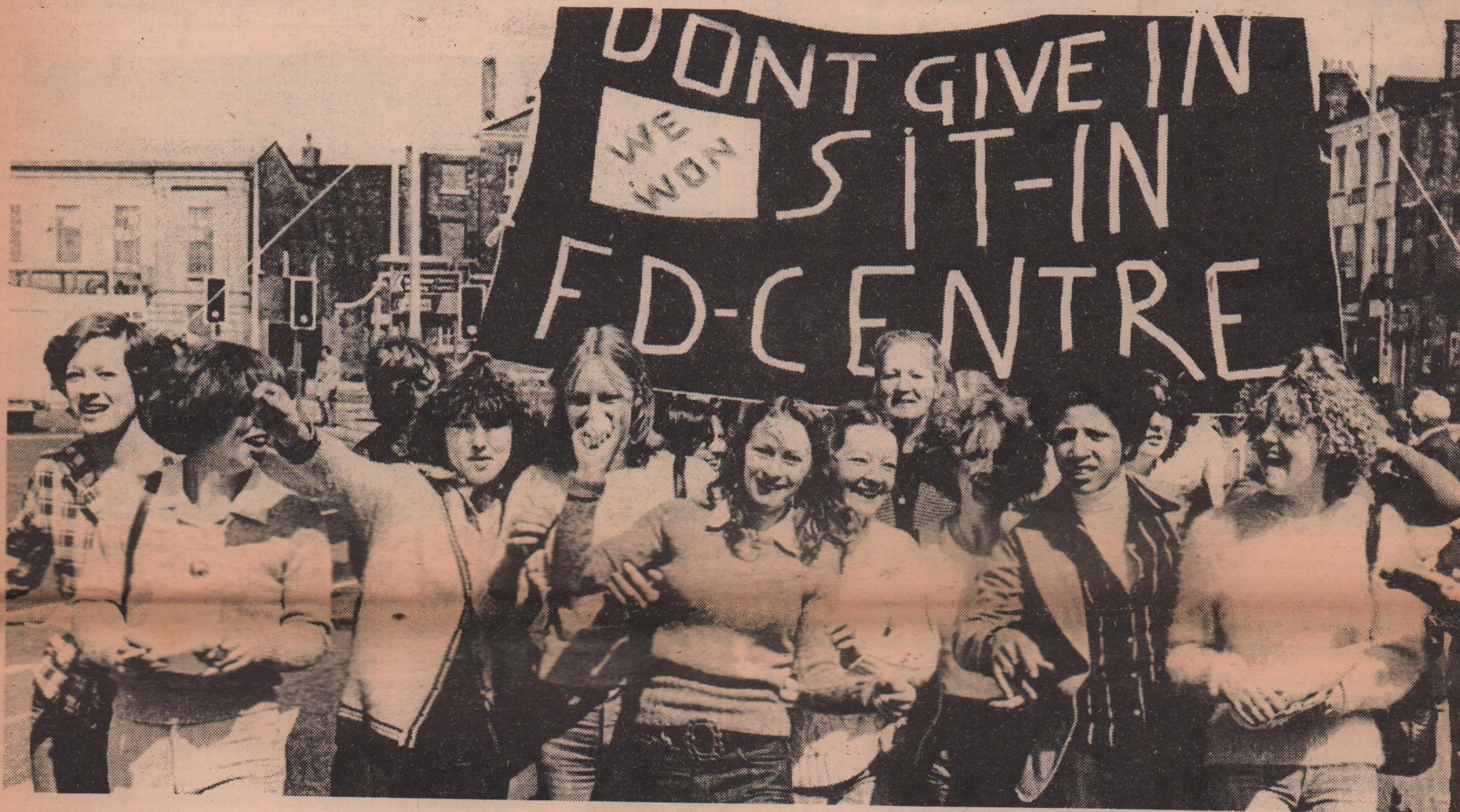
BIG FLAME

No. 63 JUNE 1978

Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

10p

THESE WOMEN WON!



They're dancing with glee because their factory, Fashion Design Centre, Kirkby, is to re-open. They've found a buyer who says he will take back the workforce, progressively.

When they heard the factory was to close — by a phone call at the end of the week — they immediately began to organise to keep it open. And it worked.

Now, some of the workers

want to set up a women's action group. In future, they want to contribute their experience in struggle to helping other workers. It's also a way of re-paying the support they got during their

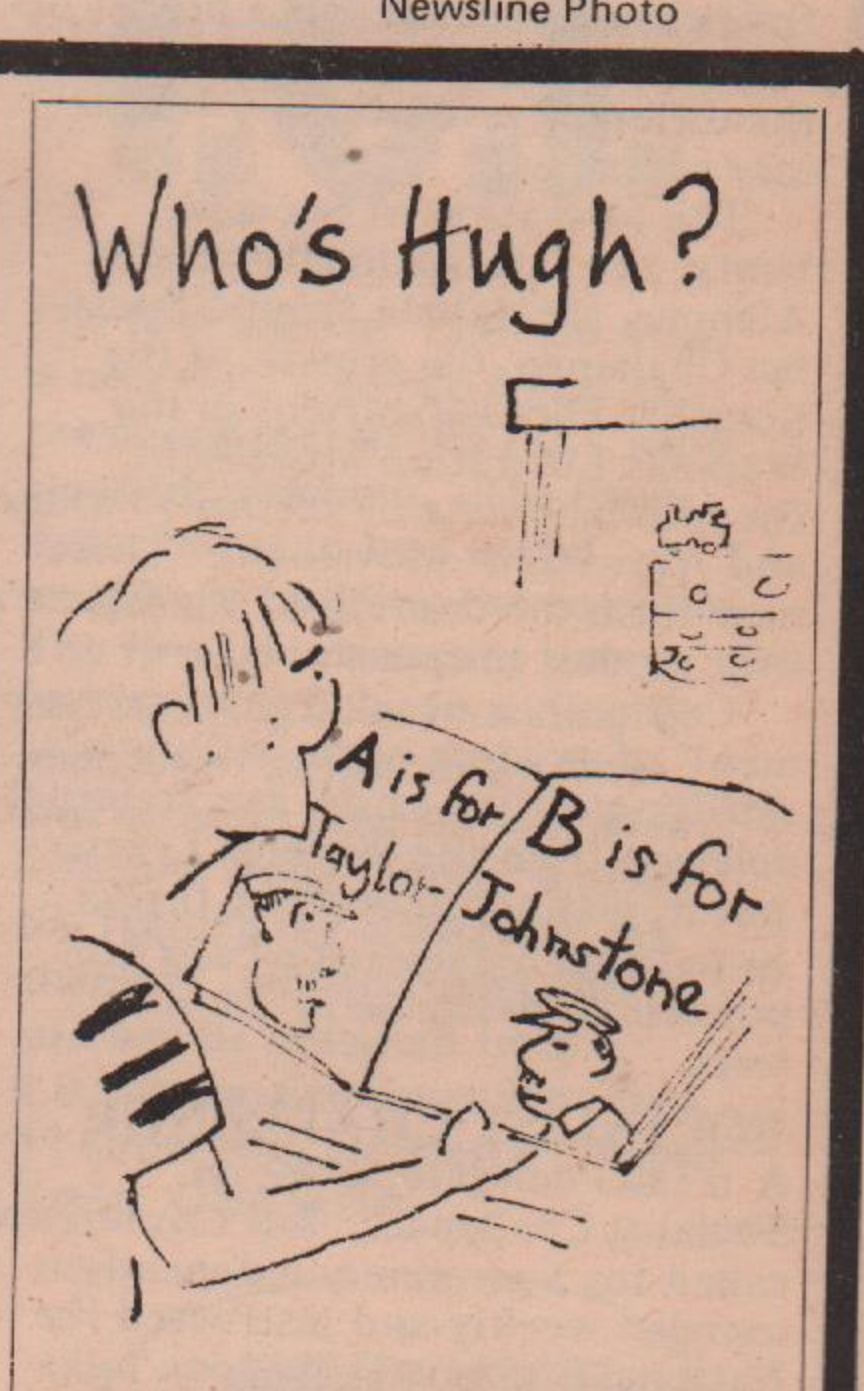
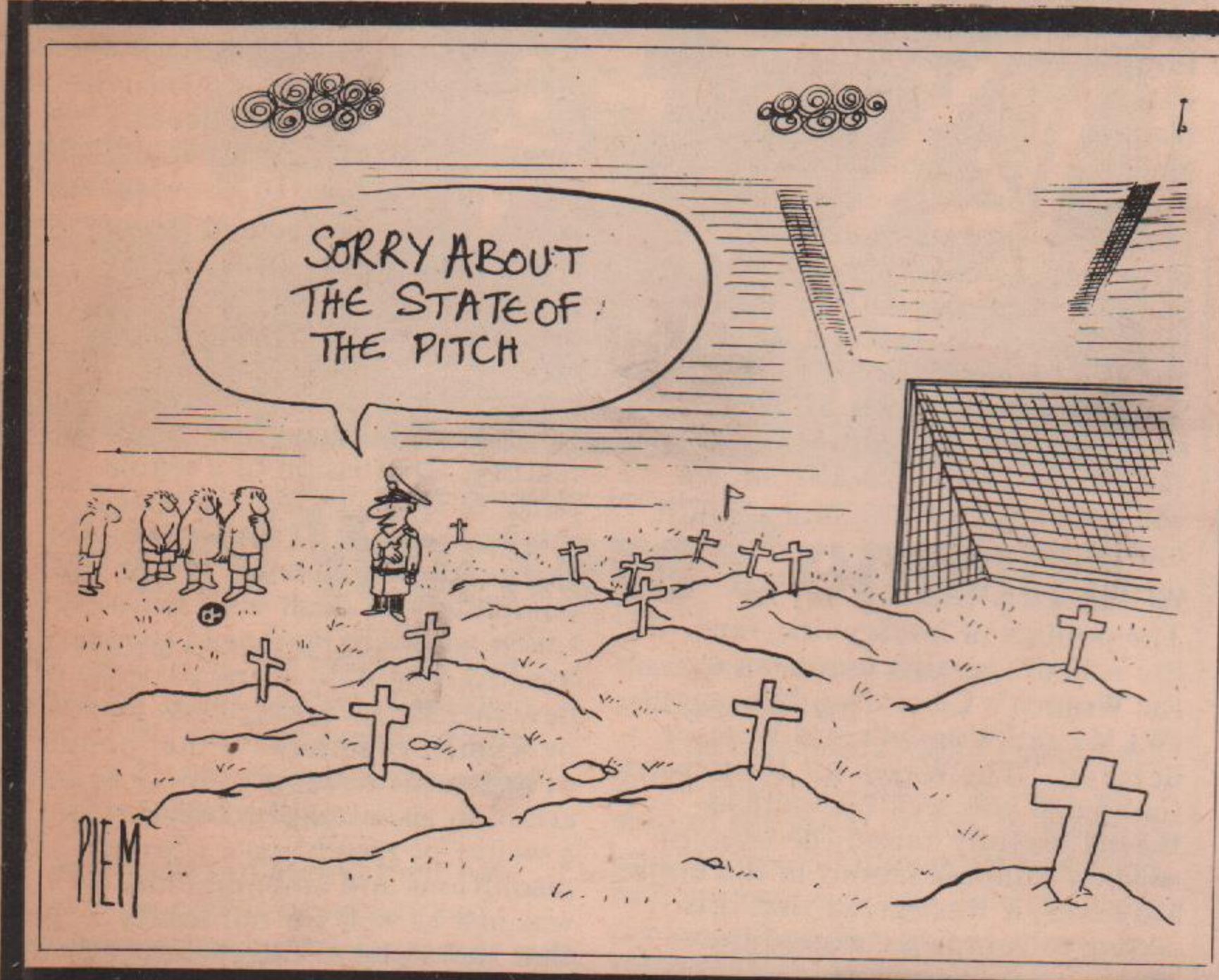
occupation.

So, why if two hundred textile workers can fight for and keep their jobs, does it now look as if the 3,000 Standard Triumph workers at Speke will shortly lose

theirs?

Inside — An article about what went wrong at Speke by a militant involved in the campaign to keep the factory open.

Newsline Photo



The Politics of Football See Page 9

The Irish Situation See Pages 6&7

CAMERAWORK

State Secrets See Page 11

Exclusive! Cohn-Bendit interview

Anti-Fascist Conference:

THE FIRST national anti-fascist conference for five years comes at a time of great excitement and confidence in the struggle against racism and fascism. The huge success of last month's Anti Nazi League Carnival and the National Front's abysmal results in the local elections must be provoking tensions inside the Front. They represent big setbacks not only for the fascists' youth policy, on which they had placed so much hope, but also for the 'parliamentary road to fascism' and the Front's attempts to gain respectability. Webster and Tyndall may well try to boost the flagging morale of their faithful by staging yet more provocative marches

through immigrant areas and by 'letting their young men loose on the reds'. If so, it may seem the wrong time to start questioning the left's position of 'no platform for fascists', and yet the conference must do just that: not the political position as such but the ways in which we try to implement it in a situation where the state is prepared to use all its might to stop us. Capitalism's strategy must be clear by now: the ruling class fears the growth of the anti-fascist movement precisely because revolutionary politics are so active within it. Hence they are willing to accede to the reformists'

demands for bans on NF marches under the Public Order Act, hoping thereby to isolate revolutionaries and upstage the real issues of racism and fascism by that of law and order. Big Flame has no prepared 'line' on the way out of this dilemma to put to the conference: all the conference can achieve is to begin a process of full, thoughtful and ongoing debate by recognising that the problem is there. Other problems remain too: we may have dealt the NF a couple of body blows, but the racialism on which feeds is alive and well thanks to the Tories' electioneering calls for more restrictive immigration

controls. While the Tories call the tune, Labour is not far behind in the race for the racist vote. The proposed new laws on nationality are a disgrace to any party which claims to be humanitarian let alone socialist. The message to the conference is again clear: our concentration on the NF has been too exclusive - racialism remains relatively untouched by our existing strategy. The need for a broader strategy relates to the question of organisation. The meteoric rise of the ANL as well as that of the sectoral organisations like Women Against Racism and Fascism and Schoolkids Against the Nazis mark the present time as

one of organisational flux. Big Flame welcomes the emergence of the ANL and regards it as a genuine parallel body to local and national anti-fascist and anti-racist committees. While it could do with a good dose of internal democracy, we place more importance on involving the League in united initiatives. The primary question about anti-fascists/ anti-racist organisation is not simply how to create a unitary national umbrella structure - structures justify themselves by functioning so as to get right the work in the localities and sections of the working class.

