

BIG FLAME

No 69 December 1978

Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

10p

THAT OLD CHRISTMAS LEGEND - AS TRUE NOW AS IT WAS THEN. AS SHINING AN EXAMPLE OF SEASONAL HYPOCRISY AS WE MAY EVER HOPE TO WITNESS!!!

GOOD KING CALLAGHAN

BRITAIN 1978
A CLASSLESS SOCIETY IN WHICH EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IS THE GUIDING LIGHT! A LAND FROM WHICH POVERTY AND NEED HAVE LONG SINCE BEEN BANISHED TO THE THIRD WORLD BY WISE GOVERNMENT AND SHREWD INVESTMENT! BLAH BLAH BLAH NOW READ ON...

GOOD KING CALLAGHAN SITS IN ONE OF HIS THREE HOUSES...

SIRE! I CAN SEE A POOR MAN GATHERING WINTER FUEL...

I SHALL GO AND SEE HIM...

I'M NOT SURPRISED WITH THE PRICE OF COAL

...IT'S YEARS SINCE I MET A POOR MAN (THERE MIGHT BE VOTES IN IT!) 5%

OUT INTO THE SNOW HE TROD, HIS PIGGY EYES SQUINTING IN THE COLD...

HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY FOLLOWED, BEARING A BASKET OF GOODIES...

NO RENT RISE HERE

...TO THE POOR MAN'S HOUSE!!

KNOCKS ON THE DOOR... KNOCK! KNOCK!

NOT ANOTHER BLOODY CANVASSER! COULD BE THE RENT MAN

THE DOOR OPENS

WE DONT VOTE TORY HERE, PAL

BUT I'M LABOUR - I CAN SING THE RED FLAG - LISTEN TO "THE PEOPLES' FLAG IS.. ER.. DEEPEST... ER.. ER..."

CAN YOU TELL JOKES AS WELL?

YES! IF WE ALL STICK TO 5% WE'LL BEAT INFLATION! DA-DA

DO YOU MIND! THERE'S KIDS ABOUT!

I BRING YOU A BASKET OF GOOD THINGS - FISH AND CHIPS!

FISH AT £1.50 A POUND...

...AND SILICON CHIPS! (WITH EVERYTHING)

YUM YUM

THE POOR FOLK BID HIM A GRATEFUL FAREWELL...

BACK AT HIS HUMBLE HOME

SIRE! THERE ARE A MILLION AND A HALF POOR FOLK OUTSIDE!...

...AND THEY'RE NOT LOOKING FOR FUEL!

LET'S NEGOTIATE! SEND OUT THE POLICE

DO WE JUST HIT THE BLACK ONES, SIR....

NO. BE FAIR. REMEMBER RACIAL EQUALITY!

ER... HAPPY CHRISTMAS, JIM...

SOB

THE BEGINNING - HAPPY NEW YEAR

A Happy Christmas To All Our Readers

SHOWDOWN AT THE TIMES

High technology is a boon — in a socialist society. For capitalism, it's a weapon to be deployed and used as carefully as a tactical nuclear weapon on the field of battle. *It is not used haphazardly by the bosses.*

DESPERATE

The docks and the print industry are the current targets, as you might expect. The continuing and obstinate refusal of these highly organised groups of workers to accept technological redundancy has goaded the bosses into desperate action. That's what the showdown at *The Times* is all about.

The employers are never keen to take on the strongest workers, but in this case they

see no choice. Print workers' power comes from the great amount of skill involved, coupled with the fact that newspapers become valueless if they are delayed for only a few hours.

Not surprisingly, a lot of money has been spent on developing a technology which incorporates the skills of the print-workers. Predictably, as well, this technology has been developed in the United States with its ancient tradition of union busting. A report on the introduction of new technology on a newspaper in Virginia has this to say:

"Previously they had 185 skilled printers working in their composing room, earning 200 dollars a week in 1971... However the figure is now 140, and it is an entirely different group of people; non-union, originally unskilled and now trained, if at all, on the job, earning 125 dollars a week. The savings from the change were 800,000 dollars in the first year alone, and are now running at 1,250,000 per year. The cost of the equipment was 900,000 dollars."

During a recent lock out at the *Washing-*

ton Post the paper was printed by middle management who had all been given secret training in the new computerised technology.

Throughout industry, the new technology is being introduced bit by bit but in the print it has to be installed all in one go because of the nature of the production process.

CONTROL

The struggle that may well halt production of the *Times* and the *Sunday Times* is crucial — it could determine on whose terms technology is introduced in the rest of industry. If the bosses have their way there may well be 4 million unemployed in this country by 1985. But another issue arises in the *Times* dispute: political control of the media. *The Times* has always been an enemy of the working class — day in, day out, it puts across a ruling class point of view to which is added a discreet touch of racism and sexism, the traditional inheritance of the English gentleman who is in fact plenty savage when you scratch the surface.

HEART ATTACKS

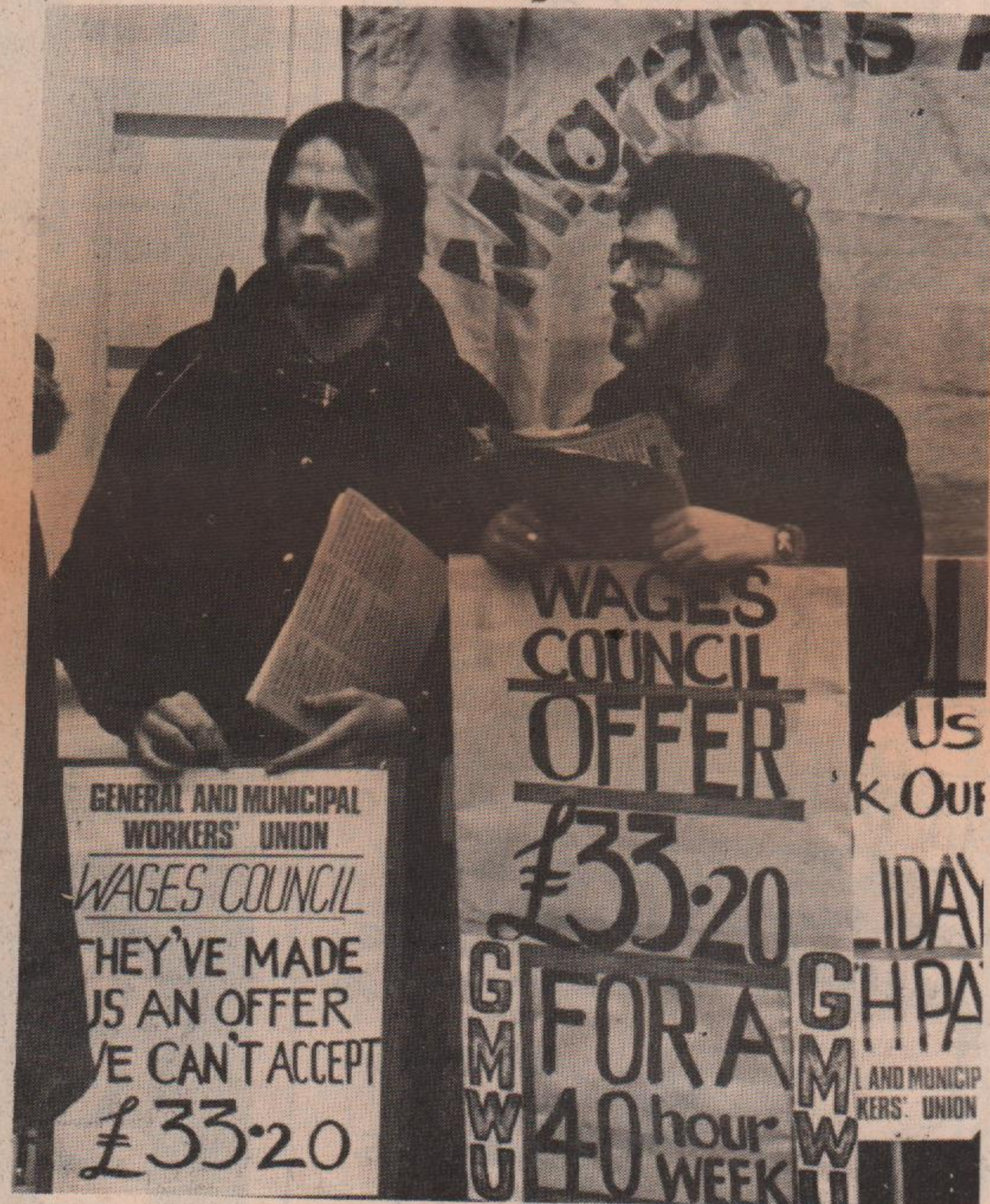
To the 'one out, all out' that is the policy of the printing union NATSOPA's rank and file, we hope will be added the perspective

of workers' control of the newspaper which is also part of working class tradition. It was the *Daily Mail's* workers' refusal to print an anti-working class editorial that set off the May 1926 General Strike and more recently an important focus of the revolutionary movement in Portugal in 1974-5 was the print workers take-over of the daily *Republica* as the voice of independent working class struggle.

An editorial in the *Times* written in support of their own struggle would be an important first step. Apart from any other effect it may cause a few heart attacks in the breakfast rooms of the ruling class.

More news on the media front comes from the circulation figures of the *Star*. In its first week, circulation of the *Star* averaged the million hoped for by management. Now, inside information puts the figure at 750,000 which means the paper is losing money. Declining circulation suggests that Northern readers are not the thick planks Trafalgar House management took them for. 'The *Star* is Porn' graffiti put up around Manchester can now be changed to 'The *Star* is Still Porn'.

Catering workers' discontent boils over



Last month's picket of the London offices of the Hotel and Catering Industry Wages Council called by the Migrants Action Group — an in-

dependent rank and file organisation — together with the T&GWU and GMWU. (Union Place Photo Collective).

THE NEW wage level set by the Hotel and Catering Industry Wages Council condemns thousands of workers to poverty. Instead of the £35.60 for a 40 hour week set by the Wages Council, the unions and the Migrants Action Council demand £60.

As the proposals stand thousands of workers will be forced to work unacceptably long hours - 60-70 hrs a week or more - to take home even a barely satisfactory wage.

In the words of Maria Bonet, member of the Migrants Action Group Executive Committee - "Migrant workers come from many countries - but are forced into the hotel and catering sector as one of the two service industries for which work permits are issued on an annual quota-basis. This permit is issued however, to the employer - not to the worker. So the worker is in an extremely vulnerable position - frequently having to accept appalling working conditions". On top of this many migrant workers are forced to live in overcrowded and often appalling housing conditions, for which they pay exorbitant rents. They rarely have access to housing outside the private rented sector and landlords take full advantage of this.

GARNERS

Migrant workers who want join a Union face problems. A worker who is sacked for union

activity may not find another job, and thus would lose residence rights in this country; jobs and the right to stay are therefore directly related. One group of workers who have refused to be intimidated in this way are the Garner's Steak House workers who are now entering the 11th month of their strike for trade union recognition.

STAKE-OUT

The unions have been forced into committing more support to efforts to bring employer Cyril Margolis to the negotiating table and, having learnt a few lessons from the successful mass picket on Oct 7th (which they had then opposed) they have called a "massive picket" or "Stake-out" of all Garner's restaurants in Central London on the evening of Friday, Dec 8th

PICKET

(in conjunction with the Greater London Association of Trades Councils). All supporters of the strike and its demands for full union recognition, reinstatement of strikers and compensation for wages lost are urged to make every possible effort to support the picket lines on this night

Support Them now!

- Pledges of support for the 8 Dec Picket can be sent to the Strike Committee, c/o TGWU, room 84 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC1 01 240 1056
- The Migrants Action Group can be contacted c/o Migrant Services Union, 68 Chalton St., NW1 1JR

HOTEL WORKERS = POVERTY LINE WAGES

SCROOGE HOTEL BOSSES - BRITAIN'S SHAME

STRIKING FOR RIGHT TO JOIN UNION

WOMEN CLEANERS and care assistants at the Leonard Cheshire Home for Disabled People, in Liverpool, have been members of NUPE for two years. Recently the Management there have decided unions are too much bother. They've refused to meet union reps to discuss wages and other problems. Suddenly, early in November, they stopped deducting union dues from the women's pay packets. So the women were no longer union members.

All the Chairperson of the Management Committee had to say was that if the staff didn't like it, it was too bad, we'd close the place down.

ANGRY

20 of the 28 women went on strike to get their union recognition back and they're picketing the home

everyday. They're up against a lot of moralising from volunteer scabs and other outsiders about 'poor disabled people being left unattended'. These people have no concern though for the women workers, many of whom have worked there for years and who work on day and night shift for a mere 81-89p an hour.

The women are now even angrier since they've found that the Job Centre is advertising their jobs at a new rate of £1.10 per hour - 21 more than they were getting.

They've taken their case to the ACAS claiming unfair dismissal. Meanwhile the picket continues and the women are trying to get more support from women's groups, trade unionists and students. They need support on the picket which is at Springwood Avenue, Liverpool 25 and financial contributions.

HIGHER WAGES, BETTER HOSPITALS!



Well, Mr Thompson, you can either die, or have private treatment

TAMESIDE HOSPITAL workers have had enough! Here is another successful fight for public sector workers to win better wages and conditions. On Thursday 16 November, after weeks of argument, theatre orderlies decided they could no longer work with the number of staff they had.

So on Thursday the theatre workers sat in the theatres and all but emergency operations were cancelled. Ancillary workers, both NUPE and COHSE came out in support for the day and nurses in COHSE supported the action by refusing to do anything other than their normal duties.

CONCEDE

By the next Wednesday, Management were ready to concede. They have given various allowances for a bonus, and a lead-in payment while a work study is prepared. Altogether the money will amount to approximately 20% bonus.

