

BIG FLAME

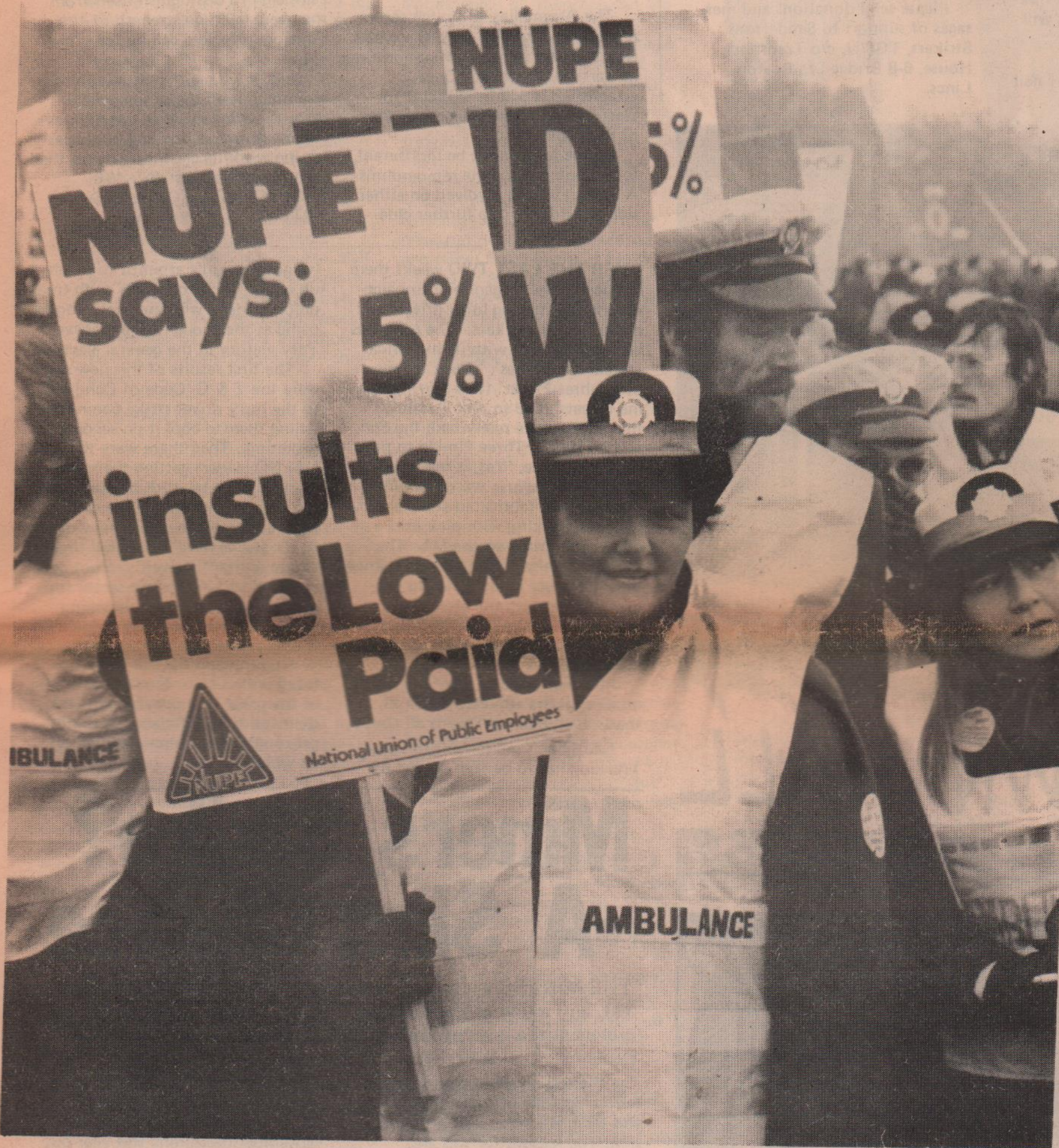
10p (or 2p if sold separately)

No 71 February 1979

Paper of the Revolutionary Socialist Organisation Big Flame

BIG FLAME
Pay Battle
SPECIAL

Ask For A Living Wage..



After three years of pay policy, half a million public sector workers are hovering on the social security border-line. Even with increasing amounts of overtime — often at unsocial hours — most earn well below the average male wage.

Immediate Rise

- Two thirds of women workers in the public sector earn £50 per week gross.
- That's why they all want an immediate rise to £60 a week *basic* — which is still only two thirds of average male earnings.

Low Earners

- Public sector workers won't carry the can any longer for a policy that slashes spending on the welfare state — in favour of the well-off.
- Last year, as 600,000 low wage earners became tax payers, the numbers paying high tax rates fell by 300,000.
- No wonder public sector workers want no more of their 'special relationship' with the Labour government.

..And You Get A National Crisis!

'Defy Their Law, Spread The Pickets'

By a Ford Langley Worker

IN WHAT from a legal point of view was an astonishing judgement, a High Court judge ruled last month that 'secondary picketing' is illegal. And he gave Mrs Thatcher's industrial advisor, Sir Hector Laing, chairman of United Biscuits, an injunction preventing pickets from standing outside one of his factories. Any worker who defies that injunction will go to prison.

■ Tightened

But if our experience at Ford, Langley, is anything to go by, then picketing at docks, airports, and companies not directly involved in the truck drivers' strike *must* be tightened if the drivers are going to win. In other words, this injunction *must* be defied. It will affect all of us. In the Ford strike we picketed docks and railway

depots. Miners in 1974 picketed coke depots. 'Secondary picketing', 'flying pickets' — call it what you will — are the power of our movement.

What was astonishing about the judgement was that the Judge admitted that strictly, according to the law, 'secondary picketing' was quite legal. However, said the Judge, he was quite sure that Parliament had not *intended*, when it passed that law, to legalise such picketing which could only lead to anarchy.

In other words, the Judge decided that Parliament had made a mistake — and he would single-handedly change it. For the convenience of his mates, the bosses.

■ Scabbing

Just look at the situation now at Ford Langley, and at all other Ford

plants in Britain. After four weeks of the drivers' strike, we were still working normally. Components for the lorries we build at Langley were still coming into our plant day after day — with scarcely any difficulty.

Some truck parts have even been flown — at enormous cost — around Britain. A load of 150 big truck differentials was driven to Newcastle airport from the manufacturer, Eaton Axles in Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham. From there the load was flown in a chartered jet (at a cost of £2200) to London airport, which is close by our factory. From there it was delivered by a scab driver to the plant.

Work normally done by the Road Haulage Association drivers is now being done by other workers. There's no other word for this than *SCAB-BING*

The only way to stop this is for drivers who normally deliver to Ford Langley on a regular basis to set up a picket outside our gates to check that no one is carrying their loads.

■ Essential

Secondary picketing is *essential* if the strike is going to win. Scabbing on this strike is going on all over the country. And it's got much worse since Moss Evans sat down with Callaghan and produced the 'Code of Practice on Picketing'. It simply gave away a massive chunk of hard-won rights. Now the High Court is set to make that permanent.

The Code of Practice should be ignored. So should the injunction. Secondary picketing *must* be tightened. That way, victory for the truck drivers will come fast.



'WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE'

IT'S BEEN called the Grunwicks of the North — here a member of the Strike Committee at Sandersons Forklifts in Skegness writes of their 21 month struggle for union recognition.

21 months, that's how long the dispute has been going on at Sandersons Forklift, Skegness. 21 months just for union recognition — it hardly seems worth the trouble.

The strikers at Sandersons think it's worth it because they realise it is not just a fight against a reactionary employer but a reactionary area of employers who have cultivated a system of low wages. Which is explained simply by saying "What do you expect in a low paid area". The

long hours — "you have always worked them, haven't you". No negotiation rights — "if you don't like it, leave, there are plenty of people on the dole to take your place". These are the stock answers given by the employers.