For further details see 'ADS' column on page 10.

TIME TO CHANGE STRATEGY



These two photographs illustrate the change in the Anti-Fascist/ Anti-Racist struggle. Left: the May Day Carnival in Hackney (Sparham I.F.L.). Right: Funeral Demonstration for Attab Ali; murdered by racists (Andrew Wiard. Report)

PARTY AND CLASS, the relationship between the revolutionary organisation and autonomous movements, and the form the revolutionary organisation should take in the present period. These were the dominant themes of the Third National Big Flame conference held last month.

PARTY AND CLASS

At last years conference, Big Flame decided to investigate the possibilities of building a qualitatively new revolutionary organisation in Britain. Since then, there have been important moves amongst other organisations of the revolutionary left and within the various sectors of the independent left towards a discussion about how to achieve the maximum unity but at the same time ensure that there is a proper debate between and recognition of the different revolutionary traditions in Britain.

The formation of Socialist Unity, the International Socialist Alliance, the debate around Socialist Challenge, the growth of the Socialist Feminist current in the Womens Liberation Movement, the mushrooming of the Anti-Fascist and Anti-Racist Movement. These now form the context of Big Flame's own modest proposals.

Conference decided that 'regroupment' of existing organisations - a shuffling of the cards' as a fraternal delegate from the Workers League put it, was not enough. A fusion of existing organisations was not possible or desirable in the short term.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE
A n IMG delegate spoke on Socialist Challenge. But Conference called for a genuinely independent socialist weekly and instructed the National Committee to open talks with other forces to this end. In the meantime our own newspaper would be improved and strengthened.

SOCIALIST UNITY
An assessment took place of the experience of Socialist Unity (S.U.) in last months local election. A fraternal delegate from the French revolutionary organisation O.C.T. described a similar project in the recent French

position we should take on the Labour Government and whether to call for a vote for Labour in constituencies where SU was not standing, and the programme of SU. Conference decided that further discussion was needed on the question of a Labour vote because of an even split. Some members were not happy with the way SU could become an end in itself - an exercise in winning votes.

THE STRUCTURE OF A REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

The discussion centred on whether the best model was a nationally elected leadership or one delegated from individual branches, and the need to ensure that women and working class members were not excluded. Those in favour of a nationally elected National Committee thought it enabled the organisation as a whole to decide on its leadership. It would allow a proper division of tasks and would be able to represent minorities within the organisation. Some thought that the question of the structure to be formed was not one of principle, but should be related to the situation Big Flame finds itself in 1978. A locally delegated leadership would enable new members and branches to have some say when they didn't have enough information to vote for a nationally elected National Committee.

Others stressed their doubts about the Democratic Centralist model, saying there was a need for a new concept of leadership. One member spoke of "the need to keep a creative tension between Leninism and Libertarianism". It was decided to have a nationally elected N.C.

RANK AND FILE ORGANISATION



industry, adult education, and colleges, spoke of the need to build up a rank and file movement, not in opposition to the existing Rank and File (R and F), but through building from small groups in various factories and workplaces and working inside bodies like R & F, Broad Left etc. where possible and necessary. The need to put forward realistic socialist alternatives in situations like the closure of Leylands at Speke was also stressed, otherwise workers would continue to accept redundancy payments as a way of solving their immediate problems.

RACISM AND FASCISM

In the wake of the immense success of the Anti-Nazi League Carnival, Conference welcomed the formation of the ANL and did not see it in opposition to the existing Anti-Fascist and Anti-Racist committees. Four tasks were identified for Big Flame's work: Fighting organised fascism. Fighting racism. Encouraging autonomous black organisation. Preparing for ruling class moves towards a "Strong State". It is no longer possible to compartmentalise anti-fascist work from the rest of the class struggle and Big Flame's work - the State is pushing it into all areas of society. The growth of the anti-fascist movement has also shown the possibility of building a youth movement.

WOMEN

The politics of housework, rape, the role of socialist feminism in the Womens Liberation Movement (WLM) and Womens Aid were debated. The Wages for Housework Campaign was seen by some as having usefully raised the issue of women's unpaid labour in the home. However, it was agreed that it is wrong to campaign around the demand of wages for housework because it would institutionalise housework as women's work. The seventh demand of the WLM recognising the importance of the fight against rape was discussed and it was agreed to work around the issue of violence against women.

It was important for Big Flame women to work in the Socialist Feminist current, involving it with working class women, but not only

IRELAND

Conference re-affirmed that BF supports the right to self-determination of the Irish people as a whole. It is in solidarity with all forces fighting British imperialism in Ireland and recognises the crucial importance of building a single anti-imperialist movement in Britain on the question of Ireland.

An emergency resolution condemned the attempted suppression of Republican News and sent a telegram of support to the prisoners in the North demanding political status.

PERSONAL POLITICS

An important aspect of BF politics has been to emphasise the need for Socialists to create social and personal relationships which show how we want to live in a socialist society. And this is not just a 'luxury' - it is essential if we are to create a movement relating to everyone's total needs, capable of breaking with capitalism. To do this we have to know precisely how capitalist social relations effect people personally.

The sort of problems we discussed were illustrated by the dynamics of the Big Flame conference. Large gatherings of this sort are in many ways unsatisfactory. Discussion of a whole range of subjects are telescoped into three days. There is a danger that whole subjects are missed out completely or dealt with in a very token way. Experienced speakers tend to dominate at the expense of new members, working class members or women generally. Finer points of argument become crudely summarised in an attempt to deal with a welter of resolutions, counter resolutions and amendments. It was just as well for our sanity that the social in the evening at which 'Clapperclaw', a feminist review, and 'Fightback' a black reggae band played, was so successful. It enabled people to talk and relax in a less formalised way imposed by a conference timetable.

Big Flame after the Conference.

That's the theme of our next Internal Bulletin. 10th June is the closing date for contributions.

Speke Shows Trade Unionism's Weakness

This article is a personal view by Frank George of Merseyside Big Flame, who has been involved in the struggle against the Speke closure.

BARRING A miracle it seems that Standard Triumph in Speke is closing down with more than 3,000 jobs lost in Liverpool, the urban area with the highest unemployment in the country.

That the plant would close was made clear at a mass meeting a couple of weeks back, when the majority of workers voted to accept the enlarged offer of redundancy pay after unanimously rejecting the previous offer. The payments average out at about £2,000, well below the figures being talked about in the current redundancy programme in the steel industry.

So why did the plant close? Why was there no fight? The plant closed because British Leyland wanted it to, and with the government posing no opposition and actively aiding the long ideological attack on Leyland workers — their supposed inefficiency and overmanning — the chances were that only a broadly-based politically militant campaign stemming from Speke would have halted the closure. But this never happened, and by no stretch of the imagination would it have happened.

The history of working class organisation at Speke reflects all the weaknesses that are at the moment inbuilt into particularly factory organisation nationwide — weaknesses reflecting the inability of old ideas and forms of organisation to effect in any substantial way the bosses' attacks on working class organisation and standards of living. These weaknesses can be summed up in two words — **TRADE UNIONISM** — the set of ideas and forms of organisation that most effectively bind the working class to the interests of the bosses. Of course, 'trade unionism' meant specific things to Speke:

1) The lack of any fundamental working class democracy in the involvement of the shop floor in deciding its own destiny, for example, the disastrous 17 week strike/lockout prior to the closure notice, there was only one mass meeting, all power was delegated to the shop stewards. This 'delegation', partly a habit based on a period when stewards were more involved with their sections due to the piece-work system (Speke only changed to Measured Day Work in 1971), and partly due to the undemocratic union structures that run through the industry, was crippling when the crunch came. The stewards made very little effort to involve the shop floor, and in

fact objectively treated the closure as a side issue, by belatedly forming an action group — on which only a minority of stewards sat, instead of turning the stewards committee into an action group and throwing it open to anyone who wanted to fight the closure.

2) Connected with the passivity caused by delegation was the lack of any consistent leadership. It's all very well for Convenor Mick Everett to describe the men who accepted an early paid lay-off as 'sheep going to the slaughter', but what has he been doing all these years except preparing the shop floor for the slaughter? The role of a convenor or shop steward is a political one, and it is how that role is filled that pretty well dictates the nature of a struggle in a situation like that at Standard Triumph. The need for mass involvement is not because of the formal need for democracy for the sake of it, it is because of the vital ideas and energy that would be focussed on the struggle. The need for involvement of local communities is not so 'that everyone can have their say', it is because it can immeasurably increase the power of those in struggle. Similarly the need to educate the shop floor to the real issues of the closure.

3) The real issue of Speke was, of course, whether the working class would go along with the capitalist strategy of rationalisation, speed-up, manning cuts and unemployment, or whether it would push for a radical change in society — at no time was this mentioned. For the 'leadership' at Speke, generalising the political meaning of the closure meant arguing over the viability of the TR7 car and influencing Leyland management and, through the Leyland Combine Committee, denouncing the closure as an attack on the future of British Leyland generally. Both important issues but not crucial ones. The sectionalism of the fight, the belief that one tiny (albeit powerful) section of society can defeat the society-wide strategy of the capitalists acting with the support of a Labour government, was once again proved wrong. The belief that the Labour government should be protected at all



Two thousand people including a large contingent from the Leyland factory at Speke, marched through London in early May to protest against redundancies in the Merseyside area.

costs had a paralysing effect on the national Leyland workers' leadership, such as Derek Robinson (Longbridge) and Bill McGarry (Canley), who were already involved in the Leyland participation scheme.

The weakness of the fight around the closure can most clearly be seen at the level of national leadership. It is the habit of delegation which leads to passivity, sectionalism, economism and routinism — which are the root causes of the current working class defeat. And not

surprisingly, it is the traditional areas of working class power — mines, cars, steel that are taking the greatest battering.

The closure is a disaster — an easy victory for the bosses. For those of us who are not prepared to accept the bosses' plans, it has become clear that we must spread the struggle to union branches, stewards committees, combine committees, in united slates for union elections, in unofficial action groups — above all on the shop floor and in the

community at large. It is no longer enough to operate at the level of propaganda as Big Flame did during the struggle. And we must fight consistently, there is no point flitting in and out of campaigns or turning up when a plant is about to close.

The general political questions have to be dealt with at a national level — after all it is the whole of the working class that is in crisis not just one section. Ultimately, a solution to the crisis will only come from the base.

Tories Pounce on Nottingham Tenants

Basford flats were built as a disaster, less than ten years ago. Many of the 840 flats and maisonettes are damp; the lifts are out of order often; noise is a tremendous problem with people's kitchens on top of other people's bedrooms.

Not surprising then that an energetic and active Tenants Action Group (TAG) should spring up. TAG has been fighting on behalf of tenants — and winning. Monthly open meetings are well attended and recently the TAG Players put on an excellent play about life in these and similar flats called 'Prawns in the Game'. BBC Nationwide televised it.

The night after, the local Tory Council pounced. In the middle of

the night they went into TAG's action centre and rummaged through the files, taking photographs of various posters. Showing this evidence at an emotionally-charged housing committee meeting they decided to withdraw TAG's tenancy of the Action Centre immediately. Their idea obviously is: if tenants fight and win — stamp on them

TAG quickly occupied the Action Centre. We've been there day and night since and intend to stay until the Council back down. Support from the flats themselves is strong, partly in response to open air meetings. Other tenants associations (even the more moderate ones) realise they could get the chop next and have actively backed the sit-in with money, publicity

and by joining the sitting-in rota. Several local trade unions are beginning to give support.

This looks like being a long battle and national support may be needed to win. Please get in touch with us through Sue Walker, Chairperson, 171 Evans Court, Old Basford, Nottingham and send messages of support, contributions to the fighting fund etc. TAG will not be moved.

I.C.I.

The first issue of 'Chemco News' is now out. 'Chemco News' is the newspaper of the I.C.I. shop stewards combine. The newspaper hopes to be a useful weapon in building the combine. The first issue contains many important articles including an analysis of productivity deals and ideas on how to fight them. 'Chemco News' which is essential reading for workers in the chemical industry costs 10p and can be obtained from J.B. Grime, Combine Secretary, 11 Croft Rd., Doncaster, South Yorks, DN4 9 HA

Cowley Militants

THE CAMPAIGN to defend the nine militants in the T & G at Cowley continues. The last meeting of the Regional enquiry has been adjourned.

The campaign bulletin makes the following assessment of the situation.

Despite the embarrassment the Regional committee has suffered over its attempt to conduct an official Regional committee hearing based on the personal opinions of an individual member of another Union (ASTMS) it would be rash to conclude that the battle is over.

The findings of the February enquiry are still to be considered by the Regional committee, which we understand will meet for that purpose in July. (Two days before the Cowley plants break for the two-week summer holiday).

is the time to step up the campaign. We therefore call on every supporter in the TGWU, as agreed at the conference to:

1. Get your branch or stewards' committee to affiliate to the campaign.
2. Send resolutions calling for the dropping of the charges, and the recognition of Alan Thornett as deputy convenor; to the Number 5 Regional committee, the General Secretary and the General Executive Council. (Copies to the organising committee).
3. Personal cash donations from supporters of the campaign are urgently needed.
4. Invite one of the nine to speak at your branch or stewards' committee.

All correspondence, requests for speakers and donations to be sent to the organising committee, care of Perry Cullen 23 Overmead



Ford Workers Combine

The Ford (UK) Workers Combine is unique. It has grouped together most of the socialist organisations active at Fords, as well as a number of independent militants.

After years of seeing their national wage claims being worked out in isolation by the Convenor's committee, with only a minimum of shop floor involvement, socialist militants from most of the Ford plants have got together to draw up a package of demands to fight for and organise around on the shop floor.

The key questions this year are money and hours. The central plank of the Workers Combine platform is * £20 on the rate, five hours

deals, no penalty clauses. * No strings attached.

The convenors haven't specified any amount of money in their version of the claim, hiding this behind an extensive shopping list including holiday pay, sick pay, line allowance. All very good, but as was shown by the last claim, unless there is a clear demand and a fight organised for money, there will be no fight on the other issues.

It is the hours and money that can unify the workforce. And the money must be enough to be worth fighting for.

The initial purpose of the Ford Workers Combine is to fight for a strong claim to be accepted at the all-Ford shop stewards conference in each plant.

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!