Higher wages don't immediately mean more staff, but it may mean that the workers who are trained will stay instead of drifting off to better paid jobs outside the Health Service.

Brixton: State of Siege

IN THE early days of November between 150 and 200 Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group descended on the Brixton area.

The first concrete sign that the SPG were in the area was given on Friday, November 5th. when 10 black youths were picked up and arrested on 'sus' charges outside Stockwell Manor School in their lunchbreak. Several of the youths picked up had not previously known each other. Since the incident, the papers in all ten cases have been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions. This is an unusual step for the authorities to take and it now seems highly probable that conspiracy charges will be substituted for the original ones.

press were busy giving their justifications to the public. The Evening Standard wrote "Brixton has a bad reputation for muggings and violent assaults involving groups of youths. Sometimes they end in murder". Brixton has had only 3 murders in the last 5 years. And, in direct contradiction to official figures, released earlier this year, which showed a clear drop in the incidence of Brixton street crime this year, "senior officers in Scotland Yard" informed us through the pages of the Daily and Sunday Telegraph of the "need for extra police" in areas including Brixton, due to the "rising crime rates".

Random Searches

However, as anyone with direct experience of the SPG knows only too well their appearance in a given situation has little or nothing to do with combatting street crime. Without any specific familiarity with the Brixton area, their searches can be nothing but random and, because they are trained as riot police, they invariably deal with people in an excessively aggressive manner and end up creating crimes that could not have occurred without their presence. The pattern of activity that has emerged over the

past few weeks, has shown, more than anything else, the essential class nature of their role. Just as in Northern Ireland it is enough just to be Catholic to be beaten up or harassed by the RUC or the British Army, so, in Brixton, it seems enough to be black, poor or homeless to invite SPG intimidation.

Hunting Grounds

The favoured hunting-grounds of the SPG in their activities so far have been four of the most depressed council housing estates in Lambeth - Cowley, Hemans, Tulse Hill and Stockwell Park, squatted streets such as Heath Road and Villa Road and the largely West Indian communities around Mayall and Railton Roads and Goldharbour Lane, Brixton and the surrounding areas have literally been under siege for three or four weeks. Hundreds of local people have been searched on the streets (in some cases up to half a dozen times - never with any explanation given), in their cars at impromptu roadblocks, on the estates and even in their homes.

Black Kids

The number of black kids arrested on "sus" grows daily, the sirens wail all night and, in one case last week, a leading organizer of the local Black Parents Against Sus Campaign, Jean Bernard, arrived home from a shopping trip to find 15 policemen (SPG and detectives) in her flat with her terrified young son. When she dared to complain, she was simply told - "Shut your mouth or you'll regret it".

Local organisations have reacted quite swiftly to their dramatic increase in harassment, and, at a recent meeting, called jointly by the All Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement, the local Anti-Nazi League and Black Parents Against Sus, the anger that many people felt was fully aired. One of the mothers of the Stockwell Ten spoke of how many parents she knew who were terrified to even let their kids out

of their sight and of how, on her estate, there was hardly one kid between the ages of ten and twenty who had not been stopped and hassled in some way by the SPG. Her conclusion, that "if they want to fight, we'll give them one" was taken up enthusiastically by the meeting which decided on two courses of immediate action. One - to start an immediate mobilization for a demonstration through the streets of Brixton calling for the immediate withdrawal of the SPG. Two - to try and force the Leader of Lambeth Council ("Socialism in one Borough" Ted Knight) and the areas's two MP's (John Tilley and John Fraser) to publicly denounce the presence of armed riot police in Lambeth, to demand their immediate withdrawal, to support the protest demonstration and to join the call for a Trades-Council sponsored enquiry into the whole manner and range of the SPG's activity.

Over the last week, thousands of leaflets, posters and stickers have been distributed around the area - outside schools, on estates and in the centre of Brixton, advertising the demo on the 25th. November and pointing out essential facts about the SPG.

Precedent

It is very rarely that direct opposition to the police is publicly aired on the streets and the organizing committee of the march is hopeful that the people of Brixton who join it will be helping to create an important precedent in this respect. The SPG in London are constantly operating in their way in one area or another. It is unclear how long they are due to remain in Brixton. One rumour suggests the end of the month though Chief-Superintendent John Stacey of Brixton Police says this - "All the SPG officers have been briefed on their duties and as far as we are concerned the longer they stay the better". Whenever they do leave, it will only be to harass and intim-

Fascism and Sexuality A Big Flame Day School

The call for this day school has arisen out of the practical problems of fighting fascism in a non-sexist way. We are trying to deal with the question of relationships between fascism and sexism. (There will be childcare arrangements).

- Includes contributions on:
- MARXISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS
 - WOMEN IN NAZI GERMANY
 - MASCULINITY AND FASCISM
 - THE NATIONAL FRONT AND WOMEN

University Union

Birmingham

Sat. 9th Dec.

For documents relating to the Day School send a large stamped, addressed envelope to Big Flame Day School, 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7.

idate the people of Islington, Southall, Deptford, Stepney or wherever, who will hopefully follow and develop further the example now being shown in Brixton in opposing their presence in whatever way possible.

Islington: Call for Action

ISLINGTON CAMPAIGN Against Racism and Fascism has called a march through Islington on Saturday 2nd December. The march will assemble at Chapel St. Market at 11.30am and proceed

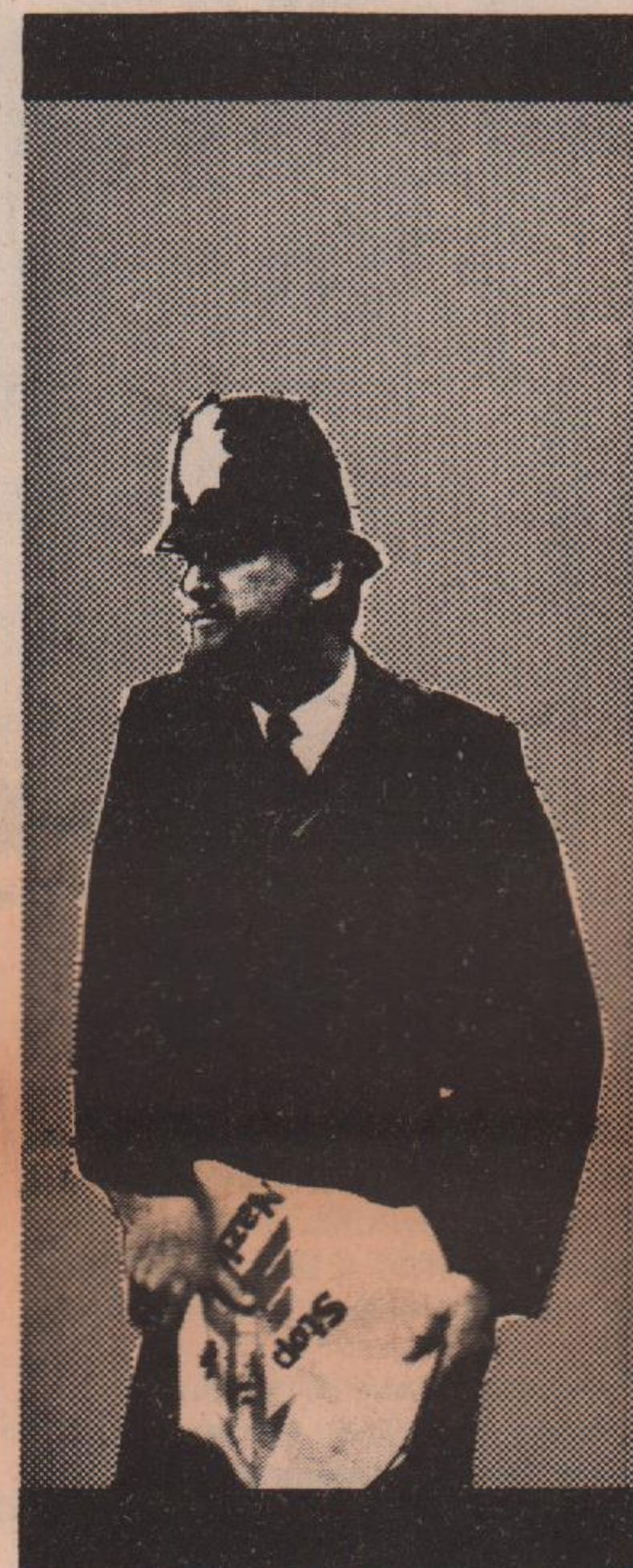
P.S. Get your trade union branch or Trade Council to write to the TUC urging it to initiate immediately the enquiry voted for at this year's conference. It must not be allowed simply to slip into oblivion.

via Upper St and Holloway Rd to Whittington Park, when there will be a short rally. There will be music along the route and in the park from two local rock bands - Charge and the Resisters.

The march has been called in response to the continuing racist attacks in Islington over the last year, and the growing presence of the fascist National Front at Chapel Market at the weekends. The racist literature and street corner abuse which the Front bring to Chapel Market are a continuing incitement to the violent attacks on black people which have been increasing throughout the year in Islington, and elsewhere. In recent months the Front have also stepped up their attacks on individual anti-fascist pickets at Chapel Market. Unless they are removed the situation will get worse.

The march aims to draw more people into the campaign to keep the fascists off the streets of Islington. It also aims to emphasise the positive aspects of a multi-cultural society and in this connection we intend to have several anti-racist bands and involve as many organisations as possible.

Support for the march has come from 13 Islington councillors, Islington Trades Council (who will have a float on the march), the Asian Centre and several local community organisations. For further information contact: 01.226.0580



Islington Gutter Press Photo

ASSEMBLE 11.30am CHAPEL STREET MARKET Sat. 2nd Dec.

Anarchist Fit Up:

Police Case Looks Shakey

SIX MONTHS after the initial arrests, the credibility of attempts by the Anti-Terrorist squad to "discover" a "nationwide conspiracy to overthrow society" seem to have all but collapsed. The anarchists charged with conspiracy to cause explosions have had the charges dropped - in two cases by the prosecution, in the others because the Attorney-General refused his permission to proceed with them. Iris Mills and Trevor Dawton have both been granted bail - indicating how great a contrast has emerged between the massive security operation and initial press hysteria surrounding the defendants and the case the police can produce against them. For example, opposing Iris Mills bail application the police were obliged to reveal the full details of the "bomb materials" seized by the police when she and Ronon Bennett were arrested on May 24. It was two small tins of weed killer, 2 bags of sugar and 1½ bags of flour. The sugar and flour were returned to Iris when she was bailed - yet on this basis the police have brought charges for possession under Section 4 of the Explosive Substances act.

Blanket Charge

In place of the dropped charges the police have brought a similar blanket charge against all of the defendants - conspiracy to rob. It has been made clear that no specific robbery charges are to be brought. Clearly they hope that the change of charge will 'depoliticise' the case while retaining the stated beliefs of the defendants as the heart of the case. For obviously in the absence of specific crimes the police case concerning conspiracy is centred around evidence of association and particularly of political belief. The implications of the charge are obviously immense - it is an attempt

by the 'security forces' to sharpen a weapon that may be directed against any collective political activity deemed dangerous in the atmosphere of 'democratic security', which the British state has erected against "internal subversion". Conspiracy to rob carries a possible life sentence.

To support this as yet uncertain tool and deepen the atmosphere of conspiracy a number of additional charges have been made. All the defendants have been charged with unlawful possession of firearms.

The failure to produce any substantial case, and the dropping of the explosions conspiracy charges, has not lessened the heavy security surrounding the case. It is being used to justify the increasingly paramilitary role of the police and their

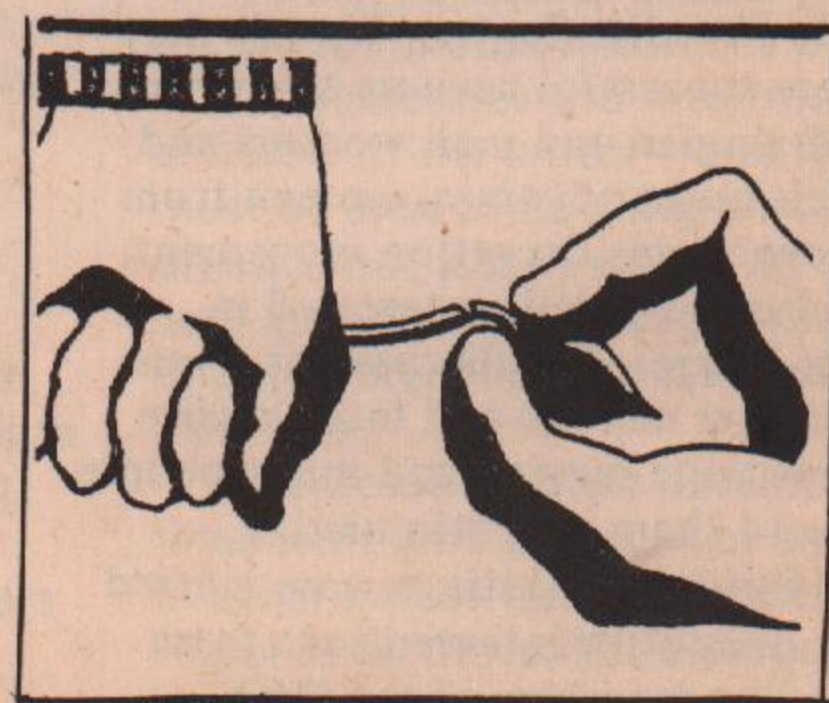
special squads and to acclimatize public opinion to it. Police at Lambeth Magistrates Count, where the remand hearings are heard, now openly boast that "they control the Court". In the meantime it is now expected that Commitals will not take place until next January which means the earliest the trial can take place is next autumn - it might indeed not be until 1980. The defendants refused bail are still held on "category A" at Brixton Prison, and are subjected to the regular harassments from petty restrictions up to beatings in the cells at the court - that are the first line of control in British prisons. Correspondence between the defendants and the support groups has been held up, mislaid or denied in a clear attempt to isolate the defendants. Both Iris Mills and Trevor Dawton have had stringent conditions attached to their bail - including reporting daily to the police and a nightly curfew.

