

BIG FLAME

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Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

10p

WHAT WILL YOU TAKE HOME THIS WEEK?

PEANUTS — that's what more and more workers are receiving for wages. And the Government's pay policy, instead of helping the low-paid has pushed them further down.

Two independent bodies — the Low Pay Unit and the Child Poverty Action Group — have just confirmed that after three years of Labour's incomes restraint the gap between the low-paid and the rest has grown

Just to cap it all the Government's Wages Councils have just set a weekly minimum of £38 for millions of catering and shop workers. This is even below what you need to qualify for Family Income Supplement (for a couple with two children).

That shows how serious the Government is about the low-paid.

FIGHTING FOR ALL

This is why Ford workers are right to say they're fighting for everyone. If they win, it'll encourage others to fight. And there's no substitute for fighting.

There are other reasons why

a Ford workers' victory would be a gain for the whole working class, above all for the low-paid. Firstly, they're asking for an across the board rise of £20. That will help the lowest paid most.

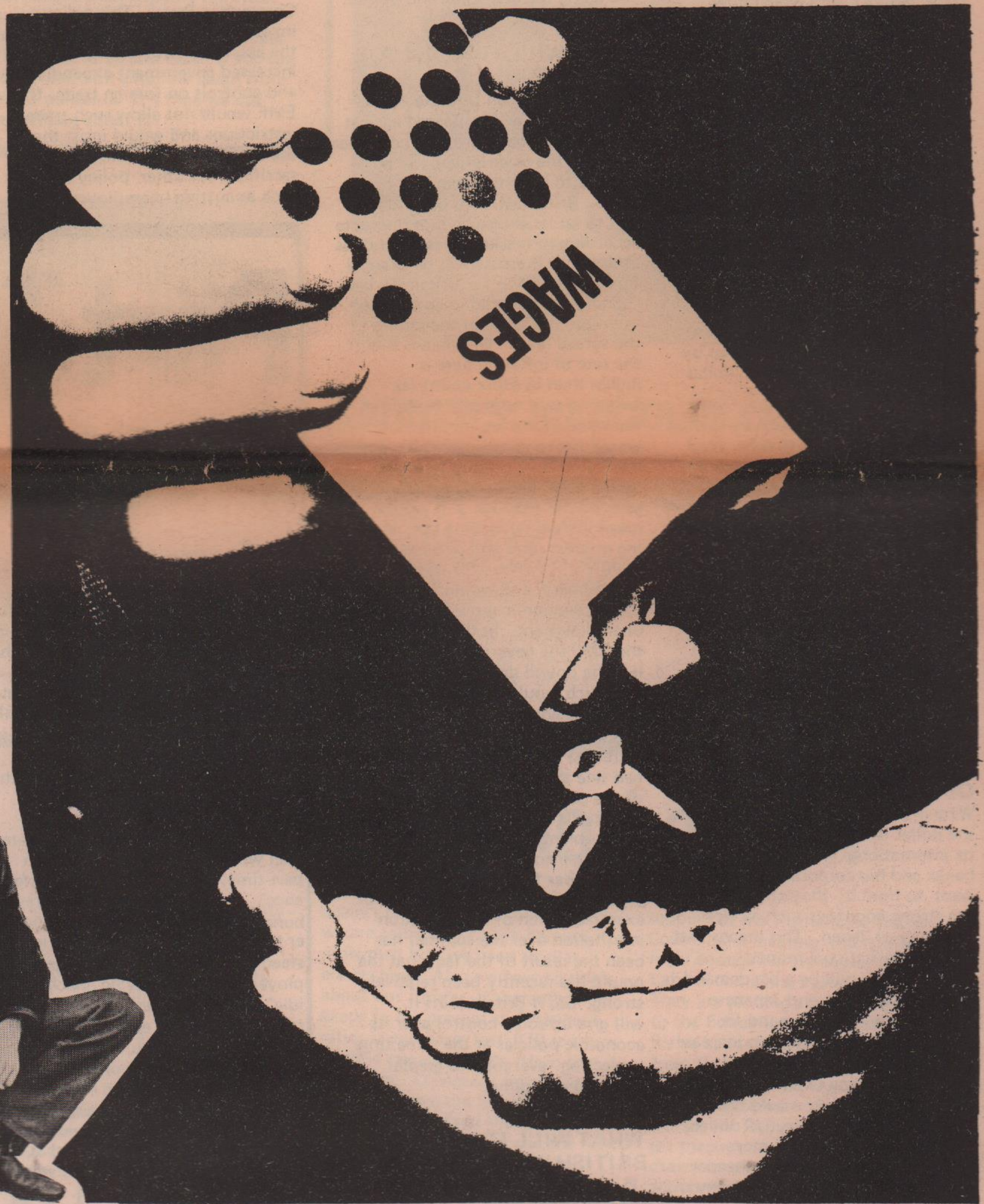
MORE JOBS

Secondly, they want a cut in hours — "an hour off the day" — which potentially creates thousands of jobs for the unemployed.

WAGES AND INFLATION

But what about high wages causing inflation? If they think they can get away with it the bosses will always try to pass on every wage rise as a price rise. But when the working class is strong and united — as we were in the early 1970s — the bosses are forced to dig into their profits to pay for wage rises.

Help the Ford workers to lead us to a new unity.



● "We'll win if we stand firm."

says Jack Brown, Secretary of the Ford (UK) Workers' Group (Combine), who writes about the strike on our centre pages.

(Photo of confident Dagenham worker by Carlos Augusto)



Support the Ford Workers

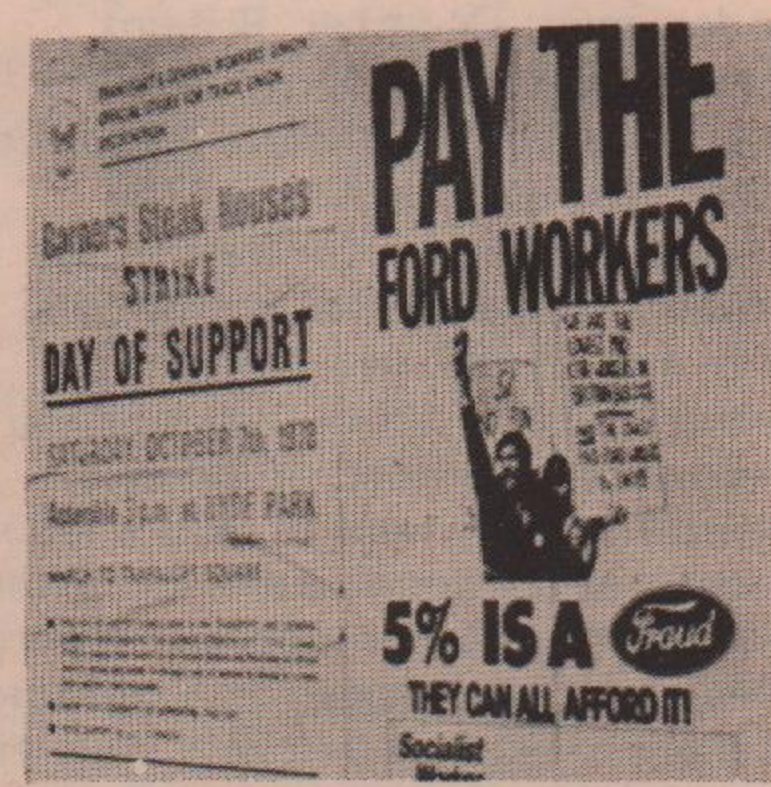


●Run a fund-raising social: OHC and the Gappers in North London recently, singing the Ford Strike Song — available soon as a single from the Ford (UK) Workers Group (Combine), the national rank and file body which campaigns for the Ford claim to be met in full.

(Photo: Carlos Augusto)



●Invite a Ford worker to speak at your meeting: Huw Beynon, Frank Ba iton (Standard Triumph) and a Ford (UK) Workers Group speaker at a Big Flame meeting in Liverpool last month. (Big Flame photo)



●Publicise the claim: The Ford Workers (UK) Group can supply posters, leaflets and badges. Contact the Secretary at 25 Dearmer House, London SW2. (Photo: Carlos Augusto)

why black people should support the FORD STRIKE



BLACK SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

●Argue their case: Get this new Black Socialist Alliance pamphlet from BSA c/o Box 24, 183 Upper St, London N1.

BEWARE OF THE SNAKE'S BITE

When writing about the European Monetary System (EMS), the 'Economist' wrote: "It sets up a framework for co-ordination for fiscal, monetary and exchange policy, which would benefit Europe as the IMF has benefited the world."! In this article, Pete Burgess explains what the EMS is and how it is not the European working class that will benefit from it

SNAKE IN THE GRASS

Much of the Left's opposition to the European Community has often gone with ignorance of what is actually happening. This is a wrong position as developments inside the European Community will affect us all — and verbal opposition won't stop it. One of the most important developments recently has been the moves towards establishing a new European Monetary System (EMS for short). The long-term aim of the proposals which originated with Schmidt of West Germany and Giscard d'Estaing of France is the creation of a common European currency which would eventually replace the different currencies (the Pound, Mark, Guilder etc.) which now exist. This would be a crucial step in the political and economic unification of Europe into a single economy with centralised economic management. This is still a long way ahead — despite attempts to bring it in by the early 1980's. At the moment the different economies which make up the EEC are too widely apart in their economic performance (growth, inflation etc.) and social composition: the admission of countries like Greece will tend to widen these differences. The current proposals have been pushed by West Germany in particular and have been speeded up by the rapid collapse in the US dollar over the summer.

The problem — as seen by the current EEC powers-that-be, West Germany and France — is twofold: how to prevent the collapse of the dollar from hurting the Common Market; and how to devise a system which will impose economic discipline on the weaker EEC economies so as to bring them into line with each other in the long term, 'strengthened' and contributing to overall EEC economic power, instead of upsetting the applecart and solving their problems at other countries expense.

ONE MARK IS A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS

Why is the dollar important? When the dollar is 'weak' — that is when its international value starts to fall — banks and big corporations do not want to hold it; they change to the strong countries such as West Germany or Japan. This means that on the international money markets there will be a big demand for German Marks and Japanese Yen and a reduced demand for dollars: the Mark will then increase in value against the dollar (say, instead of getting two marks for every US dollar you would only get 1.80 Marks for every US dollar) making German exports more expensive and US exports cheaper which would mean that Germany would be less competitive on world markets. This is especially serious for a country like West Germany which is, out of all the world developed economies, the one which is most dependent on foreign trade.

The idea of the new EMS is the creation of an intervention fund: this would be called the European Monetary Fund (EMF). Each country which joins in with the new system would pay in about 20% of their current holdings of foreign currencies into the account, which would establish a huge fund running into several billion dollars (currently estimated at \$24-34 billion). It would then intervene on foreign exchange markets to stabilise the values of the currencies of the countries involved. If, for example, inter-

national banks etc. were selling dollars and buying marks the EMF would intervene to buy dollars and sell its marks. This would stop the rise in the value of the mark and hold up the dollar: the same would happen if the pound were to fall in value against the mark. Speculators would be deterred as rates would stay constant. The whole system would start off with certain agreed rates of exchange between the major countries ('parities') in what is called a 'snake'. It's called a snake because it fluctuates (wiggles) in unison against all other countries. There already is a snake but it only consists of a few countries tied to the German Mark: the new EMF would be based on a 'super-snake' including the lira, franc and pound.

WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR BRITAIN?

First, it will mean that the value of the pound will be pegged against that of the other European countries and that the government will be obliged to keep the pound at that value. Britain will not be allowed just to let its exchange rate fluctuate according to market forces as it does at present. Pressure will be exerted through the EMF for Britain to take economic policies to maintain the international value of the pound at the agreed level. This means that if the rate of inflation here is higher than in other countries (which would normally mean that the value of the pound internationally would fall to compensate) the government would be pressed to adopt 'tight' fiscal (tax) and monetary policies. In practice this would mean increasing income tax, increasing interest rates and curbing the supply of money. This would be deflationary and would tend to reduce economic growth and increase unemployment. In the absence of the EMS the government could have left the pound drift downwards a bit which would have made exports from Britain more competitive and stimulated economic activity through increased export business. On the bad side though, letting the value of the pound slide increases the cost of imports and this would add to the problems of inflation as well as eating into workers' living standards (higher food prices), necessitating big money wage demands. For example, much of the reduction in inflation over the summer has been the result of the fact that the pound has recently been relatively strong. So, if Britain joins it will give up some control over its economic policies at the same time subjecting everyone to greater financial discipline.

WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR BRITISH WORKERS?

In many ways the EMS will strengthen the hand of the government against working class wage demands. Or rather, Britain's membership will force both the government and private companies to resist wage demands. The reason is that, in contrast to the past, companies will not be able to exploit the development of the pound to offset higher labour costs and maintain or increase profits: they have to reduce labour costs in real terms either by increased efficiency, higher labour productivity and lower wages. This will force them to get into line with countries with higher labour productivities, rather than undercutting them with devaluations of the pound. In the long term it could actually increase real wages for some groups of workers and it would reduce inflation but it would do nothing to increase

What European Monetary Policy will mean for you

equality or struggles by workers whose productivity cannot be directly measured (such as council workers, health workers etc.) The EMS will also mean higher unemployment and constraints on regional policy as Britain will not be allowed to unilaterally pursue an expansionist policy but will be forced, basically by the West Germans, into correcting economic problems through 'sensible' (i.e. restrictive) monetary policies. In the longer term the existence of the 'supersnake' would reduce the freedom of movement of any government, but especially of a left wing one: this would parallel the present controls which are imposed by the International Monetary Fund. This would be of particular concern to those socialists who agree with the Alternative Economic Policy suggested by some Labour left-wingers, unions and the Communist Party. This policy involves a controlled expansion of the economy with a price freeze, increased government expenditure and controls on foreign trade: the EMF would not allow such trade restrictions and would insist that the exchange rate could not be sacrificed for other policy aims, such as cutting unemployment.

IS IT ALL CUT AND DRIED?

No. There are still a lot of arguments and disagreements between the different countries who face different economic situations. The Italian and British governments aren't very keen on being told to go and fight it out with the unions over wages. Britain in particular wants the strong EEC countries to accept the obligation to a) expand their economies to balance out the deflation in the weaker countries and b) transfer resources to the weaker economies in the form of EEC aid (development grants etc.) to compensate these economies for having to accept fixed, high, exchange rates. At the moment West Germany is sticking on these points: they can only consolidate their power position as the leading European economy by unloading the problems of the European economy onto its weaker sections. Britain is insisting that if a country's exchange rate gets too high that country should bear the major burden of getting back into line: the Germans want other countries to intervene equally if exchange rates start to deviate (thus unloading the costs of fighting off avalanches of dollars into Germany onto everyone.) And the

Italians, who have the weakest economy, want the right to change their exchange rate by telephone when things get tough — which is far from Herr Schmidt's stern intentions!