£

But you're always telling us that it is our business

OCCUPATION—A VITAL TACTIC

by the Campaign Against the Criminal Trespass Law

THE WIDESPREAD use of occupation as a tactic is relatively new in Britain — particularly in workplace struggles — yet in the seven years since the famous work-in on the Upper Clyde in 1971, more than 250,000 workers have been involved in some 260 different workplace occu-

pations, in disputes ranging from fights against closures or redundancies, wage claims and union recognition, to victimisation, equal pay, health and safety, pensions, and indeed the full range of trade union issues. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of students have used the tactic to fight cuts, closures, teacher unemploy-

ment, fee increases and racism; in the community, groups have occupied town halls, rent offices, area health authority buildings, and social security offices in support of their struggles, and many thousands of homeless people have been forced to squat to get a roof over their heads.

OCCUPATIONS: ADVANTAGES IN THE WORKPLACE

In the workplace,

- it brings management or production operations to a standstill, and prevents the removal of goods, materials or machinery.
- It has also meant access to information about management plans, tactics, profits.
- It can give an organising base and equipment, a focus around which to build support, a meeting place, catering facilities, and shelter both from the weather and from harassment by police, scabs and management.

Apart from securing formal commitments, the Campaign has also been tackling two other tasks. Firstly, distributing information about the exact implications of the law, so that those considering an occupation have a legal brief which will enable them to plan their action with knowledge of how the law would affect it. Hopefully this will ensure that intimidation and illegal police interventions are prevented, and that, where possible actions are avoided which the new law clearly defines as offences. It is also hoped that clear information will prevent occupations being rejected as a possible tactic by those who believe that the new law makes them illegal.

Secondly, the Campaign has been working with occupations of all kinds, to contribute in each situation the experience which past occupations have gained. Not only have we attempted to pass on our own knowledge of past occupations, but we have often been able to bring in people who have direct experience of similar occupation, and who can offer their own advice on practical and organisational questions.

The Campaign is also organising a monitoring scheme to collect information on the use or threatened use of this law, in order to be able to give up-to-date practical legal advice and begin to analyse the way that the new law is being used.

The Campaign can supply information about the law, the use of occupations as a tactic and the work that it is doing. We would be happy to provide a speaker to address a meeting.

Meanwhile, the work of the Campaign depends on the active support of activists around the country.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Raise this issue in your organisation and get it to pass policy against Part 2 of the Criminal Law Act, 1977, and commit itself to mobilising in support of occupations to prevent the use of this law
- Raise this issue in your local Trades Council (and get it raised in your local Labour Party). Propose that the Trades Council actively take up this issue, that it call a meeting in the area, ensures that the implications of this law are widely understood, and that any local occupations receive all possible assistance and are defended from attack under this law.

- Propose that your organisation affiliate to the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) and propose that an additional donation is made to assist its work.

- Help with the monitoring scheme by contacting CACTL as soon as you hear of any use or threat to use the new law, whether in the workplace, in colleges or in the community.

- Get your organisation to order copies of the CACTL material giving details of the new law and its practical implications, so that people in your area are forewarned and cannot be caught off guard like the workers at Aintree.

'WORKPLACE OCCUPATIONS AND THE LAW' — a working guide'. (10p + postage)

CACTL general information leaflet (£1.00 per 100 copies)

'Squatters and the New Law' — leaflet (£1.00 per 100 copies)

Available from: CACTL c/o 35 Wellington Street, London WC2 (Tel: 01- 289 3877)



Occupation at Wildt Mellor Bromley Factory in Leicester last year. John Sturrock (Report)

It was, of course, the growing and successful exploitation of the advantages of the tactic that lay behind the pressure from property interests to introduce the new 'criminal trespass' legislation contained in Part 2 of the Criminal Law Act, 1977, which became enforceable on December 1st 1977.

OCCUPATIONS AND THE POLICE

The purpose of the new law is to strengthen the hand of the police and property owners by giving them the power to wield the criminal law against occupations. Although it does not make occupations in themselves illegal, the new law gives the police much wider grounds for intervention in such situations.

FIVE NEW CRIMES

Of the five new 'crimes' established by Part 2 of the Criminal Law Act, one relates specifically to the occupation of the premises of foreign embassies or their staff. A second relates to residential premises, and threatens squatters, licencees, unlawful sub-tenants and others with arrest if they refuse to leave their homes in certain circumstances. The other three offences affect all kinds of occupations, whether in the workplace, in colleges or in the community.

Where the people involved know the details of the law and the ways of avoiding its pitfalls, it should usually be possible to carry out and maintain an occupation without actually committing one of these offences. The danger they pose lies in the excuse they give to the police for intervening. Until this law was passed, the police could only be called in to an occupation on the grounds that it was necessary to prevent a breach of the peace, and in general they were reluctant to use this power widely. Now they have power to enter, search and

arrest, without a warrant, on the grounds that one of the new offences has been committed.

The aim of an occupation is to keep control of the premises until the issue in question is resolved, while the aim of the property owner will normally be to get the occupants removed as soon as possible. In this context, the power of the police to make arrests is crucial. For even if charges are not subsequently brought, or if they fail to be proved in court, the principal objective (removal of the occupants) will have been achieved. Indeed, as recent case demonstrates, the mere threat of charges may be effective in securing this objective, where the participants are ignorant of the law.

No-one who is aware of the way in which the police were used at Saltley Gates, outside Grunwicks or at Lewisham last year will have any doubt that police will be called on to use the threat of charges or the power of arrest in occupations or similar situations in the future. The new law adds to the armoury of excuses at their disposal, and to their confidence in using them.

And yet whether or not the police decide to use their powers in a given situation is likely to depend on what kind of confrontation their intervention might provoke. And this will depend on the strength of the occupation and the degree of outside support which it has been able to gather.

HOW THE POLICE ARE USED IN PRACTICE

When dismissal notices were issued to the whole workforce at a small distribution depot in Aintree, Liverpool, recently, in the middle of negotiations and completely out of the blue, the shop steward was advised by the district official to refuse management orders to leave the premises forthwith. On learning this, management sent for the police, who threatened action

under the new law, and the workers left the premises. This was a case where the workers were not even engaged in an 'occupation', but simply resisting a completely undisguised attempt to dispense with normal negotiations by getting rid of the workers. What is more, there were no grounds for arresting any of the participants under the new legislation, or indeed under any other law.

In this context, there are valuable examples in recent uses of the tactic. In the last year, workers in four London hospitals have used work-ins to fight closure plans and ensure that patients supported by other trade unionists and by community organisations and student unions in united action to defend their local health facilities. Similarly, when parents and children occupied a nursery school threatened with closure in Oxford recently, they too sought and secured support from all sections of the movement for their struggle. Such united local action is going to be vital in preventing attacks on occupations on the basis of the new law.

And it is all the more important in view of the fact that the law is obviously being tried out first on the weaker sections of the movement (small workforces, squatters etc.) It is essential that united action is taken to prevent the successful use of the law against these weaker sections, in order to prevent its use spreading.

CACTL

Since the law was passed in July 1977, the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) has focussed its energies on consolidating and extending the opposition to the law, and building a commitment throughout the broad movement, to mobilise against any attempts to implement this law. The Campaign has been raising this issue through the distribution of leaflets and pamphlets, speaking tours and conferences, as well as by working with occupations when they occur.

BF Summer School



It started as an idea for change from the smoke-filled rooms where we never get to know each other. We decided that the Yorkshire comrades would have a day out after the pre-conference aggregate, but it snowballed into a coachload of friends from Leeds to Scarborough. Shrimps, ice cream, fish and chips, donkey rides, sand-castles, football, the money machines and fresh air... the

welcome change from the meetings, demos and leaflets that fill up too much of our lives.

We will be following this up with a week in August (5th-12th), combining the seaside favourites with socialist education and culture. There are 200 places available, costing about £25 per adult, available to Big Flame members and sympathisers. Enquiries welcome: to BF Summer School,

N.A.C. Conference

SINCE THE heady days of massive demonstrations which lead to the defeats of the White and Benyon anti-abortion bills, the struggle for abortion rights has become the reluctant preserve of small but dedicated National Abortion Campaign groups up and down the country. This was reflected in the disappointingly low turn-out of about 100 to the third National Conference in Sheffield at the end of April.

The main discussions on the first day centred around positive legislation. It was decided to support the drafting of a NAC bill which would remove all legal and medical restrictions on the right to abortion and ensure that there is open access for every woman to free abortion facilities.

This meant rejecting the Abortion Law Reform Association's Bill which included a clause which would limit the time to which abortion was available to 28 weeks.

The conference felt that NAC should not compromise on the right of women to control their own fertility in this way.

It looks as if the ALRA bill will not be introduced in Parliament as no Labour M.P. at the moment is prepared to put it forward for fear of losing votes.

However if it were to go to Parliament, the conference decided that it should be support as an advance on the 1967 Act.

Despite all the discussion on legislation the conference decided that NAC's main priority should not be towards parliament but towards building a mass campaign which would involve people locally, to fight for day-care abortion centres and to raise the issue of a woman's right to choose.

The question of a woman's right to choose was the main topic of discussion on the second day. It was agreed that women would have no real choice of whether to have children or not unless we have better housing, more money and proper child care facilities. The cuts in the N.H.S. were also seen as an important part of the attack on women's rights.

Although the conference made important decisions no debate was had over NAC's increasing isolation from the women's Liberation Movement and the difficulties of building a campaign rooted in the working class. Perhaps the conference emphasised too much taking up formal positions rather than dealing with these problems especially as NAC is a very loosely federated grouping and how much impact the decisions taken will have on many NAC groups is doubtful.



editorial

ONCE AGAIN a woman's right whether or not to have a child is under attack. In the past the attack has come from unsympathetic doctors, anti-abortion MPs and the general lack of facilities. This time it's from a man who is seeking an injunction from the courts to stop his wife having an abortion.

If the application of the husband, William Paton, is granted, another nail will have been knocked into the coffin of the right of a woman to determine her own fertility. Even if the court does not uphold the application, the delay and publicity will make the abortion more difficult and possibly more dangerous for the women.

In this case it is a husband who is trying to stop an abortion, but it is clear that if his application is successful it will set a precedent for all men (and not just husbands) to use the courts to prevent women they have had sex with from getting an abortion.

If the injunction is granted legal history will have been made. Until now the man has had no say in whether an abortion should take place - as long as the woman is over 16 and two doctors agree that it should be performed.

And this is the case in the USA and now in Italy, where the law

makes clear that men have no say in the matter.

Having been temporarily defeated in parliament, reactionary groups like SPUC and Life are now trying to use the courts to 'give rights to the foetus'. In fact, they know that 'foetus rights' are no more than a ruse to take control over abortion even further away from women than the 1967 Act does.

It is vital that the women's movement, NAC and the revolutionary left uses this opportunity to go in the offensive and put the case for abortion on demand - a woman woman's right to choose.

In 1935, Stella Brown, a feminist wrote 'Abortion must be the key to a new world for women, not a bulwark for things as they are: omically and biologically. Abortion should not be either a prerequisite of the legal wife only, or merely a last remedy against illegitimacy. It should be available for any woman, without insolent inquisitions, nor numerous financial charges, nor tangles of red tape. FOR OUR BODIES ARE OUR OWN.'

A struggle is still needed to make her words come true.

Big Flame's position on abortion is developed in 'Revolutionary Socialism' No.2.

REVIEWS

A chilles Heel is a new magazine about the politics of being a man. Islington Gutter Press, a North London socialist paper, prints this review of its first edition - by Lynne Segal.

The magazine is produced by men from north London who have been involved in men's groups and socialist politics for many years.

TOUGH

In several articles they talk about male socialisation.

"In the society we live in, men are by and large brought up to be powerful, aggressive, competitive, and tough and manipulative; not to show feelings particularly of weakness..... We are taught to look for our emotional satisfactions in one place alone - in the family."

They don't bother to go into the guns and tanks and bloody male heroics we all know so well on the tele which instills a rigid masculinity.

"In the world we appear confident. We are supposed to be able to 'handle' things. But our inner lives, denied so early, are often deeply insecure and weak."

They mention the huge gulf they sometimes feel between themselves

CRISIS

Other articles speak of masculinity in crisis.

They see this as partly economic. With more women working, with men's jobs increasingly de-skilled boring and meaningless, and with unemployment and low wages, men's role as the breadwinner is undermined and threatened. In an article on fascism, Vic Seidler links the frustrations of the male worker to the growth of the right.

CHANGES

The authors also discuss the changes in their own lives which have occurred mainly in response to feminism. They say they have become less controlling and competitive, because of the way these impulses have crippled their relations with women, with each other and themselves. They have learned to admit dependency, to depend more on each other as men, and to share in the housework and childcare. They have supported the Women's Liberation Movement by organising creches and supporting nursery action and abortion campaigns.

And finally they speak of their need as socialist men to include in the struggle for socialism changes in their own personal lives and relationships. They say if we are to stop the growth of the Right which does draw on the real anxieties and insecurities which people feel today, at work and at home, we must present "a new vision of human relationships, between men and women, adults and children and young people which help people recognise the difficulties they face not simply as 'individual' and 'private', but as public and social."

They believe men's groups are important not just to support women's and gay people's struggles against their oppression in a patriarchal society, but also to overcome their oppression as men.

I liked all the articles in the magazine. But here are the problems

DISTRUST

I see few ways that many women can really trust men's commitment to our struggles against sexism till patriarchy is dead a hundred years or more. Sexism is not reducible to any immediate relationship between a man and a woman.

The magazine does not say enough about the power struggle going on between men and women. It does not suggest how men are learning to avoid being permanently in control in their relationships with women. There are only a few comments in the magazine which do justice to women's struggles. I think it is completely self-indulgent of men to feel they can avoid this discussion as masochistic or guilt tripping. As one local feminist commented acidly, "there's only one thing that they forget, that women are oppressed."

We do need to bring these ideas to bear on the practicalities of organising such campaigns. This must be done if the Men's Movement is to realise its goal of relating to socialist struggles in general. Though I suspect many people will still remain unhappy about the idea of an autonomous Men's Movement anyway. copies from: Men's Free Press, 7 st Mark's Rise, London, E.8 2NJ

Labour in the West Indies: the birth of a workers' movement. Arthur Lewis, New Beacon Books, 76 Stroud Stroud Green Rd., London N4 3EN £1.80 p/b.

This excellent pamphlet is about the struggles of a new force in the Caribbean in the 1930s: the working class. It traces those struggles and in an afterword shows how the class struggle has been used to 'develop' society in capitalism's interests. The very recent struggles in the Caribbean mark an important

Review: 'Living with an Earthquake: Italy 1977-8'

"The Communists stood not upon the extreme left but upon the extreme right" wrote George Orwell, the socialist novelist, during the Spanish Civil War. He did not mean to say that the Communist Party was indistinguishable from the fascists, but that it was counter-revolutionary.