As the beginnings of an attempt to criminalise association with the defendants the support groups up and down the Country have been singled out for harassment. Mail has been 'lost' or interfered with. Supporters are followed and watched. After a meeting on Oct 31 one supporter had his car burgled and the address section of his diary

stolen. He was then openly followed home. A supporter picked up at the Court in connection with an unpaid fine was strip searched, threatened with the PTA and told she was a security risk.

The attempts by the state to strengthen its powers by creating a climate in which their legal extension is justified must be resolutely fought, and the ideology of "anti-terrorism" - otherwise it will make political opposition a criminal act. (A member of Persons Unknown Support Group)

We appeal for messages of support, donations etc from Union Branches, organisations and individuals. A week of action, meetings and a national demonstration are planned for the week prior to commitals (not yet known). For news of our campaign contact: Persons Unknown, Box 123, 182 Upper St., Islington, London N1



"It is my contention that their activities have been nipped in the bud by these arrests" - Det. Supt. Bradbury (Anti-Terrorist Squad)



Big Flame Photo

SECRETS TRIAL 'NOT A VICTORY FOR STATE' ● A Big Flame Interview

The ABC trial has ended. The result on legal terms was a draw - with the prosecution getting a conviction and the accused getting conditional discharges (the two journalists) and a suspended sentence (Berry, the ex-soldier). But the trial and the fact that it was brought raise many important issues: these include:

- the Labour Governments' commitment to 'open government' which now looks like a sick joke in view of their refusal to get rid of the Official Secrets Act.
- the process of the State vetting juries, which Silkin, the Attorney General, nonchalantly informed us has been going on for years.

- the judge directing the jury as to what verdict they should return with. This, by the way, is bad law and may lead to the verdicts being overturned on appeal.
- And, of course, the whole arsenal of intelligence service operations which the trial has brought to light.

The British establishment is very careful in who it picks to do its dirty work. Its mercenaries are selected with care and given plenty of financial and social rewards. For this reason, it is important to recognise the immense courage of John Berry - the ex-soldier whose story was the beginning of the ABC affair. We are very pleased to publish this interview with John.

paign within the trial that people were losing sight of the fact that the trial was going to finish a one stage and we were going to have to consider what we were going to do at the end of it. What came across most strongly was that active supporters felt that there wasn't any future for the ABC defence campaign unless one or more of us ended up in jail.

Other campaigns will have to take up issues like Jury vetting and most importantly the role and accountability of the intelligence services - the extent to which they operate beyond public control.

Some break has got to be put on their activities: it's a very illuminating thing for people to be confronted with the fact that there are these people behind the Government in agencies which are not subject to any democratic control at all. That's the most important issue the campaign has raised.

What are the implications of the trial?

The most significant implication for journalists is that they're not going to get any protection whatever under the laws as they stand. The Official Secrets Act is probably about the best deal that a journalist can expect, I think that any so called reform is going to make things more difficult. The very vagueness of section 2 is in some ways a good thing because as soon as they institute any reform the whole thing's going to be tightened up. But the most important area that we were concerned with, the operations of unaccountable agencies and military expenditure, may well be more difficult to discuss under any proposed reform.

For people other than journalists, people like me, people with military experience, the implications are very much the same. I don't think anyone who's thinking of blowing the whistle on any particular aspect of dirty tricks is going to be put off by a suspended sentence, but again the trial judge made it very clear that the British State isn't prepared to tolerate that kind of activity.

I think that the law will be tightened up in whatever way it needs to be in order to prevent people from talking.

What choice did the jurors have, and what do you think was significant about their decision?

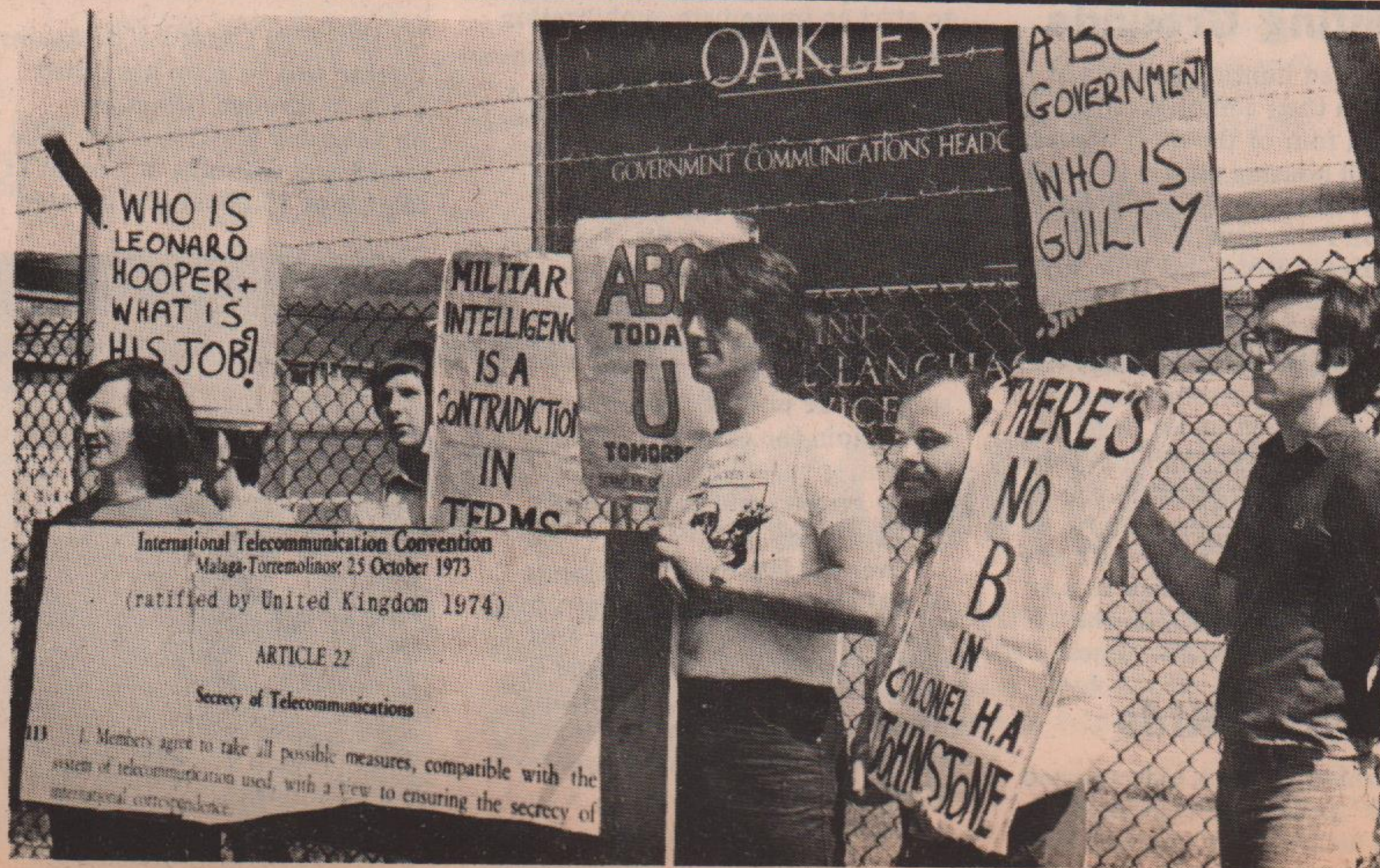
We all talked to four members of the jury, including the foreman and at the end of the trial they came along to the celebration afterwards, to apologise. What emerged was that they had felt all along that the section one charges were completely falacious and that if the judge hadn't ordered the dropping of those charges the jury would have probably thrown out the lot, and we would have been acquitted of everything.

In the final analysis the four jurors felt that they had no choice because they were faced with the judges direction to convict me.

We had wondered whether they actually knew they could return a perverse verdict and stick two fingers up to the judge and say we're not prepared to go along with it. They said they did know they had that right but that they weren't prepared to go that far.

Do you think the State regrets staging the trial?

The very thing they were seeking to avoid, that is publicity about signals intelligence has actually come about as a result of the trial and SIGINT is known much better now than before the trial. And more has been made public through the trial than would have been if only the original interview had been published. Also the question of jury rigging, or jury "vetting" came out as a consequence of the trial. It became clear that the attorney general had laid down guidelines about vetting, and that's going to be an issue that isn't going



ABC demo at Cheltenham earlier this year (John Birdsall photo)

to die quickly. Aside from that, everybody responsible for the prosecution has got a lot of egg on their faces - everyone seems to see it that way.

I don't really think that they regard our conviction under section two of the Official Secrets Act as any kind of victory for them.

What was the role of the ABC defence committee - how would things have gone without it?

The defence committee was quite heavily criticised throughout its existence by the revolutionary left. It was extremely difficult to develop any kind of political perspective within the framework of

that committee. Because it reflected the differing political positions of the defendants.

Having said that, I think it responded in the best way it could have done and we had to avoid political confrontations within the campaign. There was a gradual educative process that went on throughout the whole 21 months and I think a lot of people have been politicised as a result of it. We got a lot of

people involved; some influential people including quite a lot of backing in the House of Commons which no doubt helped. The naming of Colonel B in the House of Commons was a major break

through that would not have happened without the committee.

I think in the end it was a politically hard headed campaign because it didn't get sectarian, but we were very conscious of the fact that a lot of people were saying we should have involved the trade Union movement a lot more and things like that - but it was hard.

What's the defence committee going to be doing now?

It hasn't dissolved as yet, formally although we had a meeting about a month ago which I instigated really because I felt that we were so involved in the day to day management of the cam-

What the IMG members said was that Big Flame should have called our meetings together with other socialist groups. Not to do so was, they said, sectarian, divisive and unsupporting of the struggle at Fords.

While we support, in general, moves towards joint work and revolutionary unity, we also, like other left groups, reserve the right to hold public meetings on any topic we choose. Big Flame has recently suspended formal discussions with the IMG on building a new revolutionary organisation, (see BF 66 for our reasons), so we find it surprising that leading members of the IMG who must know this, persist at public meetings in criticising us for not doing what we have already said formally that we can't, at the moment, do. We have decided, and said so in our newspaper to build Big Flame and our public meetings are part of this process.

Having said this, we should make clear that we think there is always space for general support meetings, jointly called, around any struggle. Neither of these public meetings was seen by Big Flame to be a substitute for this. As it turned out, Fords was discussed both times because it was an important struggle going on at the time, and there were a number of men and women Ford workers present.

Finally, if the IMG feel this is so important, why did they not in the six weeks between the meetings get in touch with the Liverpool DC

involved in with the IMG, and joint meetings. Pointedly raising this issue at public meetings while doing nothing about it in any other way discredits the left and as seen as yet more "sectarian wrangling" by other militants.

Liverpool District Committee.

Dear Big Flame,

On the front page of your November issue, you wrote: 'two independent bodies - the Low Pay Unit and the Child Poverty Action Group - have just confirmed that after three years of Labour's incomes restraint the gap between the low paid and the rest has grown' - this seems unbelievable to me. Are there any figures to confirm it?

M.R. (Bristol)

Ed. Latest figures published in the government's 'New Earnings Survey' show that in percentage terms wage rises for non-manual workers continue to be higher than for manual workers. The same report shows a continuing deterioration in the relative earnings of low paid workers in general and of women in particular. In April 1977, the poorest ten percent of male workers earned 68.1% of the average wage, this April it was only 66.8%. Figures produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission show that women's earnings have fallen in relation to men's (from 75.1% in 1976 to 73.8% in 1978). In April this year, there were 4.7 million adults (two thirds of them

while, there are still almost two million people who earn less for a full week's work than the government's very low target of £44.50. That figure, by the way, is only £2 more than the average weekly increase in pay for managing directors in the 1978

Dear Comrades,

I would like to clarify a few points in relation to the letter signed by "Organisation of Democratic Youth and Students of Iran" in the November issue of Big Flame, where the writer claimed the existence of mass following for the "Tudeh (Communist) Party.