The debate will carry on more intensively over the Autumn. Many Labour and Tory MPs are uncertain about the new system, even the pro-Marketees. They know that full acceptance of the EMS could condemn Britain to even more unemployment and less economic growth than there already is — and they are afraid of the political and economic consequence of this. On the other hand, there will be sections of the ruling class who would be prepared to inflict the increased repression which would necessarily accompany even more unemployment and falls in living standards in the long term interest, of increasing the underlying profitability of certain sections of the British economy in a world growing ever more competitive internationally.

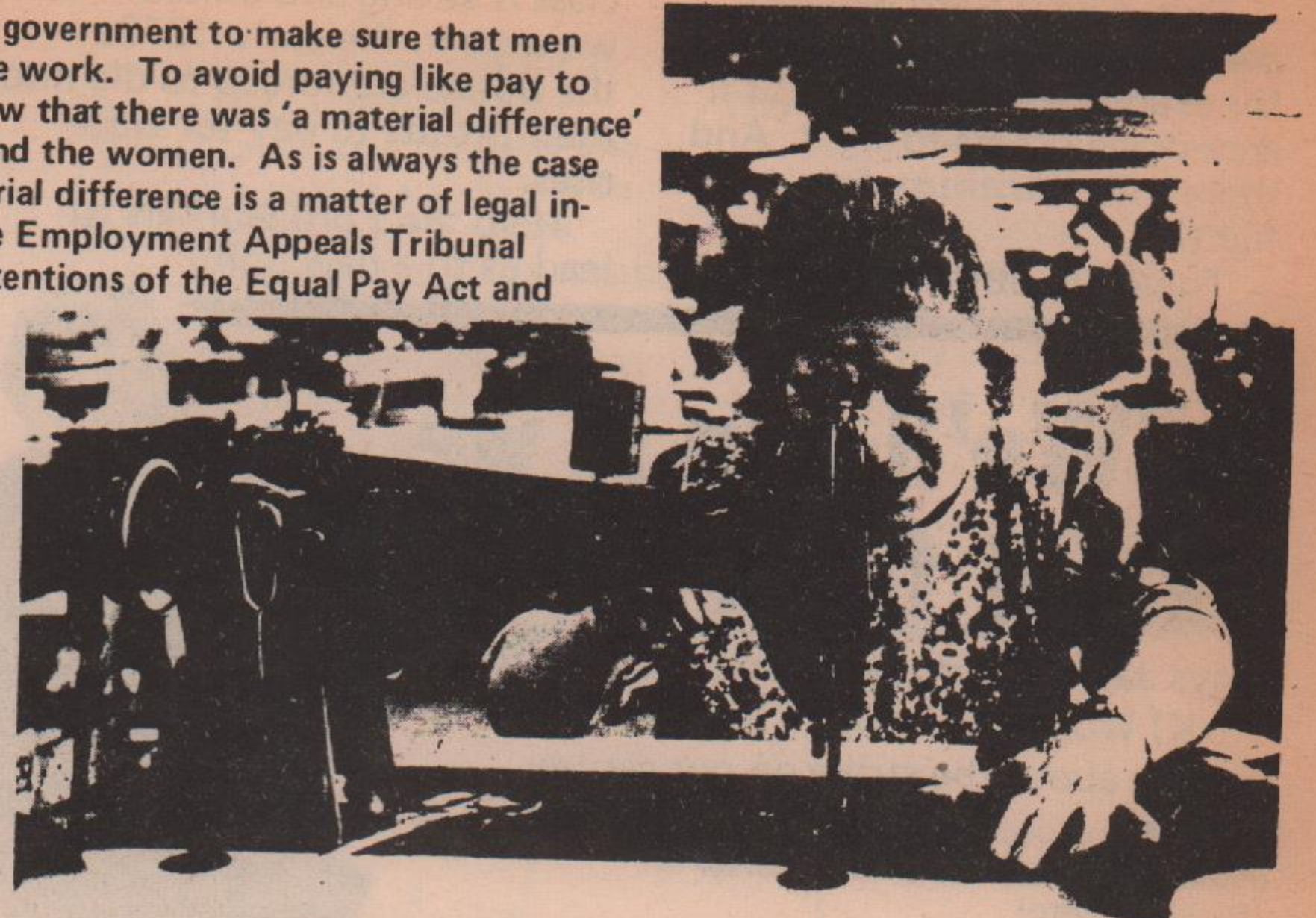
Although such questions might seem very remote and abstract for working class people such developments will determine how the government shapes its policies — which in the final analysis are directed at us.

Part Time Workers- No Equal Pay

The Equal Pay Act was passed by the government to make sure that men and women got 'like pay' for the same work. To avoid paying like pay to women, employers would have to show that there was 'a material difference' between the work done by the men and the women. As is always the case with the law, what constitutes a material difference is a matter of legal interpretation. A recent decision by the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) goes very clearly against the intentions of the Equal Pay Act and makes a mockery of it.

In deciding on the appeal of Kathleen Handley, a part-time textile machinist in East London, the Tribunal ruled that in a situation where men worked full-time and women part-time, this was a 'material difference'. The argument that the Tribunal accepted was that if an employer takes on a part-time worker instead of a full-time worker, the employer loses from having 'machines idle' at certain times. The obvious solution is for the employer to take on another part-time worker. This the Tribunal did not consider, and it ruled against Kathleen Handley.

Justice Slymm, the chairperson of the EAT, added that it was good of the company to not insist that women have to work a 40-hr. week



there. He said that her lower pay (pro rata) is justified because her working week 'is arranged so that she can conduct her family life at the same time'.

Even from the legal point of view,

this was an incorrect decision, since it goes against Section 119 of the Treaty of Rome (the E.E.C.), which makes it clear that pay for work at time rates shall be the same for both sexes if they are doing the same job.

The decision, however, must be understood in its political context. As the economic recession continues, the government and employers want to get women out of waged work to provide jobs for unemployed men. One way to do this is to make sure that those who remain in part-time employment get a very bad deal.

Discrimination against part-time workers is clearly directed against women, since they are the overwhelming majority of part-time workers. It is essential that women's groups up and down the country inform themselves of the Kathleen Handley case, and that they, and the workers' movement as a whole take appropriate action to ensure that such anti-women legal decisions are not repeated.



'Blacks must organise independently'

BLACK PEOPLE must unite! Here to stay, here to fight!, chanted 500 people as they marched through Bradford, and there was no mistaking that they meant what they said. The demonstration on 21 October—called by the Bradford Asian Youth Movement (AYM)—was, as their chairperson said at the rally, historic. 'It's the first demonstration against the immigration laws since 1971,' said Manjit Singh. 'It isn't the end of our campaign, it's the start'.

The Bradford AYM began its present campaign around the case of Said Rahman, a Bradford Trade Union Steward, who had been locked up in Armley Jail pending deportation. Investigation showed that 22 other so-called illegal immigrants were in Armley, and meetings were called and a picket held outside the Jail. Rahman was released, but the AYM has now turned its attention to campaigning against the Immigration Laws themselves.

The most encouraging aspect of the demonstration was the large number of Asians who took part, and the fact that Asians from Brick Lane and Southall had come in contingents organised by the Black Socialist Alliance and the Bangladesh Youth Association. There were also delegations from the Indian Workers Association. Firoz Haji, of the

Black Socialist Alliance paid tribute to the work of the AYM:

'We have organised ourselves in London, but the Bradford comrades have done something extremely practical: they have got Said Rahman out of jail'.

Haji also referred to the Ford strike, pointing out that *'like everyone else, black workers at Ford want to break the 5% and secure decent wage rises for all, yet many of them fear taking part in picket lines because of police surveillance and harassment'.* He then linked in the SUS campaign:

'Black youth are political prisoners. They are picked on by the police using the arbitrary powers of an antiquated act. And it's going to get worse. The Mc nee report is designed to give the police further powers to harass black people'.

While the demonstration was a concrete example of the growing self-confidence and power of the black community, there is clearly some way to go. An important breakthrough is the open assertion of the necessity and right of black people to organise autonomously. Pratibha Parmar of the Bradford Black Collective said, *'This campaign can only be won if the black community can organise itself independently'.* Firoz Haji explicitly agreed. The fact that Bradford Black, a

mainly West Indian organisation and the northern section of the *Race Today* collective, participated in the demonstration is a significant gesture towards unity. But Ms Parmar's support for the AYM was guarded, and was recognised as such by AYM members.

The black community will sort out these problems for itself. The role of the predominantly white revolutionary organisations is to support black autonomy and offer practical support when required. We have a long way to go with this task, as the demonstration showed. The Bradford Black comrade's words about independent organisation were met with a shout of 'rubbish' from a white demonstrator, and the turnout of white people on the march was pitiful. There is an obvious need for branches of the Campaign against Immigration Laws to be set up all over the country to ensure that maximum support is mobilised for action against the laws. Since most towns have a black community that is subject to the laws, there is great scope for practical legal and political support for black people who are being picked up, as well as demonstrations and pickets. Our claim to be anti-racist is increasingly met with a hollow laugh from black militants. It's time we did something about it.

(Union Place Collective)



Jayaben Desai (Grunwicks) and Habib Rahman (Garners) on the platform.

SHEFFIELD: MACHINE SHOP WORKERS STRIKE

One hundred workers have been on strike for a month over what they see as the blacklisting of their former deputy Convenor. The firm concerned is Doncasters (Sheffield), a subsidiary of the US multinational, International Nickel.

The machine shop workers decided to strike when they heard that the firm was refusing to re-employ Gordon Ashberry, who had left the firm some years ago to become area secretary of the Communist Party. The strike has been boosted by the decision, after long delays, by the AUEW executive to make it official. The strikers have also had the support of the local Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions, which has decided to 'black' Doncasters' products.

The strikers face two major problems. One is the lack of support from other workers in the plant. The majority of the workforce is still trying to work, despite the shortage of dies. The other is the difficulty of escalating the dispute outside the works, given the unusual character of the dispute and the lack of majority support in the firm itself.

The machine shop men have taken a very principled position against what appears to be political victimisation, and have put their own jobs on the line in order to prevent blacklisting from being successful. Every militant knows that blacklisting occurs throughout industry, whether through organisations like the Economic League, or employers associations. But it's very rare for workers to strike against it. This is why the strikers deserve wider support.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to:
Doncasters Strike Committee
c/o AUEW House
Furnival Gate

Fighting class sizes in Rotherham

TEACHERS IN the Rotherham area are taking action to force the authority to reduce class sizes and to employ more teachers. Their demands began in earnest when figures recently released on class sizes in primary schools revealed that nearly a third of classes were over the recognised NUT limits. Coming at a time when there are an estimated 40,000 teachers out of work these figures are shocking enough. However, Rotherham has also the most understaffed educational system in South Yorkshire and its pupil/teacher ratios are well below the national average.

Following the successful example of teachers in neighbouring Barnsley teachers in Rotherham will refuse to teach classes of over 30 in secondary schools. They will also refuse to cover for teachers absent for more than one day. The action will continue until the authority agrees to hire the extra 150 teachers that are needed to bring Rotherham in line with neighbouring Doncaster. Big Flame talked to one teacher involved in the dispute.

B.F.: *What has been the council's reaction to the teachers' demands for a reduction in class sizes?*

John: Total contempt at first. They wouldn't even discuss them. However, once they realised that the teachers meant business they told us there was no money left.

An announcement that the council have had a surplus of £1.9 million last year, part of which was from the education budget, made a mockery of that statement. Now they are telling us we must wait until November when they get the rate support grant before they'll even

B.F.: *Are there any particular problems in dealing with a strong Labour-controlled council in which most of the councillors are trade unionists.*

John: Yes. Many of them seem to display a fundamental hostility to education and teachers. They certainly don't take teachers' unions seriously. I believe they think of us as a bunch of Tories and liberals who talk a lot but will ultimately back off from a fight. This makes it all the more important that we take a firm stand on this. If we don't they'll trample all over us in the future.

B.F.: *What has been the reaction of the ordinary classroom teachers to this issue?*

John: Tremendous. There has been overwhelming support. They recognise the need for teachers and educational workers in all sectors of education to stand together and fight for better working conditions and a

GARNERS: MARGOLIS CRACKING?

October 7th Rally at Garner's. The rally, in support of striking workers at Garner's steak houses, was attended by between 1500-2000 people. Since then there has been much more support for the pickets, and the Strike Committee is approaching the crucial Christmas period with a lot more confidence. Margolis, the owner, seems to be cracking. He is spending a lot of time abroad, and recently tried to get his scab workers to march on the empty House of Commons to protest about

the falling levels of his trade and to demand new laws on picketing. Most refused to go, and the ten or so who made it were told by the Tory MP for Westminster (whom they found hanging around) that there was nothing he could do.

Help on the picket lines and money are still badly needed. If you can help, contact the Garner's Strike Committee, c/o 12/13 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W. C. 1.

against teacher unemployment. If we are to be effective in helping individual kids we need smaller classes now. Also we have to think about our future. If the authority keeps to the present staff/student ratios it will have 'lost' 279 teachers by 1984 because of the fall in the birth-rate. Obviously we cannot afford to leave the future of education in the hands of the local education authority, nor in the hands of the school hierarchies.

B.F.: *How have the head teachers reacted?*

John: Generally they pay lip-service to the aims of the teachers while in fact doing everything they can to make their action ineffective. In my own school for example, the head teacher distributed an alternative plan of action to his staff which consisted of a suggested protest letter to the Local Education Authority signed by all the staff.

B.F.: *What was the staff's response to this?*

John: At first astonishment, then an anger. They felt it all the more important to vote for action in order to show the head teacher that the NUT was not part of his empire.

B.F.: *What support have you got from outside the educational system?*



editorial

INTERNATIONAL REPRESSION

Without much 'pomp and circumstance', the Suppression of Terrorism Act became law on October 25th. This is the British state's contribution to the fight of European governments against so-called 'terrorism'. The Act ensures that the British state ignores the political nature of acts like hijacking, and either extradites or prosecutes anyone wanted for "terrorist" offences. It will come as a surprise to people soft on the Labour government to know that the version of the act passed in this country was stronger than the version passed in France. The French law at least re-affirmed that 'Anyone persecuted on account of his action for the cause of liberty has the right to asylum on the territory of the Republic'. In Britain today, anyone wanted (whether guilty or not) for a 'terrorist' offence has no chance of political asylum. As the very informative bulletin *State Research* puts it: 'Despite the seriousness of terrorism, such a blanket law which takes no account of the nature of the state requesting extradition, nor maintains provision for granting asylum to those charged with political offences, must be seen as a substantial erosion of political liberties'. Social Democracy marches on.