If this description reminds you of 40 years ago then you are getting the picture. This area is behind times because of a deliberate long-term strategy to stop workers from organising themselves and becoming a threat to the total control enjoyed by the employers today.

If we fail then we put this area back another ten years and it will be ten times harder to break through.

If we fail it will be another nail

in the coffin of the trade union movement — another Fine Tubes, another Grunwicks — how many more can we afford to lose before prospective union members refuse to join the union because of their terrible history in recognition disputes?

The future of the Sanderson dispute depends upon your help and support. Without it we will collapse. With it we may secure a victory not just for the Sandersons strikers but for the whole trade union movement.

Please send donations and messages of support to Sandersons Strikers, TGWU, c/o Transport House, 6-8 Bridge St., Boston, Lincs.

editorial

REFERENDUMS

On March 1st referendums will be held in Scotland and Wales to vote on the Government's proposals to set up directly elected assemblies in Edinburgh and Cardiff.

We think the socialist movement should call for a 'Yes' vote.

Scotland and Wales are nations with differing historical and cultural traditions, which have often been in conflict with, and suppressed by the dominant English state. Like other nations, they should have the right of self-determination.

ASSEMBLIES

The Assemblies, although severely restricted in their powers are one way that this self-determination can be partially exercised. Once established it will be difficult for Westminster to resist an expansion of their role.

So the left cannot be indifferent to the outcome of the referendums. A look at who is involved on either side should give us a further clue.

Calling for a 'No' vote — the CBI industrialists, the Tory Party and a few dissident Labour MPs. Calling for a 'Yes' vote — the Labour Party, Scottish Labour Party, Communist Party, Plaid Cymru, Liberals and a few dissident Tories, and the majority of trade unions

CLASS STRUGGLE

To call for a 'No' vote in the name of an abstract unity of the British working class ignores the diverse forms that the class struggle takes in reality. It will be extremely difficult for a small socialist campaign to distinguish itself from the overwhelming strength of the reactionary voices calling for a 'No' vote.

And, if we see the setting up of assemblies, and the campaign for them to adopt socialist and progressive measures, as opening up spaces for the working class movement, then we cannot abstain — WE SHOULD CALL FOR A YES VOTE.

OVER THE LAST TWO weeks there has been a well-organised campaign against the striking lorry drivers and public sector workers. The press has been predictable with its hysterical attacks on 'bullies', 'shock troops of Fuehrer Fisher' (*The Sun*), 'famine threats', and so on. To show that things were really bad, the *Sun* shifted it Page Three Pin-Up to page five, and wrote, 'Yes, it really is a crisis!' Even worse was the *Daily Mail's* totally fabricated story about pickets attacking with pick axes a non-union driver on the M1. The police investigating the incident knew that there was no evidence to connect pickets with the attack, and they had told the *Daily Mail* this before the paper published its provocative lies.

Also true to form were the Tories' attacks on the strikers. After all, that's what being a Tory is all about.

Callaghan's incitement to strike breaking has to be seen as part of

his government's attempt to patch up a new 'social contract' with trade union leaders, who are beginning to panic at the thought of a massive Tory victory in the general election.

The first results of this new deal were the T & G 'Code of Conduct' to the lorry driver strike committees telling them to cool it on secondary picketing. Then there were the NALGO leaders getting the social workers back to work by convening a conference where the majority of people there were not social workers. And now we have T & G full-timers telling militant stewards to not get involved in local public sector support committees and threatening them with withdrawal of credentials if they disobey.

So, rank and file militants are faced with a co-ordinated onslaught of the press, the government and their full-time officials. As things get rough, it becomes clear who is on which side.

Miners Strike? -A Slim Chance

THE MINERS wanted 40%. The Coal Board has offered 3½%. Yet, and much as the Tory crisis-mongers would love it, a miners strike is an unlikely prospect, as a South Yorks miner explains.

The chances of any major confrontation between the government and the miners this year are very slim. The reasons for this are:

- The productivity deal has created divisions within the union and huge pay anomalies. Some miners will be ready to fight for the full claim (£110 for 30 hours), but many on high bonuses will not want to risk earnings in strike action.

- Scargill's right that there's a camp on the union executive "prepared to do everything in its power to save the Labour Government, whatever the cost to the miners". But that camp, headed by Gormley, the NUM's leader, would soon give way if the pressure from below was strong enough.

- There are 35½ million tonnes of coal in stock (1/3 of a years production). You would have to be united and determined to strike for a long time in such a situation. The miners, on the whole, are not!

- Union leaders have been scheming with Benn and the Labour Government for a "no fuss" negotiated deal. The idea is to buy the miners off with a deal outside the 5% now, coupled with a 20 month phased deal until November 1980. The 3½ offer, despite the NCB's talk of whopping losses, is sheer provocation. The Coal bosses will go higher, but this is their way

of saying that the final offer will be way below the union's claim. The NUM has demanded a return to November bargaining this year but the last thing the Labour Government want (if they get back in office!) is to negotiate yet another deal with the miners in one year.

SHELVED

If the pay deal goes through "on the nod", then you can be sure of two things. First of all, the 30 hours will be shelved. In 1919 the Sankey Commission promised the miners a 7 hour day. 60 years later, miners work a minimum of 7¼ hours underground and with overtime the national average is much more. If ever there was a solid basis for shorter hours it here — and yet when productivity is the catchword the union will never seriously challenge for shorter hours.

If the NCB are allowed to offer more than 5% then many face workers may well be satisfied for the time being, especially the one on high bonus. The surface workers will feel once again that they have been forgotten because they'll be expected to settle for a lower percentage. If any action is to come this year over basic wages, the surface men, especially the winders, are likely to be at the head of it.



Union Place Collective.

March to oppose the new town hall in Southwark.

SUPPORTERS OF ELECTORAL democracy in Southwark have been getting exceptionally bad value for their votes in the last couple of months. The social workers have been out on strike since last August and the leader of the council, O'Grady, still says that there's nothing to talk about.

Corporation dustmen have been in and out of work like yoyos after all kinds of disputes with the Council. The direct labour force, too, has been taking a hammering. A recent confidential document, leaked by APEX members in the Town Hall, shows how Southwark, hand in glove with their official consultants — Bovis — intend to destroy the direct labour force within the next 18 months.

Certain things about Southwark that are not in dispute are the following facts: 1200 children in the borough are in care, the most in any London borough. Southwark has the highest number of elderly and handicapped people in any London

borough. The residents of Southwark have the lowest average household income for the whole of Greater London. Nearly one million meals per annum are served in Southwark by the Council under the National Assistance Act, the highest in London. Southwark has a higher unemployment rate than the British average (8%), the highest infant mortality rate in Greater London, and only one in eight Southwark pupils 17 or over stay on at school (compared to one in six for the Greater London area; the figures are from *South Circular*, a new South London socialist magazine).

But will O'Grady and his evil bunch put any money in to combat this level of social deprivation amongst the borough's residents? Not on your life. The latest scheme for how best to spend the Government's Rate Support Grant and the rates gleaned from the Borough's unfortunates is a dreamy new Town Hall, in Peckham. Despite opposi-

tion from almost every single organisation in Southwark, political religious, and anything else you care to mention, despite the refusal by 20 of the Labour Group Councillors to obey their own Whip's orders to support the plans and their subsequent suspension from the Local Labour Party, despite a hugely successful march of 1500-2000 local people to oppose the whole idea — despite all this, Southwark Council have voted to go ahead with this absurdly extravagant plan and it is now certain to happen (barring either a Public Enquiry finding against it or the Department of the Environment refusing permission to build it). Costs for the new white elephant of Southwark are currently estimated to be in the region of £50 million (some of which will come from cuts in the projected housing programme), though locals fear that by the time the thing is actually finished the figure could be a lot closer to £100 million.