Frightened by the coup in Chile, uncertain how to go forward in a period of economic and political crisis, the Italian CP has opted for an informal partnership with the corrupt, conservative, ruling Christian Democrats. *Living With An Earthquake* documents the consequences of the Communists' decision for the Italian far left and the working class movement.

This rich compilation of articles on the thinking of one strand of the movement, the 'autonomists', so-called because they fight for the

political autonomy of the working class from the interests of capital or its political allies. From this point of view stem the strengths and weaknesses of the pamphlet.

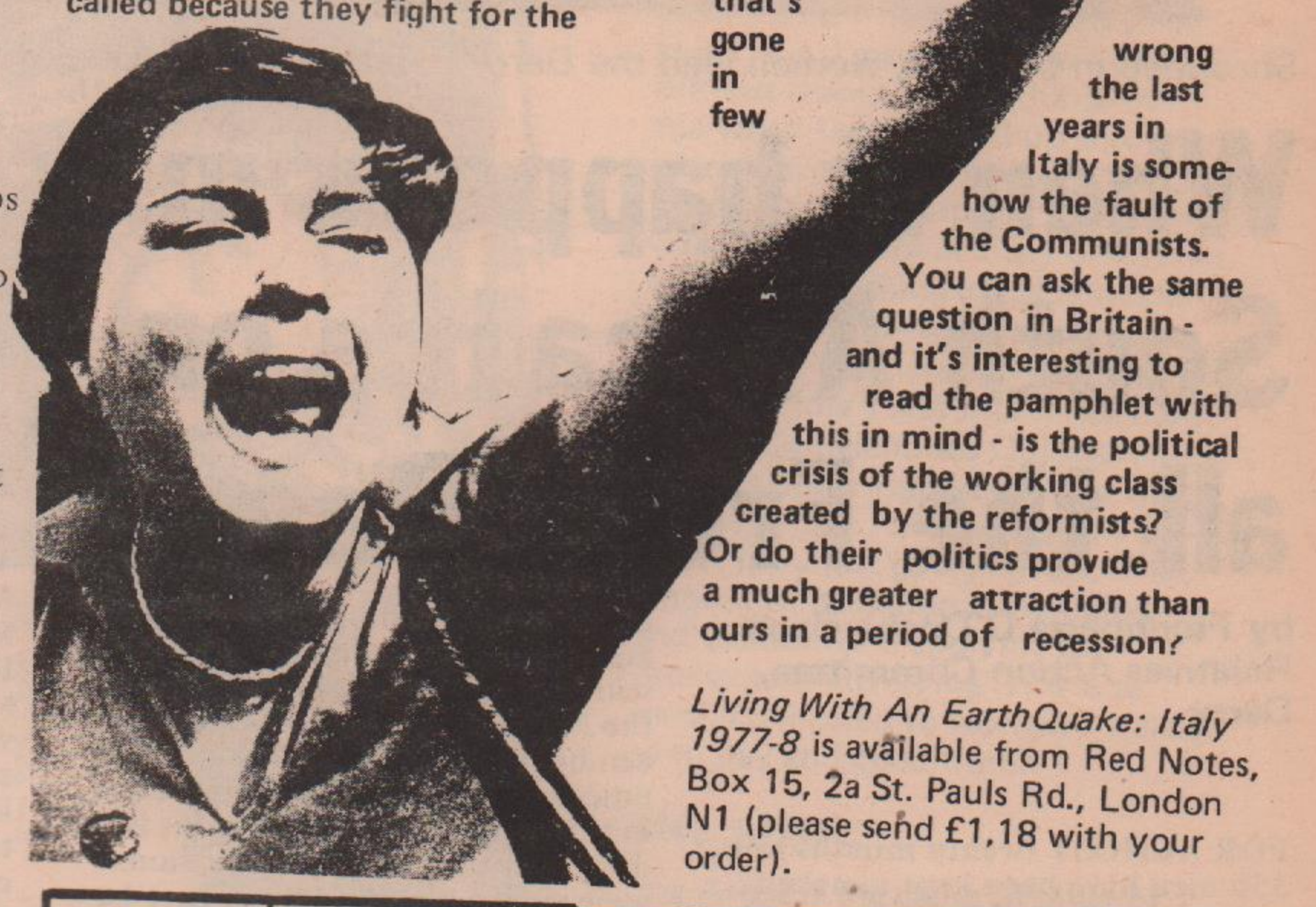
We discover how and why the Italian CP has for the past three years devoted itself to hamstringing class struggle to the needs of the capitalist economy. On the other hand, we don't hear too much about what's happened to the economy. The pamphlet is excellent when it comes to the new issues which have been thrown up on the left-feminism, personal politics, the authoritarianism of the left.

The problem is the assumption of the autonomists that everything that's gone in few

wrong the last years in Italy is somehow the fault of the Communists.

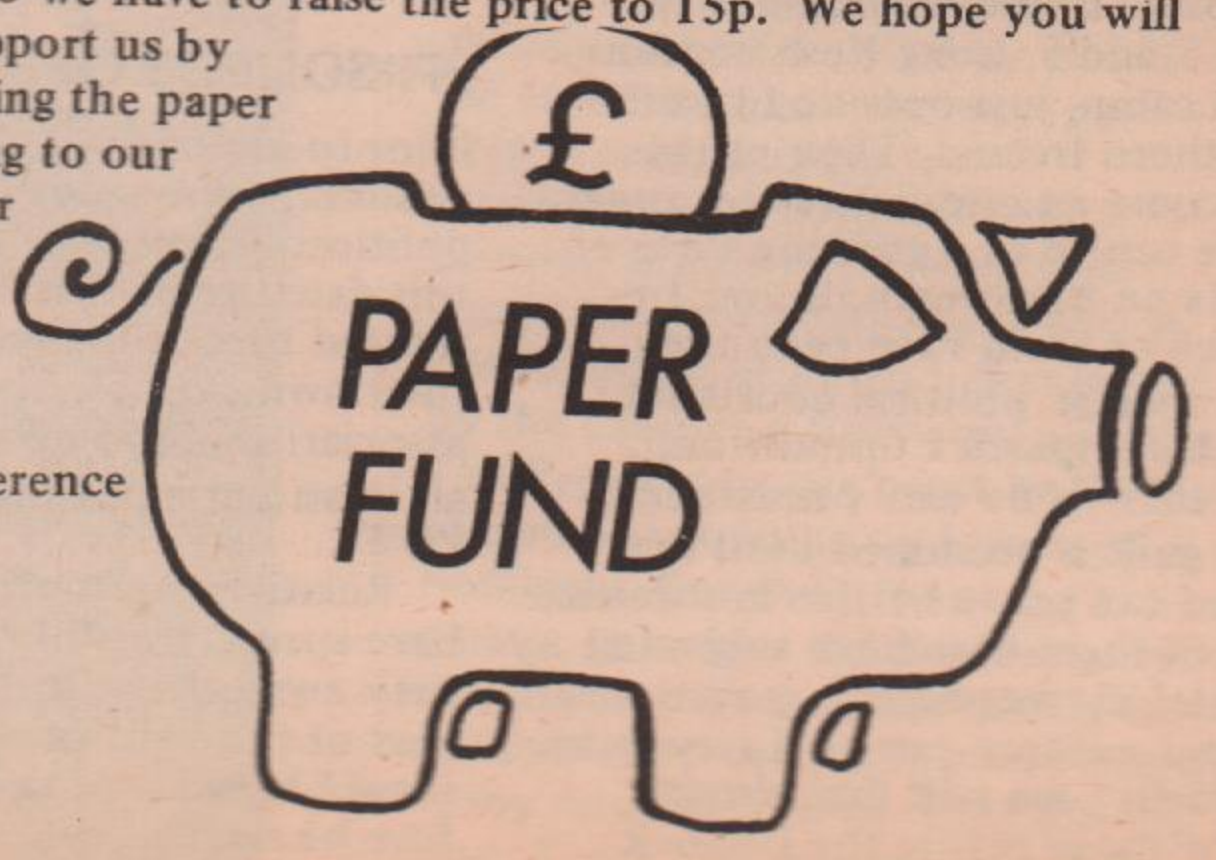
You can ask the same question in Britain - and it's interesting to read the pamphlet with this in mind - is the political crisis of the working class created by the reformists? Or do their politics provide a much greater attraction than ours in a period of recession?

Living With An Earthquake: Italy 1977-8 is available from Red Notes, Box 15, 2a St. Pauls Rd., London N1 (please send £1.18 with your order).



This month is the last issue that will be selling at 10p. Although our readers have responded well to our Fund Drive, we still will not be able to meet our target of £500 by July, unless someone gives extremely generously! Donations this month total £51, giving a grand total of £249.35. So we have to raise the price to 15p. We hope you will continue to support us by buying and selling the paper and contributing to our fund drive. Our thanks this month for donations from:

- Big Flame conference raffle £26.00
- Sheffield Big Flame £15
- Manchester Big Flame £10.00



BEHIND THE ARRESTS IN THE NORTH

EVERY BRITISH solution to end the war in Northern Ireland has failed. Not only is support growing in the Republican community for the withdrawal of British troops — the first step towards any long term settlement between Catholics and Protestants. There is also a marked shift to the left in the Republican movement and the anti-imperialist forces.

Devoid of political solutions At 4 a.m. on the morning of Thursday April 27th, 300 heavily armed RUC men backed up by a massive force of British troops broke into Catholic homes all over the North of Ireland. Some fifty people were detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The British Press has described them as IRA men, which is a deliberate lie. Some of them are members of the Provisional Sinn Fein, which is a legal political party. Others are members of the Relatives Action Committees.

the British Government has ordered a massive crackdown on the Republican movement.

- The aim is two-fold:
- to prevent a new mobilisation of the Catholic communities around the demand for political prisoner status.
 - to wipe out the growing republican socialist current.

On 27 April, three days before a big demonstration was due in support of the political prisoners of H-block, Long Kesh, security forces swooped. . . .

The fifteen who were arrested in Belfast were:

- Gerry Brannigan (Chairman, Belfast Comhairle Ceanntair), Maire Moore (Vice Chairman, Belfast Comhairle Ceanntair), Malachy Foots (Sinn Fein Organiser), Sean Caughey (Distributor of Republican News), Gary Kennedy (SDLP member, and printer of Republican News), Thomas Hartley, Peter Hartley, Mary Kennedy, Patricia Davidson, Billy Davidson, Olive Maguire, Eileen Strong, Donney Devenny, Alan Friet, Boddy Lavry.



Photo: Philip Jones Griffiths (reproduced from Camerawork, a radical photography review, £3 a year from HMPW, 119 Roman Road, London E.1.)

They are being held at the detention centre at RUC police barracks, Castlereagh. Relatives who attempt to contact them are told that there is 'No Change' in their conditions. There can be no doubt that British and RUC torturers are working their way through this new batch at this very moment.

In addition, the offices of Sinn Fein were raided, and everything has been removed. The office has been dusted for fingerprints, and much damage has been done by the police.

POLITICAL STATUS

Why do these raids come at this time? On Sunday April 30th, the Relatives Action Committee were organising a massive demonstration to protest against the withdrawal of political status. These raids have been carried out in an attempt to prevent that demonstration from taking place. This is why the Relatives Action Committees have been attacked. In the second place, the raid is an attempt to close down Republican News which is the paper in the North which gives greatest publi-

city to the conditions of the prisoners. There is speculation in the British press that those who have been arrested will be charged with conspiracy to promote the aims of an illegal organisation, or even under the Treason Act. The latter Act provides for capital sentence on those convicted. It is clear what lengths the British state is prepared to go to silence support for the men on the blanket in H-Block, or to prevent the details of this brutal torture, enacted to maintain the British presence, from reaching the British public.



Shrouded in blankets, women lead the Derry Relatives Action Committee march in solidarity with the men on the blanket in H-Block.

When it happens in South Africa it's on all the Front Pages

by Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, Relatives Action Committee, Derry.

FOR ALMOST twenty months now, 330 men have been kept in naked solitary confinement, 24 hours a day, in cells 10' x 6', where they eat sleep and excrete. They have no exercise periods — no books, no newspapers, no cigarettes, no radios. Their place of incarceration is H-Blocks 3 and 5, Long Kesh concentration camp, just outside Lisburn in Northern Ireland. Their plight has become an international scandal and the centre of a growing wave of protests on the streets all over Ireland. All of them have been tried before special political courts set up by the Diplock Commission, where there is no jury present and where guilt is presumed until the accused can prove her/his innocence. Many of them have been subjected to brutal ill-treatment in police stations and military camps. Lawyers in the North have said that almost 80% of those before the Diplock courts are jailed simply on forced

have been able to prove that the marks on their bodies are consistent with physical ill-treatment. Under the Northern Ireland laws a person can be held for seven days incommunicado before being charged, and in the great majority of cases it is difficult to prove that confessions were signed under duress. There have been attempted suicides in custody, one man jumping from the top floor of an RUC holding station, narrowly missing spiked railings below, and was unconscious for weeks.

PRISONERS OF WAR

Prior to March 1st 1976, political prisoners were recognised as being political offenders, whereas after this date the British Government refused to let the prisoners wear their own clothes, have free association, food parcels, books all in an attempt to criminalise the POWs.

Relatives Action Committees have sprung up all over Ireland, and they argue that the prisoners are a part of the political struggle for national liberation, and should therefore be recognised as prisoners of war in line with internationally

tails of the struggle for political status are asked to write to: Mr. George Henderson, 8 Chamberlain St., Derry City where literature can be requested free of charge. S.A.E. please.

"CRY FOR HELP"

Since mid-March, these prisoners of war have been adopting a policy of non-co-operation with the prison authorities, and they are refusing to wash or 'slop-out'. Speaking on RTE radio on Thursday April 27th Ms Miriam Dalym chairperson of the Irish Republican Socialist Party and a weekly welfare visitor to the camp, said, "This is the only form of protest left open to them. Indeed, they know that they will suffer even further, and skin rashes have become commonplace. This protest is a cry for help to the outside world, and the conditions have become extremely grave and will certainly worsen in the days ahead." Scores of telegrams were sent to the International Red Cross following this broadcast, asking them to send a team of investigators to the H-Blocks 3 and 5. Street protests increased and tens of thousands took part in several public demonstrations. Trade unionists speaking at the May Day Rally spoke out against these conditions, and several women wearing nothing but a blanket to symbolise the prisoners' plight stood for almost an hour during the trade union rally. Derry councillors at their monthly council meeting expressed concern, and the local Bishop, after visiting the H-Blocks described them as inhumane and degrading. It is worth remembering that each day of protest equals one days loss of remission. This

THREE MONTHS ago, a Belfast Catholic youth, John MacMahon, was taken off the street by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to their barracks on the banks of the River Lagan. He was never seen alive again. A few days ago his body was pulled from the river.