INTERNAL REPRESSION

CACTL (*Campaign Against A Criminal Trespass Law*) has brought to our attention the fact that three private bills submitted by Cheshire, Merseyside, and West Midlands County Councils have recently been

passed in the House of Lords and will come up in the Commons very soon. These three bills all make it an offence to organise a procession (unless you are a charity) without giving seven days notice to the police and local authority and providing full details. Violation of this requirement to give notice carries a fine of up to £200. It is clear that if they become law, these Acts will be a serious obstacle to demonstrations that are an immediate response to a given situation. They will have the same demobilising effect as 'having to go through procedure' in workplace disputes. As CACTL makes clear, there is still time to stop these Bills being passed. Action from the Labour Movement in West Yorkshire forced the West Yorkshire county council to withdraw a similar bill.

IF PIGS COULD FLY

The same day that a verdict of misadventure was returned at the second inquest into the death of Liddle Towers, Robert Marks, ex-chief copper had this to say: 'I am suggesting quite bluntly, that for the first time in this century the belief that the state can — or even wishes to — protect people effectively from burglary offences and theft, should be abandoned, at least in the great cities, where inadequate numbers of police have other and much more demanding priorities.'

Maybe it is just a question of priorities: if the police spent less time kicking people to death, harassing black youth and controlling workers on picket lines, they'd have more time for other jobs. How long has it been since any of us saw a copper helping a pensioner across the street?



IRELAND TEN YEARS ON

THIS YEAR is the tenth since the birth of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland. These ten years of conflict, hopes and continuing struggle against British Imperialism are only the latest "troubles" that will always return to haunt British Governments as long as they keep control of their oldest colony. We are printing a series of articles looking back over this ten years This month: THE BATTLE OF BOGSIDE

LAST MONTHS Big Flame described how violence erupted in Northern Ireland in 1968. When Catholics dared to ask for "simple" things like jobs, houses and equal rights, they were beaten into the ground by the police. Either they could give up — and sink back into a bitter acceptance of second class citizenship — or they could carry on demanding Civil Rights.

To the fury of the Protest Loyalists who controlled northern Ireland the Catholics did not give up the fight for equality once the going got rough. Only a few months after the October 1968 march in Derry had been attacked by police, another march was organised. Peoples Democracy — a mainly left-wing student group — organised a long march from Belfast to Derry in January 1969. Demanding "One man — one vote" and "One family — one house" they were harried and abused by

Loyalist groups the whole way. Finally, at Burntollet Bridge, scores of Loyalists — half of them members of the B-Specials, a part-time Protestant Police force, attacked with stones and clubs. As the marchers were brutally beaten down around them the full-time police didn't seem to notice! They wandered unconcerned amongst the attackers even chatting casually with them!

FIRST DEATH

By the time the marchers reached

Derry trouble had already broken out. Police attacks on the Catholic area of the Bogside became frequent. In April they beat a Mr. Samuel Devenny to death in front of his family. The policemen responsible are still in the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

MACHINE GUNS

The Catholics refused to accept this kind of police behaviour. By August 1969 the Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry were in revolt. They were determined to keep the police out.

But at the same time mobs of Loyalists had begun to attack isolated Catholic ghettos like Ardoyne and Short Strand. Unhampered by the police, they forced hundreds from their homes and set fire to them.

CRIMINAL TRESPASS: Continued Vigilance Needed From Left

NEXT MONTH'S conference of the Campaign Against the Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) takes place in a period of growing state repression. This article by Harriet Durban describes some of the major instances of this repression.

The military style operation mounted against the Huntley Street Squatters on August 16th, involving 500 police, including large units of the Special Patrol Group equipped with riot shields and drawn truncheons, was clearly a rehearsal for future attacks on occupations, including those in the workplace and in colleges.

The isolation of the squatting movement from other sections of the working class movement (notably the trade unions) gave the state the opportunity to both bring large numbers of police onto the streets and to bring charges under the 'Criminal Trespass Law' (fourteen people have been charged under Section 10 with resisting the Sheriff in the execution of his duty).

Although a large number of trade union branches, Trades Councils, Labour Parties, Student Unions, tenant and squatting groups have taken up this incident and come out in opposition to both the eviction, police action and charges, overall this attempt to 'legitimise' the use of the police and the charges under the 'Criminal Trespass Law' has to date been successful. For most, Huntley Street remains an event of little significance.

Yet it is only by actively opposing any attempts to use the 'Criminal Trespass Law' that we can safeguard the use of occupations as a tactic.

One month after Huntley Street, the workers at Drylanders, St. Helens, and the St. Helens Trades Council did much to halt this steady offensive by mobilising 200 people in the town to prevent the Sheriff from successfully evicting the occupation, in compliance with a possession order which had previously been granted under the civil procedure.

In theory charges under the 'Criminal Trespass Law' could have been brought (the same charges which were used at Huntley Street). The fact that the Sheriff was faced with a picket which consisted of delegations from several other factories in the town, proved to be sufficient — on that occasion — to disuade him from carrying out the eviction.

While it would be simplistic to say that 200 people will always do the trick, the lesson from Drylanders' must be that if the movement is prepared to mobilise behind an occupation it is capable of defending that occupation.

The use of the law against the working class is not restricted to the 'Criminal Trespass Law'. The 1970's have seen the increasing and deliberate use of the powers of Parliament, the police and the courts to attack the right of the organised working class to organise, strike, picket, occupy, and demonstrate.

What is equally clear is that the movement must prevent these developments from continuing, and must be resolved to oppose attempts to develop the use of law against organised working class action.

However, the working class, and this criticism must also include the revolutionary left, has failed to maintain any appreciable level of vigilance against the attempts of the state to further limit its freedom of action — attempts which have accompanied, at every stage, the onslaught against wages, jobs, public spending, etc. While the left is attempting to vigorously organise around traditional demands such as 'free collective bargaining, shorter working week', etc., it, too, has failed to notice the consistent attacks on the major offensive tactics that the working class uses to win these demands. Free collective bargaining will be worthless if workers are prevented from organising, striking, demonstrating, and occupying.

The left has a clear responsibility to raise these issues within the working class and to take a lead in opposing the development of law in this direction. The left must actively oppose attempts to implement these laws.

One opportunity to seriously address these questions will be at the Campaign Against A Criminal Trespass Law National Conference, 'Occupations, Criminal Trespass and the Use of the Law'. Nov. 11th, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London, beginning at 10 am. Credentials from CACTL, c/o 35 Wellington St. London WC2.



Huntley Street Squat (Newsrelease Photo)

Social Workers Prepare For Xmas On Picket Line

WE'RE PREPARING Christmas trees for the picket line'. That's what one of Liverpool's social workers told us in an interview recently. They feel they may be in for a long strike because the offer that has just been made is unacceptable. The strike in Liverpool began after 88% of the members voted in favour of strike action. Since then they have been picketing all social services departments and are now picketing other city council departments in the hope of bringing the city council to a halt. The response from the manual unions and the public has been incredible.

Social workers are demanding local negotiations over rates of pay and regradings as national negotiations have held salaries down over the last few years. On October 25th the employers said they would be prepared to concede a certain form

of local negotiations within a national framework; that would mean a slightly improved national scale with a few frills like stress factors which could be negotiated locally. However, the claim would not be met.

Their union (NALGO) is talking about this offer but is still supporting the social workers on strike.

We were told of one worrying development in Brent in London, where social workers were forced to accept an unacceptably low offer. This was achieved by a series of manoeuvres by a prominent member of the NEC, Arthur Steer, who is also branch secretary in Brent, and a full time official, Andrew Jacks. A branch meeting was called at which 1000 people turned up and told the social workers in the Brent NALGO branch to get back to work. The

national chairman of the negotiators called the Brent settlement a 'break-through'. This is precisely why the social workers in Liverpool are worried that the Brent experience might happen elsewhere.

A Ford worker is being invited to speak at one of the regular mass meetings of the social workers. We asked whether they saw any connection between the Ford claim and the claim of the social workers. We were told:

'There is no direct link over the 5%, but as regards NALGO's internal politics and its relationship to wage restraint, it is very important as it illustrates how rigid wage controls have been and how they've held down particular service conditions. What we're trying to do is break out of that vicious circle and hopefully show the way to other NALGO members'.

To this day a favourite Orange song describes the successful attack on Bombay Street in the Catholic Clonard area of Belfast:

'On the 18th of August we took a little trip, up along Bombay Street and burned out all the shit.

'We took a little petrol and we took a little gun,

'and we fought the fucking Fenians till we had them on the run'.

'Fenian' is a term of abuse used by Protestants to Catholics. The people of Bombay St., like all Catholics in Northern Ireland, had only themselves for protection. The police openly sided with the Orange mobs, driving into Catholic areas and spraying machine gun fire from armoured cars. In one such attack they machine-gunned the Divis Flats. They killed the first British soldier to die in the present war, a local man on leave, Trooper Hugh McCabe.

They also killed a nine-year old boy, Partick Rooney.

THE TROOPS GO IN

In Derry, however, the Catholics were a majority of the population. They drove the police back, out of the Bogside. They could not be suppressed by the RUC.

James Callaghan, as Home Secretary, made it very clear in his book, *A House Divided*, that he 'feared that the police would be unable to contain the Bogside for much longer and that if troops were not made available the police would be compelled to retreat...' In other words, when he made the fateful decision to send in troops, he was more concerned with backing up the police than in protecting the people of Bombay Street or similar areas.

IMPARTIAL?

There is no doubt that the desperate inhabitants of the Catholic ghettos were relieved to see the troops arrive. Many feared for their lives as the attacks by the police and the Orange mobs increased.

But they were not prepared to rely on a British force to protect them, when the British had been the ones to set up the sick sectarian state of Northern Ireland in the first place.

The most active members of the community began to join the Provisional IRA. This had split away from the old 'Official IRA' when the Officials had failed to protect the ghettos. The Provisionals were not some evil terrorist conspiracy, causing all the violence. They didn't even exist when the fighting started.

But they were determined that the Catholic people would not be left unarmed again.

At first the Army just appeared to be patrolling the fringe areas, 'to keep the two sides apart'. But in the year following their arrival they were deployed more and more in Catholic areas—where no police dared to appear—and hardly at all in Protestant areas. They raided for arms street by street in Catholic dis-

tricts...yet there were thousands of guns *legally licensed* in Protestant hands. The Catholics—already rejecting the Northern Irish police—began to see clearly that the troops weren't there to keep the peace. They were there to suppress the Catholic revolt!

Next Month: 'From Massacre to Mutiny—The policies of the British occupation army'.

TROOPS OUT CONFERENCE

A SHOT in the back of the head. This is what British rule in the shape of the S.A.S. means for socialist and Republican militants in the North of Ireland.

A speaker from the All-Ireland Trade Union Campaign Against Repression (TUCAR) told the recent United Troops Out Movement (UTOM) Conference that repression was becoming increasingly selective, hitting at the activity of particular individuals who cut away at the 'roots' of British rule.

The alternative to selective murder is selective internment in the notorious H Block of Long Kesh camp. UTOM will be organising a tour at which TUCAR speakers will aim for trade union affiliations in Britain.

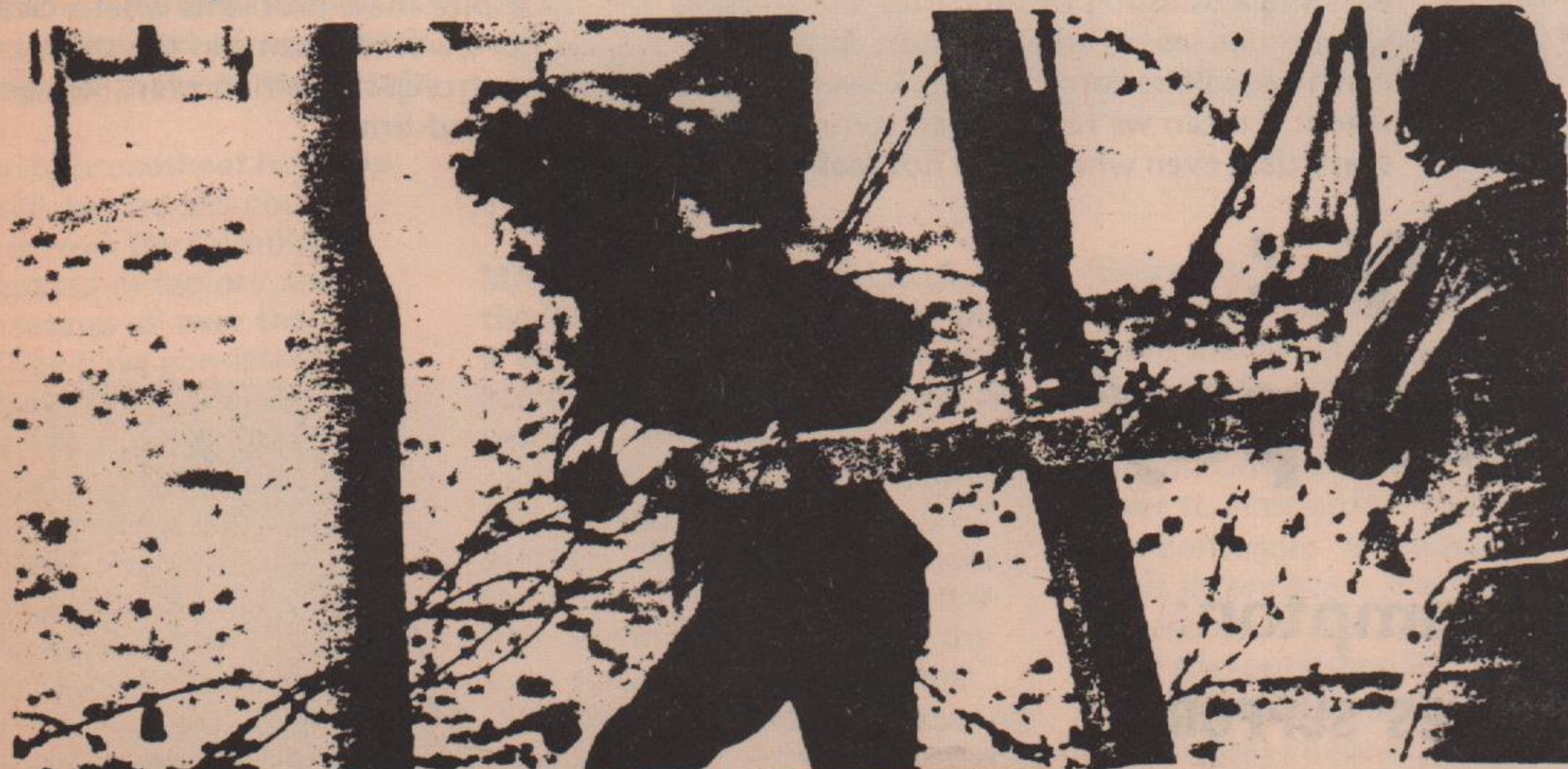
UTOM has now established itself as the main anti-imperialist movement in Britain. This is due to the

support and recognition it has received from Irish organisations, and its adoption of a clear policy on building a mass movement to get the troops out—a policy based on the *whole* working class.

