

TO THE PEOPLE OF MASHAD, IRAN, who ran their city for 3 weeks until the tanks arrived . 700 died.



'After we took control of the city, we had to create a militia to protect the hospital. We are not prepared to tolerate an attack on the hospital - we will not let the army back into our town.'

FOR THREE weeks Mashad, a town 600 miles East of Teheran was under the control of its people. On December 14th, the army attacked the town's hospital to punish the doctors who were giving sick notes to soldiers who did not want to fight against the people.

TORTURER

The intervention of the army in the hospital was murderous - there were four deaths including two children. Very quickly word of the attack spread. Very soon

an enormous crowd gathered outside the hospital - a major of the political police (SAVAK) was clubbed to death by the crowd. It was well known that he had been the torturer of thousands of students

All over the city photos were put up of Moassem Mobararchani, a 20 year old soldier who was shot by an officer after he refused to fire on a demonstration.

CANCELLED

At the huge demonstration outside the hospital, the crowd decided to take over the running of the hospital and to control street traffic. That evening the military governor attempted to go on television to remind the population that the city was under martial law. Television technicians were on

strike so his broadcast was cancelled. By nightfall, the army and secret police left Mashad and the city was under the control of its people.

HEROIC

This was the situation that lasted for three weeks until January 3rd when the army regained control. The official figure for deaths is 700 but many more people died in the fighting. 'Time' magazine has made Teng, the Chinese vice-president their *man* of year 1978. For Big Flame the reasons for our choice are very different: our *people* of the year are the heroic masses of Mashad who for three weeks in December controlled their own destiny, and gave us a glimpse of Iran's future.

editorial

THE GOVERNMENT pay policy has collapsed: settlements well above the 5% have been won at Fords, British Oxygen, Michelin, Vauxhall etc. And Parliament has defeated the government over the use of sanctions which was to be the weapon used against companies that broke the 5% limit.

The latest group of workers to come out are the lorry drivers: their claim is for £65 basic for a 35 hour week. At present they are on a £53 basic for a 40 hour week. Overtime worked in the industry averages 13 hours per driver. At present the road haulage industry is showing much more interest in increasing productivity than in agreeing to a shorter working week for drivers, which would make things safer for the drivers themselves and everyone else affected by road transport.

Faced with a situation where there is no longer any wages policy in the private sector, the government has only one option left. That is to limit the wage rises of those workers whose wages it has control over — public sector workers, 28% of the total labour force.

Faced with a massive public sector wage claim, the government has said that it will make sure that cash limits on spending by public institutions are stuck to. Wage increases above 5% would have to be paid for through the loss of thousands of jobs in the public sector.

This will mean increasing unemployment and an even worse service from the hospitals, the post-office, Direct Works etc. Already in some parts of the country, GPs are not bothering to put patients on hospital waiting lists since they know it's not worth it — only emergency cases are being accepted. The Government adherence to cash limits will make this situation worse.

The public sector workers Day of Action on January 22nd will be an important focal point for their campaign for a £60 minimum wage and a £35 hour week. Whether the campaign is successful in winning a decent living wage for low-paid workers in the public service will depend on the support workers in the private sector give to their brothers and sisters in the public sector.

To help strengthen this support, Big Flame has written to other organisations of the revolutionary left suggesting the setting up of support committees for the public sector campaign on a city by city basis.

The bakers strike was isolated. It is essential that this does not happen to the public sector workers.

**£60 minimum/35 hour week
SUPPORT THE JAN 22nd
DAY OF ACTION**

ONE GROUP of workers largely unaffected by the big January freeze up that has seen the New Year in are the strikers at Garner's Steak Houses. Their determination to win their twelve-month old strike for trade union recognition (with the TGWU) showed through over the Christmas and New Year periods when picketing went on at all the major restaurants throughout Central London amid snow, gale force winds and freezing temperatures.

Since the last day of mass picketing on December 8th, when hundreds of the strike's supporters effectively cut off all trade for the day at each of the 15 or so branches, owner Cyril Margolis has become increasingly desperate in his attempts to discredit the strike and throw the pickets off his back. In December, Margolis spoke out publicly in the Daily Express and Daily Telegraph, for the first time since the beginning of the strike in a belated attempt to win public sympathy for his "embattled cause". Of course, he wasn't against unions at all — it was just that the majority of workers in his establishment didn't want one and he wasn't prepared to go against them. This absurd claim was backed up by the results of a very spurious survey, which included the information that over 40 out of 120 of the workers were still prepared to say publicly that they did feel the need for a union. A couple of weeks after these results were announced, 15 workers were sacked in circumstances that make it very hard to believe anything other than that, having identified the union people inside the company, Margolis has proceeded to weed them out and replace them with people he can be more confident of controlling. It has yet to be

confirmed that this was the reason for their dismissal, but if it indeed turns out to be the case, the action may well backfire on Margolis if the 15 join those already on strike and on the picket lines.

STRIKERS ASSAULTED

Further evidence of management's desperation has come in the form of harassment of and violence against the pickets. This was amply and cruelly demonstrated on Christmas Day when Chaudhury, one of the strikers who has picketed throughout the last year was followed across the road from the 399 Oxford Street branch and severely beaten up in a public toilet by one of Cyril Margolis's sons, Barry. Nor was this the first time that one of Margolis's family had been involved in such an incident. In December, his wife was convicted of an assault on another of the strikers, Khan, which left him with a 25% loss of sight in one eye. For this she was fined a mere £25 compared to the £100 plus fines that the strikers and their supporters have consistently been receiving for lesser charges such as obstruction. The last six months particularly has witnessed a disturbing escalation of violence by scabs and management against picketers. They have been

GARNERS STRIKE ONE YEAR OLD



London: March in Support of Garners Workers last year. (photo: Union Print Collective)

railman into the sidings" and, recently, stickers attacking the Labour Party that have turned up on London Underground stations.

So far, much of the action against this fascist politics in the unions has been like a pair of blunt scissors, certainly not sharp enough to break the connection between National Front propaganda and the sense of frustration and bitterness that has built up amongst many workers in an industry that has suffered more cuts than the average boxers face.

BRICK LANE

The issues that have been tackled by R.A.N. reflect the wider struggles of anti-fascist movement — in London contingents have been to Brick Lane and supported pickets to stop NF use of Ealing Town Hall. Inside the industry it has been geared to building good organisation, unity amongst the mass of workers and backing local initiatives — for instance Acton and Northfields ASLEF branch threat to refuse to take trains into passenger service that have racist and fascist stickers or graffiti on them.

Students Fighting Racism

THE SO-called 'Great Debate' on educational 'standards' may for many of us be an abstract thing, another Labour government farce. Yet within the educational sector its effects are beginning to be felt. It has given the right wing within education more confidence to implement their ideas on how youth should be treated and 'educated'. This can be seen most clearly within schools and colleges of further education — where the recent so-called 'tightening up' of O and A level standards has eroded many creative attitudes towards education.

Yet there are signs that a resistance to this is growing, an example being the struggles of the students union at Kilburn Poly, an old F.E. college in London with a large proportion of black and overseas students.

HYSTERICAL

the right showed their true colours when the students union organised a Week against Racism together with the ANL staff members. At a meeting of the Academic Board the main pillar of the college administration, the right expressed a total hostility to the week against Racism. One lecturer going as far as asking what the item on the Home Office and Immigration had to do with racism. As another lecturer put it afterwards in a formal statement "I repeat my original contention that the three items on Ireland, Zionism and Iran, were highly unsuitable to be included in the Week against

Racism programme, because they were essentially political matters.."

The Students Union subsequently distributed a bulletin informing the student body what the right had attempted to do. The reaction to this bulletin was frankly hysterical. Threats of legal action were made, and the right has just succeeded in getting the academic board to ask for an "apology and retraction". Naturally the students union is not going to do any such thing, as this is a deliberate attempt to sabotage the autonomy of the Students Union, and any semblance of college democracy.

The struggle at Kilburn may seem small, but it is highly significant because a victory for the students union over the college authorities, and a subsequent capitulation of the right would mean a great step for students resisting Callaghan's master plan of racism, cuts and elitism within education.

attacked with everything from chairs to carving-knives, yet the police have consistently turned a blind eye and refused to take any action against the offenders. In marked contrast, however, the number of strikers and supporters arrested has risen to a total of just under 50.

SURE TO CRACK

Despite reports that Margolis has been getting financial support from NAFF (national Association for Freedom) and other right warty, anti-union employers and groups, there is little doubt that the picketing has severely squeezed his profits. The Strike Committee feel that with concerted pressure and the threat of action continuing into the spring and summer and the valuable tourist trade, Margolis is sure to crack sooner or later. And, as Mahbub Mahmood of the Strike Committee says, "The only way to show Margolis that we're still in business is to mobilise people in large numbers right under his nose outside the restaurants"

It is for this reason that the Strike Committee are calling for another day of mass-picketing on Saturday 27th January. This date marks the end of an entire year of picketing — a year in which the strikers and their supporters have stood outside the restaurants come hail, come shine. If you can spare any time at all, either in the morning the evening or both to come up to London and join the picket lines on that day I can guarantee that it will be time well spent and that your support will be warmly appreciated.

Written by a member of the Strike Committee Support Group

DE-RAILING THE NAZIS

THE ANTI-Nazi League has placed great stress on the need to organise at places of work. In December it organised a conference for trade unionists. In this article, a railway worker writes about the growth of 'Rail Against the Nazis'.

Railway workers in many parts of the country have been organising themselves during the past year as part of the anti-fascist, anti-racist movement. The Rail Against the Nazis (R.A.N.) group was set up last May to co-ordinate this work both on the British Rail network and London Transport — a big task considering the distances involved, the large number of unions and the history of the industry in this country since the war. Support has come from all sections — traincrews, station staff, engineering and maintenance grades, to counter the NF's strategy of taking control in union

branches or pushing respectable right-wing policies on nationalisation, closed-shop agreements and redundancies/cuts. Branches in the London area (main line and London Transport) have affiliated to R.A.N. and keep a sharp eye on known NF members. It has been possible to build up a much clearer picture of what's happening

FRUSTRATION

locally — for instance sorting out the 'National Railmen's Association' that has appeared in Watford with slogans like: "Don't push the white

BOMB IN BF OFFICE

POLICE DESCRIBED a device thrown into the Manchester Big Flame office as "one of the most sophisticated hoaxes they had ever seen." A large area of the city centre of Manchester had to be evacuated on the morning of January 6th, after members of Big Flame discovered the device, which resembled three sticks of gelignite and was taped together with a detonator and wires.

SWASTIKA

For the first time in Manchester for two years, the Army bomb disposal squad from Liverpool was called in. A swastika had been daubed on the office door, suggesting the possibility of National Front involvement.

The incident follows a series of threats made by the NF to members of Manchester Big Flame. In the most serious of these, the Tameside organiser of the NF told one of our members "We'll get the UDA (Ulster Defence Association) on to you." Tension has been building up as a result of the campaign to stop a National

Front team playing in the Tameside Sunday football league.

DEFEAT

Increasing success of anti-fascist organisations and defeat at the ballot box is forcing the NF to more desperate tactics. Particularly ominous is the growing link-up with the UDA, an extreme right-wing loyalist organisation who are past masters of intimidatory tactics.

The lesson is clear — the "democratic" face of the NF is disappearing fast and physical attacks on those who oppose them are on the increase.

BE CAREFUL!

Self Defence - No Offence

'In this country there is one law for the victims of racist attacks and another for those who commit them'

BLACK PEOPLE in the East End of London constantly face the threat of racist violence. The situation is by no means new. The last major wave of attacks against mainly Asians was in the late spring and summer of 1976. Since then the attacks have continued although receiving little publicity until they reached a new peak with several murders last summer.

1978

20th April. 10 year old Kenneth Singh was found battered to death in Plaistow.

4th May. Altab Ali was stabbed to death by a group of white youths in Whitechapel.

11th June. A gang of 150 white youths rampaged down Brick Lane, Spitalfields attacking people and shops. When the police belatedly arrived twenty were arrested but only three were charged.

25th June. Ishaque Ali was stabbed to death by a group of white youths in Lower Clapton, Hackney.

5th July. Eight Bengalis were taken to hospital after being assaulted by a large gang of white youths outside the brewery where they worked in Bow.

13th August. Five Asians ended up in hospital after being attacked by 25 white youths in Brick Lane. One Asian, but no whites, was arrested. The police statement described the incident as an unprovoked attack by the Asians on a defenceless white man.

10th December. In Stoke Newington, Hackney, a group of white youths shouted National Front slogans at three young West Indians. Three of them crossed the road and stabbed Michael Ferrier to death.

It is not only in racist attacks that we see how black people are

harassed. In case after case the police prove unwilling to provide protection for black people, they are unwilling to take people's statements, are not concerned with arresting attackers and when black people do attempt to defend themselves it is often they and not their attackers who are arrested.

Sentences too show the racism of judges - seven years for assault for one of the Virk brothers and seven years for the murderer of Altab Ali.

VIRK BROTHERS

The case of the four Virk brothers has been the focus of an important campaign among the Asians of the East End. On 23rd April 1977 (the day of the National Front march in Wood Green) three of the brothers were repairing a car outside their home in Newham. Along the road came five white youths who had been drinking heavily from noon to 3.30, first in a pub and then in a club. Several of them had previous convictions for offences such as threatening behaviour. After various insults one of the white youths attacked one of the brothers. The fourth brother came out of the house to help and some of the white neighbours joined in on the other side. In the following fight two of the white youths were seriously injured. The police arrived and arrested only the Virk brothers. On 19th July last year they were sentenced to seven, three and two years and three months. Judge Argyle refused to allow discussion of the racial motivation of the attack which he dismissed as "irrelevant". The unusual severity of the sentences shows how keen the state is to prevent black people taking their defence into their own hands.