The discovery of his body followed closely after the discovery of another. Bryan Maguire, a Catholic from Lisburn, Co. Antrim was found hanged in his cell in the notorious Castlereagh Interrogation Centre, in east Belfast.

PROTEST AGAINST CONDITIONS IN H-BLOCK, DEMAND POLITICAL STATUS FOR PRISONERS ON THE BLANKET PICKET THE HOME OFFICE WHITEHALL, 3.00pm, SUNDAY 28th MAY AND FORTNIGHTLY THEREAFTER.

When his fellow workers at the Strathearn Audio Factory heard of his death they immediately walked out in protest and there were several nights of rioting in North Belfast, including attacks on RUC stations and the home of Gerry Fitt M.P. These incidents were not widely reported by the British media.

MURDER AND TORTURE

The British Press and politicians try to present the Northern Irish police as a fine body of men, doing a difficult job. They are nothing of the sort, as the Catholic popu-

cost. The Royal Ulster Constabulary have a record of murder and torture second to none in the world. They succeeded in killing the first civilian in the present round of troubles in 1969 when they launched an attack on the Catholic Bogside area of Derry. After running amok, they beat Mr. Samuel Devenny to death in front of his own family. Later, the authorities admitted the guilt of the police but no policeman was ever charged. The murderers are still serving with the Derry

City RUC.

NO WONDER

True to form, the RUC had succeeded in forcing a signed confession from their latest victim, Bryan Maguire. Before being found hanged he had signed a statement saying he had helped in the shooting of a policeman. Signing his name to the statement was the only way he knew to stop the beating and torture he was suffering. Yet he knew that in the no-jury courts of Northern Ireland that signature would send him straight to the

IRELAND-Prisoners and Press Latest Targets of British Rule

'If you have a grievance, then there are peaceful, democratic ways of changing the situation.' That's the constant message from the government in Northern Ireland.

The last sixty years' experience in Ireland suggests this isn't true. And the last few weeks have confirmed it.

When the plight of the political prisoners in H-Block began to awake a wide and organised response in the Catholic community, the State reacted as if faced with a violent demonstration.

They rounded up members of the Relatives Action Committees,

and they arrested the staff of Republican News, the 15,000 weekly circulation newspaper of Provisional Sinn Fein, in order to end its coverage of the H-Block protests.

Meanwhile in Dublin, for the same reasons, the government there has arrested the editor of the *Starry Plough*, newspaper of the Irish Republican Socialist Party

Both governments charge the people they've arrested with 'terrorism'. This is the only justification they have for suppressing press freedom. As you read this, the chances are that the so-called terrorists will be undergoing torture aimed at

extracting false confessions from them.

These methods are part and parcel of the British Army's occupation of the North of Ireland. The state in the North was created by force and is only maintained by suppressing the rights of the Catholic minority. The state sees every demonstration, every protest, every opposition paper, as a threat to its very existence.

And like any South American military dictatorship, it rounds up its opponents and tortures them until they confess to being 'terrorists'.

IN AN ATTEMPT to break through the 'paper wall' of censorship, two IRSP (Irish Republican Socialist Party) comrades in Derry's Bog side have come up with the novel idea of preparing cassette tapes on a regular basis and mailing these off to people who add their names to a mailing list... the project has become known as the 'Grapevine' which is indeed appropriate when we consider how hard it is to get facts on the Irish struggle.

Both comrades have informed Big Flame that they wish people to contact the address below, and request that those in receipt of the

tapes convene meetings in their respective areas so that others may hear the tape and discuss its contents.

The cost of the scheme is covered by each person adding their name on the mailing list donating £1, whereby they can have one tape a month outlining the current situation.

Grapevine No. 1 is based on a series of interviews with relatives of Republican prisoners of war

contact Mr. George Henderson, 8 Chamberlain St, Bogside, Derry City Ireland. Interested parties should not send cash, but rather cheques or postal orders.

WE PRINT below an edited version of an interview with Ian Phillips who served for 3½ years in the British Army between 1972 and 1975 including 4 months in Belfast. We don't agree with all Ian's political conclusions, but we print what he has to say because of the important information it gives about the training of soldiers and their role in the North.

The interview is from *Troops Out for May 1978* — the paper of the United Troops Out Movement.

RECRUITMENT

I JOINED up because I had no education or qualifications, and where I lived in Essex there wasn't much work available. I knew others who had joined up, so I decided to follow them. I joined up as a Junior Marine when I was 16. I wanted a bit of excitement a bit of travel, to be tough, to be a *something* rather than just be a nothing outside.

THE AMOUNT OF DESERTION IS INCREDIBLE AND THE NUMBERS APPLYING FOR DISCHARGE IS INCREASING. THIS IS AS MUCH CONNECTED WITH NORTHERN IRELAND AS TO PAY AND CONDITIONS.

The image of the services, disciplined, tough and professional, was very attractive. I didn't take the discharge options at 3 months and 6 months in training because I hoped things would be great later. It's a very masculine atmosphere, and when the options come up they line you up and you get a lot of crap about they are going to separate the men from the boys who want out. The pressure is on you to stick it out and get through the training because you want to prove yourself to your mates.

TRAINING

I was sent to a Commando Unit in Plymouth. After training on NATO exercises and in America we started pre-Northern Ireland Training in May 1973.

The prospect of going to Northern Ireland is very much in soldiers' heads all the time. Before you go you do three months non-stop training for it, then you do a four month tour in the North, and when you come back you do a further one month de-brief.

So out of every 14 months you are doing 8 months of 'Internal Security' training. This training is quite different from the usual NATO training. It's a whole new ball game. It's urban warfare for

You get training at a place at Lydd in Kent, where they have a mock town. You are split into companies of 'terrorists' and 'soldiers', and you take on different roles — people on the street, gunmen, rioters etc. The mock riots there are very fierce. There are lots and lots of injuries, probably more at times than in the real thing.

In another exercise we had to interrogate RAF officers as part of their officer training. We were to give them a real kicking to make it realistic. Many blokes really en-

joyed this and no-one held back too much. We stripped them, gave them a hiding, hooded them, and all the rest of it. That was in 1973.

We were told in early 1972 that they were no longer going to train soldiers in techniques of interrogation where physical force or violence was used. This was because the press had discovered about the ill-treatment of internees. But the training still went on well after that. As far as I know from other soldiers, it was still going on in 1975.

BELFAST

I was sent to the North the day after my 18th birthday. We were stationed in North Belfast. At this time the Protestant paramilitaries were at the peak of their sectarian assassination and bombing campaign. Nevertheless all our activity was directed against the Republicans. Local Catholic pubs were being bombed frequently, and yet in the week following four attacks not one Protestant suspect was brought in. But all the time we were picking up Catholics.

I was stationed in Tactical HQ as an orderly for a period.

My room where I slept was right next door to the interrogation room and every night you'd hear people coming in and getting roughed up, their heads being banged against the walls, screaming and everything. I was more annoyed at losing my sleep than anything else at the time.

On one occasion I was told to guard three prisoners. They were told to lean up against the wall, fingers on the wall, feet apart. I was told to keep watch on them. One had gunshot wound in his leg from a few days earlier and couldn't stand up properly. I let him sit. The corporal came in, screamed at and threatened me and made the bloke get up.

Most soldiers today think the British should get out of Northern Ireland. They don't see any solution at all. Only the real idiots think that something can be achieved. They see it as going on and on and on.

GETTING OUT

After Northern Ireland I was beginning to develop pacifist and anti-military views and my tour in Cyprus when I saw that we were not there to protect human lives but only British military interests and NATO missiles trained on Russia strengthened this. I finally decided I had to get out. I went home to London without leave to think things out and when I was picked up and charged with being AWOL I told them that I was refusing to soldier, wear the uniform or obey orders. As a result I was slung in jail and court martialled for desertion. In all I spent over six months in military prison before I was finally discharged as a Conscientious Objector. Most soldiers don't even know that status exists. Most soldiers go about it by just going AWOL. The amount of desertion is incredible and the numbers applying for discharge is increasing. This is as much connected to Northern Ireland as to pay and conditions.

THE ARMY

The Army is the cause of most of the violence in Northern Ireland. But I still think that if the Army were to withdraw some sort of civil war would ensue. The Protestants see Republicanism as opposed to all they stand for and they would see withdrawal as a betrayal by Britain and a victory for republicanism. Loyalists fear — however unjustified — that they would be a persecuted minority in the Republic of Ireland, dominated by the Church, a backward country. The Protestants can't just be dismissed as a reactionary bunch of hooligans. But their fears won't change as long as the British Army is there and as long as Britain is in Ireland, and I believe that the British Army must get out of Northern Ireland. There's no doubt about it. There is no solution until the Brit-

S.A.S. - KITSON - PARAS - PSYDPS - INTERNMENT - WHITE NOISE - SENSORY DEPRIVATION - ASSASSINATION - COUNTER-GANGS - CALLAN - COL STIRLING - G.B.75 - CS GAS - GEN. WALTER WALKER - PLASTIC BULLETS - ECONOMIC CONSCRIPTION - INTERNAL SECURITY - MILITARY AID TO CIVIL POWER - WATER CANNON -

PALESTINE (1946-8); MALAYA (1948-60); KOREA (1950-5); KENYA (1952-5); CYPRUS (1954-8); ADEN (1963-8); MALAYSIA (1963-6)

NORTHERN IRELAND (69-?)

GLASGOW DUSTCART DRIVERS' STRIKE (1975); FIREMENS' STRIKE (WINTER 1977-8)

Conference on: THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

Session I: the colonial wars since 1945
Session II: panel of ex-soldiers
Session III: lessons for the future

FILMS: *Myth of the Mau Mau* at 9.45am sharp
& *Home soldier home* (new film on the Army)

SPEAKERS include:
John McGuffin — ex-internee, author of 'The Guinea Pigs'
ex-soldiers who have served in Northern Ireland
representatives from black organisations
State Research
UTOM
fireman

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE LARDER? SCAB?

TROOPS OUT GLASGOW IRELAND

FORWARDS

IT TEE

organised by UNITED TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT c/o 182 Upper St, London N1

SATURDAY 10TH JUNE 9.45am - 5.30pm
ACKLAM HALL, ACKLAM ROAD, LONDON W11
Under motorway next to GLC Uxal Tube, Ladbroke Grove, Bus: 15 52, 295
Entrance £1 (non-earners 50p) Creche.
SOCIAL at Acklam Hall 7.30 - 12.00 midnight. Belt & Braces Roadshow Band will present a selection of their political songs.
Entrance 70p (non-earners 35p). All in ticket for conference and social £1.50 (non-earners 70p).
Poster Exhibition from Belfast



Moro in captivity reading a newspaper that announces his own death.

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



Italy, the left and the Red Brigades "AGAINST TERRORISM BUT NOT AGAINST THE TERRORISTS"

Discussion on the Italian revolutionary left is dominated by issues raised by the kidnapping and execution of Aldo Moro, the leader of the Christian Democrat Party. The three interviews that follow are with Paolo Brogi and Guido Viale, two leaders and founder-members of the organisation 'Lotta Continua' and Enrico Deaglio, editor of the daily newspaper 'Lotta Continua', which currently has a circulation of 30,000 and is reference point for the revolutionary movement,

Guido Viale

The Red Brigades (BR) want to create a crisis for the Christian Democratic regime, force the Communist Party into opposition and smash the consensus that has come about recently. We cannot be indifferent to their project. Though it is not what we want, since while these things are going on in the sky of politics, nothing changes in the everyday life of working people. It is not a struggle but a spectacle. The fundamental problem is that whichever side we support is totally inadequate. If we look at things from Moro's point of view, we forget the Brigade members — their history and their motives. And we put ourselves in a position where we cannot understand why thousands of young comrades, especially the young and the workers, have taken up terrorism. If we look at things from the terrorists' point of view, we reduce Moro to a symbol.

I am against terrorism, but I am not against the terrorists; we have in common with them a large slice of our past, a past that we have decided to break with but have not yet come to terms with. Too much loyalty to the past, too much tradition, too much militancy, too much party discipline has been built on the death of our comrades, who have had their lives destroyed by repression, by years and years of prison. I am not saying this to worship the image of the 'revolutionary hero', since I do not believe that we need heroes. But, if today the stru-

ggle for the right to live requires other means than those that they have used, it is because of what they have been through and what we have begun to learn with their deaths.

Paolo Brogi

We are living in exceptional conditions. Very quickly, everything can change in Italy. My own position is that as long as Moro was in a people's prison, I was very aware of his life, of his right to live. I am not in agreement with people's prisons, they quickly lead to death. In the people's prison, Moro had less liberty than the majority of people in this country: Moro ceased to be a Christian Democrat when he was put in the people's prison. All he was was a man facing death... Without reservations, I have to support him, any regime that inflicts death I see as an enemy. Less and less do I see violence as revolutionary, but as the poisoned substitute for important and true ideas that involve millions of people.

In a few months we will look at this period as a time in which we irresponsibly played with fire; where we frittered away the gains made over the years — since we preferred to hold onto distorted images of what we were rather than accept the logical consequences of our political positions. To be revolutionaries, do we still need to live up to the heroic image of the militant who daily risks life in the final sacrifice? My comrades are those who are totally opposed to that as well as those who are no longer sure, those who are open to contradictions.

Enrico Deaglio

Viale is right when he says that we can't just forget the problem of terrorism since our history too is linked to that of the Red Brigades.

We must always make a distinction between, on the one hand, premeditated, cold, anonymous violence that is planned down to the smallest detail, which decides on the punishment to be handed out and whether someone will be killed or only shot in the leg, and on the other, spontaneous violence, which is sometimes

necessary to gain certain objectives. Myself, I do not worship this spontaneous violence, I see it as sometimes necessary. Anonymous violence — that of the BR — I see as a mirror image of bourgeois violence, the violence of the state that is inflicted on us now. If we analysed in detail the violence of the BR, we would see that the methods of the BR and the Mafia are not that different, especially at the level of structures and organisation (rules of behaviour, the law of silence etc.). But I am not saying that the BR are the same as the Mafia, they are two different historical phenomena — one linked to Sicilian society, the other to industrial society — which sometimes resemble each other.