For instance, it was agreed to emphasise in UTOM work and literature the role that women are playing in the Irish struggle.

The national initiative of UTOM must be used to complement the work of the local branches that have proved the foundation for UTOM's growth and influence.

For information of the TUCAR tour contact UTOM, c/o 182 Upper St., London N.1.



'TAKE THE PAPER SERIOUSLY'

Dear Big Flame,

In Manchester we feel that the Big Flame newspaper is central to our political activity. Given the state of the class struggle, the need for the left to work together becomes more and more necessary. Even if we had resources to set up separate BF initiatives, which we haven't, we do not think that it is politically desirable. Even so, we think that BF is developing a different approach to poli-

tics and we have something specific to contribute to the class struggle. We use the paper to spread these ideas and to give the group an identity and focus.

We have two local editors who hassle people for articles and encourage selling. We have open discussion meetings around articles in the paper, and we are beginning to discuss articles which we have written, in order to give confidence and improve style. We are constantly reap-

praising where we sell the paper and are looking for new areas. We try to sell at all meetings, concerts, etc., that we go to. We sell the paper in pubs and ordinary bookshops. We are rethinking estate and factory selling. We are all asking local newspapers if they will take the paper.

We don't find this an easy task. Mostly we are trying to sell something that most people don't want, but which we think is of interest and

and use to them, like bad tasting cough medicine. But if our politics mean anything and if BF is to continue to exist as a separate organisation, then we should push our paper, because it's good and our politics are exciting. We hope other groups begin to take the paper more seriously.

Manchester Big Flame

Dear Editor,

So, Big Flame will call for a vote for Labour at the next election. I'm staggered. But I'm not sure if I'm more staggered by the vote or by the arguments put forward by T. Arnold.

The double talk, the deception, the brazenness of this article are worthy of Jim Callaghan — and totally inconsistent with BF's general practice.

Unlike the Trotskyists (IMG, ICL, Militant), we don't say: keep the Tories out, but build the socialist alternative/mass struggle. We say: build the socialist alternative/mass struggle, and keep the Tories out. Amazing. By one foul swoop, we don't say that Labour is a lesser evil, we don't say it is a weaker enemy (after all, these were mistakes of our past). Instead we say that this is only *secondary*. Primary is building the self-activity of the working class.

We are also distinguished (from our past and from the Trotskyists) by our analysis of the Labour Party and what it is. We don't say that Labour is the mass party of the working class. We say, instead that Labour is a 'bourgeois current in the working class movement', a 'force built out of the working class movement. It is part . . . of working class struggle.' Isn't it marvellous what you can do with words!

And then comes the killer punch. Heavy black type. Images of men with dark glasses and heavy coats dragging you out of the polling booths: 'No organisation which did not oppose the return of a Tory government would have moral or political credibility in mobilising the working class movement to fight (potential Tory) measures.'

No mention of the lack of credibility in calling for the return of a Labour government that has for four years (and six years before that) consistently and unashamedly attacked the working class; no attention to the process by which more and more militants no longer give a damn who wins the election.

No mention of Socialist Unity; no mention of the *demoralising* effect that a Labour government has (as well as a politicising effect); no mention of Labour's bourgeois supporters. Just this heavy-handed, useless, bulldozer of a statement.

The left in general is usually caught out by big movements — eg the women's movement, gays, blacks. Only the ANL was an exception, and that a partial one. As the movement away from the Labour Party is picking up, the left is again being left behind. Big Flame, which is usually ahead of the rest of the left, is choosing this time to hold back. And it is doing so, embarrassingly, by using all the old hat arguments dressed up in quasi-Marxist finery.

So what should BF be arguing? Labour and Tories are twin evils. Both are the parties of monopoly capitalism. Where one makes mistakes or leaves gaps, the other moves in — and vice versa. The real and historical differences between the parties allow this. Both serve to demoralise and depoliticise — sometimes the one more than the other, depending upon the particular circumstances.

There is no mass party of the working class and there is certainly no party that represents the interests of the working class. The left must, then, move beyond the strife between the two major parties. Instead it must develop the self-activity of the working class against both parties. And it must move beyond the debate over the election and start a debate over democracy and the socialist alternative.

Ben Johnson
Lambeth/Southwark BF

2 VIEWS ON THE VOTE LABOUR DEBATE



Dear Comrades,

I'd like to take up the issue of calling for a Labour vote. I think Big Flame was wrong ever to consider that the issue was a tactical one and we were wrong to pass the motion calling for a vote for Labour.

Tactics are all about manoeuvring in the presence of the enemy; when we call for something we mean we put our position in our newspaper and at out meetings etc. to the masses (as many as we can reach). So to call for something "for tactical reasons" amounts to manoeuvring in the presence of the masses.

The motion that we passed highlights this. It argues we should call for a vote for Labour because the mass of working people still identifies with the Labour Party. This is manoeuvring — and it's on the same plane as the examples of manoeuvring that P. Anderson mentions and criticises, ie, calling for a vote for Labour because another dose of Labour government will disillusion people with social democracy; or

calling for abstention so that Labour will be defeated and a dose of Toryism will rouse up working people.

When we call for something we should do so because we think it is in the interests of the people we are addressing ourselves to and, of course, we should be open about how it's in their interests. We shouldn't call for a particular policy in the hope of engineering some change in the economic/political climate which will have some supposed automatic effect on people's consciousness.

But all this leaves the problem of what our position should be on the "labour vote". Though the question of what we call for is not a tactical one, the question of whether people should vote (and who they should vote for) most definitely is; and undoubtedly one of the things we must emphasise around election time is the tactical nature of voting in bourgeois elections. But as to whether there is one clear tactic the masses should adopt in a general election — I don't know. Whilst some fears (eg Tory policy on immigration, Rhodesia) push me one way, other threats (eg the strengthening of social democracy) and revulsions (eg Labour support for the Shah of Iran) throw me the other — and I feel unable to get a general picture.

But, then, are general elections that important? Isn't it better to have no position at all and just concentrate on building the alternatives than to have a position as mistaken as the one we've just passed.

Incidentally, at the time, I voted for the motion — much to my regret having thought about it more. Jim Armfield (Leeds BF)

IRAN — 'NOT JUST A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT'

Dear Comrade,

I bought "Big Flame" for the first time in October. I was most interested in your article on Iran; your analysis of the situation is more like the analyses of bourgeois newspapers. Of course, it is true that the religious leaders have a lot of power.

" . . . at present the 'Marxists' we (you) support have but a very small voice in the anti-Shah movement." (BF) Perhaps the ones you support have little to say in the anti-Shah movement, but the Tudeh (Communist) Party of Iran has a lot to say in the anti-Shah movement and has mass support in Iran.

Please, don't try to play the situation down by making it all a religious movement. Most of the demonstrations are religious inspired, but they (demonstrations) are used by the progressive masses. Have you not heard the slogans that are anti-imperialist and anti-west. When the mass demonstrations started about two years ago, most slogans were purely religious.

The Tudeh (Communist) Party of Iran prints a newspaper (Navid) which is read very widely. There is no other anti-Shah movement organisation which has a regular weekly newspaper (this paper is printed and distributed underground).

We don't have many publications in English, but, if you like we will send you all our publications printed in English.

Organisation of Democratic Youth and Students of Iran. ODYSI. (North Britain)

FORDS-WE'RE NOT A SPECIAL CASE

By Jack Brown — Secretary of Ford (UK) Workers Group (Combine)

No-one can be sure how the Ford strike is going to end. We do know that the strike is hitting Ford hard. Nothing's being produced in Britain and because of the support from dockers, drivers, seamen, airport workers and train drivers, the dealers are getting no imported cars. And with no parts from Britain, Ford plants in Europe are grinding to a standstill.

But the strike is beginning to hit us hard too — in the pocket. Strike

pay from the TGWU is a miserable £6 a week — ridiculous when you consider the rise in the cost of living since the last official strike in 1971, when strike pay was £5 a week.

The situation with Social Security is even more serious. All over the country, Ford workers are getting far below what they're entitled to. Cases of a family with two children where the wife is not working, receiving regular weekly payments of £7 or less are typical. And in most plants the union is doing nothing to organise people to fight collectively against this kind of robbery.

What's more, the convenors and stewards have made little effort to involve the mass of workers in the struggle. So most people are sitting at home — getting their news from the TV — and remaining isolated. There's no sense of solidarity being built up. In some plants, stewards have

even refused to allow rank and file workers to take part in picketing!

Ford management know all this very well. And now they're trying to entice us back to work with the offer of what they call an "attendance bonus". In fact, this isn't a bonus at all. It's an attempt to introduce severe financial penalties against anyone or any section that takes unofficial action on struggles over safety and health, or manning or discipline. If anyone is involved in this kind of action — then they'll automatically lose the attendance bonus (about £3) — even if the dispute lasts only a couple of minutes.

This will mean that people will be even more willing to work in dangerous conditions, and do nothing about it. It'll mean that building a tradition of solidarity and struggle will become even more difficult. It will mean we will be forced to work even harder. And it'll mean we're forced to come into work every day, even when we're not feeling well,

or when one of the kids is sick.

Already, our union leaders have told Ford they're prepared to set up a special sub-committee to negotiate the details of this "attendance bonus" — as long as they offer us a bit more money on the basic rate. So clearly, this is one main danger facing the strike.

Equally serious is the isolation of our strike. For the moment we're fighting wage restraint on our own — just like the firemen last year. The danger is that — although Ford has broken the 5% — we'll be treated as a special case. Unless we can be part of a general struggle against Callaghan's incomes policy, then we won't win everything we could have won and more important, other sections of the working class won't gain from our strength.

Despite these problems what's clear is that we Ford workers can win the strike. We're in the strongest position ever. All we've got to do is stand firm!



Ford wives say : 'Lets make Fords pay'

WHY WE'RE BACKING OUR MEN IN THE STRIKE.

WE'RE a group of Ford workers' wives who are backing this strike and we know most of the wives feel this way:

BECAUSE: We're the ones that have to make ends meet on a wage packet that's been cut by 28% in relation to rising prices over the past 4 years.

We're the ones who have to cope with our husbands being worn out and bad tempered all the time because of the lousy shifts and long hours they have to work to get a decent wage.

We know the strike's a strain for the wives — not really knowing what is going on, not enough money coming in.

But if the men go back to work now, we'll never be in a strong position again to get the wage rise we must have to cope with rising prices.

Those of us who go out to work, we're the ones who'll lose with the 5% fraud because we're the lowest paid — Ford workers are showing the way to beat it!

It's up to us to help win this strike and get the full claim. We can:

- Go to the pickets with our husbands and find out what's going on.
- Organise together to get our full Social Security benefit.
- Make ourselves heard — phone the radio chat-programs.
- Set up wives' committees to support the strike.

Contact us:
Ford Wives Strike Support Group,
25, Dearmer House, London SW2

Big Flame talked to Eileen, the wife of a worker at Halewood, about how they manage on the 'wonderful' wages that we're told car workers get.

We just about manage. If he doesn't work overtime and saturday and sunday, he'll pick up about £40 and that just about gets us over, but if he's on nights and does overtime and week ends, we have enough to go out over the weekend. The rent has just gone up to £13 — so the original offer that was made wouldn't have helped at all.

I have the two kids a lot myself. There's not much time my husband gets to be with them. They say "Where's me dad? Won't he take me out?" Especially on Sunday. We don't see him all day Sunday because he starts at 8 and ends at 5. When he comes home he has his meal and a sleep because he's tired and by the time he wakes up the kids are ready to go to bed and then on Monday morning he's not here again — he's at work.

The women definitely should have a say. It's our lives that are mixed up by it as well as the men's, and the women deal with the money more.

Now he's on strike you've got to try and juggle the money around and say leave one payment one week and pay something else the next, and then the other way round. Of course we don't eat as well, we've got to cut down on meat and butter and just buy half the food we usually buy.

We knew the strike was coming so I saved the Family Allowance for four weeks, but that's all gone now. Now you buy food on Thursday with the tax rebate and by Saturday, when you get the dole for me and the kids, there's not much left.

There's often times we row about not enough money, but I feel that they shouldn't go back if they really think they'll get the full amount. Now they've been out so long it would be a waste to go back.

Southampton: FORD WIVES' SUPPORT GROUP SAYS:

WE WON THE DAY!

Last Saturday, Ford wives from Dagenham and Langley joined with Southampton wives to wipe Susan Charlton and her anti-strike campaign off the face of the earth.

The first we heard about this telly-organised campaign was when we saw Susan Charlton on the TV on Thursday night announcing she was going to get the Ford workers back to work.

We were so angry that some of us from Dagenham and Langley decided to go down on Saturday and get together with the Southampton wives to back the strike. They had organised a strike support group already — when we arrived there were 50 of them there in support of the strike.

We marched to the meeting — there were six of Susan Charlton's 'ladies' surrounded by TV cameras. Our numbers grew to nearly 200 and the arguments started — we won the arguments, the meeting, the day — and we don't think Susan Charlton will dare raise her voice again!

In fact, in the end, some of the anti-strike women (and men) came over to our side, once we told them the facts about Ford's latest offer and how we're organising to get our full social security benefit.

Mind you we got a shock when we saw the news on the telly and the radio. They only told the side of the anti-strike 'ladies' — you wouldn't have thought there were 200 of us there backing the strike. You can't believe the media — they earn the same sort of money as Ford management.

We came back from Southampton determined to get the wives more involved now we'd found what a difference it made for us.



Julie Alexander, Langley Ford wife, at Southampton Ford wives' meeting.

John Sturrock 'Report'



NEXT EDITION

PUBLICATION DATE:
FRIDAY, 1 DECEMBER

DEADLINE:
WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER
Articles, letters, and photos to:
Big Flame Newspaper
217 Wavertree Road
LIVERPOOL 7

LEEDS:

14th November: BF open educational on Chile, introduced by members of the MIR. 8 pm, Trades Club.

4th Nov. Bonfire, Back Frances Street. Starts 6 pm, bring fireworks.

16th Nov: Film, 'Telling Tales', Lecture Theatre, Block 21, Leeds University.

15th Nov., meeting to adopt a Socialist Unity candidate, 8 pm, Trades Club.

LIVERPOOL: Big Flame Public Meeting on 'Feminism and Socialism'. The Dolphin, Paradise St. Thursday 16th Nov at 8pm.

BIG FLAME NATIONAL DAY SCHOOL: 'SEXISM AND FASCISM', with workshops. Saturday, 2 December, 12 noon to 5 pm, in Birmingham. Open to BF members and sympathisers. Details from AFAR Co-ordinator, 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool 7.

SHEFFIELD: Joint Big Flame/Socialist Workers Party public meeting—'The Ford Strike and After. Organising to Break the

5%'. Speakers from Fords Workers Combine and NUPE. 7.30 pm at the Station Hotel, The Wicker, Sheffield (Upstairs Room). Wed., November 8th.