Even during the period leading up to the CIA Coup d'etat in 1953, when the CP was a mass party, it was unable to lead the mass struggle - the national bourgeoisie led the mass movement. The reasons behind this were: (a) the CP earlier had taken part in a coalition government and helped it to break the massive strike of the workers in the south of Iran, (b) the CP was too dependant on the Soviet Union and therefore was unable to have its own independent programme of action (c) in effect this dependance led the CP to put the interests of the USSR before the interests of the Iranian people, for example in the movement for the nationalisation of oil it only called for the nationalisation in the south and argued that the oil in the north should be contracted to the USSR. But the nationalists led by Dr Mossadegh called for full nationalisation and the result

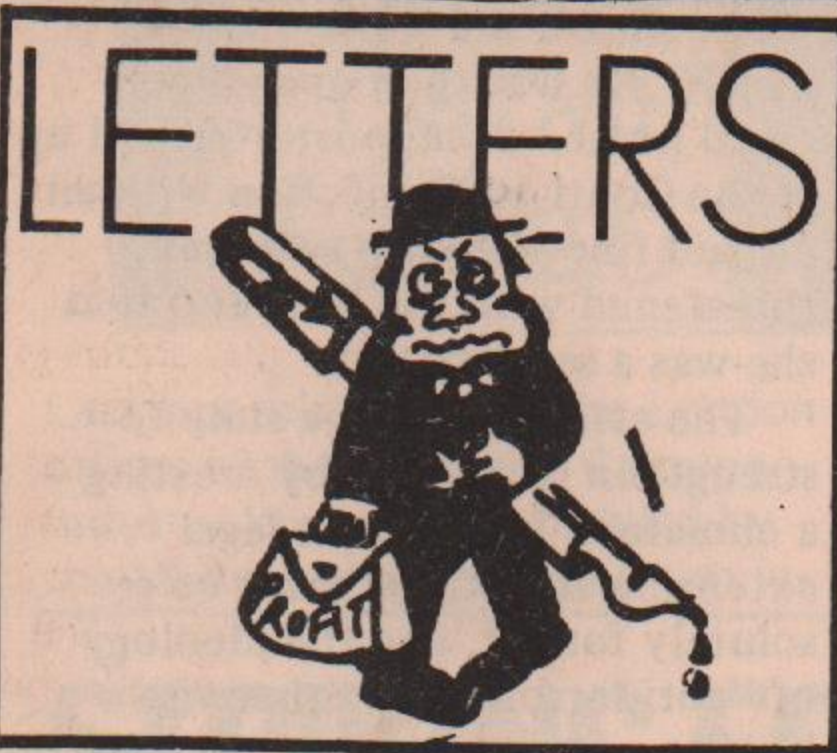
CP leadership, because it was the only organised and disciplined party with its own militia who could have prevented the coup d'etat, had they been given instructions to do so. But the leadership waited until the last moment and then fled the country into the USSR leaving the membership in the hands of the army. One should of course distinguish between the traitorous leadership and the militant membership some of whom continued the struggle.

When the guerrilla movement started in 1971, the CP in line with the Shah's regime denounced them as "terrorists" and "saboteurs". This is not to say that I agree with guerrilla strategy, but to have political disagreement is one thing and to brand those heroic militants as "terrorists" another.

To sum up, the CP's policies during all these years has been tied to that of the USSR. Whenever the relationship between Iran and USSR has been a close one, the CP has suddenly remembered "the Progressive and positive sides of the Iranian regime" and whenever the relationship has been a cold one, the CP has called for "the overthrow of the Shah"

All I can say is that the future socialist revolution in Iran will certainly be the referee of this debate.

Yours fraternally,
an Iranian comrade (name)



AN OPEN LETTER TO COMRADES OF THE IMG from the LIVERPOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE of BIG FLAME

Liverpool Big Flame have recently held two successful public meetings - the first on the lessons of redundancy at Standard Triumph and the strike at Fords. The second was on socialism and feminism, with a member of the Ford Workers Action Group and Hilary Wainwright, from Tyne-side Socialist Centre. We felt they were successful because they attracted women and men workers and their husband/wives, women from the womens liberation movement, and other people interested in Big Flame. The discussions, even if rather chaotic and inconclusive were wide ranging and many people found them very stimulating.

But both meetings were marred by disruptive interventions from leading members of the IMG. We want to explain to members

FORDS: SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS

by Frank George

THE FORD Strike is over — the workers have been defeated but they are not smashed — there is a feeling of unfinished business" in the air. After nine weeks of strike Ford Workers go back for a basic rise lower than last years' when they hardly had to lift a finger. And they go back to work with penalty clauses hanging over their heads, which if allowed to operate, will divide the shop floor and in the long term could lead to a complete and permanent turnaround in the balance of power in favour of management, with harder work and worsening conditions. Despite these very hard facts, many workers don't feel that they've been smashed rather that they "committed suicide" i.e. they could have won, but didn't for one reason or another.

The strike has had many positive aspects — which should not be underestimated or lost in the natural depression that goes with the return to work.

- The 5% has been smashed, at least as far as the private sector is concerned.
- The unity of the workforce right to the end of a very long strike has been very impressive — few cheered when the vote was passed to return.
- The large degree of popular support for the strike and the contributions of money from other industries and unions point to a real possibility of united action by the working class today.
- The growth and role of the Ford UK Workers Group (Combine) has been both important to the strike and as a model for non-sectarian rank and file organising (see below). The emphasis it has put on mass involvement and particularly the involvement of workers wives, meant that any media attempts to affect the unity of the strike by building individual strikers wives into complete "Back to work campaigns" have failed, whilst the women have been able to assert their point of view and rights as Ford "dependents" through the nationally distributed combine leaflets and through its meetings.

Officials and Conveners

Predictably it was the full time and lay officials who undermined the strike in its last weeks. By getting embroiled in the intricacies of the Attendance Allowance/Penalty clauses, they went against the wishes of the mass of workers and conveners who wanted to stick to the claim and nothing but the claim.

The full time officials have no particular allegiance to the Ford workers — they are appointed to do a job — negotiate. Their allegiance is to their own union executive, and their allegiance is ultimately to the Labour Party, which happens to form the present government.

These officials should be replaced this is an important task, but how long will it take? Who will take their place? Could the mass of workers be involved in such a long term procedure-dogged campaign?

The behaviour of the national negotiators during the late '60's led to the fight to democratise the negotiating committee (NJNC) Now it's clear that there must be a fight to increase direct shop floor representation on the NJNC and clear out the officials.

Campaigns to "replace the leadership" do have value, but they cannot be a substitute for building the understanding and confidence of the mass of workers.

The conveners representing the most militant plants — particularly Halewood, responded well to the feeling of the shop floor, and fought consistently for the claim within their limited roles. There were, however, exceptions. The vote on the National Negotiating Committee to recommend acceptance of the final offer was a close one, and was carried by the defection of two conveners and one official from the rejection side to the acceptance side. We are led to believe that these three were Harroway, Connors and Passingham. Harroway is an ex-Dagenham Body Plant Convenor, Connors is the present convenor and Passingham is the convenor of the small Dagenham River plant — all are members or supporters of the Communist Party. They claim that their changed vote was due to pressure from their membership, which is quite plausible but is not the whole story. These three are political people. Having weighed up the pros and cons of continuing the strike in a much broader way than in any of their colleagues, they realised that a rejection could have extended the strike into the new year. This would have given a chance for other sectors going for big rises to enter the fight and perhaps produce a united front against the 5% and a direct confrontation with the Labour Government. This could have led to a General Election and the defeat of the Labour Party,

something that the CPs mates in the Labour Party could not tolerate. We don't advocate bringing the Tories to power, but on the other hand, we don't let the possibility of it prevent us fighting all the way for working class demands.

At the local level, the relationship often strained in the past — between stewards and rank and file, has improved, particularly at Halewood (Again!). This was due to the gut level response of stewards and ordinary workers to the derisory 5% original offer. But despite this, the stewards played their traditionally elitist role. At Dagenham many stewards actively tried to keep ordinary workers off the picket line. No true Strike Committees were formed i.e. those which included active rank and file workers as well as stewards committed to the claim. Once again with one or two exceptions, the stewards showed contempt for the their own members rights and intelligence by not calling mass meetings, and so increased the isolation and vulnerability of the individual strikers. This wrong tradition of exclusivity and elitism must give way to a new tradition of mass involvement and democracy. This is the key that would open the door to real advances in the workers movement.



Long Term Problems

It is clear that a greater degree of mass involvement in the strike would have forced the negotiators to take a more un-compromising stand on the Ford Claim, but would increased militancy alone have won the claim? Two things stand out:

- The unions and the left still have no clear strategy for taking on a truly multi-national company like Fords. It was expected that Ford Europe would quickly grind to a halt due to the integrated nature of Ford's European Operation. This did not happen. After two months much of Ford Europe was closed down, but by no means all, while Ford USA and Ford Brazil continued undisturbed. Clearly two things were missing:
 - Despite isolated but valuable examples e.g. Amsterdam and Valencia, there was a lack of any real solidarity actions from other Ford workers i.e. the kind of action that would have thrown at least Ford Europe into turmoil. The reasons are many, but they are all underlined by Fords policy of creating divisions within an already disparate work force, through differing wage levels and appeals to nationalist prejudices. Trade unionists and socialists must recognise this real problem and start building concrete links at the official, stewards and unofficial level. A first step on this long road would be the establishment of a permanent national shop stewards committee in Britain.
 - One way or another a multi-national is by causing enough political chaos to force the Government to step in against the company. The Ford strike never had the political impact necessary to force the Government into using its power to force the Ford multinational to pay the claim. This was because of the isolationist, sectional and profit tied way in which the claim was fought.

2) For years, the left at Fords has criticised the national negotiators for putting the 35 hour week in the claim and then doing nothing about it. This year things were a bit different, the Ford UK Workers Group (Combine) consistently pushed for the 35 hours and many conveners, particularly those from Merseyside with its soaring unemploy-

all this not one bit of progress was made — Ford said "Not over my dead body" and that was it — finished. So how do you win a shorter working week? Certainly if the strike had been linked up with the other sectors waiting in the queue it would have helped. But, until a mass, independent, unemployed movement is established that can fight from the outside little progress will be made. The establishment of such a movement is clearly a task for trade unionists in work as well as the unemployed themselves.

The Combine

The Ford U.K. Workers Group (Combine), a rank and file group of left wing shop floor workers and stewards, played a vital role in the strike. At the beginning of the strike the Combine hardly existed, by the end the Combine leaflets distributed nationally had become the main way in which the mass of workers could find out about and feel active in the strike. The Combine did the shop stewards job for them and effectively became the Propaganda Arm of the union during the strike. At times the Combine quite clearly "led" the negotiators: (e.g. In the Southampton Wives Incident — and was seen to do so by the mass of workers.) But now the strike is over, and the "honeymoon" that has developed between the Combine and the Stewards Committees will be ending soon, as the moderate stewards realise that the combine is not going to disappear and is in fact a threat. The Combine cannot continue merely as a propaganda organisation, or its members will drift away and it will fail to grow.

It must be seen as a clearly socialist grouping opposed to the policies of the moderates and reformists at all levels of the union — and it must be seen to be doing this in practice not just in word. At the very least this means organising in union branches and stewards elections.

The Combine must develop links with similar groups of workers in other industries. The positive response to the leaflet distributed by Combine members to Vauxhall workers at Ellesmere Port was a sign of both the desire and need for

7 DIE AT BENTLEY COLLIERY:

A Heavy Price To Pay For Coal

7 MEN were killed and 19 injured at Bentley Colliery recently when a non-riding 'paddy' train got out of control and overturned. News like this is guaranteed to numb the national press - miners become heroes rather than enemies of society.

Whilst the ruling-class are rightly accused of crocodile tears Union leaders may be tempted to make off-hand remarks about the introduction of the incentive scheme and an increase in accidents. The fact is that in this particular case (at least until the investigation is completed) no one can say that a 'paddy' train accident can be directly attributed to a scheme that encourages faster working.

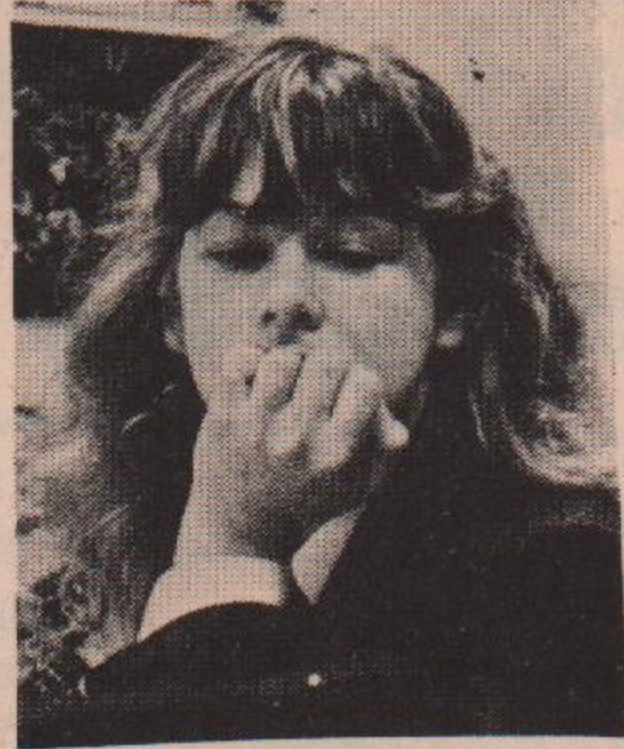
What can and must be said is that in an occupation such as mining, with all the dangers that it involves, it is wrong under any circumstances to pay people under in-

as part and parcel of the job. The first task is to reduce or eliminate these risks before you can start talking about productivity.

Many questions will be asked at the inquiry into the accident. But the main aim of them will be to shift blame away from the National Coal Board and on to the individuals involved. The argument may well be that the safety mechanisms were available so why were they not properly used and maintained. It has been said that the 'paddy' conductor was not trained for the job and that in fact he wasn't on the paddy at the time. Who is to blame for this? Under a system geared to production at the cheapest cost, thorough training is one of the first things that goes.

If this country wants coal then its going to have to pay for it. Pay for it not just in terms of wages but also for the safety.

YOUTH & RACISM



I know: two people who won't go out with black people just because their parents are so set against it, they don't dare disobey them, even though they like the kids a lot.

TALKIN ABOUT

Racial abuse, police harassment, wearing the ANL badge, the school 'heavy mob' with fascist leanings: these are some of the things we talked about with a mixed group of 5th formers in a Liverpool comprehensive.

THE THINGS PEOPLE SAY...

I was playing football a few weeks ago and we were all going home in a car and we were playing a team the next week. One of my mates said "Oh, is that the team with all the coons in?" He didn't know I was there — they just say it when you're not there and it hurts you when you hear it. I just got out of the car and got the bus home. He apologised and all that, but that wasn't any good was it?