The growth of the BR is not a revolutionary phenomenon. On the contrary, there was revolutionary potential in the opposite movement of last year. At present, it is clear that those in power have no space to grant reforms, they refuse to allow referenda to be held, they fire on people demonstrating in the streets. It is for this reason that the mass movement is unable to force concessions from those in power. Those in power (Christian Democracy and the Communist Party) feel the need to have an internal enemy — the BR are shown to be very powerful, bloody etc. — which they have to legitimise. This legitimisation is very useful for the state since they can identify all other opposition with the BR.

It is true that during the Moro business, the revolutionary left was on the defensive, hoping the whole thing would blow over. Though we did make three important decisions; firstly, we published an appeal from Moro's family that no other daily would publish. Secondly, we have begun in the paper a wide debate on terrorism. And thirdly, we have provoked the BR, who said that Moro's execution would have 'educational value'. Given that the masses could not be at the execution, we have asked them to film the execution and, then, send the video tape to the Italian masses. We'll see who's right about it having 'educational value'!

Settlement doomed in Rhodesia

AS THE Rhodesian 'internal settlement' soldiers on, its doom comes ever nearer. And the longer it survives, the less chance have the Anglo-American proposals of taking its place and stemming the revolutionary tide. These were the main lessons to learn from the developments in Rhodesia in the past two or three weeks.

The internal settlement was doomed from the outset — even by the more far-sighted imperialists, who hastily brought together various parties to rework the Anglo-American proposals. When Byron Hove was expelled from the interim Government, for daring to suggest that there should be radical changes in the racial composition of the judiciary and the upper ranks of the police force, the end came more clearly into view. And when, on May 14th Bishop Muzorewa 'rescued' the internal settlement when deciding not to resign over the Hove affair, he effectively sounded its death knell.

SPLIT

Muzorewa's decision has wide implications. The UANC (Muzorewa's Party) was very divided over the Hove affair, with many thousands demonstrating militantly in favour of Hove's reinstatement, and indications of major disagreements in the UANC leadership. Now it seems, either the UANC will split (formally or informally), with the more radical elements moving closer to, if not into, the Patriotic Front, or there will be an attempt to depose Muzorewa from the leadership.

Moreover, the internal settlement has now lost almost all credibility among Rhodesian Blacks — having started in the first place in a shaky position. Not only was there the Hove affair, there was also the dismal failure of the ceasefire call, which showed Sithole's overwhelming lack of support, and the common knowledge that most political detainees from ZANU are still in prison and that the widely hailed amnesty applied largely to relatively harmless members of the ANC (Sithole), the UANC, and ZAPU. Muzorewa's continuing support for the internal settlement, then, will seriously reduce his popularity. This will, in turn, further weaken his position in the ANC and further weaken the internal settlement.

SLIPPERY SLOPE

What are the implications of all

this for the Anglo-American proposals? The Anglo-American proposals were based to a large extent on the theory that an alliance of Muzorewa and Nkomo could command the support of the majority of Zimbabweans and defuse the radical elements in ZANU and, to a lesser extent, ZAPU. The problem was to somehow split the Patriotic Front by working on Nkomo's opportunism (mainly with a substantial financial bait), and to lead Rhodesia/Zimbabwe on to the slippery slope of democracy without letting it 'fall' into a people's democracy.

Now we have a whole new ball game. If Muzorewa has lost much of his credibility and support, then not only will an alliance with Nkomo be far less effective in defusing radical elements, but also it will be far harder to get Nkomo to ally with Muzorewa. Nkomo is far too adept a politician to compromise himself in such a way.

POLARISATION

Increasingly, then, it is becoming a choice between the internal settlement and the Patriotic Front — a polarisation that is almost bound to be challenged by desperate manoeuvres on the part of the US, Britain and South Africa. The most likely strategy seems to be an attempt to split the Patriotic Front, either by putting pressure on Nkomo in various ways, or by inciting Cuban involvement through a South African invasion (ZANU is resolutely opposed to direct Cuban involvement).

But, however the situation develops, solidarity work for the Patriotic Front is now more important than ever. With typhoid breaking out in the camps in Mozambique and a desperate shortage of medical supplies, especially in the eastern part of Rhodesia, medical aid is the most urgently required, and money donations to Zimbabwe Medical Aid would be very gratefully received. The address is: Dr R.K. Cruickshank, 84 Tindal St., Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12. For excellent counter-information on Zimbabwe, Big Flame readers are recommended the 'ZIG Bulletin', available from ZIG, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1 4JL. Members or sympathisers of Big Flame interested in doing solidarity work should contact the Big Flame International Commission, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.



FREE PALESTINE DEMONSTRATION IN LONDON MAY 1978

MARK RUSHER (IFL)

WORLD CUP 78

A SOCIALIST GUIDE

SCOTLAND — British colony to the north of England fighting for its independence. With an economy that has been dominated for years by Sassenach capitalists. Recent discovery of oil off the Scottish coast has given economic elbow to the independence movement which is dominated by the bourgeois nationalist SNP (Scottish National Party)

FRANCE — The defeat of the left in the March elections was a bitter blow to the French working class — 10 years after the 1968 events. Though relative to other European countries France is still relatively prosperous, there are nevertheless the familiar features of a capitalist society in crisis — unemployment, inflation, cuts in public spending to name but three. The victory of the right means the government can only worsen the situation for the working class. Meanwhile, the watch makers at the Lip factory are still in occupation and running the factory themselves, a reminder of the socialist alternative and what it can achieve.

PERU — Since 1968, when a military coup put a progressive section of the armed forces in power in Peru, there has been the development of an intense class struggle. The military's early legislation such as its land reform programme was progressive and it gave space and confidence to the mass movement. But since 1973-4 the economic situation in Peru, itself heavily dependent on the world economy, has worsened. The deteriorating economic situation has forced Peru to borrow from the IMF, on terms which mean austerity for the working class and peasants. The economic situation has also given space to the right who are gaining power both in society as a whole and in the armed forces. Many of the advances made are being rolled back. But as the attack upon the living standards of the masses grows, so does the masses' resistance. Already in the last nine months there have been two general strikes.

ARGENTINA — The coup in 1976 unleashed a massive attack on the working class. Both its democratic and trade union freedoms are threatened. But the military is intent on physically annihilating all opposition. The large number of 'disappearances' and the large number of political prisoners are all signs of this intent. So far there has been massive resistance from the people which has used various forms of struggle. In 1977 there was a massive railway strike in Buenos Aires. Sabotage of manufacturing industry goes on daily. And there is still a limited armed resistance.

You may think football is just a game and the World Cup a highpoint for football fans. But behind the publicity and build up to the game, Argentina's rulers are using the occasion to cover up the facts of violence and repression in their country. It has given them the chance to do a whitewash job on their record of bloody repression. To them football can be used as a political weapon. Here, we give Big Flame readers the chance to read about the political situation in the countries in the World Cup.

WEST GERMANY — The German economic miracle which relied on the super-exploitation of immigrant workers is now turning sour. Unemployment is over the million mark. To keep things sweet for the bosses, there is a job ban (Berufsverbot) which makes it impossible for any one with left politics to get jobs in the public and state sector — and in Germany this even includes cemetery attendants.

HOLLAND — One time leading trading nation now living off its imperial pension. The South Moluccans, many of whom now live in Holland were once in a Dutch colony. Like many immigrant workers in Europe they live in bad housing conditions and face unemployment or the worst jobs. Their recent kidnappings of government officials are a desperate attempt to get their oppression recognised.

HUNGARY — a State Collectivist regime in Eastern Europe.

Back in 1956, the Hungarian people overthrew the tyranny of Stalin and set up a network of workers' councils. Russian troops crushed the Hungarian Revolution. Now, once again, Hungarian intellectuals are stirring and demanding more freedom — both economic and cultural.

POLAND — Poland has been the central example of a developing working class opposition to the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. In 1976, for example, there was widespread agitation against proposed price increases which involved rioting in several cities. Subsequent attacks on workers by the bureaucracy have been countered with the formation of the Polish Workers Defence Committee, a rare but significant example of autonomous working class organisation in the countries of State Collectivism.

ITALY — As the Italian Communist Party entered into a historic compromise with the ruling Christian Democrats, becoming through this willing accomplices in imposing hardship on the working class and in the development of increasingly repressive powers in the hands of the state, the working class has become bitter, disillusioned and angry. Some of this anger will simply lose the CP much of its traditional support. Some also will come out in desperation and violence. The violence of the Red Brigades must be seen very much in this last light, as an inevitable result of the bankruptcy of reformism.

AUSTRIA — Small social-democratic country in the middle of Europe, famous for an Empire long departed. Trade union leaders are often members of the government and even more incorporated in government machinery than our own TUC.

IRAN — Despotic regime, kept in power by the USA and its allies. The vast profits made by the sale of oil go to buying luxury goods and arms for a small elite. Whilst the Shah buys trinkets for his new bride, the Iranian people exist in conditions of tremendous hardship. If Iran's football team is in the third division internationally, its secret police, SAVAK, is definitely championship class. With its agents all over to spy on Iranian workers and students, SAVAK is then in a good position to use the information back home. Over the last months, an important challenge to the Shah's regime has begun — which has led to many deaths and a state of curfew in the major Iranian cities.

SPAIN — Since Franco's death in 1975 the expected 'Spanish Revolution' has failed to materialise. The main reason for this is the continuing hold of reformism and in particular the rapid development of the Socialist Workers Party, the Spanish equivalent of the Labour Party. With this party's agreement a social contract has been negotiated and has allowed the ruling class a certain amount of stability, despite increasingly violent national struggles in the Basque country and in Catalonia.

SWEDEN — 40 years of Social Democratic rule ended in 1976. Since then, much of the liberalism which made Sweden a model social democracy in the 1960s has disappeared. In fact, Sweden's liberal state is following in the path of European neighbours in that it is developing certain repressive features similar to those in West Germany.

MEXICO — Mexico is a state ruled by the conservative Institutional Revolutionary Party. Although the country under its present leader, Lopez Portillo, aligns itself independently (it is not directly linked to US interests) in foreign policy, at home this 'radicalism' disappears. Whether the government will be quite as repressive as it was in 1968 when 4-500 protesting students were simply shot by the army is another thing. But the state remains firmly linked to the dominant interests and the poverty of the Mexican masses persists.

TUNISIA — For Tunisians the team's first ever World Cup appearance will offer a temporary distraction from the increasingly tight repression of the Bourguiba regime. Since a violent and bloody general strike in January of 1978 in which a hundred workers were killed, there has been a thorough clampdown on working class and opposition activity. The government's latest trick is the introduction of conscription to vital industries as a means of solving the unemployment problem. It means that all the menial jobs can be done for nothing.

BRAZIL — After 14 years of military rule there are pressures towards a limited amount of democracy in the Brazilian government. This pressure comes from the working class and from the business community whose direct political power is limited. The military is only likely to allow extremely tentative steps to be taken towards the return of bourgeois democracy. It is clearly aware of how small democratic reforms can be turned not just against its own direct interests but increase instability throughout the whole system.

THE CLASS NATURE OF THE U.S.S.R.

A one day school of papers and discussion on the present nature of soviet society, its history, interpretations, and its meaning for world revolution.

Saturday 10th June
10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Resource Centre, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester

Sponsored by the journal *Critique*.

Registration fee £1. The meeting room has capacity for approximately 50 people, so please try to register in advance.

Further information and registration forms to: Vic Graham, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1.

A LITTLE MORE than 60 years ago the working class of Russia carried out the world's first

years after, the Russian revolution served as an example and an inspiration to workers all over the world that socialist revolution is possible.

But since those heady days of 1917, both in its internal and external policies, the government of the U.S.S.R. has consistently acted in a way that went against the interests of world revolution and proletarian internationalism.

like this? This is one of the hardest questions that revolutionary socialists have to answer. How do socialist militants explain that what we are fighting for has nothing in common with the 'socialism' of these so-called 'socialist' countries?

If we don't find the answer to these questions socialism in our own countries is going to be a long time in coming. We'll never

ism that exists among millions of working people. The *Critique* school in Manchester on 10 June offers militants in the North West a chance to find out more about how Soviet society works and to discuss their own ideas. The school is open to everyone no matter how much or how little they already know about these countries, and no matter

FOR MANY people, Dany Cohn-Bendit represents May '68, a month in which France was shaken by a movement for change and revolution that brought millions of students and workers onto the streets. The bourgeois press loves to remind us how many of the 'children of '68' have sold out and taken the managerial posts they were educated for. This is obviously untrue of Dany who lives in Frankfurt where he works on an alternative newspaper and in a left-wing bookshop. Last week, he was in this country to record a programme on May '68 that Harlech will televise on June 1st. What is as important as the political positions which Dany puts forward in this interview (all of which we don't agree with) is the spirit of questioning and openness with which they are put. One of the most important achievements of May '68 was that it taught how alien certainty and dogma should be to revolutionaries — that a revolutionary movement that ceased to question all its beliefs was a dying one.

BF: May '68 turned over French society but it also turned over revolutionary theory and all our ideas about how the revolution will come about in developed capitalist countries.

Dany: From the point of view of revolutionary theory, one of the most important things to come out of May '68 was that there are movements that in a certain time can be very radical (like the students were in '68) and challenge the established order in a way that opens up space for the class struggle. What 1968 has taught us is that while the industrial working class is a big force for changing society, it is not the vanguard in the sense traditionally understood by Leninists. This does not mean that it is another social force like the students that are the vanguard, but rather that there are no vanguards.

BF: I don't accept your view that there are no longer vanguards — my own feeling is that there are still vanguards but which sections of the working class they are differs at different stages of development of capitalist society. Getting back to your position, it obviously has deep implications for revolutionary organisation.

Dany: Yes, today any organisation that wants revolutionary change must be aware of the contradictions that exist between the different movements. For example, take the case of Lotta Continua, with whom Big Flame had close relations — there the contradiction between the workers and the women became explosive. The workers came out with the traditional theory that they are the centre of the class struggle; the women argued that they had their own revolutionary role and logic that included fighting against the workers. With the pressure of that contradiction, Lotta Continua disintegrated as an organisation and now only remains as a newspaper and a current in the revolutionary movement. In the same way, the 'spontis' in Germany represent a current, a space on the revolutionary left that cannot be filled in an organisational sense.