'POLITICAL STATUS FOR IRISH Political Prisoners'. Speakers Joan Maynard MP, and a representative of TUCAR (Trade Union Campaign against Repression), an Irish 32 County organisation. Organised by the UTOM in support of the Prisoners March in London, Nov 26th. Nov 16th, 8.00pm Town Hall Basement Theatre, Albert Sq., Manchester.

Frank George, a member of the Big Flame Industrial Commission writes an assessment of the role of the Ford (UK) Worker Group (Combine) in the current Ford strike

FOR SOCIALISTS one of the most positive things about the Ford strike has been the emergence and growth of the Ford (UK) Workers Group (Combine), a group drawing its support from amongst shopfloor workers and stewards committed to fighting for the whole claim.

Although relatively small in numbers the combine already has an impressive list of achievements:

14,000 copies of a strike bulletin have been distributed each week for the last five weeks, keeping workers informed of the progress of the strike — something that the local stewards committees have failed to do — only Halewood has had a 'report back' mass meeting and that was four weeks ago.

A solidarity broadsheet has been distributed around the country, and Speakers from the Combine have participated in factory and left wing meetings all over the country. They have consistently argued against the "Big Profits — Special case" reasoning of the national negotiators.

Wives and girlfriends of Ford workers have been involved in the combine right from the start — a big step forward and an effective way of stopping any media inspired back to work campaign.

All the national negotiations have been picketed to ensure the union negotiators stay on the straight and narrow — the full claim.

FULL INVOLVEMENT

The Combine has fought to keep Fordworkers involved in their strike. As important as its activities has been the political role of the Combine. At every stage the combine has been putting over a socialist perspective on the strike and its implications, keeping at the front of peoples mind the need for a shorter working week and its effect on the dole queue, battling the bosses propaganda that wage rises alone cause inflation and spelling out the long term dangers of productivity deals.

It is no surprise that it is the other organised political force involved in the strike — the Communist party (which includes several convenors and senior stewards) that has been making totally unfounded attacks on the Combine accusing it of misappropriating money destined for the National Strike Fund. The CP convenors are political convenors and they recognise that the Combine is a threat to their own supremacy. They want a rapid end to the strike with a moderate victory for the workers. They know that the CP's relationship with the Labour Party will be in jeopardy if the strike destroys the Pay Policy and causes a General Election. In effect the Communist Party is the Right wing in this strike. The majority of convenors, though not revolutionary socialists by any means, recognise that it is now or never for Fordworkers and aim to get the best possible deal, come what may.

NEW DIRECTION

The Combine offers a new direction for rank and file organising in Britain, involving socialists of many different groups and parties and many who are unaligned. Through its activities and organisation it has shown up the 'Party Front' model in its true light —



John Sturrock 'Report'

MASS PICKET at Ford Langley on the 20th October. Normally there is only a token picket at the plant, but on this particular day over 50 workers turned up.

During the annual shutdown two members of the Ford (UK) Workers Group (Combine) visited the Ford Truck Plant in Amsterdam and made contact with the local stewards. Soon after the Ford strike started, a member of the Amsterdam Joint Works Committee phoned up the Combine

Secretary to tell him that staff at the British Truck Plant at Langley were smuggling blacked parts through to Amsterdam and gave the name of a Langley staff member — Simon Lowrie — who had gone over to Amsterdam to co-ordinate his colleagues' scabbing activities. This information was immediately passed on to the Langley stewards and also published in the Combine's weekly strike bulletin. The upshot of this was chaos at both Langley and Amsterdam with threats flying back

wards and forwards and Ford Management making all kinds of dire promises to the Amsterdam J.W.C. But it didn't end there, because a friendly staff member at Langley provided a list of the 15 men involved at the British end of the smuggling operation.

For a week these men were harassed every time they approached the plant, until the Police stepped in to protect them. Then came the mass picket, and on that day not one of the fifteen entered the plant!

It seems that European Fordworkers have taken heart from the struggle in Britain. Amsterdam has been on a one day week for the last fortnight. Their layoff pay (100%) has until now been paid out of a state layoff fund which is made up partly by workers contributions, the Amsterdam stewards felt that Fords should be paying and through demonstrations and lobbying have forced Ford to take over the payments from the Dutch government.

NEWS FROM THE PICKET LINE



Ford (UK) Workers Group (Combine) leaflets being handed out at Dagenham.

a conveyor belt for the party line recruiting members for the Party — all based on a pretence that a single party can represent all the left wing currents that exist in the class.

The Combine has proved that if a rank and file organisation is

truly-organisationally separate from any party, people will join it and be active within it. After the strike the combine will carry one, educating its members, fighting for a left wing leadership in the union and full participation of the shopfloor.

BIG FLAME talked to four Halewood workers on picket duty one friday night recently. They were sitting around a large tin drum turned brazier, helping themselves from time to time to the potatoes baking on the lid. Jimmy and Roy, both from the Assembly Plant, are active in the local Ford Workers (UK) Combine Committee group. That day, they and several others had been over to give out a Combine leaflet at Vauxhalls, Ellesmere Port. Dave and Joe are security men in normal times, and both stewards.

BF: Is there any move amongst people you know for going back?

Jim: Everybody's suffering, of course but not so much they're beginning to panic.

Joe: The longer it goes on, and with the way Fords are acting the goat with all these offers, the easier it becomes to stay out. It was difficult at first getting used to the idea, but now.... People know what the score is.

BF: How are you managing personally?

Joe: Well, you can see us there now. There's our dinner on the top of the fire.

Roy: My savings are vanishing. Joe: You lived before Fords came here, and if they were to wrap up tomorrow, you'd live again. You know you're not going to starve. You'll get by.

BF: Do you think there's any chance anybody else will come out and join you?

Jim: Well, there's 400 Vauxhall workers have walked out today at Ellesmere port

Dave: I think they'll come out at Vauxhalls and also the BOC workers when they hear what Fords offer is up to now.

BF: Will it make any difference for you if they do?

Jim: The more people out at the same time, strengthens everybody's position. Not only ours.

Roy: It says on our badge that Fords is fighting for everyone. Dave: When you're in a fight, you like all the help you can get.

BF: What would your attitude be if this strike helped to bring down the Government, or forced a general election on them?

Jim: I wouldn't like to see a Tory government get in...

BF: But if it came to a choice between carrying on the strike and maybe letting in a Tory Government?

Jim: Well, I'm afraid that if it meant getting the Labour government unstuck, well, that's the only way to do it.

Dave: If it brings down the Government, I would still say we should vote Labour in the next election, hoping they'd get back again, probably with a slightly different cabinet. This is the first Labour government that I've thought they've got to go. They just gone a bit too far. Last year it was, what, 8½%, and then they cut it to 5% this year.

NORTHWEST SPANNER: MERSEY-SIDE TOUR. Nov. 6th, 8 pm—'Out of Control'. Everyman Bistro (last chance to see Spanner's show, which raises the problem of nuclear power in the context of an industrial dispute over safety). Nov. 7th, 8 pm—'Partisans'. Labour Club, Deacon Rd., Appleton, Widnes ('Partisans' is Spanner's new evening show, set in a Chrysler subsidiary threatened by the Peugeot takeover). Nov. 9th, 8 pm—'Partisans', Edge Hill College, Ormskirk. Nov. 10th, 8.30 pm—'Partisans', Tom Halls Tavern, Brunswick Rd., Liverpool (late bar, disco, too...).

'BRITAIN & SOUTHERN AFRICA' a one day conference for trades unionists and youth, at Abraham Moss Centre, Crumpsall, Manchester. Saturday Nov 11th 10am-6pm. Sponsored by N.W.T.U.C., speakers invited: Joan Lestor, Mike Cooley, S.A.C. T.U. Contact Manchester Anti-Apartheid, 59 Tintern Ave., M.cr M20 8 ND, tel 061. 434.7549

'HOME, SOLDIER HOME' Manchester UTOM presents a new film on the role of the Army in the north of Ireland. Nov 8th 7.30pm, the Squat, Devas St, off Oxford Rd., Manchester.

COVENTRY UTOM/RELATIVES AC-

support of the Irish Republican prisoners jailed in the 'H-Blocks' of Long kesh prison. Wed., 8th November at 8 pm, in the Red House Pub, Stone Stanton Rd., Coventry (1 mile from city centre).

CRITIQUE CONFERENCE: 'From Lenin to Stalinism'. Saturday-Sunday, 25-26 November, Ashley Building, University of Birmingham, Bristol Rd., Birmingham. Peter Rutland: 'Nationalism in the USSR'; Mick Cox & Bob Service: 'The Party in 1917, Theory and Practice'; Dave Law and Nick Lampert: 'From Lenin to Stalin, Marxism and Soviet History'; Jeff Gleisner: 'The Ideological Work of the CPSU'. Registration: £1.50

PICKET DUKINFIELD Magistrates Court. Nov 20th 9.30am, meet outside Town Hall, King St. This is the first in a series of trials of Tameside anti-fascists arrested while protesting against the NF playing football. Two members of CARF are on trial this time. Donations to Tameside CARF, (marked Defence Fund)/c/o AUEW, Margaret St., Ashton u-Lyne, Lancs.

SAVE MANCHESTER LAW CENTRE The Law Centre has ten full time workers. Three of these jobs are threatened and the centre provides a valuable free legal service for working class people, so the service would be

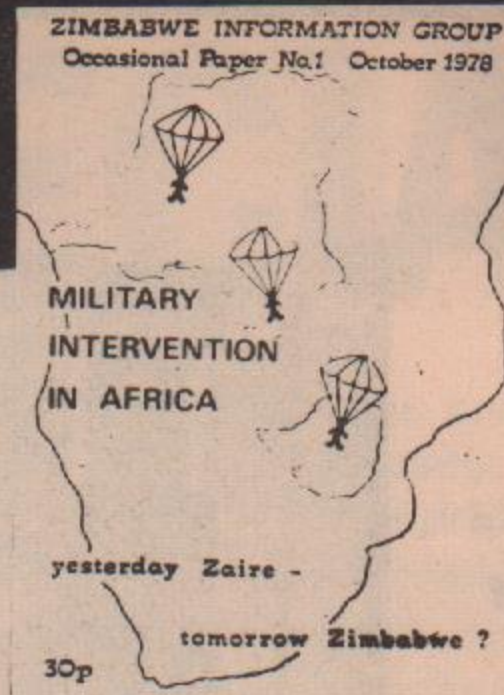
severely cut if these jobs are lost. Picket Manchester Town Hall Mon Nov 27th 2pm, letters of support to 595 Stockport Rd., Longsight, Manchester 12, tel 225.5111.

WEDGE No. 3 out now. Contains hard hitting attack on the cultural aspects of the traditional left—its demonstrations, its language, its press, and its relationship to bourgeois mass media. 75p plus 10p postage from 44 Eccles Road, London S.W. 11. Also Benefit Party with disco and food, 8.00 pm, Sat., 18th November, Hemingford Arms, Offord Rd., London N.1.

Photo: Carlos Augusto

**THE STRUGGLE
WORLDWIDE**

Apartheid rests on Migrant Labour



Armies in Africa

Of the 257 whites in Kolwezi who disappeared in the first few days of the uprising this year, 212 had declared their whereabouts by the end of June. The 257 made headlines across the Western world as part of a massive propaganda campaign against anti-imperialist movements, against Blacks, and against the Cubans. It was not reported that 212 had later declared themselves safe, and nor was it reported that, in the January before, Zairean soldiers had brutally massacred 2000 villagers in Shaba province.

This is just one of the many startling facts to emerge in a new pamphlet by the Zimbabwe Information Group. Entitled *Military Intervention in Africa: Yesterday Zaire - Tomorrow Zimbabwe* [price 30p, from ZIG, 1, Cambridge Terrace, London NW1 4JL], it is a savage indictment of Western media coverage of third world struggles. Using many eye-witness accounts, as well as reasoned analysis, it presents a clear picture of developments in Southern Zaire in May and June this year.

As ZIG's introduction makes clear, and as *Big Flame* has discussed in earlier issues, there is a real prospect of a British-led intervention in Zimbabwe in the not too distant future. Not only is this likely to seriously hamper the chances of an anti-imperialist victory in Zimbabwe, but it will also strengthen racism and fascism in this country.

For the lessons of Kolwezi are that imperialist intervention means an increase in media racism and an increase in the number of racists and fascists inside the imperialist countries. The pamphlet is, then, to be recommended highly for use by Anti-Nazi League and Against Racism and Fascism groups, as well as by Anti-Apartheid groups or those who want a far clearer idea of what happened in Kolwezi in 1978.

THE APPALLING conditions that migrant workers in South Africa face gave rise to a conference this year, organised by the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation. Attending the conference were the 'Front Line States' (the black African countries, such as Tanzania and Zambia, that have found themselves immediately involved in the liberation struggle in Southern Africa), the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe, the African National Congress of South Africa, and SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organisation) of Namibia.

The conference agreed to strive for abolition of the migratory labour system in South Africa. Until this could be achieved, they adopted a 'Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in Southern Africa'. The significance of this charter, which has not been widely publicised, extends beyond the confines of Southern Africa.

THE BANTUSTANS

The entire Bantustan policy has been to legalise the fiction that black workers are 'foreign'. Apart from those workers who have resided continuously in an urban area since birth, only those who entered employment in a 'white' area before 1968, and have worked continuously with the same employer for 10 years, or have lived continuously in the area for 15 years, may continue to live there.

With the Bantu Labour regulations of 1968, all new labour contracts in the urban areas are for a maximum period of only one year. After this the worker must again return to the Bantustan and re-register with the labour bureau for a further contract. But the security of those who qualify for urban residence under the act is more apparent than real, and workers are subject to the whims of their employers, who can dismiss them and thus deprive them of their right to stay in the urban area except as a contract migrant worker. Such contract workers are subject to the most humiliating personal restrictions. For example, they can never be the tenants of a house of their own. They must always live in 'bachelor' hostels.

They can never change their category of work. They cannot bring their wives into the area.

Inevitably these laws discriminate against any trade union or political activity. Even those who qualify for urban residence under the 1968 Regulations may be removed if they are considered 'idle' (unemployed) or 'undesirable', a category which involves virtually any political activity. This also includes trade union activity, since, although industrial action undertaken by registered trade unions is excluded from the South African definition of sabotage (one of the crimes that defines an 'undesirable' person), African trade unions may not be registered. Nor can Africans be members of registered unions. Thus they have no protection.

OPPOSITION

Nevertheless, political opposition continues. The Soweto uprising of June 1976; the growth of squatter's movements, especially in the Cape, where people have been resisting taking up Transkei citizenship (which would turn them into contract workers with no rights); and the continuing struggle of African trade unionists for full recognition, all demonstrate a determination by black South Africans to continue and extend the struggle. The divisions within the working class, which the migratory labour system encourages, can be whipped up and manipulated by the authorities when it suits them. This was clearly shown during the Soweto strike in 1976, where police planned and orches-



Inspection of black mine worker

Eve Arnold

trated confrontations between migrant hostel-dwelling contract workers and the striking population of Soweto.