THE AHMAD CASE

Mr Ahmad is a Fordworker. He lives in Manor Park, Newham, an area where black families are fairly



isolated. He is married with a small child. Mr Ahmad has often been abused. Bricks have been thrown through his windows. The police said they could do nothing unless Mr Ahmad could identify the attacks.

On October 22nd, another window was broken. Mr Ahmad caught one of the youths and called the police. The youth's parents arrived and shouted racist abuse at Mr Ahmad who locked his front door. The father then broke open another window, smashed open the door and threatened Mrs Ahmad with a knife. When the police arrived they took a statement from the youth's parents accusing Mr Ahmad. Two days later, West Ham Police charged Mr Ahmad with assault.

On 28th October, Mr Ahmad's family were celebrating their child's first birthday. At 6 o'clock the door bell rang. Mr Ahmad opened the door, was hit in the eye, dragged outside and beaten on the head with an iron bar. The attackers then fled in a van. Friends of Mr Ahmad took the van number and also recognised one of the attackers. The hospital has said that Mr Ahmad is lucky to be alive.

The Ahmad family are frightened to return home. The police say they cannot protect them. So as well as suffering physical and mental injury, the Ahmads are effectively homeless.

In spite of clear evidence it took the police over three weeks to arrest

the racist.

As Mrs Ahmad said, "In this country there is one law for the victims of racist attacks and another for those who commit them."

As we go to press we do not know the outcome of Mr Ahmad's case which comes up on January 8th - he is being tried for assaulting the youth who attacked his home.

The present wave of racist assaults and murders in the East End of London shows clearly the need for black people to organise together to defend their own communities.

Two of the most important groups that have formed as a response to these events are the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee and the Newham Defence Committee.

HACKNEY AND TOWER HAMLETS DEFENCE COMMITTEE

The Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee was formed in July last year after the murder of Ishaque Ali. It involves the various Bengali organisations and the two anti-racist groups in the area (Hackney Committee against Racism, Tower Hamlets Movement against Racism and Fascism). Its biggest success so far was the Black Solidarity Day on 17th July when the one day strike it called was supported by an estimated 8,000

Asians in the East End.

It has also organised the regular presence of anti-racists in Brick Lane every Sunday morning and is attempting to organise the patrolling of the area by members of the Bengali community.

NEWHAM DEFENCE COMMITTEE

The Newham Defence Committee was set up in November after a number of black and anti-racist organisations got together to discuss the situation. Newham is particularly bad for racist attacks. The committee recognises that the police and the judiciary are racist as well as the fascists and organised a picket of the West Ham Police station to draw attention to this.

They have been active in the defence of both the Virk brothers and Mr Ahmad and will be picketing the magistrates court on January 8th when the latter is tried there.

For too long the left has accepted the popular image of the Asian community as unable to organise in its own defence. That this was untrue in the past was shown by the formation of an Action Committee for the Defence of Asians in East London during the previous wave of attacks in 1976. These new defence committees demonstrate that the confidence of the Asian community continues to grow.

Leeds supporters against the Nazis 'No to Nazis at Elland Rd!'

LEEDS HAS a long and nasty history of fascist violence, dating from Mosley's Blackshirts, and the last three years have seen plenty of unprovoked attacks on Asians, West Indians and socialists, plus a few running battles between the left and the fascists in the city centre. Some people argue that the physical confrontation between the left and the right has undermined the fascists. They say that the left caused the collapse of Leeds' home grown, overtly nazi 'British National Party'.

In reality, the BNP has maintained its old violent and nazi ways inside the NF. The NF has recently smashed 24 windows in Asian shops, burned a swastika on the front door of an Asian family, and beaten up old and young alike in Beeston (south Leeds) an area where few black people live. They have also turned their attention to leafletting and selling outside Elland Road for Leeds United's home games. The first time the ANL responded, they were intimidated by the NF heavies. Next time we outnumbered them 5 to one, and they hardly showed their faces. But the next time our numbers were down to about 60, and theirs up to about 40, and all

the strengths and weaknesses of this type of confrontation were apparent.

The NF were all in their early twenties, male and clearly meant business. It is too easy to characterise them as 'thugs'. They were hard, and ready to fight, but a lot of them showed they knew a thing or two in the verbal battles that went on. They are better thought of as the beginnings of the fascist cadre that the NF is trying to create - the stormtroopers on whom a fascist movement relies if it is going to be built.

Physical confrontation with them will not be enough to stop this movement being built. For the hardest of them it just steals their resolve. Many of them have a string of convictions and are proud of it. Nor is the spectacle of 'our gang' (the ANL) against 'their gang' a very encouraging argument for socialism. It is particularly difficult for people who are not physically self-confident to take part in such manoeuvres.

But these disadvantages do not outweigh the reasons for making this kind of activity a priority in anti-fascist work. It is striking in Leeds what a positive effect we have had on the fans, particu-

larly the working class youth. More than 50 letters have been received at the ANL office applauding what we have done. A lot of people comment positively as we leaflet and sell badges. But the most noticeable effect was during the main confrontation. While the NF were in front of us, shouting and shoving, people scurried by like we had the plague. When the NF had been moved away, they stopped, talked and bought badges. The implication was clear. People are frightened by the NF, and they want to keep out of the aggravation, but they want to identify, even in the small way of wearing a badge, with the fight against fascism. The NF plays upon those whose fear may lead to admiration and identification with the phoney strength they offer. As one of the NF leered at me "Have you heard the crowd inside when they chant National Front, National Front? It's magic". Each time we oppose them at Elland Road we are undermining the hold of that magic, cutting away at the NF's periphery, and drawing a few more towards socialism.

F.R. (Leeds)

LEEDS MAGIC

A FEW WEEKS AGO WHEN WE PLAYED WEST BROM, SOME IDIOTS ON THE TERRACES AT ELLAND RD WERE TRYING TO GET EVERYONE SHOUTING "NATIONAL FRONT" AND "CUNNINGHAM WONT TIRE REDS AND BECAUSE THEY ARE BLACK, OK, WE LEFT THAT MATCH, BUT SLAPPING OFF FAGS + CUNNINGHAM WONT DO ANYTHING.

There's been a lot of talk recently about United's problems with Elland Rd, we've got a manager where we belong - at the top of the League. But we can do it without a bunch of Nazis stirring it up on the terraces and strutting it up outside the ground.

DIRTY WORK

The National Front racket Elland Rd is a happy hunting ground for new recruits. DON'T BE COORDED! Do their dirty work for them. The Nazis are more interested in looking for appro than supporting Leeds.

Already they've used a few misbegotten blacks to try and attack Leeds are playing away, when round Yorkshire looking for trouble. Last Saturday they all went to Harrogate. Jewish comedians, wind-up artists, and shouting racist stallholders.

LEEDS SUPPORTERS AGAINST NAZIS

WE DON'T WANT NAZIS AT ELLAND RD!

THE BADGE, PICTURED ABOVE, IN LEEDS COLOURS IS AVAILABLE FROM: C/O LEEDS TRADES CLUB, BAILEY RD, LEEDS 7.

Send your name, address and 25p for each badge to the above address.

Remember - IF YOU'VE HALF A MIND TO JOIN THE FRONT, DON'T WORRY, THAT'S ALL YOU NEED!

Wrong to Print 'Pacifist' Interview

Dear Comrades,

I was shocked to find the interview with Hans Klein in the November issue of BF. Maybe it would not have been all that surprising had this been some other traditional 'left' paper; but I was rather disappointed to find that the pages of Big Flame, a paper with a long held stand for support of liberation movements and militant action — is allowed to become a tribune for a sick demoralised pacifist like Klein who is now openly preaching most reactionary positions. The question here is not whether one agrees with the principle and theory of urban guerrilla warfare but that from what position one criticizes this theory and what alternatives one puts forward. Whether one criticises this theory from a proletarian position arguing perhaps its ability to lead to a socialist revolution, or on the other hand one is attacking this struggle from a bourgeois position and agitating fear and pacifism.

It is very unlikely that someone who has decided to leave a guerrilla movement would come out and openly denounce his previous activities and reveal a lot of information unless he has already been assured of 'good protection'. One can either criticise it from a proletarian point of view and question its ability to lead to a socialist revolution or one can criticise it from a bourgeois point of view and this leads to fear and pacifism.

Klein's departure from the German guerrilla movement and his subsequent open denunciation of this struggle and his declared willingness 'to reveal' his information 'to anyone' he sees fit, took place under very suspicious circumstances and it is something that all revolutionaries should take very cautiously. Yours fraternally,
A Friend.

(Ed: The decision to publish the interview with Klein was not taken lightly. We realised interviews like it can serve the interests of the ruling class even if they are authentic. On the other hand, the interview did contain important insights as to what happens to guerrilla fighters ('you forget a lot of things; from your humanity to your political ideals') and also a valuable critique of the political perspectives of the Red Army Fraction. It is very easy to abuse Klein for being a sick pacifist (he isn't) and a reactionary, but what do you think he should have done? Continue to be an active member of the RAF? It is legitimate to say that Klein should not have given the interview to 'Liberation'. But given that he did, we felt it important to make it available to our readers — you can be sure the ruling class had their own translation done.)

North-West Anti-Apartheid T.U. Tour

Dear Big Flame,

At a Trade Union Anti-Apartheid conference "Connections — Britain and Southern Africa" in Manchester in November, it was decided to organise a tour of workplaces and towns in the North-West, with speakers from the Southern African liberation movements and SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions). The tour will consist of public meetings, meetings with shop stewards, and factory meetings where possible. We are aiming for a three week tour in late February or early March. We would like cooperation from people who can assist in organising meetings; we also need donations!

The aims of the tour are:

1. To provide information about the current situation in South Africa, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Namibia. Most people are limited to the press and T.V. coverage with its mixture of 'Cubans', 'Terrorists', 'peace proposals' etc.
2. To create networks for getting information into and out of firms which deal with Southern Africa e.g. information on how their products are used, whether any subsidiaries operate in Southern Africa — if so what are working conditions.
3. To build opposition to possible military intervention in Zimbabwe — in May we saw a co-ordinated attempt to legitimate the French intervention in Zaire as "humanitarian".
4. To raise money for the liberation

movements (this includes money for material/medical aid). The tour will also aim to sell subscriptions to **Workers Unity** (SACTU'S paper) as a means of providing a continuing source of alternative information to the media, and to involve people in the Anti-Apartheid movement.

In a few firms, such as Leyland and ICL, there has been mass action against South African trade and in favour of trade union recognition for black workers. The tour would aim to encourage other groups of workers to take action as well.

Yours fraternally,
Frances Kelly, Convenor.
NW Trade Union-Anti-Apartheid Liason Committee,

contact address: 59 Tintern Ave.,
Manchester M20 8ND

Liverpool IMG

Dear comrade editors,

The letter from Liverpool Big Flame in your December issue raises some very serious allegations against members of the International Marxist Group which we cannot allow to go unchallenged.

1. We think both your meetings were sectarian because you used the Ford Workers Group (FWG) primarily to build yourselves rather than the strike and the FWG. We are not interested whether you planned the meetings three months or three years ago.
2. We reserve the right to raise your withdrawal from the project for a united revolutionary organisation at any public meeting you call. That doesn't mean to say we raise it every time we speak, though it is a fundamental question which relates to many issues.
3. We think it is irresponsible of you to loosely claim that we disrupted your meetings. Any organisation that holds public meetings has to answer criticisms of its politics. Otherwise your meetings become little more than rallies, where the audience listens to the platform, applauds, and goes home. If you are confident of your policies you shouldn't need to feel afraid of debate and criticism — that is the lifeblood of the labour movement which every bureaucrat and Stalinist wishes to destroy. If you start to call criticism 'disruption', your days as a democratic organisation are numbered. We trust you will not follow that path and look forward to collaboration between ourselves and other organisations in the future.