-SQUATTERS CASE- Police train for urban warfare

This month the trial of 14 Huntley Street squatters charged under the Criminal Trespass Law resumes in Marylebone Magistrate's Court. The nature of the mass eviction back in August (BF No. 66) and the information that has already come out of the court proceedings show very clearly that the whole operation was planned and executed as an elaborate and costly training exercise in 'Law and Order'.

The first point to make is that the arrests need never have happened. For only the evening before the eviction, Camden Council and the Greater London Council had agreed to rehouse ALL the squatters. Secondly, the sheer numbers of police and the amount of equipment used in the eviction was massively out of proportion to what they needed: it had been clear from well beforehand that no physical resistance from the occupants was likely to be met. The use of 650 police (predominantly Special Patrol Group) along with riot shields, JCB bulldozers, pickaxes and grappling hooks, and with streets sealed off and even journalists denied access to Huntley St., all gave the whole event a distinctly paramilitary character.

OVERKILL

Perhaps the most spectacular thing that has come out of the 14's three days in court in December has been the admission by ex-Anti Terrorist Squad Commander, Roy Habershon (the officer who led the eviction 'overkill'), that two people living in Huntley Street for three weeks before the eviction were in fact police agents. They attended all the street meetings that discussed the street's future and reported to Habershon 'quite frequently'. Further elaborate preparations for the day included aerial photos from a helicopter, video films, and constant surveillance from parked cars and a neighbouring block of flats, phones being tapped, mail being opened, and full-scale dress rehearsals on a block of flats up at Hendon police training centre.

So far, the cost of the eviction is something that the magistrate will not allow to be discussed. The most recent issue of *Squatters News* (a regular monthly newsheet) poses the question: 'Could this be because the Area Health Authority will not foot the bill for what amounted to a police training exercise?'

UNION RIGHTS

At last year's conference of the Campaign Against the Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) a Derby Trades Council delegate pointed out that since 'In Place of Strife' and the Industrial Relations Act, nearly all basic trades union rights have been

steadily eaten away. The Criminal Trespass Law, introduced under the smokescreen of 'stamping out the scourge of squatting', has been used not just on squatters, like those in Battersea and Portsmouth, but in at least one case on an industrial occupation — at Drylanders in St. Helens. The right to demonstrate has been attacked by the two month ban in London last year, by the arrest of members of Leeds Trades Council on May Day for ignoring such a ban, and by the measures now being introduced up and down the country in Local Authority Bills, requiring seven clear days notice to be given to the police for any march or 'parade'

SCAREMONGERING

Carefully orchestrated scaremongering around the question of picketing is pressuring the Royal Commission looking into changes in the picketing laws to seriously curtail the right to picket — now with the approval of the No. One Scab himself, Jim Callaghan. Now even the right to strike itself is being threatened by Tory warnings about secret legislation.

TACTICS

The sort of tactics used by the State on the 160 occupants of Huntley Street can only be seen in this broad context of attacks on the ability of the working class to organize in its own interests. The 14 must be defended as part of our more general resistance to this line of State action.

HUNTLEY STREET DEFENCE CAMPAIGN PICKET — Marylebone Magistrates Court, 14 Feb., 9.30-10.00 am. Street Theatre, Giant Puppets, etc. Edgware Rd. Tube.

HIRE THE HUNTLEY STREET EVICTION VIDEO — it's SONY 1/2 inch high density and lasts half an hour. Phone (01) 701-5691 or 267-1456.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON OCCUPATIONS and THE LAW, THE CRIMINAL TRESPASS LAW, and THE SEVEN DAY NOTICE FOR DEMONSTRATIONS can be obtained from CACTL, c/o 35 Wellington Street, London WC 2. Tel. (01) 289-3877.



Police and removal vans at the eviction of the Huntley Street squatters in August last year.

Losing the Do-gooder Image

We have been criticised for hitting the most vulnerable people in our society the hardest. Some social workers only see their jobs in terms of individual 'clients', and individual responsibility, but they might achieve more by deserting them for a while. What about all the people we don't see? What about the services we can't provide?

We wouldn't be so necessary if the state was more generous in its public sector spending. Much of our job is to do with rationing. It's ridiculous that anyone should have to decide who over 80 should have meals on wheels once a week. The main way the waiting list is reduced is by people dying.

Our strike isn't only about pay and numbers, though that's very important, of course. We're fighting for the right to negotiate locally, to influence local authority policy and conditions — we're fighting for better social services generally.

DEMOCRACY

NALGO Action Groups (NAG) have been organising at branch level. Their main priority is to reform NALGO into a more democratic union with shop stewards systems instead of departmental committees which many places still have. We want to get rid of the 'Whitley Councils', a system which diffuses power locally and sometimes takes 18 months to process a claim.

NALGO's a peculiar union, a strange mix of managers and rank and file workers. Directors see how you vote at meetings and try to intimidate and dominate on an informal level.

The social workers' strike is now ending. Social workers have been forced to go back without winning their demand for local negotiations. Militants were defeated at a national NALGO meeting in which the majority were not social workers. The interview below is with two social workers from Leeds.

Neither of us has ever been involved in a strike before. Now we are 24 hours picketing the council offices, stopping mail, heating oil, refuse, etc. You begin to understand the meaning of 'solidarity' in a much fuller way when you're on a picket line depending on fellow trade unionists. After this experience, there are very few social workers left who would ever dream

PICKET LINE

of crossing a picket line. The police were friendly at first, but now that we're being a bit more effective they get heavy. For instance, when they're escorting an oil tanker (trying to!) through our picket line at 4 am. Besides the picketing, meetings, lobbies, we produce a weekly strike bulletin which passes on essential information and keeps

morale up. Socials, discos and pub evenings have also been important, getting to know people and building on the general feeling of solidarity.

EDUCATION

We've been sharing a strike office at the Trades Club with the T & G Road Hauliers and the GMW (Yorkshire Imperial Metals). That's been a real education for all of us. At first they weren't very interested in our strike and couldn't see its relevance — the anti-wife jokes and sexist comments (by some, not all) got up our nose. And I think we got up theirs with our 'middle class manner' and what they saw as a 'soft' way of going on. But very soon we all got used to one another, we're

DELIVERIES

fighting back together, we have good discussions amid the turmoil about, for instance, the effects of shift work on family life. There's now a women's aid poster on the wall. They've been incredible over our oil deliveries, and I think that's especially because of our day to day contact and tea making. A firm, Brayfords, crossed our picket line to deliver oil and the next day came to the T & G for a dispensation order. They were told where to put it (very bluntly) because they'd crossed our NALGO picket line. Now when they try and deliver we say, 'We've got friends in the T & G'. It works miracles.

DO-GOODERS

For a great many social workers the strike has forced a change in attitude. Many people feel less patronizing towards their 'clients' struggles and the severe disruptions that shift work can cause to family life (24 hour picketing is a small taste!). The image of social workers is changing for the better, we can no longer present ourselves as passive do-gooders.

One interesting revelation on the picket line has been how many women social workers are struggling on their own to bring up kids. That's never really been out in the open before; social workers are all conventionally happily married — the assumption is that a social work must be emotionally 'successful' to be professionally 'successful'.

EXPERIENCE

Before the strike most of us found the union boring and difficult to understand. We've learned the hard way about the price you pay for not having been involved. Now we've got practical experience inside the union and we'll build on it. The strike has given a good start to our new shop steward system, and has got the employers really worried. Even they recognised, in a recent employers circular, that 'advantages gained by social workers through local bargaining (will) then be used, step by step, in all other occupational groups'.

REMEMBER ALL those attacks on the Social Security scroungers — that was another campaign of 'our' national press to turn worker against worker and whip up hate and divisions in the working class. Well a government report out last month makes it bloody clear that S.S. fiddles are a drop in the ocean compared to the money lost to the State in Tax evasion by large companies. As the report says "on all the available evidence, only a minute proportion of the £15,000 million per annum or so which the department pays out to over 20 million beneficiaries is exploited.... the amount of fraud against the public system is considerably less than that faced by a commercial organisation." And there has been only a 16% increase in the number of prosecutions which is not much to set off against a 90% increase in special DHSS investigators, the issuing of "fraud awareness packages" to all DHSS staff and other measures.