It is important to see these new movements that came out of the late 1960s (movements of women, gays, immigrant workers, ecologists etc.) — around their own specific oppression — what I would call a collective subjectivity — on a collective basis.

BF: It seems to me that the process you are describing is O.K. where there is an existing social grouping that can give its members the support they need, but that you are not solving the problem of isolated worker militants trying to org-

anise around some of the more traditional issues of revolutionary politics.

Dany: Well, at present I don't know how a revolutionary organisation can cope with its traditional tasks and these new movements. And

BF: There is long tradition on the revolutionary left — from Marx on — of saying that it was not the job of revolutionaries to provide blueprints of the socialist society. This cannot be right, especially now, when people have a chance to see what 'socialist' societies are like. We have to make it quite clear in what way the socialist society we want to build differs from the Soviet Union.

Dany: For instance, the ecology movement is a radical critique of the whole capitalist system of production. You can't just defend the right to work without saying for what — for instance, you can't defend the right to work in a nuclear plant. Also, car workers have to question how many cars are needed, how much energy we need to use — since this determines what forms of energy production we have to have.

Within our daily political activity, there must be time for these fundamental discussions, for radical critiques of our society. Too often in

BF: This, of course, gets us back to the question of vanguards and what kind of relationship it is.

Dany: The important point to make is that revolutionaries have a different rhythm or struggle from the working class.

Take the case of internal vanguards, militants who are a focal point of the struggle inside a workplace. They have two links; one to the external militants of the revolutionary organisation and secondly to the working class community they are part of. Often there is much tension between what these two links expect of them — revolutionary organisations only function at the level of political logic.

BF: First in Germany with the RAF and now in Italy with the Red Brigades, the revolutionary left has been forced to assess its relation to terrorism. What's your position?

Dany: I agree with the position taken by Lotta Continua of 'Neither the State nor the Red Brigades'. I also think that it is very important to

olutionary change. The fact is that in modern societies there is a great fear of violence — working people experience it in their everyday lives. Any revolutionary strategy must take into consideration this fear of violence. For the moment, I am very much in favour of non-violent actions without wanting to make a theory out of it.

Traditionally the revolutionary left has refused to see something like Moro's death from a moral point of view, they would argue that it is purely a question of strategy. But I would argue that there is such a thing as revolutionary morality; if we are against the death penalty then we are against it for everyone including class enemies like Moro and Schleyer

BF: I am not sure about your distinction between spontaneous and planned violence. I think that what is important is the relationship between the struggle and acts of violence — there must be an organic relationship. For instance, the destruction of cars at the Alfa-Romeo factory were planned acts of violence, but they can be supported from a revolutionary point of view.

Dany: Even so, violent actions like those that occurred at Alfa are linked to a vanguard conception of politics. You have a process of delegation to the specialists of violence — this leads logically to delegation in many other forms; I am opposed to all forms of delegation in revolutionary politics

When I talk about violent and non-violent actions, this is not the same distinction as between legal and illegal forms of action; there are many times when revolutionaries have to be illegal.

BF: It is often argued on the revolutionary left that West Germany is a model for how the rest of Western Europe will develop. Is there anything in this argument?

Dany: West Germany is a strong, authoritarian state, but it is certainly not fascist. Because the opposition is so weak, its ruling class can realise the dreams of all modern states. There is a strong atmosphere of McCarthyism in Germany today. There is a no-mans-land of the law as far as political prisoners are concerned — they are treated in a completely arbitrary way;

BF: It seems a bit of a paradox that someone like you who has always fought for an anti-leadership concept of politics, should constantly be seen as one of the historic leaders of May '68. How do you experience this contradiction?

Dany: It can be oppressive, but I know how to use it. We seem unable to carry forward a discussion on leaders inside the revolutionary left. In fact, different comrades have different abilities, I have the ability to formulate in a given situation what others are thinking. Our society gives too much credit to the abilities I have.

The Indians had a good solution to this problem. If someone was better at hunting, they were nominated as a leader during the hunt, but it did not give them any power in other situations; they were only a hunting expert. The correct way forward is not to say that we don't have leaders (this is never true) but rather to develop all comrades' potential and to sort out what makes a leader. Our discussion on this subject is stuck in a leader versus anti-authoritarianism rut.

COHN-BENDIT'S ROAD TO SOCIALISM

there is another problem — this comes from the insight that all personal problems have a political dimension. For me, the form revolutionary organisation takes can be an activist group, it can also be a commune — the way you live can be a political challenge in the area where you live. I see changing the way we live as a fundamental political priority. This brings in issues like how we relate to children which is much more than the problem of daycare.

I want to make it quite clear that I am not cynical about the possibilities of revolutionary organisation, it's much more that I am uncertain. I have no longer the certainty that anybody has the solution and I am offering my thoughts as a contribution to an ongoing debate. There are no problems with organising an activist intervention, say in anti-racist work. But in the long run there will be problems with the intervention if we do not have a clear idea of how we see the relation of our intervention to the society we want to build.

revolutionary organisations, there is a split between thinking and acting, revolutionaries must not just be activists.

BF: You mentioned the relationship between the personal and the political, this is now finally being taken up by the revolutionary left in this country.

Dany: What we've seen in Germany is a very dangerous backlash of comrades whose response is a complete turning away from politics. They are saying 'I'm fed up with politics, I just want to live my own life' There are also problems with working class militants who join revolutionary groups. Many of them want to leave behind the factories and the working class backgrounds they are in — but they are told by the groups that they must remain in the workplaces as cadres. When we worked around the Opel plant, many of the young workers we came in contact with wanted to come and live with us — we wanted them to form workers' collectives.

use the current period to develop a discussion on violence and its role in the revolutionary process. For me, there is a complete difference between the use of spontaneous violence like in Watts (when black people destroyed their ghettos in US cities) — these are signs of political disintegration of society — and the use of conscious, planned violence like the Red Brigades. At the same time, we must develop our discussion on the state and what form the 'storming of the Winter Palace' will take in Western European societies. I take it that one of the most important tasks of the revolutionary left is to alienate people from the violence of the state. You see state violence can only be used against a minority with the support of the masses — it cannot be used against the majority. So every political act we do must have the effect of turning people away from the state. Political acts that strengthen the bond between the masses and the state work against the possibilities of rev-

MANCHESTER BIG FLAME
'Violence and society' Thursday 8th June, 7.45 pm, The Ancoats, Gt Ancoats St, Manchester.
Thursday 22nd June, 7.45 pm
General Discussion on articles in this month's newspaper... Big Flame office 3rd floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1.

GAY PRIDE week, including a carnival parade, theatre, films, workshops, discos and concerts. June 30th — July 9th. Contact Gay Pride week committee, c/o 5 Caledonia Rd, London N.1.

BIRMINGHAM
'Workshop on Threatened Hospitals' Birmingham Civic Hall, Digbeth. Sat. June 3rd 12 — 5.00 p.m. (Sponsored by Fight Back, whose second issue is now out).

Belt and Braces Roadshow — 'Not so Green as it's Cabbage' — background pamphlet on Ireland including perspectives on Ireland, some relevant economic, political and military considerations. 20p + 10p postage etc. from 22 Vicars Road, London NW5. Tel: 01-485 2872

'IRELAND — A PEOPLE at War'
Journal of Leeds UTOM. Issue No 1 Contains analysis of present situation, Irishwomen in prison, article from Provisional Sinn Fein, Gay Politics in the 6 counties, activities of Leeds UTOM. 20p + 10p postage from Leeds UTOM c/o 182 Upper St., London N.1.

THIS BADGE IS SUBVERSIVE!



In tasteful cream, dark brown and royal blue. 20p + 7p postage for one, or 17p each for ten or more. From: Movement Against A Monarchy (MAAM), Box M, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1.

SOWETO 2nd Anniversary Demonstration in London 18th June. Organised by African Students Union (UK)

'National Front' — Anti-fascist single from the Pigs (Punk band). Further details from: New Bristol Records, 37 Southleigh Road, Bristol.

SCHOOL STUDENTS at Quintin Kynaston School, North West London have set up a Students Action Group to 'campaign against racism and sexism in and outside of the School.'

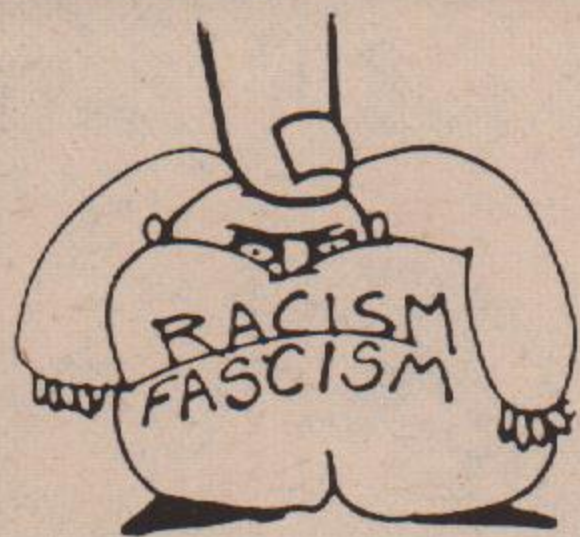
The groups is also concerned about possible school closures in the locality. Members of the group are also working with the Westminster Group for Multi Racial Education (which includes teachers, parents, and community workers) and the local Paddington Campaign Against Racism. Members are anxious to contact similar self-organised student groups and are also willing to talk to students at other local schools. Contact Quintin Kynaston Student Action Group, QK School, Marlborough Hill, NW8.

ADS

Classified Ad rates: From next month we will have to charge 3p a word (pre-paid in the form of stamps).

BIG FLAME INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION DAY SCHOOL
'The Situation in the Middle East' Sunday June 11th 2-6 p.m.
BF Office, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester. Open to all BF members and sympathisers.

EGA Hospital, London.
Monday June 19th at 7.30 p.m.
Meeting at the hospital to plan for Women's Health Fair on July 8th.



ANTI-FASCIST, ANTI-RACIST Conference organised by the A-F, A-R Coordinating Committee, June 3/4th. Contact ARAFCC Box 53, 183 Upper St., London N.1.

UNITED TROOPS Out Movement Conference on the British Army, Sat June 10th. Contact UTOM c/o 182 Upper St., London N.1.

NORTH WEST Socialist Feminist Workshop on Ireland. Saturday June 3rd., 10-6pm. Bolton Institute of Technology, Deane Rd., Bolton. Details from Ros, 69 Venice St., Bolton.

PRISONERS AID Committee Demonstration. July 9th. Details next month.

Colonel B? Who you trying to kid, Colonel H.A. Johnstone

Crispin Aubrey, Duncan Campbell and John Berry have been committed for trial at the Old Bailey on Official Secrets Act charges arising from a conversation they had in John Berry's flat in February last. The Prosecution's main case rested on a tape recording of the conversation which the three men had—a recording which they made themselves.

The conversation concerned Signals Intelligence, or SIGINT, electronic surveillance of radio transmissions. This activity is believed to provide western nations with up to ninety five per cent of their information about what goes on in the rest of the world. The western network is largely under the control of the US National Security Agency, NSA: Britain's organisation is Government Communications Headquarters, GCHQ, based at Cheltenham. SIGINT intercepts not only transmissions of communist countries, but also of neutral and friendly nations. And surveillance extends not only to military and diplomatic traffic, but to normal commercial interchange. Information on what foreign firms are doing is passed, informally, to British firms.

All this profitable business activity is carried on under the spurious cloak of 'national security', to stop enquiry about it. This was carried to such a laughable extent that the Army Officer who testified against Aubrey, Berry and Campbell was allowed to remain anonymous, being referred to in court as 'Colonel B'.

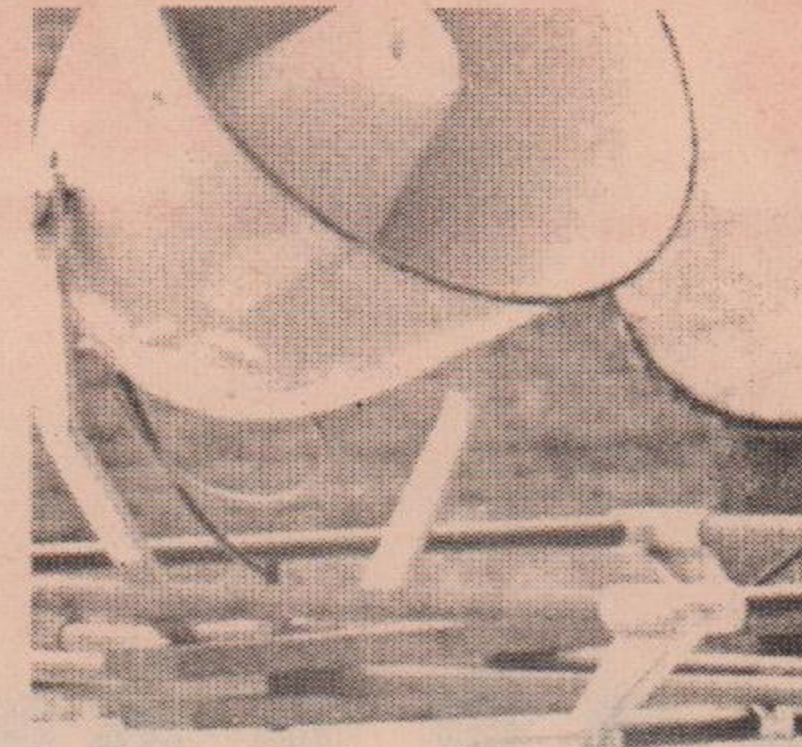
Defence lawyers were not allowed to contest this anonymous figure's opinion that the tape had contained information prejudicial to 'national security'. 'I don't think there should be any discussion of SIGINT. The whole subject is classified,' Colonel B told the court.

Who is this man, who is allowed irresponsibly, and on his personal opinion, to condemn the actions of two journalists and a former soldier as 'against the interests of national security'?

He is in fact Colonel HA Johnstone, formerly of the Royal Corps of Signals, now attached to the Army General Staff, DI 24, which he joined in November 1974. He holds the MBE: his army number is 420864. Colonel Johnstone has studied not only at the British Army's Staff College, but also at the French Defence and Staff Colleges, the Ecole Supérieure de Guerre and the Cours Supérieure Interarmee. Having been an army man all his life, he betrays the military approach to democracy and free enquiry: he doesn't understand it at all, but if he did he would oppose it.