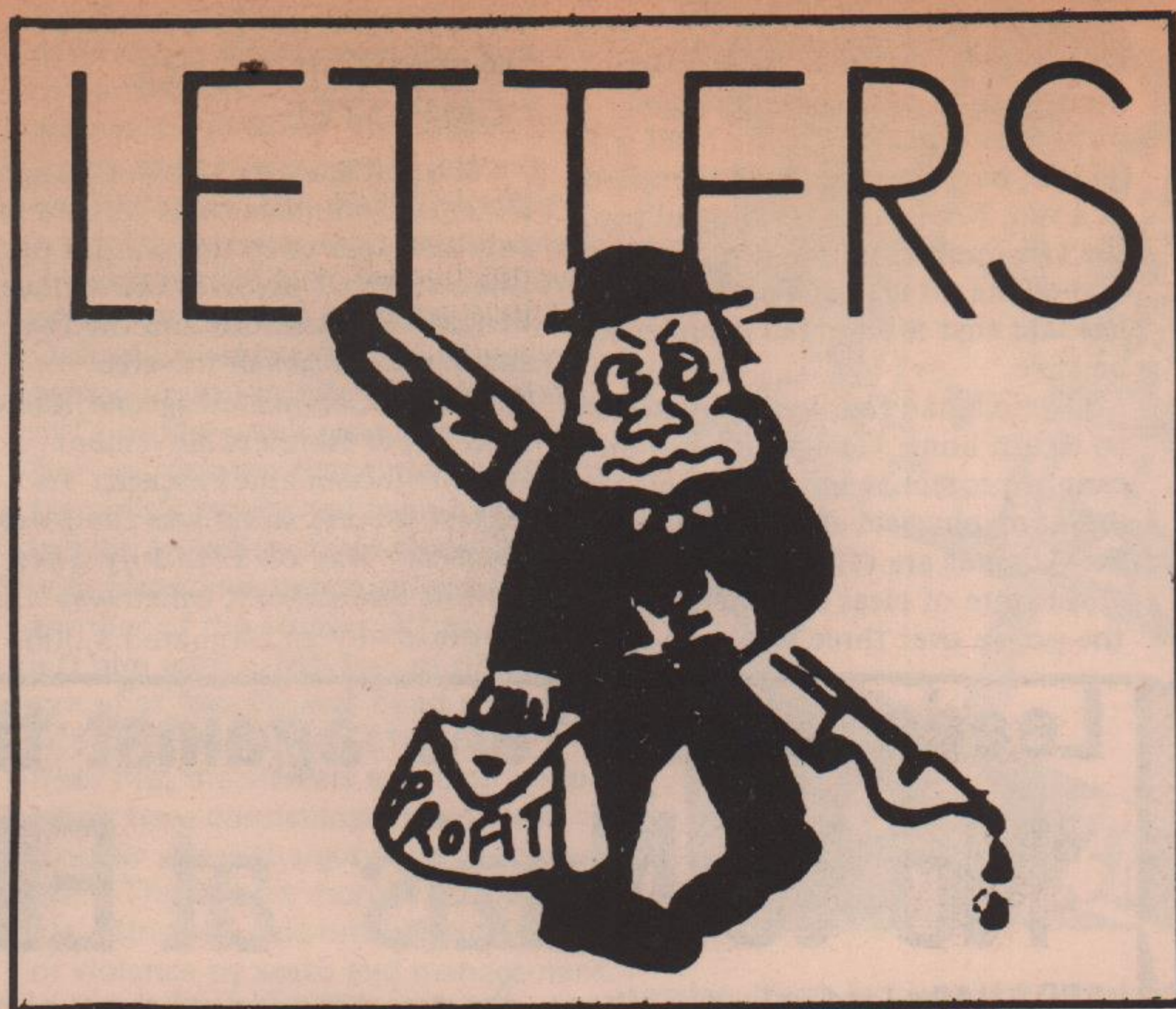
Revolutionary greetings,
Liverpool IMG Branch Committee.

(Ed. We do not intend to follow the path towards Stalinist degeneration!

However this does not mean that we won't organise meetings on subjects of our choosing or make collective decisions to withdraw from projects for a united revolutionary organisation.

We regret that we were mistaken in publishing the letter from the Liverpool District Committee. The matter would have been better dealt with through an exchange of letters between Liverpool BF and IMG.)

N.B. the letter from the IMG has been cut, for reasons of space.



Labour & Elections '...call for a Labour vote'

Dear Big Flame,

I would like to reply to the two recent letters criticising BF's recent decision to call for a vote for Labour at the next election. Ben Johnson's letter was inaccurate and politically confused. Some examples. He says that there was "no mention of Socialist Unity". In fact the first point of the motion passed and printed in the paper was that it was to be "the priority", to build Socialist Unity". Johnson denies that there is any difference between BF's characterisation of the LP as a 'bourgeois current in the working class movement,' and the (Trotskyist), 'mass party of the working class'. The bourgeois nature of the LP is defined by its policies and leadership, but to argue that it is not 'a force built out of the working class movement' is to close your eyes to reality. I am my union delegate on the local Trades Council. I am also one of a tiny handful who is not a member or supporter of the LP. No struggle takes place in St Helens without some connection - good or bad - to the LP. I do not believe this is unique in emphasising the tremendous institutional links between the LP, unions and working class. Finally he says that 'more and more militants no longer give a damn who wins the election'. No evidence is given of this and I do not believe it to be accurate of militants, even outside the thousands active at the base of the LP. In fact evidence to the contrary is given in the same issue of the paper, where Ford's militants interviewed indicated they would vote Labour, although correctly stressing they would continue with their struggle even at the expense of bringing Labour down.

The letter says that there is 'no mass party of the working class'. But there is a party the mass of the class votes for. So, while they are different things, it is not feasible to argue (as Peter Anderson

does in the original pro-abstention article) that it is 'only out of habit'. No - it is a class vote, faced with the inevitable choice of a governmental alternative under conditions of normal bourgeois democracy. Of course, Labour and Tory are 'twin evils'. But the difference between those twins is not, so much at the level of policies (though this exists) but in their relationship to the social forces they rest on.

It is this reality that the tactics of the revolutionary left start from. This is not recognised by the abstentionist position because they have a wrong view of tactics as 'all about manoeuvring in the face of the enemy', (Armfield letter). Tactics however have always been defined by revolutionary marxists as how to win the majority of the working class to socialism,

Armfield says, 'Isn't it better to have no position at all and just concentrate on building the alternatives'. But that alternative is reduced to abstract calls for the 'self-activity of the working class'. as if that self-activity hasn't or will never have any connection to the state or government. The task of winning the working class to socialist revolution of necessity includes the revolutionary left taking a position on the question of a governmental alternative. To refuse to do so not only fails to recognise the nature of the class vote for Labour, but re-emphasises that the abstentionist position has nothing to say about a strategy for achieving working class power. No historical example exists in industrialised countries, of there being the possibility of a 'seizure of power' by the working class, without it being preceded by the formation of some kind of left government. These are not the only reasons for calling for a Labour vote, but I think they are the most important ones.

Paul Thompson

'... Labour must be fought'

Dear Big Flame,

I am against a vote for the Labour Party at any time. While this originally came from the feeling that the LP in no way fought for my interests and in fact seemed to fight for the interests of capital, the debate in Big Flame has forced me to try and understand the role of the LP and its relationship to the interests of the working class. Here is my analysis, although it needs help from others to develop it.

The LP says it represents the interests of the working class. This it tries to do but only within the capitalist solution of bourgeois democracy. We as revolutionaries know that the interests of capital and the working class are irreconcilable, and thus an end to our exploitation will not be achieved within bourgeois democracy (and thus parliamentary democracy.) We are revolutionaries.

Our end can only be achieved through revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Because the LP tries to represent the working class only within capitalism it ends up trying to preserve capitalism and thus the exploitation of the working class.

Thus objectively the LP does not represent the interests of the working class. It is then as much an enemy of ours as the other parliamentary parties. All these parties must at all times be fought and a clear difference made between their politics in the interests of capital and ours for socialism.

Support for LP is not then a tactical question: it is never possible from a revolutionary analysis.

Recently I had to move, to leave the UK and out of necessity I'm forced to work in a factory, on the line of a car factory. 6am to 2.15pm one week, 2.15 to 10.30 the other, with only 25 minutes of break. Forced to do Saturday overtime. Forced to work hard all day long, a car every 2½ minutes, 180 a day and never any loss of production. Everybody on the line except testing electricians, feels the solidarity that arises from the oppression, whatever the nationality or politics.

I don't need to find a solidarity on the level of abstract ideas or politics. I fight for revolutionary ends because that is in my self interest and since I cannot succeed alone I argue these politics with the other workers who clearly have the same self interest. But I don't subjectively throw in my lot with them. Take an example, if I believe an unlimited strike is necessary while others believe an overtime ban is enough then I fight all the way and vote for what I believe is the correct course. If defeated of course I do the overtime ban and don't strike alone. Because objectively it has no use and the other way is the only way forward * This is done not because subjectively I need to solidarise. This is entirely different to the subjective decision to follow the course of the masses in the vote for the Labour Labour Party. In the previous example I of course continue to fight for the unlimited strike which is still objectively necessary.

B.D. (Nottingham BF)
*This letter has been cut.

Nottingham STEP Workers Win

Dear Big Flame,

I thought you might like to know how the Labour Government's sop to the unemployed is being challenged here.

On a rainy thursday in December at 3.00pm, the workers renovating Waterloo Crescent in Nottingham walked off the job. Their demands were for protective clothing and somewhere to shelter from the rain. But this was only the surface of several weeks discontent with

the conditions on the job. The demands were immediately met. **What was unusual about this?** They were working for the government set-up, S.T.E.P., which takes nineteen year olds and older who have been unemployed for at least six months, supposedly providing jobs for the unemployed. A big question mark hangs over all these schemes: what kind of training do they provide? Do they sabotage Trade Union rates for

the job? Are they just a cosmetic job on the unemployment figures? Do they guarantee jobs after the contract is over? If the government is banking on a 'humble and grateful' workforce, who will take whatever shit is thrown at them in these schemes, these Nottingham STEP employees certainly should give them a shock.

G. Ward, Nottingham.

'GOING TO the doctor' is usually associated with self-pity, frustration, need for individual attention, a tedious wait in the waiting-room, and a few unsatisfactory minutes with the expert who if you're lucky will give you a few words of comfort and some pills.

A doctor and a community worker at the Lister Health Clinic, a NHS clinic on a recently built estate in Peckham, in South London, are trying to change this pattern of Dr:patient relationships and how health issues are dealt with (or not dealt with) in a local community.

The Peckham Health Project has grown out of a Health Group, which in turn developed from Mother and Toddler group in a local estate. After an initial series of talks at this group, the doctor and the community worker, together with other local health workers and residents, have developed groups and projects related to health in the local community.

Here is how they described the project themselves, in an article in the local paper *The Peckham Pulse*.

"There was a time when health care was simple — you went to the doctor(s)he told you what to do, nobody questioned anything — the doctor's prescription, the nature of the medicine — not even what it meant to be ill.

Now health care is different. The NHS is an enormous industry, the largest employer in the country, there are large numbers of different kinds of health workers and they involve us more and more in their business.

The health of this country has been enormously improved since the NHS began but the whole thing has become increasingly out of people's control. Because we are all bound up with this process questions about standards and the workings of each bit of the NHS are being asked all the time.

The Peckham Health Project has grown from this process. Over the next few years we shall all be asking more and more questions about the Health Services in our area. Does it help keep people healthy? Does it encourage understanding and democratic participation? Why do the children of this district have a higher illness and death rate than England and Wales as a whole? Why does your doctor treat you the way he or she does?

At the same time the project holds public meetings on health issues such as the menopause, cystitis and smoking. Future topics include children's illnesses and heart disease. These meetings have been followed by groups that meet regularly to find out more about the particular issue they are interested in.

After a time we hope that a substantial number of people will be in a position to understand their own health difficulties and begin to change them, even if this may mean challenging some established values and raising some important issues. At the same time, we hope that people will be more able to keep themselves and their families healthier, by such measures as eating better and using the health services more effectively."

And here is what happened at the first few talks given to the Mother and Toddler club:

"At the first few sessions the air was explosive! We were discussing what might seem to be perfectly mundane subjects like children's illnesses, and when to call a doctor, but to most of us it was the first chance we'd had to tell a doctor what it really feels like to go along to the surgery or the hospital and to come out

THE PECKHAM HEALTH PROJECT

A community breaking down old doctor-patient relationship



Learning about the body.

OPEN DAY...



The movement and exercise workshop

feeling that nobody is really interested in what you think or feel.

Many of the members of the group were mothers dealing with all sorts of day to day crises in their children's lives, so why do we have so little confidence in making the simplest decisions about their health care? How come most of us don't even consider our health until we get ill?

We were bursting with these and many other questions — one thing was certain: six weeks wasn't long enough to find out the answers! That was two years ago and some of those original people have been meeting ever since. We discussed a wide range of health topics and have come to the conclusion that, although information is important, it's no good unless you can develop the confidence to use it.

CONFIDENCE

This growth in confidence has meant a change in the relationships and strengths within the group, between the women, and between the women and the doctor, for instance. It meant also a growth in confidence of the group as a whole, the making of a video-tape on Doctor-patient relationships playing an important part in this.

The most recent of the projects activities was the Open Day at the clinic, which took place on a Saturday in early December.

The Community worker, Maggie Cochrane describes the day:

"About 50 people turned up to the event and most of them stayed the whole afternoon. The programme

started at 1.00pm with a good lunch. The choice of food had been carefully selected to provide cheap, nourishing dishes that were easy to prepare.

It was interesting to see the looks of suspicion on many people's faces turn to surprise, then enjoyment when they tried some of the dishes. Recipes were available and taken.

An introduction to the ideas and work of the health project followed and the general aims of the project were explained.

Chris, from the cystitis/thrush group, then described how a self help group had developed from a public meeting, where Angela Kilmartin (authoress of a book on Cystitis) had given a talk.

They met regularly at the health centre, finding out through reading and talking about experiences, how to prevent new attacks appearing. They have written a very readable pamphlet which they hope will help other sufferers.

Many people from Smokestop described how effective

it was meeting with other people who really meant to stop smoking. Their group meets every Thursday evening at the health centre. Finally the health group described some of the things they'd covered in the past two and a half years. Discussions ranged from children's illnesses to violence at home.

BODY GAMES

Thirty people of mixed ages took part in exercises and relaxation workshops. Others learnt how to take blood pressures, looked

into each other's ears and eyes, and listened to hearts. The body game that the health group had invented produced quite a few laughs and shamed faces.

WHAT THE PUBLIC SAID...

"I felt that the day was a great success — people were not as reluctant to take part as I had feared. The relaxation and Keep Fit Exercises were particularly successful, with people of all ages shaking their limbs side by side. No age barrier here, the food was great, everybody seemed to enjoy their lunch and for many of them, who had never sampled beans etc., this was certainly a new experience."