The report makes clear that any further attempt to tighten the system up will only make things more difficult for genuine claimants. Commenting on the report, Stanley Orme, the minister responsible, made this point clearly: "The vast majority of payments are made to entirely honest and fully entitled people.... This fact makes it essential that the Social Security system should primarily be geared to their needs. They must not be deterred from claiming what is rightfully theirs by over-stringent precautions and regulations to counteract the tiny minority who try to beat the system."

Of course, the publication of this government report won't stop the gutter press from their endless attacks on "scroungers" and "fiddlers" — even if they didn't exist, they'd invent them. But at least it makes it easier for us to try and convince those we live and work with what a pack of lies it all is.

One woman describes her anger as:

Women Reclaim the Night

*"Whatever we wear, Wherever we go
Yes means Yes and No means No"*

That was the message as 2,500 women from all over the country marched, chanted and sang through the streets of Soho on January 20th. For that night at least, women could walk through the streets of Sex Shops and strip shows with confidence. It was a national "Reclaim the Night" demonstration. Picking on Soho as an obvious focus for a protest against the porn and against the police who had baton charged a demonstration on Halloween night. That night 16 women were arrested and many injured. Below one of the women who demonstrated writes about what it meant to her.

THE BODY PROFITEERS

It was the first time I'd ever walked through this pimp's paradise, and I was interested in spite of myself in what the "body profiteers" were offering for sale. At first I was amused by the pathetic display of seedy bookshops, blown up breasts and wriggling dolls, interspersed between the classy-looking restaurants. Then quickly my amusement turned to anger.

IMAGES OF WOMEN

These people really did see me and all women in terms of sex. They really saw us as fleshy protruberances and elastic slits. How dare they put that image on me? How dare they limit all my thoughts, emotions, ideas and well tuned human machine, to a few sick fantasies? To make a whole industry out of a woman's sex and man's need to debase it. Really they've got the most infernal cheek!

SEXPLOITATION

That march really brought home to me the links between the commercial exploitation of sex, and the fear women have of walking the streets in the dark. Of all the rapes, battering and public humiliation women are forced to go through.

WE ARE THE WOMEN MEN HAVE WARNED US ABOUT

Now when I see an advert, whether on the telly, on a hoarding in a magazine, that sells women as a "hole", I feel RAGE, and a surge

of emotion that is near to pure hatred. And behind me is the power and strength of my sisters who took over the streets of Soho that night. Howling and chanting, singing and challenging. This is the beginning of the end for the porn merchants, for the body profiteers.

Because we are the women men have warned us about — and we're going to smash 'em.

RECLAIM THE NIGHT INQUIRY

The Reclaim the Night group is calling for a public inquiry into what happened at the Halloween demo. They ask all women to write to their MPs etc. A defence fund has been started and contributions and inquiries should go to:

Box 1, 190 Upper St., Islington, London N.1.

NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Between March 3rd and 10th, the week surrounding International Women's Day, there will be a national week of local action, ending in a national women's march (probably in Leeds or Sheffield).

To find out what's happening in your area — write to 17 Gleave Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29. But better still arrange things yourselves — then co-ordinate with the other women's groups in your area.



2500 women march through Soho last month. (Photo Diane Bailey)

TUC General Council blocks 'unofficial' campaign

RIGHT-WINGERS calling for Union leaderships to control their members will no doubt be pleased to hear of a recent decision made by the TUC general council. The council has circulated all TUC regions with instructions not to support forthcoming regional conferences initiated by the Campaign Against the Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL).

The Campaign has over 360 affiliated organisations, including five national unions and the North West Regional TUC. It has led the fight to defend the tactic of occupations in workplaces and squatting of the homeless in empty houses.

The TUC instruction followed a previous circular advising the Regional TUCs not to support the

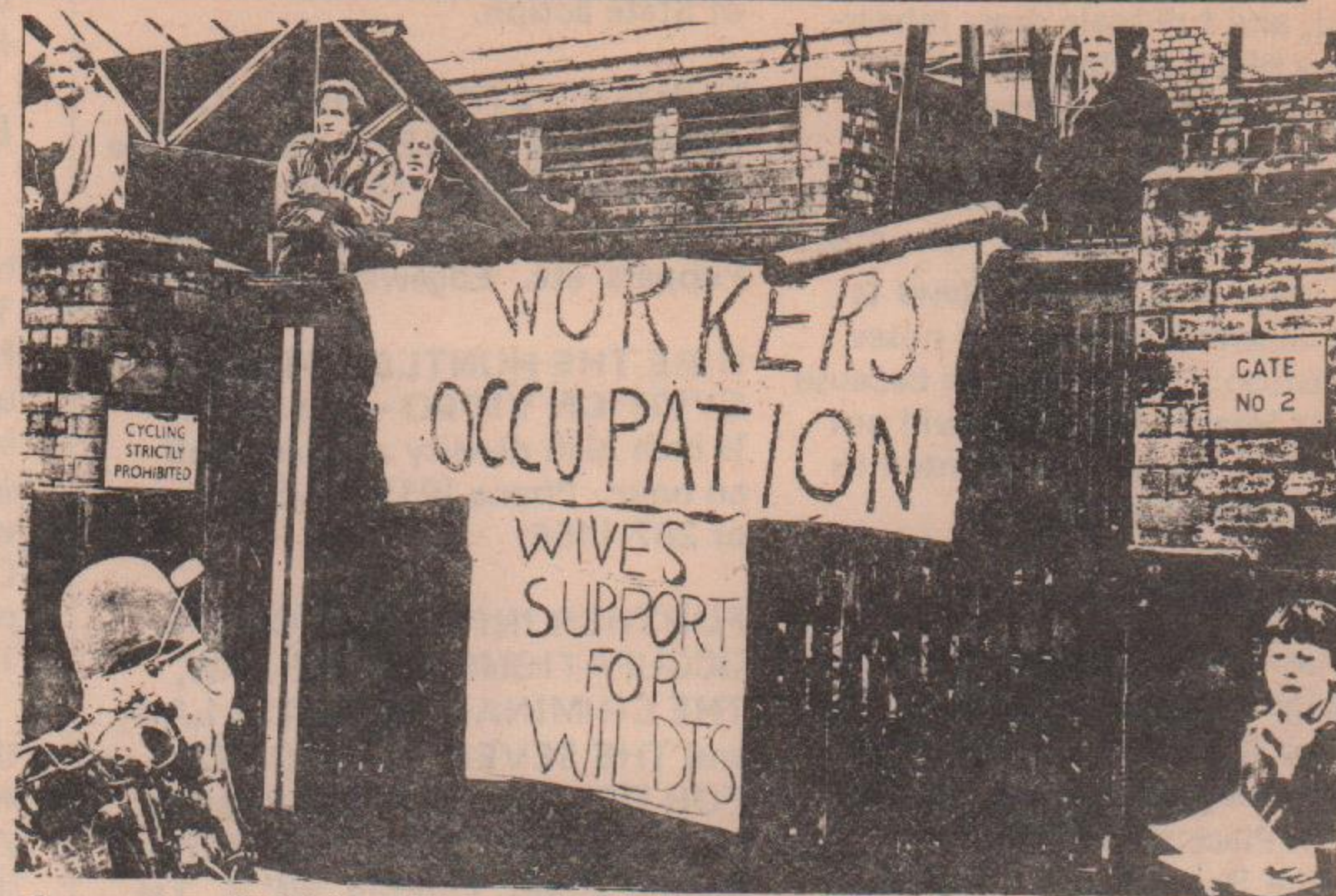
CACTL regional conferences.