CHARTER

The Charter of Rights for Migrant Workers in Southern Africa was an attempt by the participants at the conference to confront the extreme aspects of the South African migratory labour system. Hence demands for free trade unions, freedom of movement and of residence, equal pay, freedom of occupation, etc. The demands in themselves are by no means revolutionary, and fall far short of conditions achieved by workers in other parts of the world. But the Charter is important because of what it leaves out - not once in its 15 clauses are the words 'migrant worker' mentioned. The Charter refers throughout to 'all workers'. The Charter for Migrant Workers

denies the category of migrant workers; the significance of this is made quite clear in the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) policy statement on migrant workers. This states:

"in the same way as SACTU rejects the concept of "foreign workers" when applied to black South Africans, so too does it reject that concept when applied to other workers, regardless of their country of origin... We say that those who have contributed to the wealth of South Africa, regardless of their country of origin, will be free to live and work in South Africa if they so choose."

JOINT STRUGGLE

In Britain, the racist immigration laws that created the notion of patrials and non-patrials (a convenient new notion of nationality for the ruling class) operate in exactly the

same way. Throughout the world, the notion of 'foreignness' allows the creation of a reserve army of rightless workers. How different is British deportation on the expiry of a work permit from South African deportation? And how different is the threat of such deportation to a militant trade unionist?

To deny the existence of the migrant worker is to accept the worker from other countries as a co-worker, and to engage collectively in struggles to defend the working conditions of all workers. And such struggles are also by their nature attacks on the operation of imperialism itself, which can only be the loser if 'migrant' labour is no longer available.

Socialists in Britain have always been opposed to all immigration controls for these reasons. We should welcome the 'Charter' as a contribution to our joint struggle against imperialism.

SOUTH AFRICA

THE 'BANTU HOMELANDS'	
HOMELAND	PEOPLE
1 Boputhatswana	Tswana
2 Lebowa	North Sotho
3 Ndebele	Ndebele
4 Gazankulu	Shangaan & Tsonga
5 Venda	Venda
6 Swazi	Swazi
7 Basotho-Iwaqwa	South Sotho
8 KwaZulu	Zulu
9 Transkei	Xhosa
10 Ciskei	Xhosa



No Blacks in South Africa—that is the logic behind the artificial creation of the 10 Bantustans. It is white South Africa's answer to international criticism that Black people have no rights in their own country.

The Bantustans are central to the strengthening of apartheid. The government pretends to be giving Blacks their independence. In reality, it is 'giving' 12.9% of the land surface to 75% of the people.

To achieve consolidation the regime is forcibly moving black South Africans from their homes to the Bantustans. Estimates are that over 3.8 million people will be involved in removals. So far, 2,115,000 have been moved, only 7000 of them white (*Post* 14.3.78).

The regime asserts that the Bantustans will eventually become economically self-sufficient. Nothing in the present condition of the Bantustans or future plans for them support this. Peasant production in the Transkei and other Bantustans has in fact collapsed. These are areas where neglect of agriculture and a massive drain of labour power have led to abject poverty and chronic rural under-development. They are areas almost wholly dependent on wages earned outside them.

—From Counter Information Services pamphlet, *Buying Time in South Africa*. 95p from Counter Information Services, 9 Poland Street.

Puerto Rican 'jumping fingerprints'

When a 'suitable' jury has been found, the trial will begin in Puerto Rico of Miguel Cabrera, a Teamster militant accused of murdering company lawyer Alan Randall, who was known to have close links with the U.S. intelligence service. The only evidence against Cabrera is an alleged finger-print known in Puerto Rico as the 'jumping fingerprint', because of its ability to jump from one bit of evidence to the other.

The frame-up of Cabrera comes at a time when the US-dominated government is attempting a systematic destruction of the trade union movement. Earlier this year Juan Caballero, another Teamster militant, was tortured and then murdered by the police 'Death Squad'. For years now trans-national corporations have thrived in Puerto Rico as rock bottom wages and tax exemptions meant sky-high profits. The developing workplace organisation has led to very bitter and violent confrontations (e.g., Ponce Cement) with the forces of 'law and order'. At the same time, there has been a growth of the movement for independence and national liberation, which has had to take on the United States and its puppets who want Puerto Rico to become a U.S. state.

A Committee for the Defence of Miguel Cabrera has been set up in London. It has detailed information on the case and more generally on what is happening in



Miguel Cabrera

information contact: Miguel Cabrera Defence Committee, 313 Caledonian Road, London N. 1 (tel.

'Today I would not support actions I agreed with in the past'

LAST MONTH, the left-wing French daily 'Liberation' published a long interview with Hans Joachim Klein, an ex-member of the German guerrilla movement who is wanted both by the German police and by the German underground who are not at all happy about his leaving the armed struggle. Caught in a cross-fire between two armies, Klein is in a very difficult situation. In this interview, of which we only print extracts, Klein talks about the politics of the guerrilla movement, what living in clandestinity is like and the problems he now faces. What comes across with tragic clarity in the interview are the problems that face a revolutionary who wants to admit that he has made a mistake. The difference with Klein is that he had the courage to admit it.

When he was active in the German urban guerrilla movement, Klein was a member of the Revolutionary Cells (RZ). A group less well known than the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the 2nd of June Movement — the RZ is a more 'political' group; it tries to make sure that there is some link between its actions and the needs of the class struggle.

an interview with Hans Joachim Klein

There are members of the straight left who thought that it would have been better for me to break with the guerrillas and remain silent. From my experience, I think that this is wrong. When members of the guerrilla movement declare that their actions are motivated by love and solidarity and, in fact, what they are doing is to plant bombs on a Japanese Airline plane in exchange for five million dollars — I can see no relationship between these acts and left-wing politics. And what I want to explain is what has become of the political project of the guerrillas.

What do you mean?

The problem is that they claimed that their actions were independent but this was no longer the case. Always, they were under the control of Waddi Haddad and his Palestinian group (Haddad whose death was recently announced, was one of the founders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FPLP). On leaving the FPLP, Haddad took charge of the 'special operations' of the Palestinian movement). To undertake any action around the freeing of prisoners, the guerrilla movement is dependent on a country that is prepared to take the prisoners in. And they are dependent on someone for money and arms. The German guerrilla got money and arms in exchange for agreeing to carry out other actions. Haddad needed people for his operations that were not Arab. This explains how Germans got involved in Fascist actions like the raid on Entebbe (three years ago Israeli Commandos staged a lightning attack to release the passengers hijacked by a guerrilla group and held at Entebbe Airport, Uganda with President Amin's connivance.) As far as I'm concerned that's a fair description of what happened at Entebbe — it was like Auschwitz.

What happened at Entebbe?

As soon as I learned that at Entebbe the airplane passengers had been divided into different groups, with the Jews on one side, the others on the other, it reminded me of what used to happen in the stations before people were shipped off to Auschwitz. It's pretty sad that members of the German guerrilla movement could get involved in this sorting out of people.

Are you sure about this?

I'm certain. It's Haddad himself who told me about it. He was at Entebbe. He also told me about the murder of Dora Bloch, the old woman who was taken to a hospital in Entebbe. Not only did he confirm to me that she was assassinated, but Idi Amin claimed to have strangled her with his own hands! It was pure brutality.

What do you hope to achieve with this long interview?

I am not interested in naming either individuals or governments.

I want to make available my political experiences, share the lessons I have drawn from them, and explain what it was like from the inside. I do not want to put people in danger whatever political differences I have with them today. The only names I will give you are either of people who are dead or of fascists like Idi Amin whose crimes I refuse to protect.

It seems that many of the guerrilla fighters that you mentioned (who are now dead) changed a lot from their early days as activists in the student anti-imperialist movement.

You know it's my feeling that if you stay in the urban guerrilla movement, sooner or later you forget a lot of things, from your humanity to your political ideals. You get deeper and deeper in the shit — there's no way out. If you get caught, it's a ten-fifteen year sentence whatever you did.

This was my problem after the OPEC operation in Vienna, (when the oil producing countries' organisations' headquarters was occupied by guerrillas). After an operation like that you can't get out. And anyway to be on the run for years like I am, is no future.

I have the feeling that the real political situation in Germany does not really interest the different guerrilla groups. Their analysis is always the same — it's what they were writing years ago.

From the beginning the RAF has always said that what had to be done was to sharpen the contradictions so that things became more and more openly fascist. The thing is to bring out the latent fascism of the West German regime. Then, we would get the support of the masses and of the left, including those who are against us today. In this climate, things are difficult for the legal left but also for the guerrilla movement. Yet, they want things to get even worse. They make attacks that boomerang on them. It's clear — they carry out their actions and are forced to leave West Germany. It's difficult to live in West Germany, it's even more difficult to live underground.

What do the members of the guerrilla movement think about the revolutionary left?

There is this famous slogan that the supporters of the RAF shout on demos in Germany: 'Baader out, Dany in' which means free Baader and, in exchange, put Cohn Bendit in solitary confinement! They think that the left does not understand anything. So the RAF tries to exert a moral pressure on the left over the question of the political prisoners who are, in fact, in a terrible situation. But if you show solidarity, you must do so from the political perspective

of the guerrilla movement otherwise they treat you as a 'do gooder.'

They have even gone as far as to destroy solidarity campaigns which did not take up their political positions. And their treatment of liberals is the same. They use them and send them back to their studies.... You know, I can no longer call the people in the guerrilla movement 'comrades'. For me it was an important word; the first time I was called comrade, I was very happy. The members of the German guerrilla movement are not able to do what the Weather Underground did in the States — to say 'we're going to stop'. Today I would not support actions I agreed with in the past. Actions have their own internal logic — they become an end in themselves. It's a vicious circle. Each action became more fucked up, more and more apolitical....

On the left now, some comrades are raising the demand for an amnesty for those who are still in the underground. Are you in favour of this?

Yes, I am for an amnesty as a political solution. At least a partial one. I am not naive enough to think that it will be enough if Germany remains Germany. And I am sure that the guerrilla fighters will be very suspicious of an amnesty. But I don't think that they will all refuse it. And it will still be possible to say that the struggle goes on.

It is the fanatical reactions of the State that have turned the guerrilla movement into a hydra. Everytime the state has arrested someone, this has created five new guerrilla fighters. Ordering people to give up will never solve the problem. That's why this vicious circle must be broken and a door opened.

If the federal government does not take such an initiative, it will be legitimate to think that it does not want to break the circle, that it needs the guerrillas. There are moments when I believe this.

What do you mean?

That they need it to make things tougher. Under the cover of the anti-terrorist struggle, everything has become possible. For example, under section 88, everything can be banned — books, newspapers.... What's it got to do with terrorism that people put a scarf around their face when they go on a demo? It's only to protect themselves against the terrorism of the state. Now that is going to be made illegal. Also they're going to make it illegal to carry a bag. Pretty soon, we're going to be forced to visit the police with no clothes on to make it easier for them to beat the shit out of us! What do these demos have to do with terrorism? Nothing.

What's your personal situation now?

Well, it's certainly better than still being in the guerrilla movement when you no longer agree with what's being done — I did this for a year. Throughout that year, my mind was elsewhere — only my body was in the guerrilla movement. The problem today is that I remain dependent; on comrades who give me money, on comrades who put me up, who help me move around. The main problem is money. The comrades who help me are people on the left, who, as you well know don't have much money. It's difficult for me to get a regular job. Either because I can't find one or because I haven't got the right papers.

My life is not easy. In the beginning, I had to live with comrades in a very restricted space. If you can never go out, living together in cramped conditions can become very difficult. There's nothing much to do — all you can do is think about the past. About all the fuck ups you did. And when you start thinking about your destiny, about what's going to happen to you, all you can think of is that you are being followed. It's not fear that's the problem but the feeling of having no future. To be shut in thoughts

that have no way out of them.

The other day, when you came to fetch me, you were wearing on your shirt a small pacifist badge. You told me that it was a present. Have you become a pacifist?

No.....It's a present sent to me on my last birthday by a comrade who was very glad that I had left the guerrilla movement. One of those who, from the beginning, said that it was not the right way forward. One of those with whom I often argued with in the past but who today is prepared to help me. Coming from him, it gave me great joy, so I wear it.

But I am not a pacifist; I know full well that we have to defend ourselves. But there are times — for instance in demos — when you cannot use just any counter-violence. You should fight as long as you can but you are not waging a private war against the police. If you declare war on them — you then find you haven't got the resources to wage it. Since we are in a minority — it's madness.

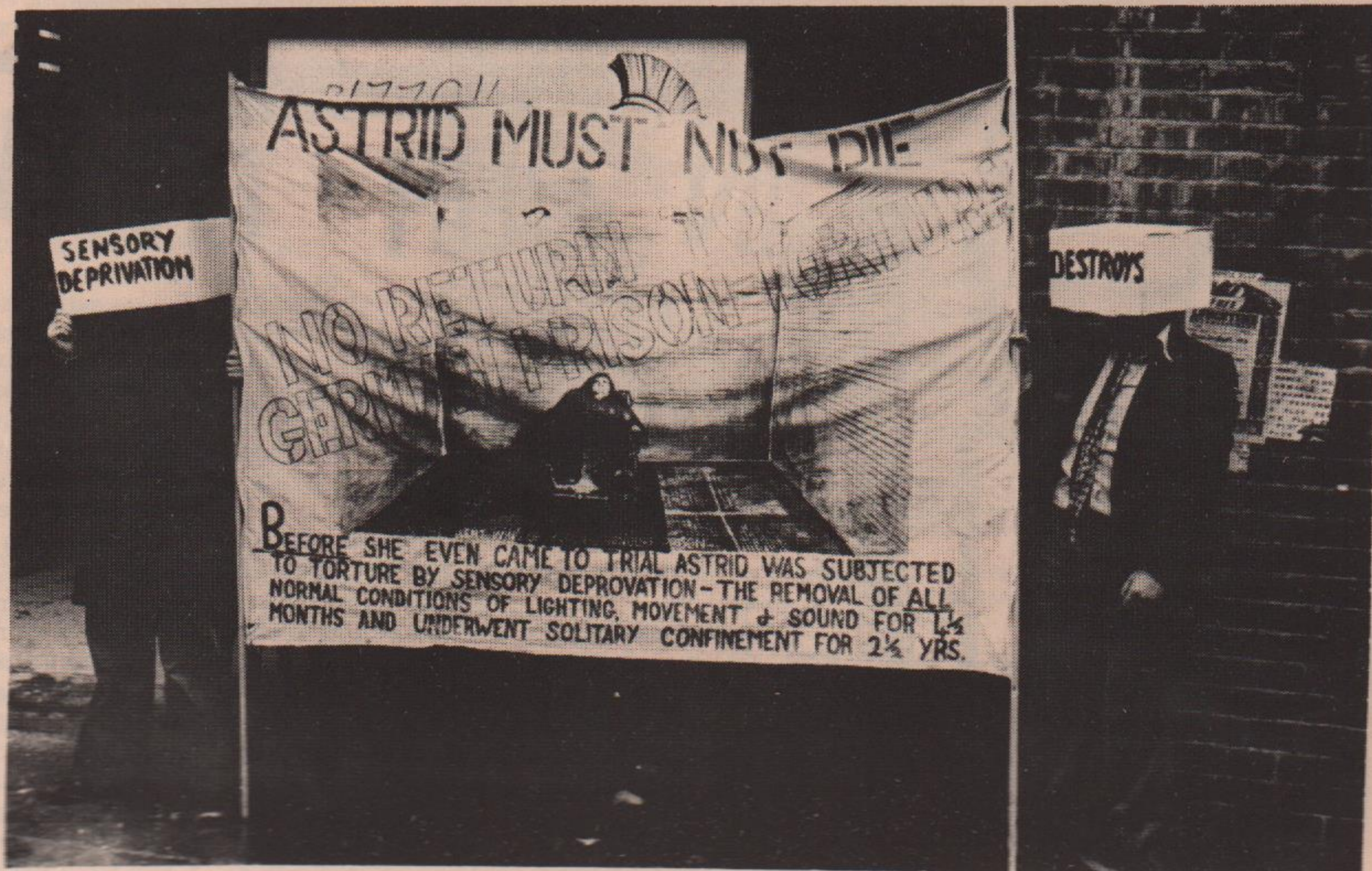
Do you still carry a gun?