"I felt that it was just the right number of people there, enough to make you feel something was happening, not enough to make you feel uneasy. It was really nice to see several elderly people joining in the event. And the food was smashing, my son, aged 10, commented 'the bread is really delicious, you should get the recipe and make that sort of bread at home' "

Quotes in this article are from 'Peckham Pulse' No. 3 Aug '78 and No. 7 Dec '78

(A longer interview with the community worker and doctor will be appearing in 'Revolutionary Socialism' the Big Flame Journal.

Further information from Maggie Cochrane, Pitt Street Settlement, East Surrey Grove Peckham, LONDON S.E. 15

.....AT THE CLINIC

China: A Great

THE CHINESE people have once again thrust themselves on to the political scene. Through demonstrations, mass meetings and wall posters, they have made public their opinions on what has been happening in China since the death of Mao.

Up to a certain point, the pressure of the masses was used by the right wing leadership of Teng and Hua to consolidate their control over the Communist Party and the government and to eliminate from positions of power any remaining supporters of the Shanghai Group (whom they refer to as the Gang of Four). Not surprisingly, when the wall-posters began to question Mao and to demand a China in which the masses really ruled themselves, the forces of law and order intervened and the masses were persuaded to cool it.

A MOVE TO THE RIGHT WITH SOME MASS SUPPORT

What has been happening in China in the last 18 months is not easy to grasp. The people who have been in power since the arrest of the Shanghai Group, have introduced revisionist (right-wing) politics in all sectors and these policies have been introduced with considerable mass support. The main changes are in the economy and education.

ECONOMIC POLICY

It was always an essential part of Mao's teachings that you

must 'put politics in command.' That meant that how you organised production, what technology you used and by what system wages were calculated were not politically neutral matters. On the contrary, the socialist organisation of production would determine what the needs of the economy were.

The Hua/Teng regime has stood all this on its head and now Radio Peking says: 'Politics must serve economics.' What this means is that in the work-places managers must be given back full power to manage, to bring back piece-rates

and raise production targets. As Radio Peking puts it 'Rules and Regulations ought never to be eliminated. Moreover with the development of production and technology, rules and regulations must become stricter, and people must follow them precisely.' This is a direct answer to the ideas of the Shanghai Group who wrote before their fall in 1976: 'How far are we to go in this severity? Are we to introduce the capitalist mode of production, which even keeps check on the

time the workers spend when they go to the toilet?'

The Teng/Hua regime aims to make China a modern industrial nation by the year 2000, by the importation of the capitalist organisation of production. So far there is popular support for their policies, especially amongst skilled workers, since they have raised wages (mainly through the introduction of bonus payments) and raised the standard of living of the Chinese people by paying more attention to consumer

Why the Chinese events matter

What is happening in China has very important consequences:

Firstly, it directly affects what is happening in South East Asia. The Chinese signing of a peace and trade treaty with Japan has quite rightly been seen by the Russians as an attempt by the Chinese to get Japan on their side before an escalation of the Russia-China aggravation. To counter-balance this China-Japan unity, the Russians have re-inforced their aid to Vietnam and are supporting the Vietnamese in their current offensive in Cambodia, who is an ally of China. The inability of two 'socialist' powers to find any way of getting on with one another has led to a situation of dangerous instability in the area.

Secondly, US recognition of the 'People's Republic' makes international relations a whole new ball game, as the Americans say. The

Chinese will attempt to use their new relationship with the US to isolate the Russians internationally. Given the violent anti-Soviet feeling amongst many Western politicians (e.g. Thatcher), it is quite likely that the Russians, who feel hemmed in on all sides, will respond with a rapid rise in defence spending and a beefing up of their military strike power. The prospects for *detente* on a world scale are very poor. It goes without saying that it is the working classes throughout the world that will suffer most from this new round of arms expenditure.

Thirdly, China's opening of its borders to U.S. technology and investment once again brings up the question of whether there can be a non-capitalist route for industrialisation. Revolutionary socialists should be aware of the enormous difficulties facing a country that wants to industrialise without

using capitalist technology and without becoming wrapped up in capitalist trade relations. China could have made a success of 'the Great Leap Forward' and the 'Cultural Revolution' if these economic reforms had found the political structures necessary to carry them out. But these political structures would have involved giving to the Chinese people more power to control their own lives than the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (including Mao) was prepared to allow. A Socialist Revolution in a developed capitalist country like Britain will not face the economic problems that China faced but unless it quickly develops structures of direct democracy, it will be no more successful than other revolutions of this century in which a party and not the people has seized power....and kept it.



Public discussion about an issue of the "Peoples' Daily." For the last month, wall posters and in circulation in China as popular discussion about changes in policy grows.

IRAN



Women against the S

MANNI is an Iranian socialist Feminist who has recently returned from Iran. She is active in a socialist feminist group in South London. She talked to *Big Flame* about the role of women and Islam in the Iranian struggle, the aims of that struggle and how they relate to feminism.

Many feminists and socialists in this country see the black shroud, or chador, worn by many Iranian women, as the main symbol of oppression of Iranian women. And when they see masses of women on demonstrations wearing the chador, and masses of people calling for an Islamic republic, they fear that the present uprisings could lead to an increase in women's oppression following the uprisings. What do you say to this?

I think it is very unfortunate that so much emphasis has been put on the chador, both by feminists and by Iranian women in this country. It indicates a failure to see the struggle in its economic, social and historical context. This can only lead to wrong conclusions. Firstly, many women wear the chador for protection. In the cities, not to wear the chador can mean constant harassment, constantly being molested, being called a whore etc.

More importantly, women are now coming out on to the street for the first time in 25 years. They are not coming out primarily to fight the oppression of women in particular — so it is not the form of struggle against an oppressive regime, a regime that represses them far more than religion or the chador. And the very act of coming out on the streets is an act that, for women, breaks Islamic law! This shows that women will discard laws when

has now been dissolved because it was a flop.

And what use is a ban on the chador when people are still oppressed in all other areas of life? It's no use removing a symbol if the basis for that symbol is not removed. The basis must be removed first.

Is the basis being attacked at all, at present?

Some women are beginning to struggle, mainly teachers, students and single mothers. Moreover, they generally do this wearing the chador, as otherwise they would be alienated from the mass of women in the cities. In this respect, then, the chador is a uniform of unity rather than a symbol of oppression.

Women in the oil industry are asking for equal pay, equal work, equal rights. You know, women oilworkers are not given houses as part of their contract, like men. The men receive family allowances, not the women. And of course the women get worse pay and worse jobs.

Under the Shah, many more women have entered the workforce. In the propaganda this is said to be part of the Shah's emancipation. Really it came about because the Shah saw an opportunity for greater exploitation. And certainly these 'emancipated' women get some of the shittiest jobs, the most unsociable hours, and the lowest pay.

Working women are beginning to struggle against their conditions of work more than ever before. In doing so, they may call for an Islamic republic, but what they are really calling for is an end to their present oppressive conditions. Islam appears to offer this alternative, and



Wearing the Chador — "a uniform of unity rather than a symbol of oppression."

they no longer serve them.

Can you explain something about the nature of the present oppressive regime? In particular, could you explain the Shah's so-called emancipation of women?

Many women have been emancipated in a very specific sense — that is, in the sense in which some intellectuals in this country talk of emancipation. Women have been given the vote, for example, and the Shah would be happy to ban the chador, like his father did in the 1930's, if he could.

But so what? What use is the vote when Parliament is a joke, no more no less? The only Party you could vote for was the Shah's, and that

Leap Backwards?

needs, especially in the provision of housing and food. Of course they are aware of the potential working class hostility to their policies but their strategy is to weaken resistance by dividing the class and winning to their side skilled workers and foremen, those sections of the working class who have most to gain from the new forms of industrial organisation.

EDUCATION

One of the fundamental socialist advances of the Cultural Revolution



newspapers have soared

was in educational policy. At that time, the government responded to mass pressure by instituting positive discrimination in favour of the children of workers and peasants. Streaming was abolished, some places at universities were reserved for workers who were selected by their work-mates and university students were obliged to spend some time in the countryside in an attempt to break down the divisions between rural and city dwellers.

Since 1976, all these policies have been rolled back: students are encouraged to specialise; streaming is back and no-one is sent to the countryside. An elitist education system is being erected which favours the children of intellectuals and party officials.

FOREIGN POLICY

The degeneration of Chinese foreign policy occurred long before the death of Mao. It started as soon as foreign policy began to reflect the needs of the Chinese State and not the needs of world revolution. What we have seen under Hua/Teng is a systematisation of this policy into the counter-revolutionary 'theory of the three worlds' (two superpower imperialists v. the rest of the world) and sharpening of the hatred of the U.S.S.R. which underlies the policy. The Chinese withdrawal of all technicians and aid from Albania is an ironic reminder of the similar Soviet withdrawal in the late 1950's which the Chinese have rightly made a big issue of.

WHY SO MUCH SUPPORT FOR 'THE GREAT LEAP BACKWARDS'?

Why when the crunch came was there so little popular support for the Shanghai Group in their

confrontation with Hua. It is quite true that Hua and his supporters were much more powerful in the party, the government and the army but it is also true that although there was much popular support for the progressive policies of the Shanghai group, the people experienced the events that occurred after the death of Mao as a power struggle within the party leadership that they had no say in.

It is also important to remember that in the years before the death of Mao when the Shanghai group were influential, they used their power to force their policies on the people. They did not reason and educate.

Works of art the Shanghai Group did not like were banned, a student who did not want to go to the country was forcibly taken there. Their approach to 'Revolutionise by coercion' was not calculated to win popular support. And in those instances when the masses did set up structures which would enable them to take control of their own lives, as for instance during the short-lived Shanghai Commune in 1967, the leadership of the party (including Mao and the Shanghai Group) quickly united to dismantle the Commune. They converted it into the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee which, not surprisingly, was much less antagonistic to the established organs of power. The Shanghai Group failed to support the revolutionary initiatives of the Shanghai working-class, who later returned the compliment by cold-shouldering the Groups revolutionary declarations.

This is why even in Shanghai there was so little support for the Shang-

Who makes history? Mao or the people?

Can it be true that the group of Liu Shao Chi (the ex-president), Teng and Tao Chu (who like the other two was demoted during the Cultural Revolution) formed a bourgeois head quarters? Did Liu really want to lead China into darkness or was it just that he had ideas different from those of president Mao? Why do people have to be demoted if they have different opinions? Why can't we let different opinions co-exist? Liu and Teng had ideas that were different from Mao's — that's how they became traitors.

The great proletarian cultural revolution used the lives of the Chinese people for an experiment of proletarian dictatorship. I am not opposed to president Hua but Mao said one day: "With you in charge, I am at ease." This is to treat the country as if it were a personal gift that one person can give to another. Mao is big and Hua is lucid but this way of doing things is unconstitutional. Everyone can use their intelligence. Why not us? Did Mao think about this? We want to be the real masters of our country. If Mao were still alive, would he welcome my questions? A marxist would.

A Wall Poster



Clashes on the USSR — China border. Hatred of the USSR, whom the Chinese call 'social imperialists' remains a constant of Chinese foreign policy.

hai Group (the Gang of Four) in their struggle with Hua and his supporters. Many of the peasants and workers were probably quite pleased that the struggle between Hua and the Shanghai group was over so quickly that they did not have time to choose sides. And in any case, Hua's promises of stability and economic prosperity were welcome after the turmoil of the

Cultural Revolution. One clear lesson from the defeat of the Shanghai Group is that it is not enough for revolutionary leaders to have good ideas — they must also be prepared to put them into practice in a way that encourages the self-organisation of the people and be prepared for this self-organisation to go against the vested interests of all leaders, including their own.

Shah

no doubt they will support it until they are shown otherwise.

That's a very different picture from that of women struggling against their freedom.

Women were supposedly given nurseries under the Shah. Some joke! And then the housing conditions! The regime used bulldozers against the shanty towns around Tehran, where people built their own 'houses' out of corrugated iron, mud and wood. And why did the regime do that? Because the sight of the shanty towns were revealing the scandalous housing situation and was bad for prestige and the tourist trade! And also because women took the initiative to challenge the governments land policy. There was no alternative accommodation provided.

How did the people respond?

The people, mainly women, in fact, attacked the Government municipal buildings. They smashed the windows and they held up placards telling the story. And whole neighbourhoods came out to join them, because it was in the centre of Tehran and the news spread quickly. This was late last year, before the explosion of demonstrations.

What is the class nature of the women involved in the uprisings?

The women are slum dwellers, wives of political prisoners, teachers, students, factory workers, telecommunications workers and some wives of bazaaris (the traders of the bazaar). There are not many bourgeois women.

The most religious people are the clergy and the people who finance them, the bazaaris. These are the people who most have a class interest in Islam, because Islam, you see,

is essentially a religion for the tradesman. Mohammed himself was a trader and Islam reinforces the trader's role in society. Islamic fanatics are against the Shah's regime more than anything because it has helped bring in the big monopoly shopowners and the Western consumer goods that threaten the position of the bazaaris. Islam's 'anti-imperialist' stance has the same basis. It is a petty bourgeois opposition to a foreign bourgeoisie.

The struggle of women, on the other hand, though it takes a religious form, has a different content?

Yes, the chador is not itself the iron fist of oppression that many in the West think. It is discarded in the fields by peasant women and it is discarded in the factories. It is true that it symbolises oppression, but it is not the only thing. The laws, the job structure and the family structure also maintain and reinforce women's oppression, and more so than the chador. The struggle in Iran, whatever its form, is about all these, and if the chador gets in the way of the struggle it will be discarded.