The TUC has argued that criminal trespass is a national issue and not the concern of regions and claims that CACTL is an 'unofficial' campaign who's policies go further than those adopted by Congress.

This attack has come at a time when occupations could be considered as a way of fighting for

decent wages and resisting lay-offs which employers will claim are a result of successful pay claims. However the long term implications could well be far more restricting. TUC officers may find the General Council obstructing local actions even if strongly supported by local members.

● If your union branch is affiliated to CACTL it is important to pass a motion to the TUC condemning their decision. Further details from CACTL c/o 35 Wellington St., London, W.C.2.



Occupations like this at Leicester in 1977 are now affected by the new law.

John Sturrock (Report)

NOTTS: NUJ FIGHT SACKINGS

IN LAST month's Big Flame we reported on the 28 journalists from the Nottingham Evening Post who were sacked during the national NUJ strike

The national agreement that ended the strike included no victimisation clause — which the Evening Post's management refuses to implement. They have refused to re-instate the 28 sacked journalists.

Supported by other workers, the 28 Evening Post journalists are fighting back:

They have brought out the Nottingham News, the first edition of which had a circulation of 1,000.

They have got the support of Nottingham Forest manager, Brian Clough, who has refused to assist in any way the Evening Post in the coverage of Forest's matches. He has said he will only give interviews to the strikers' paper!

The other print unions (NGA, SOGAT, and SLADE) have told companies that advertise in the

Post that their ad copy will be blacked in all other papers if they do not stop advertising in the Post.

A mass picket on Jan 27th held back distribution of the Post for two hours. An NUJ picket was seriously injured by a Post van driver (who are all non-union).

Another mass picket is planned for February 3rd. The 28 sacked NUJ Evening Post journalists have taken on a management that is reactionary even by the very low standards set by newspaper bosses. They need all the support we can give them.

UNITY NEEDED IN INDUSTRY

50 WORKERS from the major British car plants — including Cowley, Langley, Dagenham and Jaguar — met in January under the auspices of the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement. Almost every revolutionary group was present together with many independent socialists. A Leyland worker from Coventry explains what happened and why the meeting may have been over ambitious.

Throughout the motor industry workers and their organisations are under attack, with wage levels declining and manning levels being slashed. And still we heard the usual calls for 'united action' and 'forging links'. The demands are correct in theory: it's the practice that's questionable.

ROBOTS

The conference represented a very limited influence in the motor and components industry, yet militants often don't recognise that the material for united work is there in their own plant. Asked about the links

between shopfloor and office staff, for example, many people look blank, as if they worked thousands of miles apart rather than a few hundred yards.

The daily problems and fears for the future are similar for both groups. The shopfloor worker is concerned about robots, automation, speed ups and redundancies. The office worker is worried about changing technology, machines that can do the work of seven typists. The computer programmer who trained for what was once considered to be a secure future is threatened by smaller more sophis-

ticated machines that can be operated by almost anyone with a couple of hours training.

SOCIALISTS

Although staff workers haven't the same traditions or industrial muscle as the shopfloor, there are many socialists among them — usually isolated and often independent, who are disillusioned by the organised left because of its sectarian attitudes. Contrary to the myth that staff workers are conservative, many have the same end result in mind: socialism or a more equal society to eliminate discriminatory practices based on sex, religion or class. If the CPDM attempts to overcome these problems then there may be the base to go forward.

Meanwhile, work is going ahead on a pamphlet about the Campaign's demands for the industry and another conference will be held in March to launch it.

Tameside JOLT FOR SOCCER ANTI- FASCIST

Seven of the eight anti-fascists charged in relation to the Tameside Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF) campaign to remove the National Front football team from the Hyde Sunday League have been tried. All seven were found guilty on one count or another. Three had obstruction and violent behaviour charges against them dismissed, despite being found guilty of other charges which related to one and the same alleged incident.

The verdicts themselves constitute decisions that we will not be allowed to demonstrate, peacefully or otherwise, outside police stations when our comrades are arrested for things that happened when they were five miles away, and that we cannot go onto the football pitches of Tameside to demonstrate against Fascist football teams using the game to further their political ends.

The total fines and costs imposed so far by the Tameside courts amount to £875.

NOT APPEALING

These sentences, which are totally out of proportion to the charges obviously reflect a political decision to hit very hard at anti-fascists seeking to implement 'No Platform for the National Front'. It is this understanding that has decided all of us against appealing to the £20,000 a year Lord Justices of Appeal.

Of all the fines, the £300 fine imposed on a Tameside Labour Councillor sheds the most light on the state's tactics; they want to divide off the Labour Party from the rest of the Anti-Nazi League by hitting them hard when they join united fronts with the revolutionary left. Oldham Labour Party is rumoured to have already complied with this by directing all its members not to go on any anti-fascist demonstrations until after the General Election.

PETITION

Tameside CARF has collected nearly 200 signatures on a petition calling for an end to police harassment of its officers, and contributions to the Defence Fund are beginning to come in.

We still await the outcome of our Chairperson's trial for insulting behaviour: laying a wreath with a political message on Remembrance Sunday. Perhaps our memories are faded by time, but didn't NF leader, Martin Webster get a 3000-strong police escort to do the same thing at Hyde Town Hall last year?

If you or your organisation can make any contribution to our efforts, or want a speaker at your meeting please write to Tameside Defence Fund, 540 Edge Lane, Droylsden, Manchester.

The Fuhrer Speaks

'If our opponents are determined not to allow debate and argument we will use all the force and all the power necessary to defend ourselves against them - and when they hurt us we'll hurt them for and five times as much.'

.....In the Elizabethan age, men first thought of Empire, not as a device to bring democracy to savages, but as something for the expansion and enrichment of the British race. A man like Drake was able to act ruthlessly against the nation's enemies and not bring upon himself the disapproval of a thousand pens, dripping with the anguish of liberal thinkers.

.....We are not a party that seeks its justification in the momentary approval of the momentary approval that it may gain at the ballot box or in opinion polls. We are in a war and we have to face the vicissitudes, as well as the triumphs of war'.

(John Tyndall at the AGM of the National Front held on Jan 20th in the Seymour Hall, London)

MICHAEL FERREIRA - MURDERED BY RACISTS

'Those white boys went out to kill somebody'



We spoke to Ann, Michael Ferreira's sister:

"I think the police are a part of the problem. They're on the side of the white people. They just started to push my family. There is no justice in this court. They're trying to hide what has happened to us, so people don't know - and we don't want that. We can't walk down the street, we can't go home late from parties. If they go on like this the NF will just think "oh

well, it's alright, we can kill people because we'll get away with it, just like that man who got bail today."

"It's all such a shock really. I can't believe it. My brother was never ever in trouble, at school or anywhere. He never even swore or used bad language. He was never in any arguments. He just loved music. So those white boys deliberately went out to kill somebody."

"The police should be out there looking for white people with knives instead of here assaulting

innocent people. If we don't do something now there'll be more and more murders. It's just innocent working class people who are suffering. Everybody has to do something. They can't just keep quiet. If something isn't done you're more or less giving them a licence to kill."

"My mum is really taking it bad, because he was the only boy, then when she cried out her anger and grief, they arrested her. She's now more upset than ever after this morning. There has to be a stop to it somewhere."

Radical Brighton Paper Threatened:

Unfriendly Warnings for Newsagents

BEFORE CHRISTMAS, a number of Brighton's left wing/alternative shops had bricks thrown through their windows. Just afterwards, all the newsagents received letters which read: "A Friendly Warning: Because Brighton Voice is a Communist Front newspaper, shops which sell it have had their windows broken and other troubles. . . . It is advisable, therefore, not to sell Brighton Voice in your shop."

Most of the newsagents who sell the Voice don't have any particular political reason for doing so - it's one of dozens of papers on their counters. As one said shortly after receiving the note: "I don't think I've even read the paper, but one thing's for sure, nobody is going to tell me what I cannot or can sell - these people are just bullying thugs."