I was getting on a bus and some teacher pushed in in front of me and said she was there first. So I just walked on the bus in front of her. Some guy pulled me off so I told him to get his hands off me and walked on to the bus. He punched me in the face. He was calling me all racial names. My dad didn't agree with me swearing at him.

I've had an experience like that when my mum just said to me leave them alone.

Little kids say things like "you're a nigger" or "have you had a wash since this morning" but what can you say to a little kid — if it's someone your own age they say it, but they half run away as they say it.

If there's some hooligan saying things you're not going to say "Don't call me that again."

because it's not going to be taken heed of — you're going to hit him aren't you.

Nobody really says "because you're black you're taking our houses" It's usually just an odd name and you can't go preaching about a name.

This sort of thing happens few and far between, if you have one incident the next will be some time away so you won't think it's all coming against you — but sometimes you'd feel better somewhere else.

I DIDN'T THINK OF MYSELF AS BLACK....

I didn't use to think of myself as black. Now I've got more black friends than I used to have when I was younger. Going out helped a lot, the black music as well gets you involved with other black people.

It's later on when you realise you're different.

BOYFRIENDS AND GIRL FRIENDS.

Usually white people stay with white people and black people with black unless it's somewhere like a college or a school. It's harder for black people to go out with white people because of the racial views of their parents and that.

I know two people who won't go out with black people just because their parents are so set against it they don't dare disobey them, even though they like the kids a lot.

If there is only you and a white girl walking along, people won't take much notice but if there's say about three black people and three white people, people will think more about it. It's like if people are racial and one black person moves into the street they won't say much but if it's a whole block of them they'll start to say things.

THE THREAT OF THE NF

I don't think they'll ever get into power — they'll go round beating up the odd black or Pakistani, but they're not going to win any battles doing that.

When it happens to you or in your area, that's when you feel threatened by them.

You do feel threatened. You'd like to stop them, that's why you have the ANL — wearing the badges and that.

THE ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE

Some people just go for the music, it's stupid the way they say 'look at all the people supporting the ANL,' but if the music wasn't as popular like heavy rock — there wouldn't be so many there — the ones who go on the marches are the ones who are really into it.

We went because we're against racialism. Racialism's wrong — you hear what Hitler did in Germany when he killed six million people and you don't want it to happen again.

I wear a badge because it means people know you're against the Nazis.

But some people wear them just because it's a badge and they like a group.

Some people don't understand



I said to one of the 'heavy mob', "Still voting for the National Front?". He said, "I was for the National Front, but seeing as they don't want heavy rock or nothing I'm not for them."

G RACISM

everything a badge says so they don't like to wear it in case they're saying something they don't mean.

They might not understand everything a badge says so they don't like to wear it in case they're saying something they don't mean. They might not understand all the political stuff. So their answer is not to wear it in case they were saying something they didn't mean.

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU YOUR PARENTS SAY

Black people that are older think that it's wrong to fight back because they sat through it all and watched it happen — when they hear of all these marches they say it's not right.

It was worse when they were young because we were only starting to come into the country then and there were skinheads and teddy boys and they were more racial. Now they know there's more of us. When they come down black bashing they're going to come down in force because they know there won't be just ten of us there'll be 100 and they'll come in force with 200.

My parents don't really talk about racialism. They don't like it I know that. If I was provoked really badly they'd expect me to fight back not with just words.

It depends on your parents whether you're racist or not. They have a lot of effect on you. If they're definitely anti-black, then you're going to turn out anti-black.

I can remember when I was small I used to call my brother a Jew because he wouldn't lend me some money and I got really told off about it. I wouldn't do it now because I know it's silly, but then my dad explained but some people aren't told.

THE POLICE PICK YOU UP FOR NO REASON

The police pick you up for no reason at all. They say things like there's a lot of break-ins going on round here. We want to talk to you, turn your pockets out. That's happened to me at least seven times. It doesn't happen so much to whites.

The police wouldn't do anything when I was punched at the bus-stop, but if I'd hit him they'd have done something.

In the paper it said a policeman was attacked but it didn't mention that a Rastaman was beaten up by them — the police are always right — they've got to be right.

THE 'HEAVY MOB'

There's only a tiny minority who are anti black in this school. If you say to normal people "do you believe in coloured people living here?" they say "oh yes" they just take it for granted.

The ones we call the "heavy mob" are not really heavy but they like to think they are — that they're one of the boys and that they're cool.

On the bus one day I said to one of the 'heavy mob' from this school, "still voting for the National Front?" he said "I was for the National Front but seeing as they don't want heavy rock or nothing I'm not for them".

One of the heavy mob thinks he's cool and goes round saying "all blacks stink, get them all out of our country." and really weak ones think "Oooo, I wish I was like him."

I know for a fact that one of them wasn't against blacks when he was younger, but now he's hanging round with one of the 'heavy mob' he is.

It's like in the beginning when the Sex Pistols first came out, they used to wear swastikas and all the punks used to wear arm bands with swastikas and now they're all in the Anti-Nazi League. They didn't know why they wore them in the first place. It's just an image they try and put over.

TEACHERS DON'T TELL YOU IT WAS WRONG, ONLY THAT IT HAPPENED

The teachers are only interested in their own subject and they're not interested in whether it's right or not — it's up to you to decide that. In the third form when we did slavery it could have been put over in a better way — it was like the slaves were there, they happened to be that colour, it was their fault that they were in America at that time.

They didn't tell you that it was wrong only that it happened.

Even now when we're doing the Jews and Hitler in Germany, if we didn't know that Jews are the same, the way he puts it Jews are different.

Many teachers think that when you're young you're not worth bothering about — you haven't any political views yet. Maybe in the sixth form they'll tell you a bit more.

They do their job, teaching, and that's it. You wouldn't know if they were in the National Front or anything.



A float on the second carnival in London.



MARIE



EILEEN

'We're all going on a summer holiday.....'

"If there was another one we'd go...we'd like to go to the South of England next time..."

That's what Eileen and Marie, two girls who went to this year's summer school told us:

"We got on great with the people, all the people there were great, it was the people that made it. It's better going away with other people when you're on your own. It's harder to mix, but when you go with other people you know you're all together."

We looked after ourselves and went for walks and climbed and fell in the mud! We enjoyed the outings and the packed lunches and going to the beach and the do's at night. There was singing and music and everyone got up dancing — that was great.

It was a good idea that everyone had a bit of a holiday — even those with little kids — with everyone taking a share looking after the kids. The party for the little kids was good with all the games!"

We asked them whether they had joined in any educational or watched any of the films

"We stayed and watched two or three of the films - the one on the nurseries was good — but we really couldn't understand them. It would have been a good idea to arrange things for the older kids like that."

Finding the ideal place for so many socialists and kids to have a holiday is always a problem. This year was no exception, as Eileen and Marie pointed out:

"We liked the holiday but the camp wasn't that good. We didn't like the food or the beds and having to walk outside to the toilets, but the arrangements were good. It was stupid that the villagers didn't like us just because people were different. They should have mixed and talked and got to know us."

The hunt is on for next year's school! We need a large, cheap place with large rooms for discussions and few restrictions. It needs to be in a nice place so people have a good holiday with lots for the kids to do — any ideas?

Big Flame photo

Big Flame photo

IRELAND TEN YEARS ON

IN LAST months Big Flame we described how many people in Catholic areas of northern Ireland welcomed the arrival of British troops. But the troops soon began to show which side they were on....

When the Catholics saw the troops protecting provocative Orange parades as they passed through their communities, they began to doubt the government line about "neutral peace-keepers"

The doubt was confirmed in July 1970 when the Lower Falls a Catholic area of terraced streets in inner Belfast, was sealed off by hundreds of troops and a curfew declared. The area was saturated with CS gas. Houses were searched and furniture smashed. Several local people were shot dead. While people in the Catholic - Nationalist areas were deprived of their arms no such operations took place in Protestant - loyalist - areas.

INTERMENT

By 1971 the mass of the Catholic nationalist population, realised that they had the British army as well as the police and the Orangemen to contend with. Rioting against the Army increased. On February 6th the first British soldier was killed. The Loyalist regime, terrified of the armed revolt, demanded wholesale arrests without trial. On August 9th they got their way. In a massive operation over 300 men were dragged from their homes by troops. No charge. No trial. This was internment.

BLOODY SUNDAY

The anti-Catholic bias of internment and revelations of torture led to widespread anger and protest. The IRA, far from defeated by internment, was stronger than ever. The Civil Rights Association chose Sunday 30th January 1972 for a massive march of protest in Derry against internment and for an end to anti-Catholic discrimination. The British government and Army decided to drive that march off the streets. When the rally, over 15,000 strong, began to assemble in Derry's Bogside, paratroops arrived and opened fire immediately at the unarmed crowd. 14 were killed,



another dozen wounded. The British newspapers, as usual, told the British army's version about how all the dead were "heavily armed" or "known gunmen and bombers" etc.

END PARTITION

The people of Ireland knew different. Instead of being intimidated, they were so enraged that they took to the streets in larger numbers than ever. The Bloody Sunday massacre marked the end of the belief that Catholics could get genuine equal rights in northern Ireland. They now realised that the northern Irish state was unreformable. It was set up to discriminate against Catholics. The only way to get Civil Rights was to overthrow the Loyalist regime, throw the British out and re-unite with the south.

The Civil Rights Association which still believed in reforms began to lose support. The Provisional Republicans and revolutionary groups like Peoples Democracy called for the end of northern Ireland and unity with the South. Their support mushroomed. The British government began to re-think its strategy.

NEXT MONTH: The British Army mutinies!

Argentina Conference

The issue of Argentina is particularly important for militants and the trade union movement in this country. This is because British firms have large investments in Argentina (e.g. Dunlops, Plessey's, Massey Fergussons and Perkins Diesels to name but a few) and moreover, multi-national companies such as Fords wouldn't hesitate to use the same barbaric methods, such as military occupations of factories, in this country if the situation required it. It is also true that the success or failure of the popular resistance to the dictatorship in Argentina will affect the future of popular struggles in the whole of Latin America.

The British Argentina Campaign has called an open conference on the 2nd December for all people involved in solidarity work with Argentina. The aim of the conference is to group together trade unionists, political militants and human rights groups in order to decide on the political perspectives that are necessary for the future development of the campaign.

Priorities for action will be discussed. Proposals include the means by which the junta can be isolated politically and economically e.g. by calling for an end to arms sales, a boycott of selected exports. The adoption of political prisoners is also an important area of work, and we have much to learn from the Chile Campaign in terms of how to set up a visa programme and get grants and other forms of material aid for refugees.

A final and more long-term aim of the campaign, which will be discussed at the conference, will be how to set up a co-ordinating committee between the campaigns for the different



countries of Latin America. At present there are campaigns for Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, and at the moment solidarity with the liberation struggle in Nicaragua must be a priority too. Ideally we should be able to use the experience gained from the longer established campaigns to work in solidarity with the popular forces in all the countries of Latin America, which all suffer the oppression of imperialism and vicious violations of human rights at the hands of their own regimes.

Conference at: Liverpool University, Student Union Building, Brownlow Hill, Saturday 2nd December 12-6pm. Fee £1, 50p unwaged. Creche provided, details available from: The British Argentina Campaign, 52 Acre Lane, London S.W.2. 01.274.5317

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE



West German State Suppresses

Arbeiterkampf

Jg. 7 Nr. 142 13.11.78 Arbeiterzeitung des Kommunistischen Bundes DM 2,-

KOMMUNISTISCHE BUND (KB), a West German revolutionary group with who Big Flame has close links currently faces two prosecutions. If the German state is able to get a conviction on either of these charges, it will be a serious blow for the freedom of the press in that country.

The first prosecution is against the editor of their newspaper "Arbeiter Kampf" (Workers Fight) for an article that suggested that the prison "suicides" of members of the Red Army Faction were not totally self-inflicted.

The second prosecution against KB is for its publication of a book "Special Units in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) - the Steady Development of the new Gestapo" which is a thorough documentation of the increasingly intervention of the secret service, of military units and of paramilitary squads in the social life of the FRG. The book also documents the persistence of former Nazis in the state institutions.

The charge made against the book is that it "puts the state in

a bad light". The prosecution case claims that it "presents to the eyes of the unbiased but careful average reader a picture of the FRG as a state deserving contempt. Again and again circumstances in the FRG are compared with those of the National Socialist regime."

Both cases make use of article 90 of the West German constitution, "defamation of the state and its symbols", a charge that is becoming increasingly popular with the German state. It is being used against a Berlin paper merely for publishing an advert for the KB book! This law is clearly being used to suppress open discussion of the activities of the state.

These prosecutions represent an assault on press freedom in the FRG. If the prosecutions succeed, then

all democratic criticism of the West German strong state and its security police will be open to suppression. For this reason it is crucial that all socialist and democratic forces, inside and outside West Germany, support the KB. An article in a leading Frankfurt daily puts the point clearly: "The seizure of the KB book could become a dangerous precedent. The Law is measuring up to see how far it can define the extent to which criticism of the present situation can go, and what elements of the past must be left alone. This must be taken into consideration by anyone who believes that this book is not worth the protest"

The German state sees this as an important case, and is going for the maximum penalty. The KB urgently needs financial support for legal costs and for the heavy fine they possibly face. Money and solidarity greetings should be sent to: Verlag Arbeiterkampf, Lerchenstrasse 75, D-2000, Hamburg 50, FRG

East German Marxist in Jail

RUDOLF BAHRO is an East German marxist who wrote a marxist book about his country. He describes how East Germany, the Soviet Union, and the other countries of Eastern Europe have nothing in common with socialism. Instead, they are bureaucratic regimes where the workers are atomised and divorced from real control. In his book Bahro proposes a series of radical reforms that would effectively put the bureaucracy out of power and build up a political system based on workers' democracy.