There is a danger of judging the role of Iranian women in the recent mass uprising according to our own feminist yardstick, veil, vote, abortion. This is not to say that these issues are not important, but they are not being raised by women in the front line of the struggle today.

The women in Iran today want the Shah out, imperialism out and the British tanks which kill their children out. These are their general national demands, demands you can raise in your organisations in Britain

POWER TO THE PEOPLE,
POWER TO THE SISTERS!

Iranian Consulate occupiers bound over

A GROUP of ten Iranian students was bound over to keep the peace for twelve months in a surprise show of leniency by the Magistrate's Court in Manchester, on January 4th. After occupying the Iranian consulate in December, the group had been charged with £900 of criminal damage at their first court appearance. But after police failed to take a statement from the Consulate, which also made no claim for compensation, the charge dropped from £900 to £100 and then disappeared altogether. It could have something to do with the Shah losing his grip.

On Wednesday December 13th the ten occupied the Iranian consulate in Booth St. When the staff left the room, they spray painted the walls and smashed portraits of the Shah, replacing them with portraits of Iranians killed by the regime. They found and burned a booklet about secret SAVAK codes. They also found photographs, some pornographic, some of Iranian students in Britain. These may have been taken by the Special Branch and passed to the consulate; Iranian students are quite wary about letting other Iranians photograph them.

When the police came to the consulate, they smashed a window

and then dragged the students over the broken glass. At the station the police refused, for over four hours, to allow a solicitor entry; they also interviewed some of the students, contrary to the Judges Rules. The police objected to bail, and also wanted to bring conspiracy charges, though this was not allowed at the court on the Thursday.

That evening, the Special Branch raided ten houses in Manchester, Leeds, and Bradford, taking diaries, posters, leaflets, and books in Persian. They had a warrant to search the flats for firearms, though the students were unarmed at the occupation. Unless the Special Branch reads Pers-

ian, we may guess that they will hand the books to the Iranian consulate, to discover the ideology behind the occupation. Cooperation between the Special Branch and SAVAK, the Iranian Secret Police, is to be expected. SAVAK was set up with help from both the CIA and the FBI (which is used against dissidents inside the USA). SAVAK has close links with the "intelligence services" in Israel and the rest of the Middle East, and Tehran is the regional HQ for the CIA. Documents taken from the Iranian embassy in Geneva in 1975 showed that SAVAK acts under diplomatic cover in Europe to tap phones, install microphones, and photograph dissidents.

Given what is happening in Iran, Special Branch and other government agencies are trying to play down their links with their Iranian counterparts. The occupation of the consulate in Manchester has brought these links out into the open — the next step is to break them.



Picket outside the Manchester Court, on 4th January

H-BLOCK HORRORS

by Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, Derry City

IT WAS a bitterly cold morning just a few days prior to Christmas when relatives and friends gathered at the Creggan shops to await transportation to the infamous H-blocks of Long Kesh. Clutching small brown-paper wrapped parcels the parents of the remand prisoners boarded the bus; while those with no parcels at all clearly reflected the large numbers 'on the blanket' who are not entitled to either newspapers, books, foodstuffs, radio, cigs, confectionery or anything at all.

The journey of almost 100 miles was rather uneventful, as the rain battered on the windows of the aged and draughty vehicle. Now and again a mother, sister or brother would sing a song of republican defiance, but the majority of the time was spent talking about the plight of their immediate relatives, each consoling the other and lending support to those who broke down in tears during such discussions. I took mental notes of the conversations, and decided to write this article for Big Flame.

"Fourteen blanketmen were hosed down by the screws last Thursday. When they resisted this brutality the warders threw boiling water over five of them. They all had to go to hospital for treatment for severe burns. Fr. Faul and others have objected to the papers. Poor Gerry Dowdall of the IRSP has been victimised by the screws for almost nineteen months now even though he was badly shot up after a British patrol ambushed him, and he hasn't even been tried yet. My God, some of them have been on remand for over two years and they tell us that internment has been abolished. Who do they think they are kidding?"

"You want to see our Sean. He's like an old man after two years on the blanket, and he says the cold is really getting to him because they have lowered the heat. It takes me all my time to hold back my tears and anger, sure he'd suffer even more if I went for some of them screws. He told me that he ripped part of his blanket to cover his feet and protect them from the concrete floor for he says he can hardly walk and his bones are sore all the time from lack of exercise. I don't know how he and them poor lads can hold out...sure it's a living tomb they're in."

In Sean's case his blanket was removed from him and he was left completely naked for two whole weeks.

To understand what the nature of the prisoner's struggle is all about, it is important to realise that the British Government removed Political Status in March 1976, endeavouring to brand all prisoners of war as criminals. The first POW sentenced as a criminal was teenager Keiran Nugent who on entering the H-block refused to put on a prison uniform or do prison work. He was battered senseless on a number of occasions at that time, and has been a special target ever since. His clothes were removed and he was put in a totally white-painted cell with no opportunity to see even daylight, confined for 23 out of every 24 hours, with nothing only a mattress, blanket and slop pot. He is now in his third year 'on the blanket'. (In all that time, like many others, he has received no visits). This was how blanket protests started, with Keiran setting the tone of militancy by declaring that the only way the screws could get a uniform on him was by nailing it onto his back. Since then the real fight has been to keep warm,



Families of prisoners boarding the bus to the Maze Prison

alive and mentally active. Over 400 POWs have joined Keiran and all are suffering great physical and mental torture each second of their lives. Every day of protest means a day's loss of remission, and many of these POWS would have been free men by now if they had accepted 'criminalisation'.

Daily the newspapers here are filled with reports of beatings, forced washings, and spreading illness within the H-blocks. All over the north members of the Relatives Action Committees hold protests every week, with the occasional mass demonstration attracting upwards of 20,000 plus. Concern is also being expressed for the women prisoners in Armagh gaol who since May 1978 have been confined to their cells 21 hours a day, and conditions continue to deteriorate for them.

'IN HERE TIME BECOMES YOUR WORST ENEMY, AND FREEDOM YOUR DAILY DREAM. MAKE SURE YOU APPRECIATE BOTH AND USE THEM CONSTRUCTIVELY FOR SOCIALISM'

One last word or two I'd like to leave you with based on a bit of advice given to me by the comrade I went to visit in the H-blocks, "In here, time becomes your worst enemy, and freedom your daily dream, make sure you appreciate both and use them constructively for socialism"

A Happy 1979 Comrades!

(A new pamphlet 'H-Block' is available from Republican News, 170a Falls Rd, Belfast. Price 45p)

Due to lack of space we have held over to next month the next installment of our series on the last ten years in Ireland

Remember Bloody Sunday

Assemble 2.30pm Hyde Park Corner, London, January 28th
March to Rally. Speakers from: Sinn Fein, Prisoners Aid Committee and the United Troops Out Movement

Ireland: The forgotten war comes home

SO NORTHERN Ireland isn't quietening down! The recent wave of bombing and shooting in the Six Counties have proved that.

Over the last year the British press and TV have succeeded very well in ignoring the war in Ireland. Even when they *did* mention it, they gave us a series of "light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel" articles, about how military incidents were lessening, how nobody was attending the anti-British demonstrations that were never reported anyway and about how the Ulster police were really nice guys at heart.

FRUSTRATION
Nothing, of course, is further from the truth. Thousands of Irish people have demonstrated against the conditions of Irish prisoners in British prison camps. They have seen people shot down without warning by the British assassination group, the S.A.S. They have seen the endless succession of young men and women dragged through the phoney, no-jury Diplock courts. Yet it seems to them that no-one in Britain cares. All they get is British troops, laws, guns and press lies.

Out of frustration the IRA has begun to bomb Britain again.

LOGIC

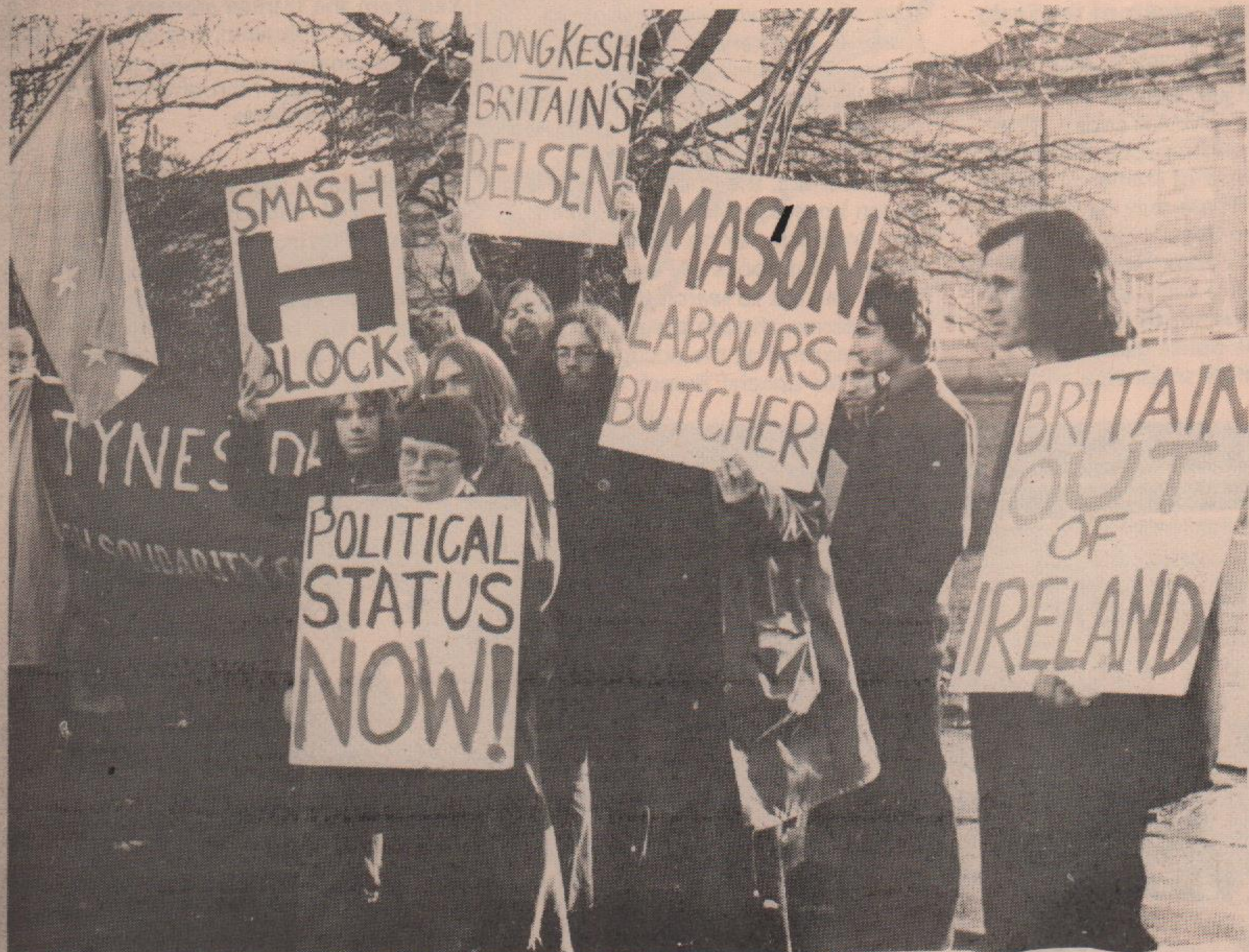
In their statement the IRA made their aim clear. They want to awaken British people from apparent complacency. They say they are considering inflicting heavy civilian casualties if British troops continue the policy of repression. In this way they hope to increase demands for troop withdrawal.

But there is a flaw to this logic. It assumes widespread knowledge about the injustice and violence of British rule in Ireland. Unfortunately this isn't the case.

A new bombing campaign in England would actually *increase* calls for more repression. It would act as a justification for Mason's hard line. It would make it more difficult to argue that the Irish have a right to independence.

Unfortunately it has to be said that it is the failure of people in Britain to create a massive movement for troop withdrawal that has led the IRA to this situation. The United Troops Out Movement is growing but has a long way to go. Strengthening the UTOM should be a priority.

We don't blame the IRA for considering a new bombing campaign in Britain. But we don't think it will help.



Pickets outside Durham Jail on December 9th 1978. The Tyneside Irish Solidarity Campaign called the picket in solidarity with Irish political prisoners particularly the seven people currently held in Durham Jail. There are five women and two men held in the Jail under maximum security, in solitary confinement, isolated from friends and relatives. A recent report in the Newcastle "Evening Chronicle" described conditions in the women's wing of the jail as "very oppressive" with women drugged into a 'half alive' state. One of the women, Anne Maguire was refused permission for an urgent operation, on 'security grounds'.

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MONETARISM

A FEW years ago, right-wing Tories like Joseph and Thatcher began to be associated with a form of economic policy called "monetarism". Last month, Healey made it quite clear that the current Labour government was also into "monetarism" — his version, he claimed, was that little bit more subtle. In the article that follows our economics correspondent explains what "monetarism" is and how it's going to affect our lives.

When asked to comment on the TUC's refusal to sign a wage pact with the government, Denis Healey's comment was: "No sort of collective bargaining will make the water of the Niagara flow up and not down." A rather roundabout way for him to say that if the unions did not agree to wage control, the government would use other methods to cut the demand side of the economy and control the rate of inflation.

Capital is International

What Healey has realised for a good while now is that no country can individually go against the international financial and economic order, whose laws are not derived from logic or nature but from the worldwide needs of the pursuit of profit and the accumulation of capital. And in this he is basically correct. If the rate of inflation in Britain is much higher than elsewhere in the world several consequences follow: first, the prices of British goods will increase and those goods will become less competitive on the world market. Unless the value of the pound internationally is allowed to fall as compensation, exports will fall and jobs will be threatened in the exporting industries: Britain exports around 20% of its total national income — so a lot is at stake.