Others, unfortunately, have little choice in the matter: "My family and I live right above our shop", said one, "we cannot take the risk - we'd be living in perpetual fear of a petrol bomb."

EXPOSING

The Voice has lost several of its retailers. On the other hand, all the publicity about the attacks has meant that the local commercial press and radio are at last beginning to take the danger of racism and fascism in Brighton seriously (with the notable exception of the notorious Evening Argus). We hear, for example, that at least one paper is planning to run a major feature on the fascists in Brighton, and many local journalists have been putting pressure on the police for the names

of those who are known to have been involved in the attacks.

The Voice, a radical paper put together by a loose collective, has over the five years of its life spent much of its time investigating and exposing the activities of local fascists - often in conjunction with the local anti-fascist committee and more recently the ANL. It has been well-used to attack over the years, but recent events are altogether more serious.

DEFENCE

The Brighton Trades Council has pledged greater support for the Voice (they already use it to carry their monthly trades council bulletin.); and the local ANL are planning to sell the paper.

Some of the threatened shops have formed themselves into a defence group and are raising funds to provide greater protection. The attempts by the local fascists to close down the Voice look as if they are going to rebound right back into their faces.

For further information, please contact the Brighton Voice Collective, 7 Victoria Road, Brighton.



Hundreds marched to Stoke Newington Police Station in Michael Ferreira's funeral procession on January 20th. (Photo: Islington Community Press Workshop)

THEY LEFT HIM TO BLEED TO DEATH

HOW IT HAPPENED

EARLY IN the morning of December 10th three black youths stopped in Kingsland High Rd in London on their way home from a party. On the other side of the road three whites shouted NF slogans and racist abuse at them. Two of the black youths said they should split in order to avoid trouble, but one of them, Michael Andrew Ferreira, a 19 year old West Indian car mechanic, decided to

stand his ground. The three whites crossed the road and one of them stabbed Michael in the ribs and ran away. The other black youths came running to their friend and carried him to Stoke Newington Police Station, just a short distance away.

They arrived at the police station at 2 am. The ambulance did not arrive till 2.45 am although Shore-ditch Ambulance Station is only ten minutes walk from the police station. At the police station Michael was propped in a chair, given a rag to staunch his wound and questioned. He was finally

taken to St Leonards Hospital, where after two attempts to resuscitate him, he died through loss of blood.

At 3 am three whites, Peter Campbell (29), Mark Sullivan (17) and James Barnes (18), all from Hackney, were arrested in connection with the murder.

On Friday 19th January '79 the three appeared on remand at Highbury Magistrates Court before magistrate Ian McLean.

WHITE JUSTICE

The murdered youth's mother, Mrs Moses, relatives and friends

were in the public gallery and members of the newly formed Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation, as well as some of the parents of the defendants. After the white youths were remanded and were being taken from the Court, Mrs Moses, who was crying, called out 'this isn't justice! It was my boy that was killed' and Michel Ramchaital briefly held up a placard which said 'Another racist murder in the East End' (He referred to Altab Ali, Ishaque Ali and Darren Beonit). They were dragged from the public gallery by the

police down to the witness box where magistrate McClean asked them to apologise, and said they would be charged with causing a disturbance. When they protested police took them to the cells in the basement of the Court building.

Mrs Moses was released without being charged, but Michel Ramchaital was charged with breach of the peace and bound over for a year on the sum of £500 in all.

Winston James was charged with two cases of assault on the police and obstruction. He was eventually released on £100 bail and is due to reappear on Feb 6th

LAW AND ORDER is the issue that the Right has made its very own. By contrast, the Left has tried to deal with the problem of crime by pretending that socialism would mean its abolition. Even if there is some truth in this, law and order is too

urgent an issue to be shelved pending the revolution. As both our contributors make clear, the Right's increasingly effective use of the law and order bogey has a lot to do with the appeal for many in the working class

of a solid moral stand on crime, sex, violence, terrorism, trade union power. Belatedly, the Left is beginning to see that these are related political issues. What do we have to offer?



Mark Rusher (FL)

LAW AND ORDER:

STUART HALL is one of the authors of the recently published *Policing the Crisis*, a book which breaks new ground on the Left by relating the growth of state power to key issues like law and order and race. In a detailed analysis, mugging is shown to be the authorities' device for softening up the working class for an extension of police powers. One result, as Hall argues in this interview with *Big Flame* is that racism is no longer a 'brotherhood issue' for white socialists: they are in danger of losing their own class to the racists of the NF and the Tory Party.

An important argument in the book is that a key area in which the post-war consensus has broken down is at the level of ideas — what is the connection between the breakdown at this level and the economic crisis?

Two Trends

It is important to see that at the economic level, we are looking at two trends. On the one hand, we have a deep-seated structural decline of British capitalism which has been going on since 1945, then on top of that we have the more recent problems connected with the balance of payments, inflation etc. And it is the deep-seated decline that is causing profound changes in the relationship between the working class, the Labour government (and party) and state involvement in industry. Now, one area in which these changes first become apparent is at the level of ideas — over issues like the involvement of trade-union officials in government and over issues that are not normally thought of as political — crime, family, welfare; issues that are thought of as removed from the terrain of industrial struggle. We should not be surprised that social-democrats see these areas as outside the realm of the 'political' — more surprisingly, this has also been the attitude of the revolutionary left who tend to be mesmerised by the industrial struggle.

This is in no way to suggest that the struggle in industry is not important. Still, it cannot be denied that an important reactionary offensive is taking place over these issues. In the 1960's, it's almost as though the right has a monopoly on these key social issues and it's only with the arrival of Thatcher, with her clear connection with the extreme right, that the Left has come to grasp the importance of what they once dismissed as non-political issues.

Racial Fantasies

Ideas are important in helping people understand what is happening to them — and what is happening to them are real material

events. Take race for example — it is quite wrong for the left to go on thinking that working class racism is some kind of fantasy that has been injected into people's heads; in fact, it has its roots in conditions of working class life. Take someone who has bought a house, it is objectively the case that if blacks move in next door, the market value of the house goes down; it is also true that there is more mugging in working class areas. Either we find a socialist way of explaining what is happening or people will accept the right-wing version. This is the fertile terrain where the right has been much quicker off the mark than the left. And this is an important aim of our book — to show that the area of the political is much wider than is traditionally accepted — that it includes what are considered 'moral' issues, issues about 'good' and 'bad', which in fact reflect political choices.

Coercive State

The term 'legitimate coercion' is used in the book to define how the ruling class in Britain today rules — do you see this as a new development?

It is important to remember that ruling class rule is always a mixture of coercion and consent. We have a situation of formal democracy combined with class rule — and this obviously produces certain problems for the ruling class. For instance, the law must appear to be impartial even though we know that it isn't. The ruling class comes to rely more and more on the working class consenting to its domination. Though, quite clearly, the ruling class continues to hold in reserve an exceptional form of rule like fascism.

In the book, we make it clear that we do not share with the rest of the left the assessment that a fascist solution (military coup, abolition of trade unions etc) is likely to appeal to the ruling class reliance on coercive mechanisms, but where the coercive mechanism are still being used to construct consent; where the formal mechanisms of democracy have not broken down. Though

it must be pointed out that there is an important sense in which the power of these democratic institutions is withering away — the shell is preserved, but their content is drained away — this applies to parliament as well as lesser bodies like local Labour Party branches. This vacuum is being filled by the state which expands its influence at all levels. And, of course, it makes a lot of difference that this trend to a more coercive state is being carried out by labourism, by social democracy — which can use its 'special' relationship with the working class.

So what you are saying is that the ruling class uses the myth of the democratic traditions as a kind of cover for introducing increasingly repressive measures?

Yes, that's right. What we now have to look at is the relationship between this strong state, this 'law'n order' state and the more overt repression of fascism and the NF.