I've been offered one, but I've refused. I am careful — I keep on my toes. If I had a gun and a burglar entered the flat, I wouldn't begin by tackling with him. If you're armed, you always over-estimate the reactions of others. You control yourself less. You fire because you have to be the first one to do so.

We are at the end of the interview. Is there anything you want to add?

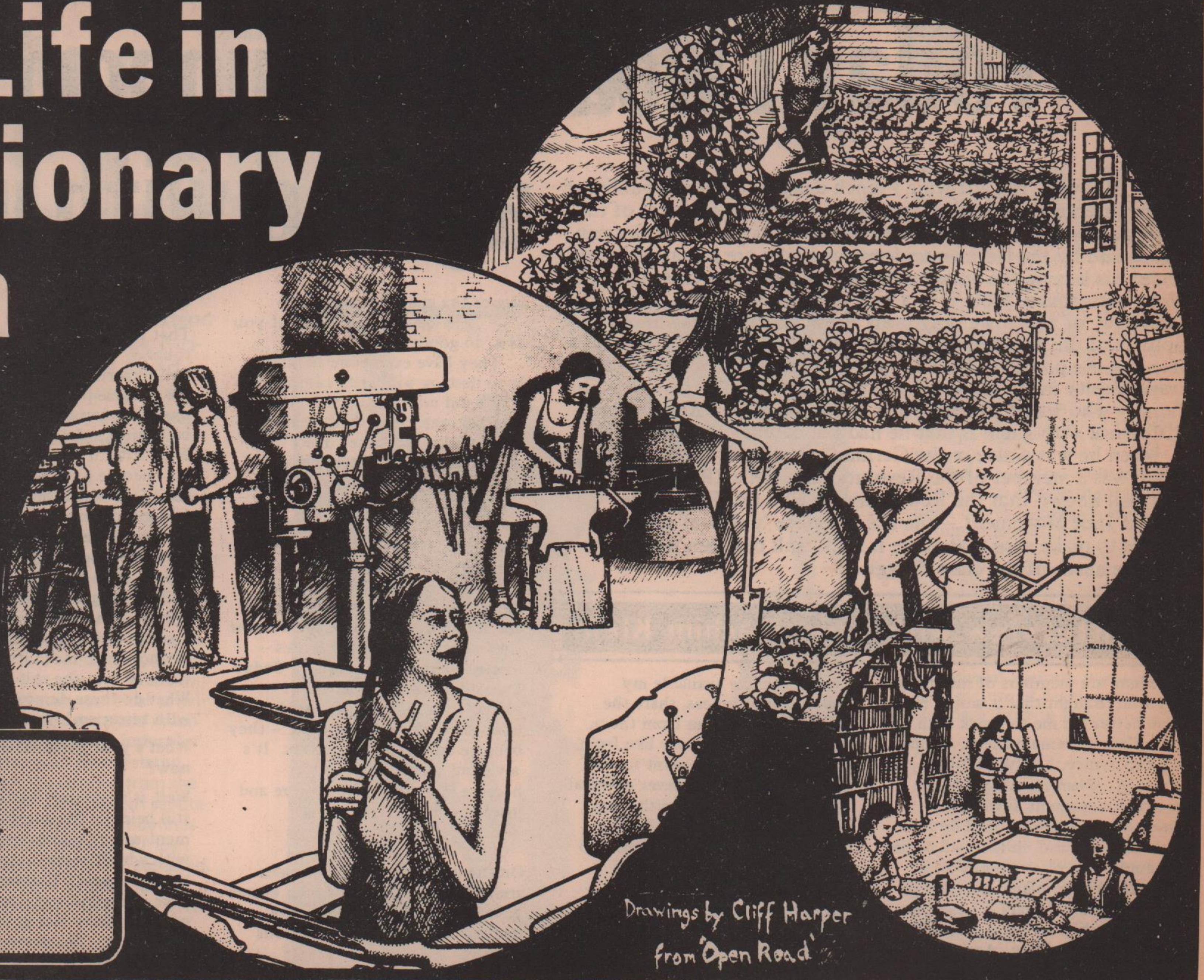
I want to say hello to all my friends, all the comrades. To tell them to keep their spirits up. That one day we'll get there.

Jean Paul Sartre, who knew Klein, has opened a bank account to raise money for him. Anyone who wants to help Klein in this essential way can send an international money order to Jean Paul Sartre c/o Liberation, 30 Rue de Lorraine, 75019, Paris.



AT THE picket of Astrid Proll's weekly appearance in court. Every week Astrid Proll is taken from Brixton Prison to Bow St Magistrates Court to be told that as yet the German government has not presented evidence as to why she should be sent back to Germany to stand trial. There is little doubt that the British government in recent years has kicked out Rudi Dutschke, Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball, will not lose any sleep over extraditing Astrid Proll though she faces automatic conviction in a German court. Before being put on trial in Germany she is likely to spend time in a 'Silent Wing' of a German Prison. Ulrike Meinhof, who spent 231 days in a 'Silent wing' said of it: "there is a feeling one's head is exploding, that one's skull is about to split. The feeling that one's spine is drilling into the brain — the feeling that the whole layer of skin has been ripped away."

Daily Life in Revolutionary Utopia



TIME OFF

'ECOTOPIA' A new novel by Ernest Callenbach is part of a long tradition of visionary novels that use what is happening at present to try and describe the future. But unlike books like George Orwell's '1984', 'Ecotopia' is a profoundly optimistic novel that builds on the positive experiences of many social movements that have developed on the West Coast of the United States.

Socialists must always be very careful that they do not assess what is going on through the spectacles of their ruling-class and its media. Too many of us contemptuously dismiss experiments in communal living, alternative food, alternative health as 'weirdo' things that have nothing to do with Revolutionary Politics (with a big R and a big P). But, as 'Ecotopia' shows, these social movements are developing a radical critique of capitalist society — a critique that can be a powerful weapon in the class struggle. No doubt these Califor-

nian social experiments do not have a working class orientation and it could be argued that the space for these social experiments only exist because of the United States' imperialist role in the international division of labour. These points are valid — but they do not mean that we cannot learn from these social developments — as long as we learn about their limitations as well.

Although its politics are relaxed ('laid back' as they say), 'Ecotopia' is a materialist book in that it makes clear that central to the new society is a new organisation of production. 'We toured the factory, which is a confusing place. Like other Ecotopian workplaces, I am told, it is not organised on the assembly-line principles generally thought essential to really efficient mass production. Certain aspects are automated; the production of the electric motor, suspension frames, and other major elements. However, the assembly of these frames, is done by

groups of workers who actually fasten the parts together one by one, taking them from supply bins kept full by the automated machines. The plant is quiet and pleasant compared to the crashing racket of a Detroit plant, and the workers do not seem to be under Detroit's high output pressures. Of course the extreme simplification of Ecotopian vehicles must make the manufacturing process much easier to plan and manage.... Not only is there a 20 hour week in Ecotopia but there is also collective discussion over what is produced and in what conditions. Only essential products are made in Ecotopian factories and they are made to last long — so less and less labour is required. This being the case, Ecotopians have much more time to attend to what we call 'leisure' and to their personal lives. They organise their personal life on a much more communal scale than we do and it gives them much greater emotional stability. As the American journalist visiting

Ecotopia remarks 'Ecotopians marriages shade off more gradually into extended family connections, into friendships with both sexes. Individuals don't perhaps stand out as sharply as we do: they don't present themselves as problems or gifts to each other, more as companions. Nobody is as essential (or as expendable) here as with us. It is all fearfully complex and dense to me, yet I can see that it's that very density that sustains them — there are always good, solid alternatives to any relationship, however intense. Thus they don't have our terrible agonising worries when a relationship is rocky....'. Ecotopia has a different concept of health and education — both these are seen as ongoing processes which involve the mind as well as the body. The Ecotopian medical system 'has a strong emphasis on preventive care. The many neighbourhood clinics provide regular check-ups for all citizens, and are within easy reach for minor problems

that might develop into major ones... All Ecotopian doctors receive what we would call psychiatric training though psychology and psychiatry no longer constitute separate fields. My doctor, thus, paid considerable attention to my psychic state as well as to my medical injuries...'

The value of a book like 'Ecotopia' is that it makes its reader think about different ways of organising society — and this is very important for a revolutionary movement like ours that is so stuck in defending existing arrangements of society. It is easy to find disagreements with the way Ecotopian society is organised — some of the arrangements are definitely non-socialist. But the important point is that Callenbach's book if it has any influence will force us to talk and write about what kind of society it is that we are fighting for — and that can only be a good thing.

Ecotopia by Ernest Callenbach is published by Pluto Press at £1.20



You are invited to a socialist bookfair

**Camden Townhall
Euston Rd.
London NW1**

**Fri. 10th Nov.
12.30—6.30
Sat 11th Nov.**

IN OUR OWN WRITE

OVER THE last ten years there has been an explosion in radical and marxist literature in this country. Nowadays most major cities have at least one left-wing bookshop, and the demand for books and pamphlets is enough to sustain about a dozen left-wing publishers. So if the left has generally been on the defensive in the unions and weakened by its own divisions, it has clearly been on the attack in the area of socialist and feminist culture and publishing. Much of the richness and variety of contemporary left publishing, with everything from heavy theory to kids books and comics, will be on show at the Second Socialist Bookfair (Camden Town Hall, Friday — Saturday, November 10th and 11th).

The growth of the far left, the development of the womens movement and student radicalisation in the 1960's created an atmosphere in which new ideas could be developed, examined, and tried out. What became clear was that radical ideas could no longer be the preserve of one party or channelled through the stifling orthodoxy of the Communist Party which had dominated left-wing culture and ideas since the days of the Left Book Club in the 1930's.

The new politics and enthusiasm for Marxist ideas also coincided with changes in book and print technology. Keyboard setting and photolitho printing made the whole process of

getting something into print very much easier. Indeed at times it seems as though as soon as a group or campaign gives itself a name, it produces a manifesto or pamphlet. Often this was done without any idea of how it would be sold — many of us have ended up with boxes of pamphlets and papers in our kitchens and bedrooms when they should have been in bookshops or in someone else's hands, or even in the dustbin. The gap between producer and 'consumer' has now been filled by the increasing number of independent left-wing bookshops and more specifically by the Publications Distribution Co-op, who have enabled many groups to reach a much wider audience.

They, and the majority of feminist and left-wing publishers, and even some bourgeois companies who know a fast buck when they see one, will be at the book fair as well as one or two leading left-wing publishers from the Continent (the Rotbuch collective from Berlin, and Maspéro from Paris).

The paradox remains, though, that this rich and important development on the left in Britain has taken place during the years of wage freezes, right-wing and corporatist drifts in the trade unions, increasing state repression, and setbacks in many areas of working class politics. How we generalise our ideas and link our practice and theory remains a problem for all of us to solve.

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's trickle totalled £28.50. This will have to improve if we're to maintain the price at 10p. We are particularly in need of more donations from standing orders. Our account, in the name of Big Flame Newspaper, is at: Lloyds Bank, Water Street, Liverpool (branch code 30-95-11). The account number is 0008738. Ask your bank for a standing order form, and fill in the above details.

Thanks this month to:

Norwich Reader	£1
Manchester BF	£10
I.F., Liverpool	£4.50
Standing Orders	£13

CUTS...FIGHT HOSPITAL CUTS...FIGHT

NHS The second class service

by Kate Truscott

WE HAVE had a National Health Service in this country now for thirty years. In the early days, it was the envy of the world, a free comprehensive health service which looked after you from "the cradle to the grave".

Today that grave is nearer than you think....

Several weeks ago, a woman aged 57 died in Liverpool from renal failure because Sefton General Hospital management has cut back on the use of dialysis equipment. Because of the cuts they say they can only dialyse patients under the age of 55. Liverpool general practitioners are withdrawing co-operation from the Health Authority in protest at this and other devastating effects of the cuts.

And elsewhere.... Theatre staff at Bristol General Hospital have decided to work to contract because staff shortages have created dangerously bad conditions. One nurse said "I don't want to kill my patients, but that is what management is doing all the time. We must stop the cuts, not only for our interests, but also for those that cannot fight, the sick and the dying." Meanwhile, waiting lists for routine operations in Bristol are twelve months long. Next year they will be fourteen months.

Nurses at Kings College Hospital have said that working conditions have deteriorated so much that they consider it dangerous to be a patient there. Pressure sores are common even among young patients, colostomy bags are left to burst and incontinent patients lie wet in bed for hours.

public sector) in subsidies and tax-cuts to "encourage industry to invest". Under this scheme Fords paid no tax at all in 1978. They made £667,000,000 profit and gave management pay rises of 80%, yet still the wages of their workers are meant to be pegged to 5%. Courtaulds, the giant textile firm recently received £62 million from the Government (or your money). They made 4,000 workers redundant and have invested nothing in Britain for nine years. Was this worth the sacrifice of the 134 hospitals which have been closed since 1974?

But, says the Government, you must increase productivity. In fact, in every year since the introduction of major productivity deals both in the private sector and in the public sector (where they call it bonus schemes, staff shortages or changing shifts) the incidence of mental stress from working conditions has rapidly increased. And by 1971, 38.5 million working days were lost owing to severe mental stress and depression through work pressure. In the same year, 28.5 million days were lost through accidents, ten million from colds and flu and only 11 million from strikes.