But if the pound is allowed to fall this will also make imports dearer: more pounds will be needed to buy \$1 worth of oil or wheat. This will affect prices in the shops — and workers will try and regain their real earnings by pushing for higher money earnings. There would be a constant pressure towards the depreciation, both nationally and internationally of the currency. But no country with a large financial (banking, insurance) sector like Britain can afford to let its currency spiral down in value. Because of Britain's past financial dominance and present influence, many foreign governments and firms use the City of London either as a place to deposit their wealth or as a place to raise new loans. When this wealth is held here it can be used by the City of London's various institutions to make money — which eventually appears as a "plus" in Britain's overall balance of international payments.

However, people would not want to hold their wealth in sterling if they felt it was an "unreliable" currency whose value could not be relied on: so the Government has to intervene to keep up the rate — or at least control the rate — so as not to alarm these foreign institutions or create a panic which would provoke a "flight from sterling", where people change their assets from pounds into dollars, marks or gold. The government knows too that a strong pound is good to control inflation — it keeps the prices of imports down and eases pressure on household budgets.

Wages Control

All finance ministers in every country, but especially in those where the working class retains some independent economic and political power, know they have to try and contain the conflicts between capital and labour so that they do not explode into a struggle which increases the rate of inflation. Although firms may have benefited from the period of mild inflation from the 1950's to the late

Banking figures show small rise in money supply

REES FIRM ON 5pc PAY POLICY

NEW WAVE OF BANKRUPTCIES FEARED

By Alex Brummer, Financial Correspondent
A marginal rise in the money supply is the latest growth forecast for the bank.

factors, could be considerably higher. Some City analysts suggested yesterday that a figure as high as £500 millions is possible. But there is little encouragement for the Government's policy.

By NICHOLAS COMFORT, Political Staff
The Government "will be able to sit back" on the rate of inflation, Mr Rees, Home Secretary, warned in Leeds.

The hints of tougher moderation follows a pack by Mr Rodgers, Secretary, on an "unprecedented" of employers' and Conservative the five per cent.

DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER
BANKRUPTCY experts are concerned that the number of company failures may be about to rise again after falling off last year. Mr Frank Stansil, chartered accountant, of the firm M. Hacker Young yesterday: "In

'If I don't get you now with wages, I'll get you later with unemployment'



factors of production were free to move to their most profitable use. This is what economists used to say before the Depression of the 1930s showed that capitalism has no automatic tendency to grow if left to itself. But there is no doubt that the policy would be very rough on the working class who would have to suffer even higher levels of unemployment than now — and could well wipe out the steady growth in union membership over the last few years. The unions would be virtually powerless against such a policy unless they mounted a massive political challenge.

Over the last three years the policies of the Labour government have drifted closer and closer to the use of money (the supply of money and interest rates) as a means of controlling the economy. This has to some extent been imposed from outside: the International Monetary Fund, who have lent Britain a great deal of money, and Chancellor Schmidt are both keen on monetary strictness as a means of controlling inflation and re-establishing economic growth worldwide. But it also represents a recognition by capitalist governments that they cannot politically negotiate with the working class and gain acceptance for policies which raise the rate of exploitation by the levels needed to reestablish profitable capitalism in Britain: although wages and living standards have been depressed profits are still historically low. By creating higher unemployment and forcing illiquid companies out of existence monetary policy of the sort which Healey (and even more so, Thatcher and Joseph) makes it all look quite natural and inevitable. And therefore harder to fight against.

Labour's Management

In the past Labour Governments have tried to "manage" their way rather than "confront" their way out of political and economic crises. They have sold their relationship to the unions as the key to some form of class consensus, in which they could make the unions see what was "reasonable" in return for organisational concessions to the trade unions. Many of the reforms which were introduced as concessions to the unions in the social-contract have also extended the ability of the top levels in state and trade union to manage to "bureaucratise" the rank and file more effectively. The Labour government has also tried to encourage flexibility between jobs by means of retraining schemes rather than the more dramatic policies of creating higher unemployment and "redeploying" labour in that way.

Perhaps Labour's attempts to integrate the unions and their members in the management of capitalism may have had some success if the economy was not in such a severe crisis: perhaps in more "happy times" class contradictions could have been smoothed over using all the wily resources of the present Labour government and trade union leaderships. But this management of the crisis has broken down in the face of the Ford strike, the threatened local authority workers strike, and growing opposition of spending cuts from within the state sector. Healey has decided it's time to exercise a heavy hand and has basically said: "if I don't get you now with wages I'll get you later with unemployment"

1960's, the constant need to put up prices to ward off a fall in profits in the face of large money wage demands won by workers results in all the problems of currency depreciation mentioned above. Although 'counter inflation policies' usually involve a redistribution of income from workers to capital they are not simply tricks to achieve this.

The issue is, though, on whose terms should the rate of price increases be kept down. What would be the real destination of various types of anti-inflation strategy? For Healey and the government it is clear: the end point is a restoration of a stable and profitable capitalism where the only increases in workers incomes come from increases in their productivity. And since profits in the UK are still very low by international and historical standards, the "fight against inflation" also has to cover up a redistribution of wealth away from workers towards capital. It is trite to accuse Healey of being a callous bastard who would like to see us all ground into the dust: these may be his secret fantasies, but they don't determine his political behaviour.

He knows, and is quite correct, that for capitalism to survive in Britain the rate of exploitation of workers must increase and the rate of inflation must come down. Otherwise there will be an accelerated decline in investment, a decline in technological innovation and a decline in Britain's financial institutions: he claims that workers will be able to share in this increase in wealth: he points to the example of Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, where the working class has obtained real increases in its incomes through the virtual abandonment of real control of production. Whether these conditions could apply to Britain in the 1980s and 1990s is questionable. Healey is perhaps suffering from the social democratic illusion that a growing capitalism provides real wealth which can be won

by workers — or redistributed through welfare schemes, forgetting however, that the provision of a few material benefits to workers is only incidental to the functioning of the capitalist system. Once capital rules it will attempt to sustain itself and survive regardless of the social consequences. If British capitalism cannot survive in the 1980s without unemployment of less than 3 million, so be it as far as capitalists are concerned.

If the working class will not only have to abandon its economic and political power but also its material well-being then clearly it has little to gain from the government's counter-inflation strategy.

The Faceless Enemy

But what about a counter-inflation strategy? What happened at the middle of November is quite instructive. When the government thought it couldn't get its way at one level — agreement on wages, they simply shifted ground to another area, which at the moment is out of the reach of traditional workers' action: the monetary field. Monetary action is way a way of attacking living standards without having to resort to direct confrontation with real, live people.

How does "monetarism" as it is called, work? Two instruments are open to the government. First, it can change the bank rate — if it wants to make borrowing more expensive, it will increase it. If borrowing is more expensive firms will only raise loans if it is profitable enough to cover the higher rate — less profitable projects will not be undertaken. Higher interest rates also affect things like Hire Purchase. It will make it dearer to buy on credit — which will cut down the sales of things like washing machines, cars and TVs. These effects together

will push up unemployment as there will be less demand for certain types of goods on the one hand, and less demand for labour as investment is cut back on the other. Second the government can control the "supply of money": the supply of money is not just notes and coins. It also includes current account deposits at the bank and other assets which can function as money, being universally acceptable and easy to realise. By putting controls on the banks the government can control the amount of overdrafts they give: most companies have to make temporary borrowings to pay wages bills. For example; if a company makes sunhats which only sell in the summer they will have to borrow during the winter while they're building up supplies for the rush.

The government can make money "scarce" by intervening in the market for loans and by controlling bank credit. The firm may have to close down, not because it is unprofitable or because no one wants what it makes, but because it simply can't get the cash to meet its weekly obligations every week.

The Effects

Whether this policy actually works to control inflation in the long term is still open to question. A lot of economists say it is attacking the symptoms of inflation and not the cause. Others say that the cure is worse than the disease — monetarism rigorously followed would dramatically increase unemployment and result in massive cuts in state spending. Although governments have always employed some kind of "money policy" the new version is much more extreme and is based on some very doubtful assumptions — such as that the capitalist system would work smoothly if governments balanced their budgets if there was no excessive creation of credit and if all the

SOCIAL WORKERS

THE SOCIAL workers' strike — now five months old in some areas — is entering a crucial phase, leading up to a special conference on January 26th. The conference is the NALGO leadership's final desperate bid to torpedo a struggle which has proven to be a landmark in the union's history.

The statement by General Secretary Geoffrey Drain that it was a dispute "NALGO can't afford to lose" has a hollow ring about it in the light of the union leadership's attempted sell out of the strike. The social workers are proving to be a difficult nut for the leadership to crack. At the end of November, National Local Government Committee Chairman Mike Blick came up with a ridiculous five level plan to end the strike. He was confident that he could impose it on the strikers. But the determination and organisation which the social workers had built up in struggle gave him a nasty surprise as the deal was rejected by social workers all over the country.

SELL-OUT REJECTED

A lightning campaign which culminated in a 1,500 strong lobby of NALGO House, resulted in even backwaters like the Isle of Wight rejecting the national sell out.

The social workers own rank and file organisations are pressing ahead with the original demand — for local negotiations and substantial regradings.

Faced with such a determined united front the leadership has called the special meeting for January 26th, when they hope to force through a slightly improved national deal. The meeting (a Special Local Government Group Meeting) will involve delegates from all local government branches, not just those with social workers in them.

The National Committee is making it plain that it wants to use those branches with no social workers in them to force the strikers back to

work, with threats about how we are using the strike fund up. But when the strikers put forward plans to raise money for the fund they were told, "finance is no problem at the moment"! It now seems that the strike has become one that NALGO can't afford to win.

EMPLOYERS CRACKING

Ironically this is all happening just as the employers are showing signs of cracking. A secret letter sent to all employers by their own national association refers to the "plight of authorities subject to militant action" and pleads with them to hold the line against local negotiations.

Despite this, four authorities have given in on one of the major demands and are negotiating locally.

With NALGO persisting in attempting to sell out the social workers they could yet be in for a nasty shock. The social workers are pointing out that if NALGO can't win a dispute such as this, then we will have no chance at all of winning a decent rise in the summer. Arguments such as this could well result in a humiliating defeat for the leadership on the 26th.

Whatever else happens it is sure that neither NALGO nor social workers will ever be the same again. Social workers have learnt that what counts is rank and file militancy, links with other workers, and an understanding of the forces ranged against them. Many people who have never even thought of trade union activity before this strike have found out that social work's traditional values of 'professionalism' and 'self-sacrifice' lead only to too much work and too little pay.

ROUGH JUSTICE

Local groups organise resistance to new DHSS plans

ANYONE WHO'S ever been on Social Security knows how hard it is to get by — how you have to struggle to get enough money for food or rent, let alone for clothes or for an evening out.

But even what we get now is under threat. This is because the DHSS has drawn up a set of proposals (in a long document called "Social Assistance") which would make drastic changes to supplementary benefit. And these changes would make it even harder to exist on the SS.

They've given two main reasons for these changes. First, to cut back on the rising amount of money spent on supplementary benefit and on the rising number of staff employed in social security offices. Secondly, to simplify the supplementary benefit rules so that they can be more easily understood and more "fairly" enforced.

So for example, grants that are given for clothing or for heating bills and that at present are given at the 'discretion' of the local office will be cut. They know that this has meant that people can get together in claimants unions, women's aid groups etc. and put pressure on the SS for more money. They say that this is unfair because some people get more money than others. And so their solution is to give totally inadequate grants to everyone.

These proposals are part of the state's way of using the crisis at our expense. Already one in ten people are dependant on supplementary benefit. With more people being thrown on the dole, more women leaving home, and more people being forced to stay at home looking after the sick and old, this number

is sure to rise. From the state's point of view it's no good using unemployment to attack the working class if they just have to spend out more money on social security.

The whole strategy of the proposals is to divide the poor. At every point they take money away from one group of claimants with one hand, and give a little extra to another group with the other. There's no serious discussion of the one change that would make life easier for all claimants — more money on the basic rates.

As yet these proposals are just proposals. But unless there's a strong fight-back, from all sections of the working class, some major changes are sure to be introduced. Already resistance is starting. Local groups are organising meetings and leafletting SS offices. Recently a national conference of the 'Campaign against the Supplementary Benefits Review' has been held.

We must strengthen this campaign — any one of us can be on the SS. In particular it's important to unite all sections of the working class against the proposals. To date opposition has mainly come from community

workers, claimants unions, and DHSS workers, but not from other waged workers or housewives.

This campaign gives the opportunity to fight for what we really want from the SS. We could start with a guaranteed income for all, higher SS rates, and an end to the co-habitation rule.

The Main Proposals include:

Standard amounts for the first eight weeks of claiming paying no attention to needs. Proposed amounts include just £6.90 for rent, and £1.85 per child. This may apply only to people who have just left a job.

Cut-backs to exceptional circumstances additions (such as extra money for heating or special diets)

No more exceptional needs payments for clothing, shoes or fuel. Instead an automatic six-monthly grant set at a ridiculously low level (such as £26 for a family with three or more kids).

Appeals to be virtually stopped.

A continuation of the co-habitation rule. One sop given to women is the 'nominated bread-winner' scheme, where if the woman has been in waged work for a certain period of time, and if her husband agrees, she can claim rather than him.