For writing his book the East German government has put Bahro in jail for eight years. All over Europe - including here in Britain - leftists have organised committees to defend Rudolf Bahro and put pressure on the East Germans to set him free.

The most important solidarity action yet held in support of Rudolf Bahro took place in West Berlin last month, from the 16th to the 19th of November. The West Berlin left organised an "International Congress For and About Rudolf Bahro". More than 3,000 people jammed the halls of the Technical University of West Berlin to listen to speakers from all over Europe discuss the problems raised by Bahro's book. Every section of the European workers' movement was there:

East European and Russian socialist emigres, Italian Eurocommunists, West German Social Democrats, Trotskyists, Maoists, and the large West German independent left.

POLITICAL SUCCESS AND POLITICAL FAILURES

One of the bad things about the conference was the political differences between Eurocommunists and revolutionaries never really got discussed. Bahro's book is often very contradictory, so that both Eurocommunist reformists and revolutionary socialists can find things in it to support their own conceptions of socialism. There should have been a really hard-hitting debate about this, but there wasn't. To give an example, it turned out that the Spanish Communist Party, which prides itself on being in the "vanguard" of the Eurocommunist critique of the Soviet Union - backed out of the conference. Why? Because that very weekend the Spanish CP was entertaining an official East German delegation in Madrid to try and patch up its differences with the Soviet Union!

Compared to the successes of the conference, however, these failures were minor. The conference's political impact was doubly effective because it was in West Berlin.

Every day reports of the conference went out over West Berlin and West German TV and radio. Most people in East Germany can pick up these broadcasts, and so they would have been able to follow the conference discussions. For this fact alone the conference must have greatly boosted the morale of East German socialists struggling against the regime.

The conference also gave an important lesson to socialists in other countries about how to work together. The idea and organisation of the conference came from the independent left, who brought together all the different groups to debate and discuss. As one of the independents said from the platform, the independent left had done what the individual organisations had been either unwilling or unable to do: it brought together a mass, international conference and forced the left to co-operate around a common purpose.

We would all do well to learn from this example.

Rudolf Bahro's book "The Alternative", will soon appear in English, published by New Left Books. People interested in working with the Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee should contact: Gunter Minnerup, 14 Folkestone Rd., Copnor, Portsmouth.

Israeli Terrorist Gets Peace Prize

The press, television, politicians and other clever people who tell us what to think are all very fond of making pious noises about "terrorism".

It's a plague/plot on a world scale, (they cry), a threat to civilisation-as-we-know-it (they wail), countries that harbour terrorists should have sanctions imposed on them (they threaten).

So what are we to think when the nobel peace prize of all things is awarded to a well known and unrepentant, nay, proud! - terrorist?

Menachem Begin was a leading member of the Irgun, one of the most active and right-wing Jewish terrorist groups active in Palestine

at the time. During the 30's and 40's the Irgun were responsible for bombing Arab markets, cinemas and buses, beating Arab workers and hanging British soldiers. They were also responsible for the bombing of the King David Hotel where several civilians were killed.

It is important to point out that while the Irgun activities have been justified as part of the fight against British imperialism, most of their actions were directed against the Arab population.

Begin and many members of the Irgun were also responsible for the bloody massacre of the village of Dir Yassin where over 250 civilians were killed during the

Begin has not given up terrorism since he became a respectable politician. If you count recent so-called reprisal raids against the Palestine Liberation Organisation which usually involve flattening a refugee camp full of civilians.

And of course during much of the time that the "peace" negotiations with Egypt have been going on Israel has been involved in the war in the South of Lebanon helping the Syrians and right wing Christians wipe out the Palestinians.

So exactly how does giving the Nobel Peace Prize to a terrorist contribute to the fight against terrorism, or towards world peace

ON NOVEMBER 5th a military government was installed in Iran in order to keep the Shah in power. This came as a response to the Shah's growing inability to control popular discontent with his regime. However, the future of this new government seems shaky; the National Front (the Liberal and Social democratic opposition) continue to call for the removal of the Shah and so do the people.

BACKGROUND

Demonstrations have been growing and developing over the last year. In the last two months there have

been strikes on a massive scale — oil workers, steelworkers, bankworkers, teachers, post office workers, airline and telecommunications workers. Opposition to the Shah has also come from the bazaar merchants, the peasants, the landless labourers, students and school children, not to mention some sectors of the bourgeoisie. Clearly then the military has been brought in due to the Shah's inability to introduce 'liberalisation' from on high.

CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY

The Shah has little remaining political support and so must rely on

his foreign allies and brute force. But even within the military there are contradictions owing to the fact that most of its new recruits are conscripts. They differ from the professional army men because they have their roots in the masses, the very people they are called on to fire upon in demonstrations. Dissident army men have published clandestine leaflets stating their opposition to the Shah, and television film shown the world over revealed scenes of soldiers breaking down and sinking into the embrace of the anti-shah crowds. One soldier on Bloody Friday (September 8th) shot his commanding officer

and committed suicide rather than fire into the crowd.

Because of this the regime has had to use outsiders to do its dirty work: soldiers from one region or minority group are set against demonstrators of another, whilst Israeli troops were brought in for the Bloody Friday massacre.

THE OPPOSITION

At the time of writing, workers' and religious opposition movement is deceptively calm. But there are indications that the religious leaders are waiting for Moharran, the holiest period for Shiite Moslems, which is just beginning before calling for a further uprising.

THE CONDITIONS OF REPRESSION

The conditions of repression which have reigned in Iran for the last 25 years have made it impossible for political organisations to operate legally inside the country, and difficult even to operate clandestinely. Because of this the upsurge of popular discontent has largely left behind the organised opposition in Iran, including the Left. In the interview that follows, two Iranian comrades talk about the situation in Iran. As the interview makes clear, the fall of the Shah will only be the beginning of a stormy period of change that has hit the country.

BRITISH TANKS CAN'T SAVE THE SHAH

A period of instability begins in Iran

Interview with two Iranian Students

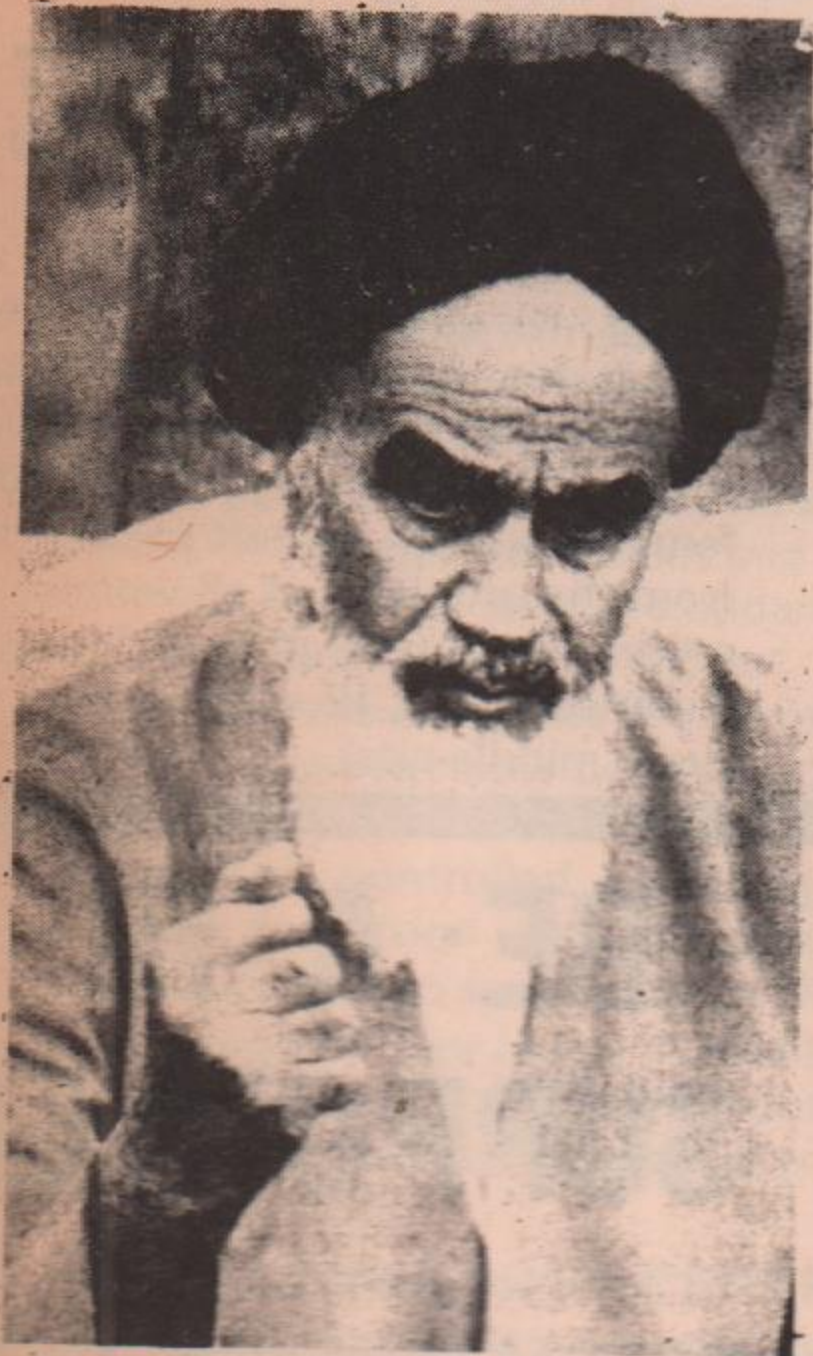
BF: Could you briefly explain the background to the present events?

The opposition movement developed primarily because of an increasingly severe economic crisis. This was part of capitalism's international economic crisis, but was also a crisis of Iran's dependent capitalist system. This system is tied hand and foot to imperialism, so that there are steadily worsening, massive food shortages due to the collapse of agriculture; factories are built merely to assemble parts that are produced elsewhere or vice-versa; so that land prices for the wealthy go down and food prices go up at a rapid rate.

Also the system is terribly corrupt. The Shah, his family, and his sycophants take huge cuts on the deals they make with businessmen. Even some of the bourgeoisie hate the Shah for this. And there has been terrible repression, widespread torture — which got worse with the crisis. The Shah's regime is responsible for all this. It is through this regime that Iran is tied to Imperialism. The people see this, in their own way.

BF: How important a role does religion play in the opposition to the Shah?

Religious forces are stronger than the Marxist organisations in the opposition. But religion is much more important as the focus for discontent than it is as the actual content of discontent.



Ayatollah Khomeini in France

The religious leader, Khomeini is very popular, but more because he has fought for fifteen years against the Shah and because he is against foreign domination. And the mosques are important more because they have provided a haven in the long years of repression. A comrade of ours was at the September 8th demonstration, when masses of people were brutally massacred. Leaflets for the demonstration, whether Marxist

religious, were distributed from the mosques.

But Islam has a history of being anti-authority, too. It started as a sect in the Christian 7th century in opposition to Arab domination in Iran, and has only been incorporated into the Iranian state for a few short periods since then. It has usually been in opposition. Today it is the form in which opposition to the Shah and to harsh economic conditions is expressed.

BF: To what extent are Marxists involved in the opposition movement?

The Left is weak in numbers. There are not many of them, but they play an important role.

BF: The Mojahedeen and the Fedai guerillas?

More the Mojahedeen (Marxists with an Islamic background). The Fedai work more in the rural areas, and seem to have been a little left behind by developments, even though they clearly have popular support in some areas.

Marxists and Khomeini supporters have many of the same demands: Remove the Shah, End to Foreign Domination, Release all political Prisoners, etc. But the Khomeini supporters also call for the return of Khomeini. As many of the political strikes have not made that demand, there may be Marxists involved. But certainly Marxists are only involved in some of the strikes.

BF: How has the strike movement developed?

It seems the strike wave began with a strike at the Bank Melli of Iran, and we have information that the National Front was involved (the National Front is an alliance of various social democratic and liberal tendencies that are opposed to the Shah more in rhetoric than in reality. It has little popular support except among the disillusioned bourgeoisie. The more important strikes of workers in the oil and steel industries came later, and generally it seems that the opposition movement was started by lower middle class forces, with the workers following later.

BF: Can you explain that?

In the years of repression the workers had no organisations, no trade unions. The lower middle classes, on the other hand, were able to organise — and thus develop some self-confidence — in the mosques. As a result, they were in a much better position when the opportunities came.

But many sectors of the working class are now developing organisations, and, as a consequence, an awareness of their class position and potential. If this is not repressed right at its beginning, it could be very important.

BF: We are not witnessing another 1917 then?

We don't think so. There is today no pre-revolutionary situation in Iran.

are not there, nor is the revolutionary consciousness, nor the revolutionary Party. The situation is only pre-revolutionary in the sense that a political revolution is now possible, but in that respect it's more like Portugal 1974 than Russia, 1917.

BF: What then are the tasks for Marxists in the present situation?

It is important that Marxists do not stay out of the opposition movement, despite its weaknesses. They should take part in it, dissolve into it, but keep their independence. That means taking part in demonstrations but putting forward more radical slogans, e.g. not Down with the repressive Regime, but Down with American Imperialism. And in strikes, it means politicising the demands made — though at the same time ensuring that the demands are acceptable to the people.

If the present regime goes, there will not be a socialist revolution, we think. Probably, there will be a regime with a mixture of religious and liberal, bourgeois tendencies, with more bourgeois freedoms. Marxists should welcome such a regime as a step forward, and should take advantage of the opportunities that it opens up. That means developing mass activity, involving themselves more in workers' struggles, and developing the new revolutionary Party — that is, generally hastening the inevitable downfall of the capitalist system.