The Royal Signals, of course, provide most of the personnel for GCHQ, and John Berry was a corporal with the regiment. While not wanting to disclose our sources of information, we would like to make it clear—as Colonel Johnstone's name was given to the defence lawyers on condition they did not reveal it—that we got his name from sources entirely independent of lawyers and accused.

SOCIALIST UNITY



the three week charade and not the endless promises. People appreciated us saying that we promised nothing except that we would help them organise to fight for the things we need and that only they, through mass action, could change things. This was backed by the SU pledge to hold regular meetings to seek a mandate from local people and working class organisations if elected.

Both the above prove that it is vital for SU to have a consistent presence before and after the elections. Every election manifesto said some variation on "SU will keep on fighting and organising, win or lose." If we break that promise our interventions may not be so successful next time. Already there appears to be disagreement in some areas over what form SU should continue to be active. Our attitude in BF is that SU groups should be kept going to carry out activity on the basis of the existing programme, with the organisations involved committing militants to the groups, alongside independents as a distinct area of activity. This rather loose organisational form should be kept as a way of testing out political possibilities until after the General Election intervention, when a further evaluation of the future can be made.

Another area that needs discussing is the question of candidates. SU has traditionally said that we want local candidates, with a base in the struggle. While this is still desirable not too much should be made of it. Candidates can and do have a varied number of qualities and much of the success of a campaign will depend on the overall team of militants and the nature of their political intervention.

- Socialist Unity won an average 6% of the vote in last month's local elections.
- In Spitalfields, in East London, we increased our vote since we last stood to 21% — and beat the National Front.

THE FIRST systematic intervention of the revolutionary left in local elections has proved a very satisfying and useful experience. 30 candidates nationally is a long way from a comprehensive coverage of areas and struggles, but it is an important beginning. There is no doubt that the results were good and above expectations. This included an average of 6%, with exceptionally good results in Sandhills/Liverpool (12%), Spitalfields/London (21%) and Bradford Moor/Bradford (10%). We beat the Tories and Liberals on a number of occasions, but what was especially heartening was to beat the National Front in most areas. The Communist Party's parliamentary road was also looking a little longer, after trailing behind Socialist Unity, on all but two occasions. It proves that there is an audience inside the working class for revolutionary socialist politics.

LESSONS

Firstly elections are useful in meeting and engaging in political dialogue a much wider range of actual and potential socialist militants. Some of them are disillusioned Labour supporters, others are housewives and young people becoming radicalised for the first time and often ignored by the Left. Canvassing door to door is vital. As one comrade remarked: two weeks compulsory canvassing would do none of us any harm in helping us to learn how to put our arguments simply and clearly to ordinary people, instead of trying to impress members of other Left groups.

Second, the key distinguishing thing is not our programme in itself but in our overall alternative political approach. In general local SU groups were extremely good at adapting the programme to specific conditions. But to really get through to people and to convince them it was worth voting for a small left wing 'party', we needed to convince them that we were different. That difference was best expressed in

While we don't want to stand candidates with no actual or potential base if possible, areas which for instance didn't stand because they couldn't stand their best militant, as in Leeds, probably overestimated the importance of a candidate as something separate from a campaign.

LABOUR PARTY ILLUSIONS

Finally SU needs to discuss in more detail the question of our relationship to the Labour Party. This has proved to be the biggest point of difference between the IMG, Big Flame and independent militants. We are not talking of whether there should be a vote for Labour; that has already been decided. But when deciding on areas to stand and on the programme, differences have arisen. This is particularly the case in deciding what demands to put on Labour. There is a real danger in building illusions that Labour Councils can carry out socialist policies, using the lone example of Clay Cross (which very few people have actually heard of). Especially when we are also saying that only the working class itself can fight for the programme demands.

UNITY WITH SWP

These are important questions although they are not the only ones. Discussion is needed to strengthen our general election intervention. So we hope SU will soon call a national conference to begin such a political preparation starting by evaluating existing experiences.

One further point. Although we shall keep on trying it does seem unlikely that the SWP and other left forces will join Socialist Unity. The fact that local militants imposed on the SWP a joint candidate under a 'Socialist Alliance' label (supported by SU and SWP) in Swindon is a heartening sign and one SU supporters should encourage. We should also be getting down to talks on how to divide up constituencies and avoid useless clashes.

Gay News, Peace News,
Republican News.....

COMING SOON

NO NEWS

This is the article which earned *The Leveller*, the socialist monthly magazine, a £500 fine for contempt of court. Two other magazines have also been fined for blowing Colonel Johnstone's anonymity: *Peace News* (£500) and *The Journalist* (£250).

Worst of all, *The Leveller* and *Peace News* must between them raise the costs of the hearing, £5,000. That's why a defence fund has been started for them.

Despite this, *The Leveller* is continuing its campaign against the Official Secrets Act and the growing police state apparatus. Its latest edition, which includes a lead article on phone tapping, names Colonel 'A' — Colonel Taylor who originally was to have given the evidence that Johnstone provided.

Send Donations to: Leveller/Peace News Defence Fund, Box B/HAJ, 5 Caledonian Rd., London N.1. A.B.C. Defence Committee: c/o 374 Grays Inn Rd., London W.C.1.

Further information about SIGINT is in the June issue of the *Leveller*. OUT NOW 35p from good bookshops, or 155a Drummond St., London N.W.1.

AND BROADSIDE'S IN TROUBLE TOO

Another radical newspaper is being taken to court. Neville Bosworth, Tory Leader of Birmingham City Council has taken out a writ for libel against the *Birmingham Broadside*. This follows the publication of an article about Bosworth and the Denis Fell Group of Companies in February.

The *Broadside* is published twice monthly and is the only Birmingham paper which is not controlled by Lord Illifee and his family.

To defend a libel case is very expensive and time consuming. The *Broadside* have set up a defence committee which needs support. They are also appealing for funds to make their defence possible.

Donations and offers of help should be addressed to: Birmingham Broadside, 81 Grove Lane, Hensworth, Birmingham B21



BIG FLAME

Save The Green!

Why the buses stopped

WHEN WORKERS in the public sector go on strike, they often get a lot of stick from members of the public who take their anger out on them. This is happening in Leeds where the bus workers strike is in its sixth week.

The strike is over management's right to introduce new schedules which eliminate jobs and cut back services. In Leeds, the bus company management has refused to consult the unions before introducing the new schedules. We spoke to Ian McDonald a T & G shop steward who works on the buses:

"It's about time the National Negotiating body of our union challenged management's right to determine the level and pattern of the service. Already we are 170 bus workers short, if these schedules were accepted it would mean the loss of fourteen more jobs. Eventually these cuts will come in. Services are being reduced throughout the West Leeds area. The fact that some areas are gaining a new service is to the detriment of existing services."

Talking to strikers we learned that some of their kids have been beaten up because their dad happens to be a bus driver and some have had bricks thrown through their windows. One striker who receives £6 a week strike pay with which he has to support a family of three kids told us: "There's a great determination to win. It's the strongest feeling amongst the bus workers I've seen for a long time. The strike could go on indefinitely."

The strike is escalating and there have been one day solidarity stoppages of bus workers in Halifax, Huddersfield and Bradford. And tanker drivers, who have pledged support to the strike, are discussing blacking the supply of fuel to all authorities in the Leeds metropolitan area. Industry and trade are also feeling the effects of the strike, in the words of one director "Management are exhausted by having to get up early and arrive home late to bring in staff and take them home."



June 30th — that's the date set by David Ennals, Secretary of the Social Services, for the closure of the Green (Bethnal Green Hospital). Workers there have announced that they reject closure and intend a

work-in.

A closure date has been set for the EGA too — July 21. This was the hospital that began the work-in tactic. On 19th May opponents of the closure blocked the nearby

main road, Euston Rd., to the cheers of the workers and patients inside.

London NUPE wants to mount a rolling series of one day strikes against the closures. Meanwhile, anyone who can

support the EGA's emergency pickets should contact Arthur Churchley on 01-387 2501.

A Woman's Health Fair is planned for 9th July at the EGA.

Photo: Nigel Norie (IFL)

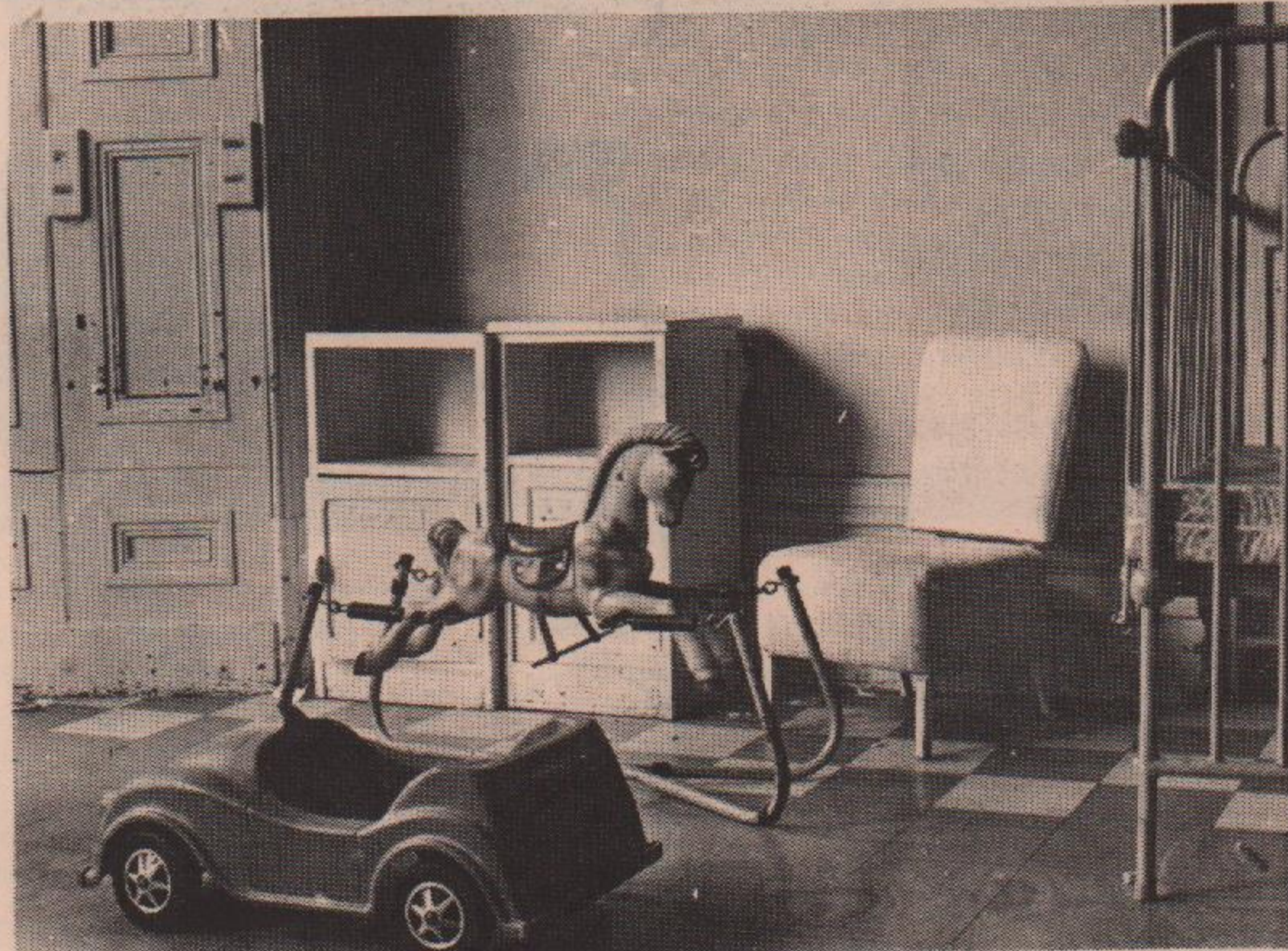
HITTING BACK AT HOMELESSNESS

"Occupied — Homeless women need this refuge" is the slogan draped out of the top floor windows outside St. Monica's hostel for women in Croxteth Rd, Liverpool

The hostel was occupied in the small hours of Sunday April 30th by the Housing Action Committee, a group formed specifically to try to keep St. Monica's open, and open as a refuge for women and children. Contrary to popular opinion, however, although this is seemingly a women's struggle, there are several men closely involved in all aspects of the fight. This shows the broader nature of the issue, for this is

a struggle about homelessness in this city.

In February this year, the Anglican Diocesan Board of Finance, which owns the hostel, decided it could no longer afford to run the place and duly closed it down (or hoped to) on April 30th. It was touchingly ironic that on the eve of the deadline for all residents to get out, the entire committee descended upon the home to perform a christening ceremony on one of the women's baby. Ironic also that the next day she was seen sitting on the doorstep, bags packed, baby in arms, with nowhere to go.



Desolate scene at St. Monica's after the Church pulled out. (Photo: Big Flame).

Negotiations are now in progress with the Housing Corporation to take the building over, although the intention seems to be to rent it for a year (complete with furniture and fixtures) to check its viability — what better way to sweep the problem under the carpet and take the heat out of our argument.

According to reports, the Corporation wants to make St. Monica's into a homeless families unit. What's wrong with that, you might ask — provision for homeless families. And so it is

the Housing Department laughingly sees as a "model"? And will it help homeless women and children to be shooed away into seedy backstreet hotels where they have to walk the streets from 9.30 in the morning till they are allowed back for the night?

The Housing Department seems to need to be persuaded that there is after all a demand for a hostel for women and children. A recent Social Services report to the Housing and Building Committee quotes 416 women and children

be asked is where are those women now? What has the Housing done with them and what will they do with the hundreds of other like them? The majority have been shuttled into housing blackspot hard-to-let areas such as Myrtle Gardens where their problems fester and multiply.

Therefore, the Housing Action Group believes that St Monica's should be kept as a refuge for women and children; better staffed, with workers paid at NALGO rates; financed by the Corporation; run as a community and with a democratically elected management committee to give the people a say in its running

BETTER DEAL

So far, we have had some support from various organisations, but we are disappointed that we have had to go cap-in-hand to many of the left groups which we feel should have given immediate and unconditional support. Once again, this struggle is about homelessness and the scandalous position of the homeless in this city, and probably in the whole country. For this reason we need your support, individually and collectively. Homelessness can happen to anyone and we are all responsible for the disease as well as the cure. We need change in practice, not merely in policy. HOMELESS

BIG FLAME

I want to subscribe to the paper

I want more information about Big Flame

Sub. rates: £2.25 per year Britain & Ireland; £1.10 for 6 months. Abroad: £3.00 & £1.50

NAME

ADDRESS