'Rough Justice' is a good short pamphlet on the changes. Available from Bristol Resources Centre, 62 Bedminster Parade, Bristol BS3 4HL. Price 20p

Contact the Campaign Against the Supplementary Benefits Review at Harlesden Advice Centre, 25 High St., London N.W.10. 01.965.2500.



NALGO — FORMED as a Chief Officers' club at the turn of the century — is hardly a union noted for its militancy. And social workers have no history at all of trade union action or organisation. So how has a combination of the two produced a strike which has lasted over five months?

The answer lies in two things: NALGO's particularly servile attitude under the social contract, and the contradictions within social work itself.

NALGO, although it is one of the four unions not affiliated to the Labour Party, has been one of the Labour Government's most loyal supporters over the past four years. As a result NALGO members have not only lost out on wage rises, they have also faced cutbacks in services and increased workloads, and have been unable to get even the smallest improvements in their conditions of service.

Social workers have suffered especially badly in this process. Over the past seven years there has been a massive increase in the responsibilities they have to carry. When government or local authorities are faced

with especially difficult social problems — such as baby battering — social workers often provide a convenient let out for them. A new law is passed, and social workers have yet another responsibility dumped on them.

With living standards falling, unemployment rising and services being reduced, the contradictions facing social workers become more stark every day. To combat immense social problems they are given pitiful resources, and more than ever they are forced to realise that their traditional tool, casework, has no power to resolve the most serious problems their 'clients' face.

Such a situation might have been acceptable to many social workers if they had been accorded full 'professional' status and given salaries to match.

It is this combination of circumstances, and some very effective work done by left wing social workers in building up trade union organisation and developing radical ideas, which has led to a dispute which has enabled about 2,000 workers to turn one of Britain's biggest unions inside out.



Southwark NALGO social workers picket Walworth Road Area office. photo: Union place collective

'We want £20 and we want to change society' - Journalists

NORTH LONDON NEWS NUJ chapel was the first in the country to come out against the 5% pay increase offered by management. They demanded £20 across the board. To their amazement the NUJ NEC made their strike official one week later. So began the first all-out NUJ strike in 71 years.

Three North London News journalists explain to us why **THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME** on our local newspapers.

How did you organise?

The first step was to get together the other workers in the print industry in support - NGA, SLADE, NATSOPA, SOGAT and the T&G van drivers. Two years ago we managed to stop the distribution of our paper, the Islington Gazette, with the help of SOGAT. We couldn't stop it at the source. What's new about this situation is that in many places we've got the support of the NGA - even though they haven't got official backing. Workers who refuse to cross our picket lines are not being sanctioned.

N.G.A. BACKING

Our three papers are printed in Nuneaton where we picketed and we now have the co-operation of the NGA there. But we have to mount a hostile picket to get it, so that the only way workers could cross the picket is with a police escort, which they refuse to do. The management at Nuneaton are absolutely terrified of us, because they'd never had any trouble with their NUJ chapel on the Nuneaton Evening Tribune. In fact, though it's their first ever industrial action, the Nuneaton NUJ were raring to go. They've been incredible in their support for us and the Evening Tribune has stopped production.

Are the NGA more supportive this time because of the threats to their jobs from the new technology?

Yes. The North London NUJ have passed resolutions saying they will do no work previously done by NGA men. That's one of the reasons why we think the NGA at Nuneaton backed us.

SCAB UNION

How many papers have stopped production?

In the first week of the official strike we stopped more than 50% of papers in London. Nationally it is not so good. London is the most militant area, always has been.

How much co-ordination is there between the owners?

The whole dispute is a threat to the existence of the Newspaper Society (provincial newspapers employers' association). For instance, Ham and High Home Counties Group have now withdrawn from the Newspaper Society and given the journalists a £15 a week rise. The Institute of Journalists (the scab union of people like Robin Day) who have been crossing picket lines have been offered 11%. The Newspaper Society is indicating that if we return to work we'll be offered the same.

What happened at Barnet?

We used the same tactics at Barnet as we'd used at Nuneaton to stop production of the Barnet Press. But the NGA are less sympathetic there, and the police are heavier. Cops in the North are like village bobbies compared to London. Ten of us have been arrested at Barnet. The police have been very vindictive - kept us locked up for five hours, wouldn't allow us cigarettes, food or even a glass of water. We were finger-printed and then immediately checked through the criminal records. We've made an official complaint.

SCAREMONGERING

Our union president, Denis McShane, was on the picket line at Barnet this morning. What a joke! At first he was completely against our unofficial strike. He was scaremongering, saying we'd never get the support of the print unions and trying to discourage us. He agreed with management to have only token pickets if the Newspaper Society would agree to negotiate. When the momentum built up, he had to support us.

How do you see things going from here?

We told them at Nuneaton, 'we want £20 and we want to change society.' We have 9,000 journalists involved in this dispute and that has a very radicalising effect which is very good. The government doesn't like that, the employers don't like that, that's why ACAS has stepped in so sharply. They're much happier with us thinking of ourselves as professional people.

How much support have you got?

The public have been amazing and given incredible support - money food etc. - it's really encouraging. We've had monetary support from Fleet Street and there's been very good support from other workers.

BADLY PAID

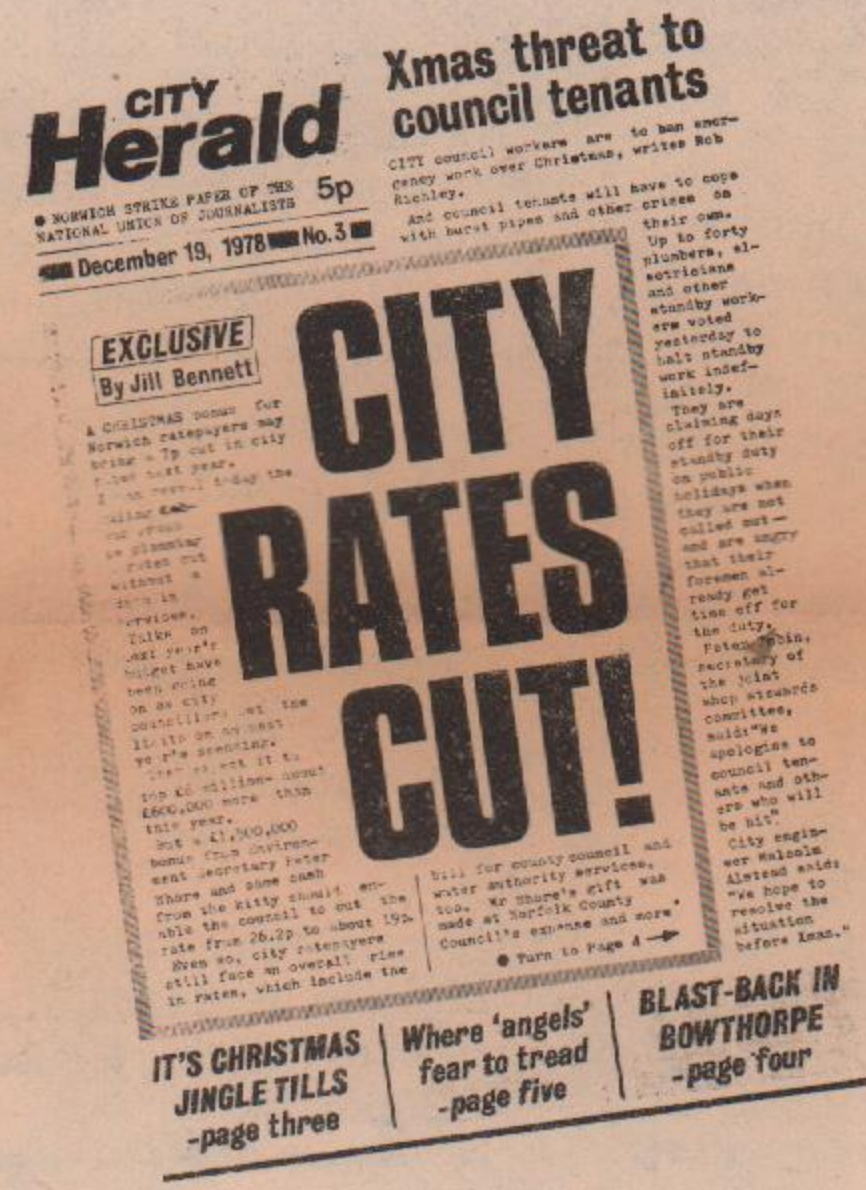
Why is militancy so high?

Because people see the cause as being just. There's no doubt about it, we're very badly paid workers. But the militancy alone is not enough. Lots of chapels throughout the country just are not organised, have never run a strike, though their hearts are in the right place.

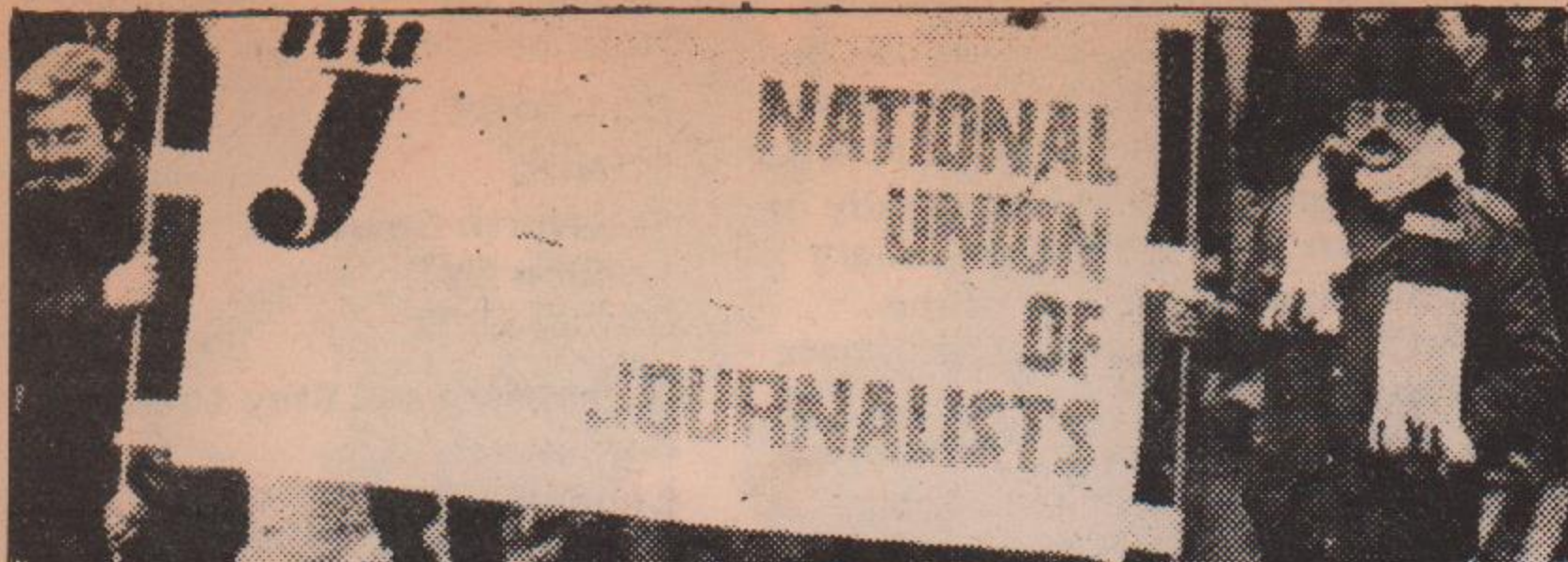
In some places striking journalists have brought out their own paper



Picket arrested at Evening Dispatch and Northern Echo, Darlington during first round of the struggle last July (John Sturrock, Report)



Norwich NUJ'S strike sheet



NATIONAL N.U.J. DEMONSTRATION IN NOTTINGHAM

The demonstration took place in Nottingham as a response to action taken by the "Nottingham Evening Post." The paper has sacked 28 of its journalists who are on strike. Six years ago, after a bitter seven week dispute, the "Evening Post" introduced new technology with the result that the paper could now be brought out with many less journalists. Management is using the current dispute to try and smash N.U.J. organisation on the paper and get rid of those journalists it considers 'superfluous'. During the strike, the editor has been using the paper's front page to attack the N.U.J. and the strikers.

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 23rd Jan (features), 25th Jan (news) Paper OUT 2nd Feb.

A CLOSE LOOK AT FASCISM AND RACISM: a BF pamphlet. * 30p (including postage) from 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7

CHEMICAL HAZARDS at Work. The Manchester Area Safety Committee and the Manchester Industrial Branch of the Workers' Educational Association are organising a series of eight weekly discussion meetings at Roscoe Building, Manchester University, Brunswick St. Starting date Thursday 25th January, 7. pm A fee of 40 p per meeting will be charged. Further details from 061.225.0611



THE NUCLEAR DISASTER - a new Counter Information Services pamphlet about the growing nuclear establishment. 65p. (20p post/packing) from CIS, 9 Poland St, London W.1 01-439 3764.

GARNERS DAY OF MASS PICKETING

Sat 27th January

ASSEMBLE 12noon 399 OXFORD STREET, 5.30 pm WHITCOMB ST.