On top of that, reports from GPs show an increase in cases of TB and rickets, illnesses directly related to poor diet and bad housing. And even today, thirty years after the setting up of the National Health Service 10,000 old people die every winter from hypothermia a combination of malnutrition and exposure to cold. Meanwhile we see growing evidence of a two-tier health system growing, one for the rich (private) and a second-hand, crumbling NHS for the poor if and when we are lucky. Again, Labour does its bit for good business.... It set up the Health Services Board in 1976 to reduce pay-beds. In the meantime, the same Board authorises the building of private hospitals like the new £5 million private hospital in Cheadle, Manchester.

In any one year, 2,000 people received fatal injuries at work; a further 1,000 are killed by recognised industrial diseases.

THE DIRECT EFFECT OF CUTS

Besides actual closures, the number of people waiting for hospital admission has now risen to 700,000 (In 1949 when the NHS was still clearing up the backlog from before the founding of the new service, it was 498,000). Now, "targets" have been introduced to discharge patients several days earlier with little attention given to extra rehabilitation or extra commu-



Twice as many children of the working class die in the first week of life as do babies of the upper class.

By the age of 65, 10% of workers are already retired through ill health.

But perhaps the most important thing is that the issue of "health" is not confined to health workers. Nor can health workers on their own defend the National Health Service.

Take for instance the issue of health and safety. In recent years this important part of the struggle for more control over dangerous working conditions and substances has resulted in new legislation. But what is the point of having Health and Safety courses and more research into bad working conditions if, at the end of the day there is no casualty, no rehabilitation centre or no hospital to go to.

We campaign for early retirement, but what is the point of retiring early if the prospect of lack of community care for the elderly is all you have to look forward to?

And women have not fought for equal pay and against sex discrimination just to feel forced into doing extra work at home for no money looking after sick or ageing relations because Callaghan thinks they are easy victims of his cuts.

Already, several campaigns like Willesden, Bethnal Green, St. Nicholas hospital, the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Hounslow Hospital have begun to look at what kind of health service is needed in the area, or in the case of the EGA, by women in particular. Both Willesden and Hounslow



nity services.

Staff shortages represent another devastating effect of the cuts. There are now 8,000 nurses on the dole, a situation unheard of even ten years ago. Local Health Authorities who are prepared to juggle with services as if they were nothing more than a game of chess, pat themselves on the back if they can show they have "saved" money by not employing enough staff. Meanwhile staff try to cope with unbearable workloads, changing shifts and rotas, working through breaks and thus increasing the risk of infection and illness directly related to lack of adequate care.



Any health workers will confirm these examples are not isolated cases.

Many people think that the "issue" of cuts is over, that it was something that health workers demonstrated about two years ago. Nothing could be further from the truth. More than ever before we are having to face the fact of a long-term struggle against the long-term strategy of this Labour Government to attempt to solve inflation at the expense of the working class, and in favour of the interests of big business.

Even if this strategy involves increasing sickness, worry, mental stress, unbearable working conditions and even death, the Government will still be counting pennies and not lives.

The Government's strategy is making us sick, literally. And if you think this is a bit extreme, think carefully about the following questions.

Will cutting Public Spending increase our wealth and health? Judge for yourself.... Every day, the Government pays out roughly £25 million of your money (taken from your taxes and cut out of the

have produced detailed documents showing how the needs in both areas is for Community hospitals while St. Nicholas in South East London has shown that patients from "richer" areas, because of poor housing conditions and so many women working outside the home are in a very bad situation when they come out of hospital.

CAMPAIGNS

Elsewhere, like in Hemel Hempstead, the Trades Council is calling on local health and safety reps in the local factories to draw up a list of jobs they would be prepared to black because emergency health facilities are not available.

In Cynon Valley, South Wales, an eight week occupation of the administration block at Aberdare hospital effectively stopped the run-down of the hospital, won new facilities and the extension of Mountain Ash as a Community hospital.

These are just a handful of examples of campaigns against health cuts which are not only still alive, but more and more taking on the question of health and the control of the health of people in the community.

Perhaps we are beginning to understand how the Social Contract, redundancies, cuts and lowering living standards are all part of the same strategy which will do us no good, either now or in the future.

Our strength lies in the fact that we are being attacked as a class, and we can fight back as a class. Our strength is that we are the biggest class, the working class.

Good health is the right of all. **We won't let them take it away.**

(much of this article comes from "Health - No Cuts" a new action sheet from Fightback, a nationally co-ordinated campaign against the cuts. The action sheet is easy to read and good for mass selling in workplaces and communities. It is especially useful for getting across the arguments about why campaigns against cuts and closures should be supported by everyone.)

Get your trade union branch or other organisation to order bulk copies at £1 for 25, £2 for 50 etc. (includes postage).

From Fightback, c/o Hounslow Hospital Occupation, Staines Rd, Hounslow Middx. tel. 01.570.1901.



Hounslow Hospital ward wrecked after the removal of patients. (Andrew Wiard - Report)

(Ian Ollie (T. & G.W.U. Divisional Delegate, Royal Group of Docks, London)

We've got the Seaman's Hospital at Custom House which they want to close. They've already closed part of the accident unit there which is one of the things that dockers need most. Because although containerisation has cut down the accident rate, the heavier equipment means that the accidents we have are usually serious and require immediate attention. What really gets me is that they're closing all the small local hospitals.

Poplar has gone and now East Ham Memorial and St. Mary's in Stratford are due for closure. They say it's because they are going to build one of these monster nucleus hospitals in Plaistow. But they haven't even laid a single brick yet, and already the local hospitals are half gone. And one hospital for all the people of Newham, one of the most densely populated and biggest London boroughs, which houses docks and one of the biggest chemical complexes in the country, as well as major oil installations, is just not on. Already we have to use the London hospital four miles away, and that can't cope as it is. They assume everyone's got a car, but plenty of people I know can't afford one. We've got our own struggle on at the moment to save London Docks. It's the same thing everywhere. It's the working class which is being hit left, right and centre. We're all in this together.

Sally Groves (AUEW member, Trico-Falberth Ltd.)

A year ago, when we heard of the raid at Hounslow (which was a year after our long strike) a big delegation of women and men from Trico left the workshops and came down to defend the occupation, it being our local hospital.

This threatened closure affected us all personally. It would mean the clock being turned back and many women having to abandon their jobs to nurse sick relations, when, in fact, the contribution of our wage packets to the family income is vital to keep men with

BIG FLAME

Defend Direct Works!
Build For People
-Not For Profit!

COUNCIL WORKERS IN ACTION

All over South London this year, Direct Works departments, particularly in construction, have been experiencing unprecedented and vicious attacks from the Councils that employ them, both Tory and Labour.

In Wandsworth, the leading Tory 'Gang of Four' are pledged to the total destruction of a thousand jobs in the Council's Building Works Department. Their latest ploy is to put newly-completed, large public housing developments up for sale on the open market.

Most recently, however, attention has been focussed on the GLC housing site at Foxley Road, near Oval in Lambeth. The contract for work on this site was originally won by the GLC's Construction Department, due to the fact that its bid was the lowest. The job was already getting under way when a Housing Review Committee decided that the Direct Works Department must not be allowed to have the job (incidentally, this was the only job for which Direct Works had successfully tendered during the Tory's present term), and instead handed it over to Mowlem's, a private contractor whose bid had exceeded the Construction Department's by a lean £400,000. In the wake of such a direct robbery of their contract, the Joint Committee of the GLC's Construction Branch reacted swiftly and angrily by slapping a picket on the site, where all work is now at a complete standstill.



The regular picket on Foxley Road is enough to keep the site at a standstill, though it might need to be built up when the GLC try bringing another private contractor in.
Photo: Union Place Collective

MASS PICKET

On October 16th, a call for a mass picket brought 300 building workers from all over London to the site. Support was also there from striking social workers in Southwark and from NALGO members in various Town Halls. In the words of John Boles, Secretary of the Joint Committee,

'The response from rank and file building workers has been absolutely magnificent. We've got men from sites all over London losing themselves a day's pay to come and join us on the picket lines and the schedules for picket duty are already filled for the next two to three weeks. No work whatsoever will be getting done till negotiations with the GLC are under way and until this contract is handed back to the Construction Department'.

The pickets have already persuaded Mowlem's to abandon the contract, but, undaunted, the GLC have now approached the third lowest bidder, the infamous Harry Heymes.

LABOUR ON THE ATTACK

John and the rest of the workers are under no illusions as to the reasons behind the viciousness of the latest attack.

'Tory or Labour, these Councils are no way interested in running Direct Labour Organisations (DLO's). They are simply not in business to build homes for working-class people in need. They will use all the

devious means they can muster to get rid of DLO's, be it through natural wastage or withdrawing bonuses to force men off site (as has happened on yet another GLC site in Merton, South London, where 24 were locked out nine weeks ago), or whatever. We've already lost 564 jobs in the Department since the Tories came to power a year and a half ago. There can be no doubt that their ultimate plan is to drive the entire Department into the ground. You see, these Councils are riddled through and through with corruption. You might think it would be different in places like Southwark, with a Labour Council and all, but it's exactly the same thing that's going on over there. The amount of jobs they hand out through the back door or over a couple of drinks in the pub is nobody's business. In May last year, the GLC were building 1500 houses and flats for working people. Now the figure is 450, and a good half of those will probably be put up for sale on the open market as soon as they come available.

The militant and united mood of the rank and file building workers makes people like John more determined than ever to keep up the pressure. 'The GLC must take note that we are intent on fighting them through to the bitter end. We will not give up until we have booted the Tories out of office and we will survive. If we don't get that contract back, this job will never get built'.

Leeds: N.U.S.S. Women's Group

THE LEEDS Area Young Woman's group is the first of its kind in the country. It started in September this year as a womens group of the National Union of School Students.

Leeds is one of the strongholds of the NUSS. Last year there were several hundred members with activities including ANL leafletting outside schools, organising discos and more recently a picket of the offices of the Evening Post which had given biased coverage of a

recent strike of school students at Matthew Murray High School.

It was Leeds Area feminists who thought it would be a good idea to start up NUSS women's groups wherever possible around the country. The idea did not meet with support from all sides - at the annual conference some argued that women's groups would discriminate against them! But the women felt that there was a need for a women's caucus within the NUSS to ensure that anti-sexism campaigns could

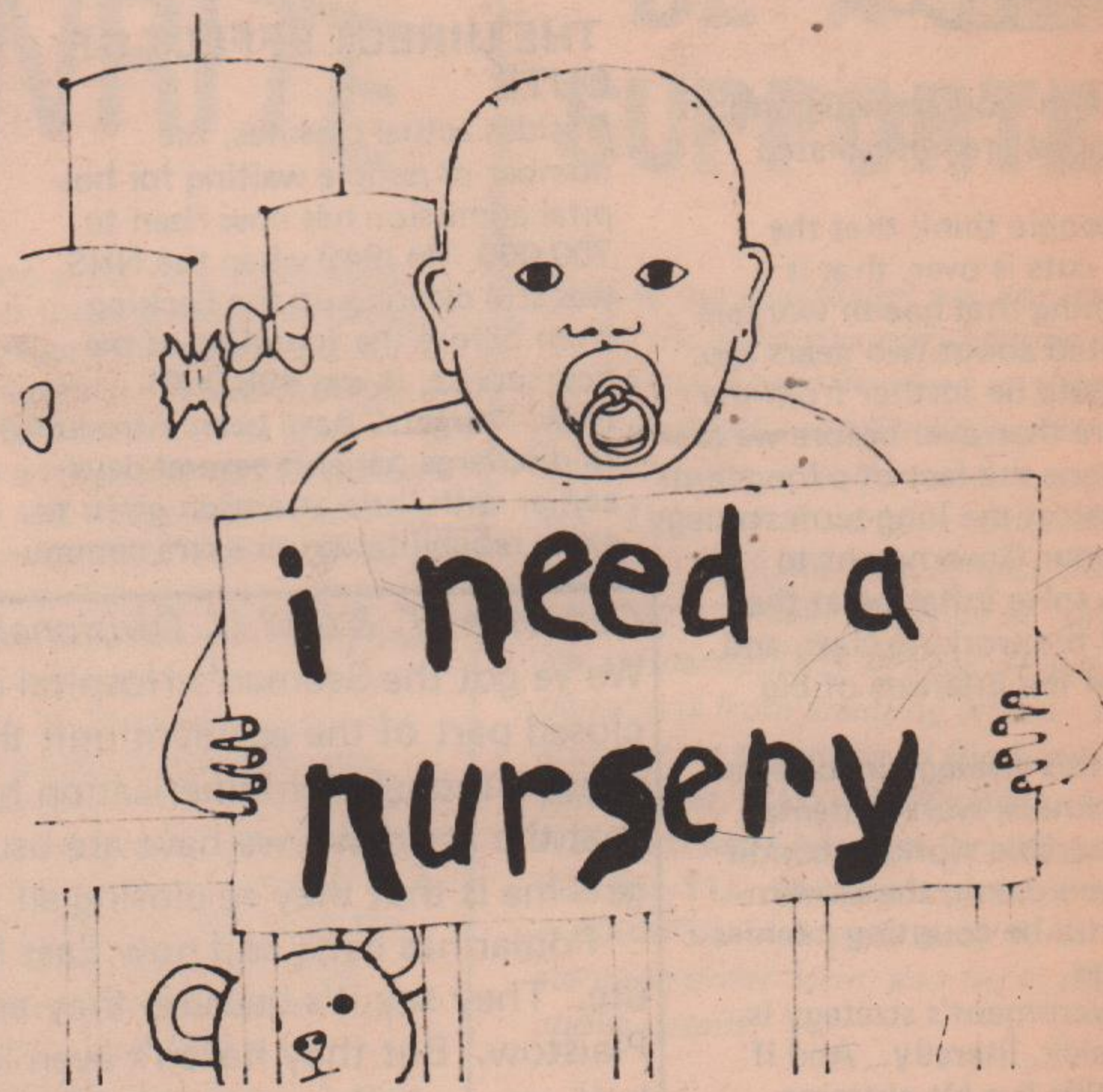
not be pushed out of the way as they had been in the past.

The first meeting attracted 15 women between the ages of 15 and 19, and the discussion was on the various manifestations of sexism inside and outside education. For the future, the group are planning an anti-sexism conference and fundraising activity.

If you are interested in finding out more about the group you can contact Erica on Leeds 781682.

MANCHESTER STUDENTS IN FIGHT FOR NURSERY

STUDENTS AT the Manchester Polytechnic are fighting to get a nursery on campus. The Poly which has 13,000 students is the largest in Europe - yet all it has is the allocation of ten places at the nursery of the university. Last year there were fifty kids on the waiting list for these places and there would be many more if mature students, many of whom have kids, were encouraged to enrol. It is ten years since the project of a nursery for the Poly was first brought up. The students' sit-in is to make sure that they will not have to wait another ten years.



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