Powellism

The key event which allowed the 'radical' right to come to power in the Tory party was the defeat of the moderate, Heath wing of the party in the 1970-74 period — a defeat caused by the power of the industrial working class. What we are saying is that Thatcherism is Powellism without Powell. As a movement, it exists in the Tory party and outside in the media — in the crusading right-wing press of the 'Sun', the Mail and the Express. These papers are direct organisers of political consciousness and they have made acceptable the positions of the extreme right. The fact that the NF can take over the streets in a working class area, in a black area, represents a major political shift to the right but what makes the situation even more dangerous is the relationship that exists between the 'respectable' right of the Tory party and the 'unrespectable' right of the NF. We would have a much better chance of defeating what the NF stands for on race if these same ideas were not taken up by the leadership of the Tory party.

This relationship between the respectable and non-respectable right — which has political, economic and social dimensions — poses a very difficult problem for the revolutionary left. We should not use the same strategy to confront these two manifestations of the same politics — the left sees it as a case of either attacking the NF or the Tories: it's not as simple as that.

Yes, I very much want to stress the import-

ance of the two fronts. This came out at an ANL meeting in Wolverhampton where I felt it essential to make the point that you had to stop the Front from marching through working class areas whatever the press might say about such militant behaviour. After all, anyone who understands the nature of fascism will know that to be able to march through working class districts is an essential part of its politics — a demonstration of open power in a popular area. At the same time, even if you stop the NF marching, you haven't stopped the soil that it feeds on; the Mail, the telly etc.

Alternative

What importance does this have for the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle?

Firstly, it re-inforces the need for the autonomous organisation of blacks in the struggle. There is no possibility of an immediate 'unite and fight.'

Secondly, it should be clear that the orientation of the right-wing is towards the white working class and it is on this ground that the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement must concentrate. Going back to what we were saying before about the need to recognise the material basis of racist and fascist ideology — the only way to answer this is an alternative political strategy.

It is only if people see that there is some way of struggling against those material conditions in ways that don't require them to scapegoat the blacks that you will stem the tide. This will require of the left an involvement in new areas of struggle; for instance local community struggles. If you think about how racist and fascist appeals operate in those social areas which are not only about jobs but also the street, housing, the pub, it is clear that if the left cannot construct an alternative political strategy to deal with them, the right will continue to walk the floor.

Let me make one thing clear — it's no longer necessary for the white left to engage in this struggle as a gesture to their black brothers and sisters: it's their own class they're losing. Race in that sense has become a structural feature of British politics — it's no longer a civil rights issue, a brotherhood issue; it is now the nitty gritty of the political struggle. In the long term, an alternative strategy can be successful but it requires a higher level of involvement over these social issues we have been talking about.



WHAT JUSTICE FOR WOMEN?
 QUEEN'S GUARD RAPIST FREED!
 DISMISS ♀ the Judges!



BEGONIA

....THE LEFT'S SILENCE

CRIME AND violence are serious problems in many working class areas. Canvassing recently for Socialist Unity, Austin McKechnie, found that he had no ready reply to the many genuine concerns expressed on the doorstep.

MY WORRIES on this question were reinforced watching the Labour Party conference debate and pass a pro "law and order" motion. Many speakers from Constituency Parties condemned the motion as reminiscent of the Tories. One said that "crime was endemic in the lack of values in a capitalist society." The motion was rubbish, but the problem became clear in a televised confrontation between the blunt Yorkshire right-winger who proposed the motion and a young articulate leftist councillor from London. When it came down to being asked what action socialists should propose now on the question of crime, the left-winger could say nothing. Socialism was the maximum and minimum demand.

Crime

The Left has, however, been forced to take up questions of crime and violence in relation to attacks on black people and women. Reading the Left press about incidents in the East End you find descriptions and condemnations of attacks by racist thugs. The police are condemned for their disregard of the protection of the area and implicitly tough action is called for. The same is not always said about attacks on women. As a woman who took her own direct action against a "flasher" said in a recent Spare Rib:

"But no matter how grave the sexual assault, left and liberal hypocrisy remain the same. If we use the courts and police we are deemed reactionary, deluded, told we are encouraging people to believe in the repressive agents of the bourgeois state. If we demand higher sentences for rapists we are curtly informed that prison doesn't cure rapists. That it may put them out of action for a while is apparently irrelevant. It's the system that produces rape that we should be fighting - not the individual perpetrators of it. After all their victims of their conditioning too, blah, blah... Fascinating how all these qualms disappear when it comes say, to the victims of racist attacks. For them to want prison for fascists is fine: for us to demand it for humble-ordinary-bloke-in-the-street rapists is not. That good old double-standard again.. When the courts allowed Tom Holdsworth - the soldier who brutally raped and mutilated Carol Maggs - to walk away scot free, they gave rapists their blessing and we were outraged. But if we weren't demanding his imprisonment, what the hell were we asking for - a written apology?"

But hasn't the whole of the Left, including feminists, got a double standard when it comes to violent attacks on old people or any people who are robbed and beaten up? Don't we condemn this? Even if we're

not clear on what can be done in the short term, our silence reveals the limits of our politics and morality.

Left's Reluctance

The reasons why the Left is reluctant to say anything on crime and law and order are probably threefold:

- (1) It is a right-wing political terrain.
- (2) The class of the people who commit many criminal acts (working class)
- (3) We are reluctant to call on the state to carry out repressive policies.

So what we tend to do is counter right-wing law and order propaganda with our own about their crimes, their violence. But while reference to ruling class criminality is necessary, it is hollow unless we can relate socialist politics to peoples' everyday experiences and fears.

We also have to take seriously the criminalisation by capitalist society of sections of working class youth, through permanent unemployment etc; they are part of the human material from which socialism is created. Yet this is unlikely while they have values

which allow them to attack other working class people and tear each other to bits at Football matches.

There are problems about calling on the state to take action (although we do call for them to repeal laws like the Criminal Trespass Act). But it may not be a question of calling on the state in this way to take repressive action, but of realising that it is in the interests of the mass of people that certain actions take place. This was raised in the *Islington Gutter Press* by Dave Robbins, a socialist youth worker, about the young thugs who support the NF. He wrote:

"You've got to sort out the hard cases. It seems to me that probation officers are actually trained to ignore kids who come to them with NF leaflets in their hand, saying 'I'm being good now, I'm out selling the paper etc.' There's no way you can convert these people - they're hell bent on self-destruction. I agree with Chrissy Lightbown, these kids have to be taken out of the mainstream. I don't care how - borstal, Detention Centre. I'm sick of the whole social work industry with its Oedipal complexes and the rest - new truancy projects. I can spot one of these apprentice mass murderers really fast."

Well, personally I wouldn't want the criminally insane, violent rapists, or hardcore professional criminals wandering the streets. Not all crimes can be reduced to the inequalities of wealth and property in capitalism. Aside from the inevitable historical time-lag in changing material circumstances, ideas and behaviour, the psychology of people and criminality is too unexplored an area to make many assumptions about social relations under socialism.

Not Abstract

The essential core of the marxist argument that law, crime and the state have a character shaped by the domination of society by the ruling class remains correct. The police and the judicial institutions are part of the enemy. Any worker on a picket line knows this. Having four convictions ranging from petty larceny as a youth to "assaulting the police" as an anti-fascist, I am also not unaware of it on a personal level.

But there are practical and theoretical problems that need exploring. Crime is not an abstract thing. Some petty, anti-property crime (e.g. fiddling electricity meters) are acts of individual working class resistance, though more or less irrelevant politically. Other crimes can only have an anti-social character and consequence. I am not clear on the kinds of demands we raise, aside from the obvious ones that eliminate the material basis of crime, e.g. the right to work or a living income. What I am clear on, is that we have to start talking about crime. We are unlikely to advance while we close our eyes or romanticise.