END LOW PAY Demonstration and lobby Parliament. 22nd January Assemble 11.30am Speakers Corner, march to Parliament. Continuous meeting in Central Hall from 3pm

Monday 22nd January, South London UTOM meeting on Bloody Sunday 7.30 pm St Matthews Meeting Place, Brixton. Friday 26th January 8.30 pm. Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee Social. Grove Tavern, Hammersmith Grove.

socialist unity

THE LEFT AND ELECTIONS

speakers include HUGO BLANCO, leader of mass peasant struggles in Peru and a deputy in the Peruvian parliament for FOCEP (a united left slate); HARRY McSHANE, a veteran of the workers movement who was active in the election work of the CPGB during the 1920's; PAT ARROWSMITH, the Independent Socialist candidate for Cardiff West who has been involved in the campaigns against nuclear destruction, for gay rights and for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

SOCIALIST UNITY NATIONAL CONFERENCE SATURDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 1979 - BEGINS 11.00am. HOLBORN ASSEMBLY ROOMS, LONDON WC1.

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 donations are £20 from Liverpool Big Flame social and £2 from Liverpool reader. Not much of a haul, given the festive period. Just because we're not heavy about it, there's no need to neglect our urgent calls for financial support!

an introduction to

Big Flame

Our Politics, History, Structures and Publications. 10p

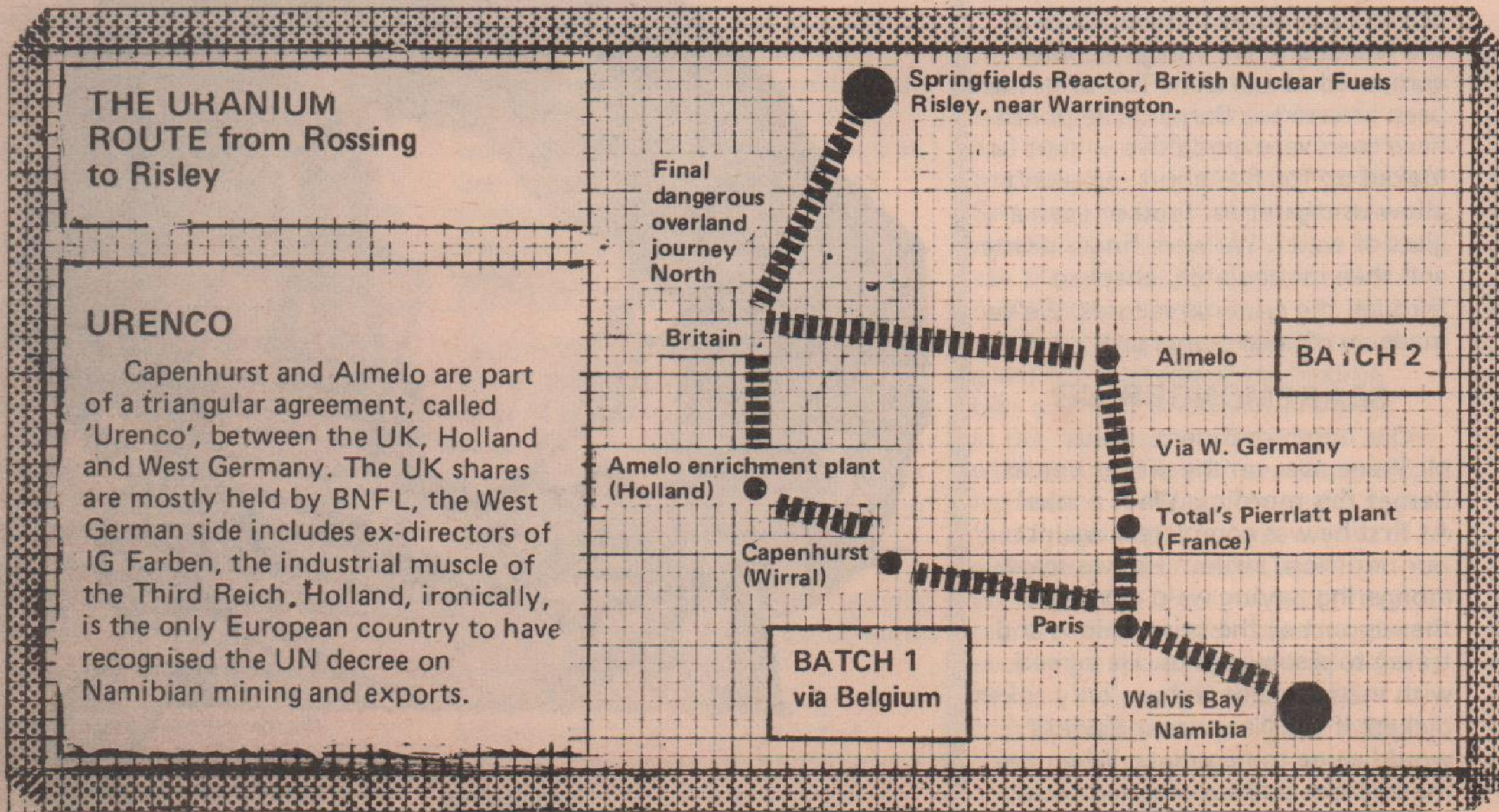
There are now Big Flame Groups in:

- North West: Manchester and Liverpool.
- Yorkshire: Leeds and Sheffield
- Midlands: Birmingham, Coventry and Nottingham
- South East: London (3), Brighton
- East Anglia: Norwich.

and individual members in many other towns.

A new publication 'An Introduction to Big Flame' is available for 20p including postage. To find out more about Big Flame, send off the form on the back page.

How Banned Uranium Imports Reach Britain



ROSSING

The Rossing mine lies just outside Walvis Bay, the area South Africa refuses to concede to a future Namibia. It is owned by RTZ, Rio Algom, Total (the French oil company which helped Shell and BP in their sanctions-busting 'swap'), the Industrial Development Corporation (South Africa), General Mining and UranGesellschaft (W. Germany). South Africa's occupation of Namibia has been denounced by the International Court and by the UN, which also issued a special decree to stop any mining or export of natural resources from Namibia.

About two thirds of the 1,600 black workers at Rossing are migrants, and half of these come from South Africa and Malawi. All the workers live apart with separate compounds for Europeans, Damaras, 'Coloureds', Ovambos, Hereros and Xhosas. The

black camps are raided by police with dogs, the food is bad, and most of the black workers are on 35c an hour (R16.80 per week) according

Two Public Meetings in Manchester.

- ▶ Stop Urenco Shipments Campaign meeting, Saturday 20th January 10-6pm Resource Centre, 61 Bloom St., Manchester 1.
- ▶ Nuclear Power Public Meeting, Friday 26th January, Friends Meeting House, 7.30pm

to Barbara Rogers' article in the *South African Labour Bulletin* Jan. 1978. A black Rossing worker said: "The first day when I came here I was told that I mustn't discuss

politics there at the job by the foreman."

"That's as soon as you arrived?"
"Yes."
"Was that because they knew that you were a university student?"
"Yes, they did."

All taxes on RTZ profits from Rossing go straight to South Africa. SWAPO, the Namibian national liberation organisation, has consistently condemned the contract, and if it was to come to power through UN-supervised elections or otherwise, it would cancel or at least renegotiate it drastically. So the British government is hurrying to get the oxide out before South Africa loses its hold over Namibia.

RESPONSES

30,000 people demonstrated at Almelo last year in March, leading the Dutch parliament to restrict the supply of uranium to Brazil, though

Uranium oxide, mined illegally at Rossing in Namibia, is coming to Britain for processing by Urenco and may be used for new reactors, nuclear weapons or export to Brazil.

Another source of oxide for Britain is land belonging to the aborigines in Australia.

The story of the Rossing contract (to deliver 7,500 tons of uranium oxide to the British government and BNFL (British

Nuclear Fuels Ltd.) and of South Africa's nuclear program, was outlined in Big Flame last August. Now, new information from CANUC (Campaign against the Namibian Uranium Contract), and from the aborigines, makes it clearer how the uranium gets to Britain and how opposition from workers, trades unionists and anti-nuclear groups is developing in Namibia, Australia and Europe.

this is not binding on Urenco. Dutch and French trade unionists will be discussing the Rossing shipments with Paris airport workers and activists from Holland and Britain at a meeting called by the CGT in Paris on January 24th.

Following the Anti-Apartheid conference in Manchester, trade unionists from Preston intend to press their trades council to approach transport workers in Lancashire. The issue will be raised in the Anti-Apartheid factory tour (see letter p 4.) The Rossing deliveries are also opposed by leaders of the transport unions.

AUSTRALIA

But even if the Rossing contract were cancelled, a similar game is being played by RTZ and others elsewhere. Ever since the original invasion of Australia by Europeans, the aborigines have suffered massacres, expropriation, forced labour and racism — like apartheid.

Uranium mining has brought this matter to a head. The Fraser government claim that the Northern Land Council — representing aborigines in the Northern Territory — agreed last November to a multi-million pound uranium development at Ranger (where RTZ are involved.) Aborigines, touring Europe, say that only four out of 40 members gave their consent, and a high court action is in progress. The mines already in operation (like Jabiluka and Mary Kathleen) produce 20% of the West's uranium, and new finds have been announced.

Mass demonstrations, led by the aborigines, have blocked off Melbourne with 25,000 people and

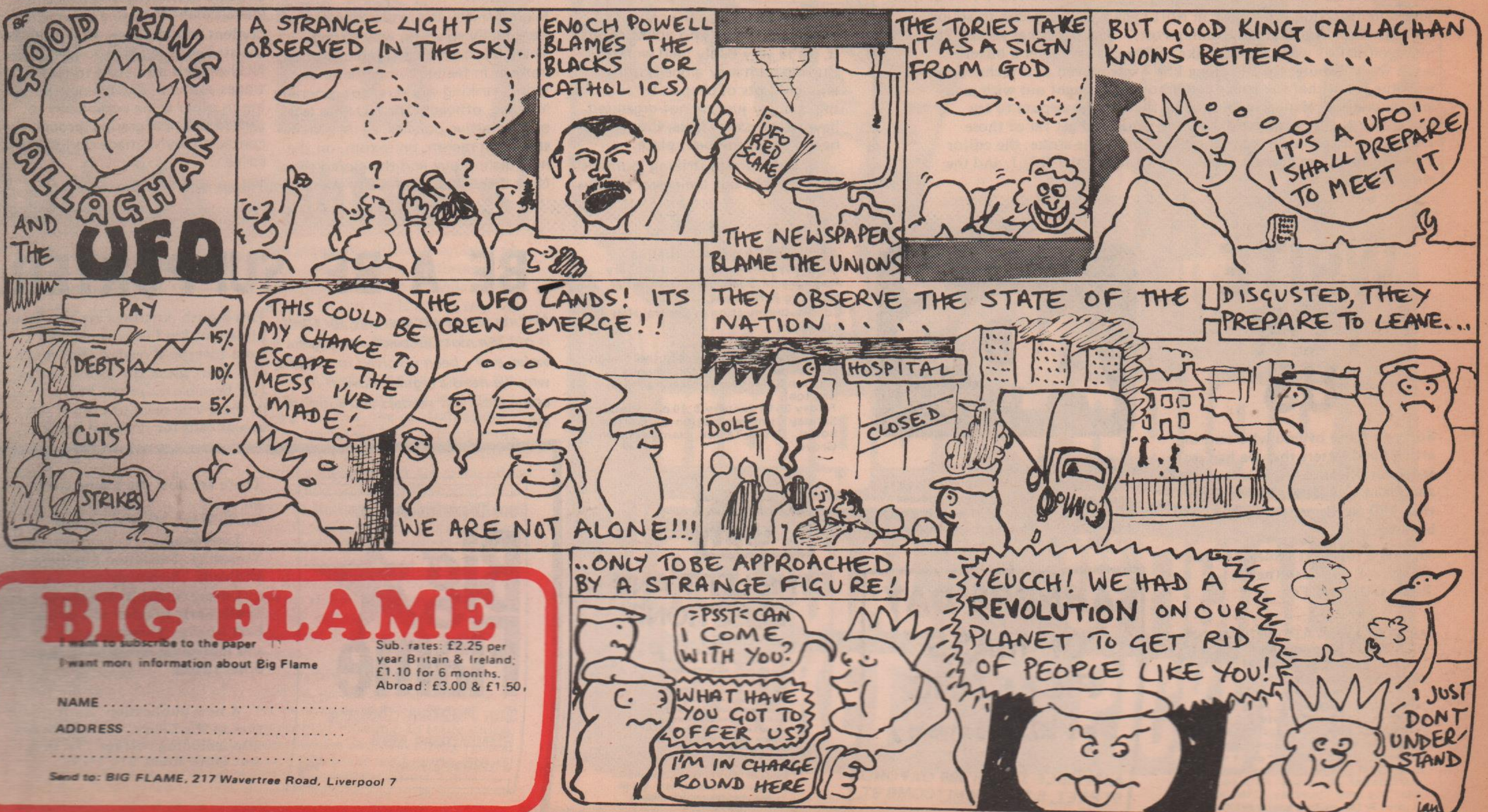
Sidney with 11,000. Speaking in Manchester on November 22nd, Mick Miller, the Chairman of the North Queensland Land Council, said:

"... the Australian people are waking up. They don't want uranium. It's the government who's pushing it, because they own 40% of the company that's going to mine... Public opinion has got to be built up to the same stage it was during the Vietnam War. Hundreds of thousands of people protested in the streets... and the Australian government had to pull out. Well, we believe that we can do the same thing with uranium. But we can't do it alone... Britain is going to be one of our big buyers of uranium that's going to come out of our reserve lands. It's going to come in through Liverpool. We've been to see the dockworkers at Liverpool today, and we got a good response from them. We work very closely with our unions in Australia, and we need that solidarity over here to prevent any handling of the ships that bring in uranium. All the big reserve at Arnhemland is going to be destroyed... but you're going to be in danger as well... We don't believe Wedgewood Benn when he says that the British people really do need uranium. We've heard that story before..."

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