In December a United Nations financed ship will be leaving Southampton for Mozambique with clothing and other goods for Zimbabwean refugees.

Because of the refusal of the racist Smith regime to accept genuine majority rule in Zimbabwe (the African name for Rhodesia), the people of Zimbabwe have no choice but to train themselves to regain their rights and their country through armed struggle. The guerilla war has now spread to most parts of the country and there are



Clothes For Zimbabwe

now more than 3½ million people living in semi-liberated areas inside Zimbabwe.

At the same time the repressive Smith regime has provoked the mass exodus of thousands of civilians into neighbouring countries of Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. The people arrive unheralded and their material needs

are not able to be coped with!

These refugees, men, women and children, forced to leave their homes urgently need clothes and blankets, medicines and tools to build their own self reliance; hand sewing machines, cloth and sewing thread to make and repair their clothes; books for the massive literacy programme being undertaken; and many more items of a very practical nature.

It's important that we urgently support this national appeal by raising it in trade unions, anti-racist groups and the NAL as well as other organisations. Firstly we should give support to the just struggle for a new Zimbabwe. Secondly, the situation in Central and Southern Africa is constantly being used to whip up racism in the UK (as the recent events in Zaire showed). On top of this we can expect a barrage of white Rhodesian racists to come to the UK over the next couple of years, many will join the National Front.

It will be quite some time before the next shipment of clothes, so please organise street and other collections now. In Nottingham, the Forest Anti-racist Group have already filled two...

"A Disappointing Vision"



Warner Bros Photo

TIME OFF

CLAUDIA WEILL'S 'GIRLFRIENDS'

"Do you think I'm selfish?" Sue asks her selfish boyfriend. "No, scared", he replies, without looking away from the football on the tele. I'd be scared if I relied on creeps like that for affection. Sue is the New York heroine in "Girlfriends". She is, she says, "just coming out of a heavy relationship" with her friend Annie. The film opens with Sue and Anne sharing a small flat. They plan to paint it. But Sue is in love. She wants her man to take care of her. "You don't need anyone to take care of you, I don't". Sue lies. Sue is happy, she has just sold photos, she is a photographer. Then Anne announces she is getting married, and Sue is upset. Living on her own, Sue is lonely. She is uncomfortable when she visits Anne. Anne is also feeling isolated, living alone with her husband. Soon she has a baby and finds she cannot even get on with her writing. She is jealous of Sue, and feels Sue abandoned her just because she got married. Sue replies

she felt betrayed when Anne moved out. They are both frustrated. Sue cannot decide how she wants to live. She doesn't want to need anyone, but to "take care of herself" and "live alone". Before long, however, she is almost living with her new boyfriend, Eric, and does not want to go visiting without him. Finally she tells Anne that she does not know whether to move in with Eric or not, because she is "frightened of being left". Despite her new boyfriend, her new exhibition, and having her own flat, Sue says she's just a "turtle" really, not the woman Annie see, someone who "like to take chances" and is "free".

Independent

Like a number of other films on at the moment, this is a film about women, directed by a woman. - The movie moguls have been quick to spot they are good box office. Men only come into the film from

the women's perception of them. In fact the men seem a bit of a parody, which makes a change. Eric, the "strange young person of the male gender" with his gigantic posters of Muhammed Ali and conversation limited to sport, comes across as an insensitive fool. (Why does Sue like him? Does she like him?) Anne's husband is a total bore. Sue, on the other hand, comes to life in the film as an independent woman concerned about her career, and full of energy and wit.

Confused

The film does present many of the problems of heterosexual women in a sexist world. The central problem for many of us is that of obtaining love from a man, in a way that does not smash our own attempts at autonomy, and our relations with other women, in a way that meets out needs. In the film it seems that it is Eric who is selfish and unresponsive to Sue's

needs, but it is Sue who feels selfish and is getting confused.

Lonely

The confusion is not surprising. It arises because we are brought up to see men as the solution to all our problems rather than, because of their typically greater self-contredness and inability to be caring, as the cause of many of them. It's often hard for us to see what the struggle with men is really about, and I'm not sure that this film clarifies it. Sue says, "I like me when I don't need you," to her boring boyfriend. She feels it's up to her to struggle to meet all her own needs herself, alone. Anne, on the other hand, never has the chance to be alone at all. The film shows the competitiveness between the women as they try to feel creative on their own. Anne feels that Sue is critical of her writing and puts her down for wanting to live with a man.

The ending is not a positive one. As the film closes it seems that either a woman lives alone, and lonely, or she lives with her man and child, still lonely. In the final scene the two women are playing together. Anne's husband returns, and they both sigh. So did I. It's a disappointing vision. Are there really no ways for us to live more inter-dependently with women, men and children? Hard as it is to find new ways of living relating, some of us still do try. We don't want to forget that.

Interesting

The film is definitely worth seeing. - It's well made and interesting. It does prove that women do exist, and do struggle in their lives. It shows too that the problems of feminist women are not so different from the problems of all women everywhere. Though as with most American films, its world is entirely middle-class.

'POLITROCK'

FROM ITS relentless pursuit of good times, Leeds Big Flame bring you the Resisters, a band described by a famous Socialist film-maker and musician an 'politrock' a combination of R & B and new wave. Their lyrics (when you can hear them) certainly demonstrate whose side they're on. Songs like the 'Dispossessed are Fighting Back', 'Nazi Man', 'Curb Crawler' and 'Secrets about the Special Branch put them firmly in the developing culture of socialist rock and roll.

Hear Resisters at the Leeds BF Social (see ad). Bring your own instruments too, since there will be plenty of time for home made entertainment.



CARF 7 OUT NOW! Campaign Against Racism and fascism Price 15p. - articles on racism and judiciary, East End, racist attacks etc.

ZIG No9 - New bulletin of Zimbabwe Information Group - articles on possibility of Western intervention, mercenary recruitment etc. Available from 1 Cambridge Terrace - 20p 20p.

SISTERWRITE - co-operative women's bookshop, 190 Upper St. London N1. Opening 30th Nov. Mon-Fri 11-7.00. Sat. 10.00 - 6.00. Large stock British and American feminist publications.

LIVERPOOL BIG FLAME SOCIAL Caribbean Centre, Amberley St. L'pool 8. Tickets 50p. 8.30 pm. Late bar. Dec. 8.

MANCHESTER BIG FLAME - Thursday Public Meetings. Dec. 7 Discussion of Perspectives Document, for BF members and sympathisers. 14 Piccadilly. 7.45 pm.

Dec 14. Public Meeting on Zimbabwe: Current situation and danger of intervention. Speakers from Patriotic Front and ZIG. 7.30 7.30 pm in Black Women's Co-op (Peoples Centre), St Mary's St. Moss Side.

WOMEN IN IRAN. Dec 2. Speaker from Iran + slides. St. Ann's Hall, Venn St. Clapham, London. 7 pm.

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN needs help - Urgent. NAC is in desperate need of funds. Without money the campaign will fold. Help continue the fight. Donations to NAC, 374 Grays Inn Rd. London WC1.

Sat. Dec 16 LEEDS BIG FLAME XMAS SOCIAL with the Resisters. The Gaiety, Roundhay Rd, Leeds 8. 8 till 1. 75p.

Sunday Dec 3. NUSS DAY CONFERENCE ON SEXISM. 11am Leeds Poly, Calverley St.

WRITE FOR US

Sorry to those of you who sent in articles and letters that we had no space for. Please keep to copy dates and make sure letters are no more than 400 words otherwise they will be cut.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE - 3rd January (features), 4th January (news). PAPER OUT 12th January.

BE A BF SUPPORTER

Making our newspaper pay for itself is not the most successful struggle we've ever been involved in. That's why we need a regular flow of income from our readers and supporters.

This month we got £10 from London and our monthly standing orders went up to £24. Think of us in the New Year.

POLICE PROTECT PORN

AS WOMEN RECLAIM THE SOHO NIGHT

150-200 WOMEN out to "Reclaim the Night" in Soho at Halloween were met with an astonishing display of violence by the police. 31st October was chosen as an international day of action against rape — and in fact this was the third "Reclaim the Night" march to be held in Soho in the last year. The previous two had been quite successful, lots of sex shops and cinemas were forced to close

their doors for the duration of the march, the area was plastered with feminist stickers, and there was a good response generally from women bystanders who were handed leaflets.

HARD PORN

This time it was a different story. Only ten minutes from the

beginning of the march the women came to the Ann Summers Sex Shop and the New Swedish Cinema Club, which had a big notice up outside saying "Hard Porn Films" Women surged forwards to put stickers on the windows, and two or three women went into the cinema. There was a scuffle inside as they attempted to remove some of the magazines from their racks, and one of the staff hit a woman

over the head with a stool and then threatened her with a hammer. The women, forced their way out, leaving one policeman in there, heroically defending the premises. By this time there were about four policemen ranged along the front of the cinema as well. They prevented women from sticking any more stickers up. At this, the chant went up "Police Protest Pornography", and one woman went and stood in front of the police and took off her T-shirt demanding the same kind of police protection. Instead she was very violently arrested, pushed hard against a window and held in an arm lock. Other women who went to her assistance were treated very roughly.

woman to be released didn't get out till nearly 5 am there were still women waiting outside to support her. Inside the station none of those arrested were allowed to make phone calls, and despite efforts made by the women waiting outside, no solicitor came to the station. So the charges (ranging from assault and actual bodily harm to obstruction and offensive language) were made, statements given and photographs and fingerprints taken with no solicitor present.

CURFEW

The Commissioner of Police — McNee — recently advised women to avoid going out at night. If there is to be a curfew he should remember that it's men who do the raping. And in this instance the women would have been a lot safer if the police had been under lock and key.

The women who have been meeting since the march have been discussing defence, publicity and fundraising. And also the whole issue of "Reclaim the Night" — what its aims are, how women can defend themselves, the link between pornography and violence against women.

TRUNCHEONS

At this point about 40 police reinforcements arrived, and immediately waded into the crowd of women, with drawn truncheons, and started to clear the street very violently. Women were hit on the head and body, a lot were injured, several later received hospital treatment, and at least one woman was knocked out by a blow from a truncheon to the back of her head. The Police seized a lot of women, apparently indiscriminately, but in all the confusion quite a lot of them got away again. And finally perhaps the police weren't quite so indiscriminate, since of the sixteen women who were finally charged, only two of them were visibly injured. It wouldn't have looked good in court the next day if they'd all arrived with obvious injuries.

NO SOLICITOR

Quite a number of women on the march went down to the station where those arrested were being held, and although the last

MASS PROTEST

What happened is going to be raised in the House of Commons by a woman MP, an article is due to appear in the Guardian, and some women are taking a petition around the flats in the Soho area. A mass women's protest is being planned for the weekend before the sixteen women appear in court again on the 17th January. Before then there has got to be a lot more publicity and money raised. If anyone has suggestions or donations please contact: A Womans Place, 42 Earlham St., London WC2



Photo: Diana Bailey

The battle of Brewer Street, Soho

PADDINGTON FIGHTING BACK

'What are they trying to do to ordinary people in this area?'

"They're closing the hospital, they're closing the school, now the 510, what are they trying to do to ordinary people in this area?"

Sometimes someone up there really does seem to have it in for you. Over the last few months Paddington has been reeling as one closure proposal has followed another, but now a fightback is developing which shows signs of linking the various struggles.

Paddington is an inner city area with a large West Indian population, plus Africans, Portuguese, Spanish, Irish and many others. It has a high proportion of one parent families. Many people live in crowded conditions and the new estates are sub-standard. Many flats on the new Mozart Estate have dampness problems and several are now boarded up. Now the authorities, both Labour and Tory controlled, expecting little opposition in an area where people have to spend a lot of time coping with day to day problems of survival, are putting the boot in. They have been surprised by the reaction.

510 COMMUNITY CENTRE

The 510 Centre is a community centre based in the heart of North Paddington, on the Harrow Road. It is used by many local groups including pensioners clubs, womens group, tenants associations, the Dominican Democratic Association, Claimants Union and the Paddington Campaign Against Racism. The local council has used a local election leaflet put out by the PCAR, as a reason for cutting off its grant to the Centre, claiming that its message "Don't vote Nazi"

was politically contentious and contravened the conditions imposed on the centre of not indulging in "party politics". Users of the centre responded, at an emergency meeting attended by about 40 user groups, by passing unanimously a resolution which read: "We believe that opposing racism in whatever form it appears is a legitimate, humanitarian and non-party political activity which all community organisations could expect the right to be involved in."

SCHOOL CLOSURES

The Inner London Education Authority has proposed a secondary school amalgamation of three schools which effectively means the closure of two. After a farcical "consultation" with parents, during which their proposals were opposed down the line, they are going ahead with the scheme anyway. The proposals are now before Shirley Williams but the opposition continues. At the public meeting parents and students spoke against the proposals.

A school student from Rutherford School said "If the schools amalgamate there will be aggravation. If classes were made smaller we'd get better teaching, there are lots of unemployed teachers. We'll fight against overlarge classes and we want parents to help us with the fight."

The local NUT has adopted a policy supporting small schools, with a reduced class size and are arguing for the better quality education this will provide, particularly as a small class size will mean more effective use of progressive methods.

HOSPITAL

A Hospital Defence Committee has been set up to fight the proposed clo-

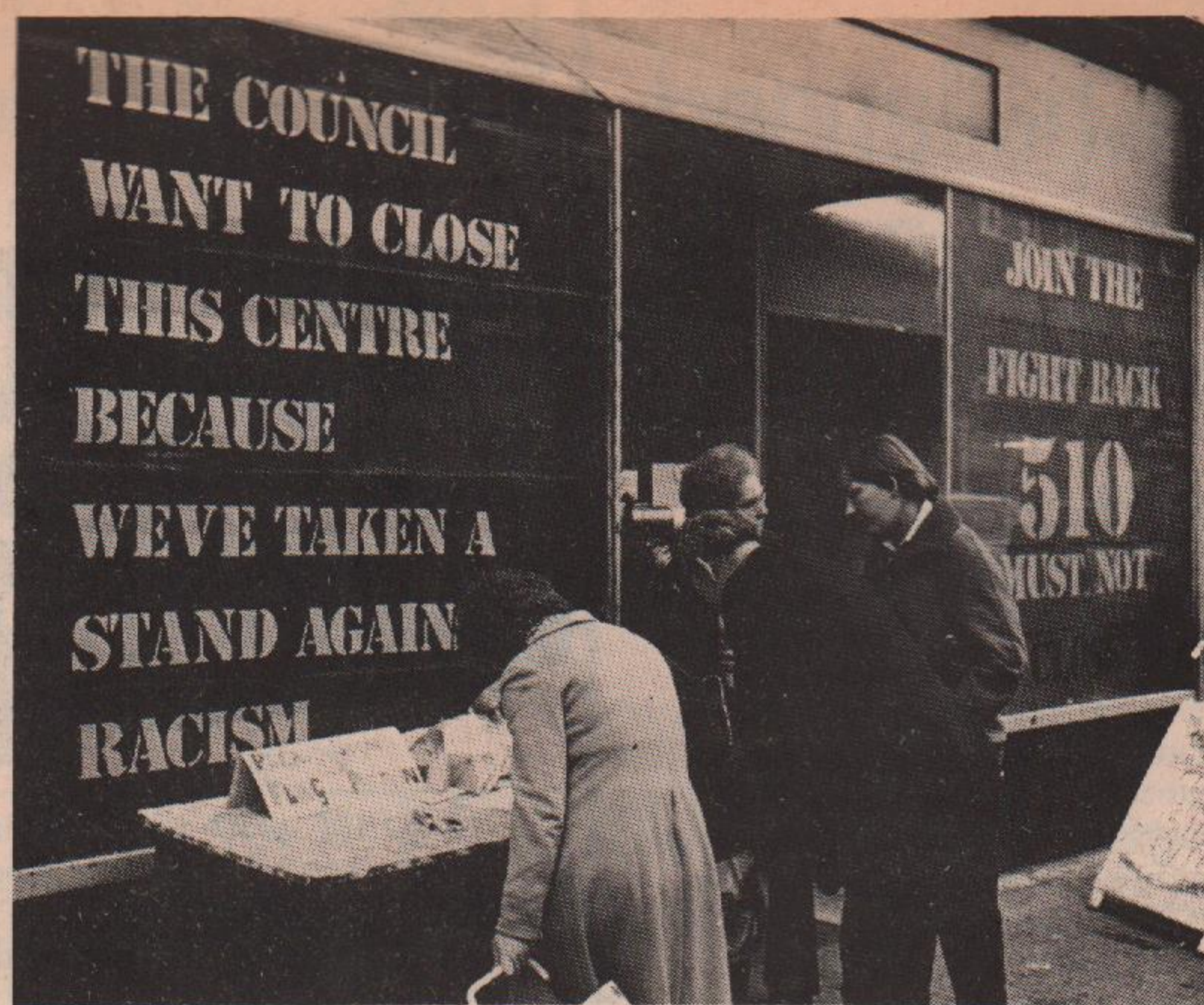


Photo: 510 Campaign

Signing the petition against the closure of the 510 Community Centre.

sure of St Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, Paddington. The proposal is to double the size of one branch of the hospital, in Praed Street (South Paddington) at the expense of Harrow Road and other local hospitals.

John Ricordson of Westminster Trades Council at a public meeting on the closure said "Harrow Road should be improved, not closed. It is being closed simply to find the money to run the new hospital, jobs are going to be lost, and people will have to travel further to get attention. There is no justification for this to happen."

As well as the Defence Committee a "Save Paddington's Hospitals" campaign has been set up and includes a cross section of Paddington people and organisations. At present one working group is working on an Alternative Plan. Paddington Womens Centre are hoping to put in a major contribution to the plan and hope to do some research on what local women want from health care. They see it as important also,

to support women in the campaign, to make sure they have a loud voice and hope to help bridge the gap, between the Defence Committee (mainly workers in the hospitals) and the "Save Paddington's Hospitals" Campaign (community based).

A useful way things could develop now is the formation of an umbrella "Regenerate Paddington" or "Paddington Fightback" campaign bringing together schools, hospital and housing etc. which would put forward alternative plans that reflect peoples' wants in the area and that could gain trade union and community support. Such plans already exist as far as schools are concerned and are being put together by the hospitals.

An all-London Campaign Against School Closures group has been formed and is to hold a public meeting on Thursday December 7th, at Friends House, Euston Road, London. at 7.30pm

NOTTINGHAM HOUSING

When the Music Stops

ON THE day Nottingham City Housing Department celebrated the sale of their 5,000th council house, ITV's "TV Eye" showed a programme exposing the hardship this policy has caused in London and in Nottingham.

The so-called achievement of the Tory-controlled (and Labour Government backed) council in Nottingham to sell more council houses than anybody else has meant that in the waiting list game of musical chairs there are now 5,000 less chairs in the game. And despite an estimated 800 houses standing empty at any one time council leader Jack Green claims there is no hardship and no significant waiting list in the city.

The TVEye reporters filmed one family with six children and a grandfather in a nineteenth century two-up, two-down terraced house in obvious need. They were taken to see a new house which a few years ago they would have been eligible for the tenancy of. Now it's on the market, along with the rest of the best council houses, and way beyond their means. On the other hand a TV Eye reporter posing as a local tenant with the money to buy a house and within one day was offered a council house by the City Council.

The publicity from the programme sent Cllr Green rushing to local radio threatening to sue TV Eye and announce that there are to be no more houses for rent. It seems that the music has stopped.

What will Nottingham tenants do now?

The council house sales scheme effects tenants in different situations as well as council employees. It's time for a united campaign to fight council house sales — and win.

STRIKE: FAR FROM CRUMBLING

ASSOCIATED Foods and Rank Hovis have made it clear that they want to smash the Bakers' Union - they are not prepared to be reasonable unlike many of the independent bakeries who have met the bakers' claim in full. With the decision to expel members who have gone back to work and to picket the flour mills, the bakers union have decided to escalate their struggle.

It is essential that Socialists all over the country give total support to their struggle - a defeat could have very serious consequences for their organisation. Support on the picket lines, donations and leaflets putting forward their case in shopping precincts are all important contributions that comrades have been making. This article from bakers on strike in Norwich explains the difficulties the strike is facing in an area with little history of militancy.

The most important thing to emerge from the Recalled Delegates Conference of the Bakers Union on Saturday 18th Nov was the clear fact that the bakers' strike is much stronger than the media coverage has suggested. Despite reports and predictions of the strike "crumbling" with massive returns to work, delegates' reports on the situations in their areas showed that this has mainly been confined to the southern regions of the union and that the numbers involved have been greatly exaggerated.

Included in the numbers of those reported to have returned to work are members at 15-20 smaller independent bakeries where the £10 pay claim has been met in full.

In Norwich, a combined meeting of workers from the city's two ABF bakeries was held on Monday 20th for a report-back from conference.

The meeting reaffirmed full support for the strike by a large majority, and went on to set up a

strike committee and discuss plans for publicity and for establishing a hardship fund.

Also being planned is a march down into the city, and a large leaflet distribution amongst shoppers in the centre. This will include strikers wives, husbands and families, and should be a good morale booster.

From the beginning there has been a general apprehension and lack of confidence in a situation where we have been receiving very little hard information on what the union executive has been doing, and where it has been proving quite difficult to make the strike "bite" locally - both bakeries have continued a limited bake with foremen and scab labour operating the plant. In this situation the shop stewards, have concentrated on the immediate tasks of organising pickets and co-ordinating with union officials, and made

no concerted attempt to involve the rank and file in decision-making.

As a result ideas which have been put forward on the picket-line - like the need for wider publicising of our case, and for a hardship fund - have not been taken up and acted upon, and the general need for boosting morale to maintain the strength of the strike has been ignored. Hopefully the strike committee, by spreading the burden of responsibility, can now sort some of these things, and stimulate more

active involvement by the rank and file.

The central task still facing us is how to effectively strangle production. This is particularly difficult at Betabake, the larger and more modern of the two bakeries, where about half the workforce have returned to work, a further quarter have left for other jobs and where there are five entrances to cover. The main reason for the weakness at Betabake is that they operate a five day x 12 day hour shift week

and the workforce is consequently largely casual. At Sunblest, virtually continuous picketing round the clock has been maintained, though the burden of picketing is still falling on a hard core of active people. We are succeeding in keeping oil supplies out, though 24 tons of flour was taken through the picket this week by a non-union driver. Nevertheless the success of the strike nationally now really depends on how effectively the union can stop the flour at source - at the flour mills.

LIVERPOOL: BBC's Racism Challenged

RECENTLY, 500 people marched through the centre of Liverpool in one of the most significant anti-racist protests the city has witnessed for a number of years. The issue which triggered off the protest was an article in the *Listener* (2nd November) by a BBC Nationwide reporter, Martin Young, written in connection with the TV series 'on the Mersey Beat', about the workings of the Merseyside Police.

The article claimed that "police men are not racist, despite what many black groups believe", and went on to use overtly racist language to describe the population of Liverpool 8 as "half castes" who are the "product of liaisons between black seamen and white prostitutes", who grow up without "any kind of recognised home life... they gradually realise they are nothing and are well outside recognised society."

Relations between the police and the black community of Liverpool 8, particularly the youth, have never been good. Black people are acutely aware of the racist attitudes and practices of the police in the area.

What was significant about the 500-strong march on November 26 was that for the first time in a number of years of anti-racist demonstration in Liverpool was called by black people and organised by black people. For once, the white left, trade unionists and others

who came to support the march took a back seat as black people, who comprised the majority of the demonstration, led the protest through the busy city centre to deliver a petition at the BBC, demanding a full public apology, and then moved on to the police headquarters where the petition was delivered to the police chief constable demanding an investigation into which policeman supplied Martin Young with the racist material used in his article.

This and other recent issues affecting black people in Liverpool - for example, the case of Baba Femi, an elderly man who was hounded to death by the police, and the closure of the two inner city multi-racial schools - demonstrates the need for black people to organise independently of the white left.

The fact that the march was called at four days notice and received an overwhelming response from black people is an indication of the potential within the black community for self-organisation.



Kids from Birmingham homes on the 17 Nov. demo.

BIRMINGHAM: COUNCIL PLANS MORE CUTS

CLOSURES which will hit over 200 children and youths have been agreed to by the Tory-controlled Birmingham Council. These drastic moves towards limiting spending have had severe consequences:

- * 19 establishments for children including 11 hostels for working youths living in care are due to be closed;
- * the closure of 3 residential nurseries which look after many physically and mentally handicapped children under the age of 5;
- * the closure of 5 children's homes;
- * restricting full-time nursery places for working women.

The hostels will be sold or handed back to the Housing Department. The homeless children will go into bedsitters on their own, have to fend for themselves, or be fostered (although many have failed to find foster homes). One youth, Veronica said "Most of the people at Wilton Grange have been in Council care all their lives - and they just couldn't cope at the moment if they had to look after themselves, they need to learn first how to be independent"

Attendance at the day - nurseries is to be cut to half-days only, except in "exceptional cases".

Workers in NUPE, NALGO and BASW (British Association of Social Workers) have set up the

Birmingham Children's Defence Campaign to fight these closures. Workers were refused admission to the Social Services Committee meeting on 4 October, when City Councillors first met to agree upon the closures. 250 social workers, mainly women, had gathered to lobby that meeting; one social worker commented: "Just for a penny off the rates they will be throwing our children onto the scrap-heap". A signed agreement to consult with the Union over questions of policy has clearly been disregarded.

An internal memorandum of the Social Services Committee states: "We are putting a cash limit on the total net budget and will not permit a budget beyond that figure". The committee are confident that these cuts will be implemented; they are just as adamant to stop the expansion of Social Services in the city - yet Birmingham has one of the lowest levels of social service spending compared with other cities.

The committee's memorandum states that fewer children are now coming into care, and so the facilities are currently underused. What the Committee does not explain, however, is their block on new admissions which restrict access

Many youths in the hostels fail to "look after themselves" and "over 10% of them are getting into trouble" says Councillor Dickinson. Furthermore, she said, "The majority of them get into trouble anyway so why waste money on them". No consideration is given to the youths being pushed into the community unprepared. Our City Councillors are attempting to justify these cuts at the expense of children in care.

All this has produced a major confrontation between the unions involved (NUPE, NALGO and BASW) and the Council. Over 800 workers withdrew their labour on 7 November and held a day of action to demonstrate against the Council's proposals.

The fightback, organised by the Children's Defence Campaign continues, and five local campaign groups have been set up in different areas of Birmingham. The Social Services Committee have been asked to provide in detail their proposals, backed up by statistics; the Defence Campaign want to know exactly where the Council plan to transfer the money.

The kids themselves, from the homes and hostels all over Birmingham, came out on the 17 November to challenge the proposed cuts and closures. An extract from the leaflet produced by the residents of working children's hostels in Birmingham tell their story: "We didn't ask to come into care and we've done nothing wrong... we've been moved around like a piece of luggage in the past. They say foster parents will automatically come, but would you foster kids, black or white, at 16?" (thanks to Birmingham Broadside for photo and information for article)

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

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