Grunwicks police encourage co-operation. Big Flame Photo

Public sector workers say- 'We want

LOW PAY- NO WAY

The Government tells the public sector workers that any rises above the 5% pay limit will cost them their jobs. Not only is this sheer blackmail — it's economic nonsense, as we show below.

On the other hand, a wages victory could strengthen the fight against public services cuts.

Callaghan says, 'we have to pay our way' which translated means 'you have to pay their way.' Either you increase taxation, he says, or cut public services to pay for wage rises. Yet, if you cut public services you cut employment, and therefore get less tax — in short, a vicious circle.

One area where taxation could raise more revenue is that paid by industry. The latest ASTMS Quarterly Economic Review shows that if Corporation Tax was levied at the nominal rate of 52%, then there would have been an extra £6 billion in 1977/78 — enough not only to restore all cuts but also to make substantial improvements.

Furthermore, an increase of £1 billion in the public sector would yield another 39,000 jobs.

CRUEL JOKE

Another argument, and one which is important to counter, because many trade union leaders with members in the manufacturing industries have used it, is that cuts are necessary to provide investment to rebuild the 'manufacturing base'. Again, this is absolute fallacy, as a specialist adviser to the House of Commons Expenditure Committee said: "The very action of cutting the public sector supposedly to encourage investment reduces demand for industry's products, and hence the desirability of investing in additional capacity". Again, a vicious circle. The argument that investing more in manufacturing industry will produce more jobs is perhaps the cruellest joke of all. To the extent that there is any investment going on in manufacturing at all, then it

is used to capitially intensify which reduces jobs, eg robots for spot welding in the car industry, micro-chip technology etc.

Then there's the argument that manufacturing industry needs the scarce resources of manpower which the public sector is hogging. With 1.5 million unemployed such an argument is to say the least bonkers. In fact, there are considerable arguments to show that the public sector debt would be reduced considerably if instead of increasing the unemployed and paying unemployment benefit, they were to be employed and paid a decent wage.

The fight for higher wages against the Government's pay policy is absolutely crucial, but it must go further — it must insist that it is not paid for by cuts in the public services. The campaign against the cuts has not been successful, with small but important exceptions. A victory on the wages front would give the workers in the public sector the confidence to take on and beat the callous 'Tory' policies of the present government, and on the basis of a united campaign to improve the welfare state and reduce the level of unemployment.

Workers in the manufacturing companies need to be shown that only by demands for a shorter working week and an increase in the public sector, are they going to be guaranteed jobs. The false division between public and private sector workers encouraged by the Government, media and trade union leaders must not be allowed to succeed.

Guess which part of the public sector is going to be increased? Defence, by £300 million. Why? To keep our friends in NATO happy.

At the same time, public services have underspent by millions on housing, social services, health and education. In short, whilst hospitals are closing the DHSS calmly announces that it has underspent by £80 million, only some of which can be carried over. Whilst housebuilding is at an all time low and thousands are without homes, the Department of the Environment has underspent by £410 millions. Even concessionary bus fares, usually applicable to the sick and elderly are to be reduced because at least 21 local authorities have refused to take up the money that is available to them from central government.

Lies! Madness! you cry — no, just the latest White Paper on Public Expenditure.

LAW AND

PICKETING:

THE FACTS

AT ANY given moment, the law reflects the balance of class forces. At present, the law on picketing is unclear: it reflects the Labour Government's position of uneasy compromise between the trade-unions who want a clear right to picket defined and the employers (and the Tory Party) who are pushing for the "custom and practice" of picketing and flying (secondary) picketing to be rolled back. In this situation of compromise with the law hazy, a lot of power is given to the judges — who not surprisingly time after time, make anti-working class decisions.

WHAT IS THE LAW

The 1906 Trades Dispute Act gives workers the right in trade disputes to "attend" on a highway near any place for the purpose only of peacefully imparting information or peacefully persuading persons not to work. That right has never been restricted to any particular place of work so long as the trade dispute is being furthered. But the courts have said that the right does not



'This kind of action is necessary for people in our position within the public sector to unite with the strong sections like the waterworkers, ambulance men and binmen. Hopefully united action of this type will prevent the government paying off the strong sectors and leaving us with the 2½% we now have on the table. This would be worth between £1.14 and £1.71 after tax, enough for two packets of cigarettes a week'. (Direct Works Worker)



'We have been fed for years with all this guilt about dedication, but the management don't give a damn about the patients; we are not stopping anything essential but management are — we had no Christmas tree this year; management gave a paltry £25 for the Christmas party for 26 patients on my ward, so the nurses have to organise raffles and charities — you feel as if you are grovelling to get money to give your patients a good time at Christmas'. (A NUPE Sister)



'We don't intend to stand out here (on the picket line outside Manchester Royal Infirmary) in future. We will lock ourselves in the kitchens then no scabs can do our jobs. We have taken that kind of action before. We'll need to watch our union. Last time we had action the employers offered us 5% and we battled them down to 3%.'

THE DOCKERS VICTORY

As a result of the victory of London dockers' struggle in 1972, the Commons passed the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act which laid down that a union cannot be sued for civil wrongs as long as the civil wrong is done "in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute." And it enabled unions to take actions in disputes that injure the firm's customers without facing any liability for doing so — this made secondary picketing legal.

RECIPE FOR ANARCHY

But the judges' strategy has been to narrow the definition of what can be "in furtherance of a trade dispute". The most recent restricting decision is the injunction granted

by Judge Ackner against Reg Fall, a lorry driver picket in East London. From his comments Judge Ackner made it clear that there had to be a restrictive interpretation of what was a "furtherance of a trade dispute" otherwise it would be "a recipe for anarchy". Now obviously secondary pickets are furthering their dispute — though it should come as no surprise that the judges are interpreting a Law of Parliament in a way that suits their class need.

PRESSURE NEEDED

It is only working class pressure that can force Parliament to pass laws that further working class interests. And it is the judges that will continue to make decisions that attempt to demobilise this pressure.

Union Place Collective

Photos: Union Place Collective

Big Flame Photo

£60 NOW and no cuts!

BIG FLAME **Pay Battle SPECIAL**

STRONG MOVEMENT -BUT NO CLEAR ALTERNATIVE TO LABOUR

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT is a con — first the Ford workers, then the lorry drivers and now the public sector workers have said 'NO' to the 5% pay limit. The current strikes are a clear message from the working class that wage cuts and cuts in services are no longer acceptable.

The strikes have bit hard, although not quite as deeply as the press campaign suggests. But the bosses and the Tories have been quick to create an atmosphere of national crisis. And the weather has obliged too by making everything seem worse than it really is.

WEAKNESS

The working class is strong — for the bosses, alarmingly so, despite the cuts and redundancies of the last three years — but the right wing has been able to pin-point a vital weakness.

Compare the present wave of strikes with the strike which finally brought down Heath's Tory Government almost exactly four years ago. There have been far more people on strike than in 1974 — perhaps a million during the Day of Action of the public sector alone — but this time, the working class has a Labour Government to contend with.

It took a long time before there was enough rank and file pressure on the union leaders for them to drop their support of the Government. But now that strike action is going ahead it is still affected by the government in power, even if hardly anybody cares any longer whether Callaghan gets defeated as a result.

HYSTERIA

The problem, as the Tories have grasped, is that the working class knows that the defeat of the 5% limit is only half the answer. The problem is, what comes next? That's why so many workers and housewives respond to the national emergency hysteria.

They're half afraid that they're tearing something down and opening the way to rampant inflation and social disorder.

There's no way that revolutionaries can plug the political vacuum on the left and provide a clear socialist alternative to Callaghan and Thatcher — in the short term.

For the moment, there are two key considerations:

ISOLATED

a) Weak and isolated though we are, we can have maximum impact by coordinating our involvement in the strikes. Don't forget that coming up for settlement by the spring are the claims of:

- 420,000 nurses
- 200,000 postal workers
- 90,000 electricity supply workers
- 750,000 local authority workers
- 520,000 teachers

This winter should see the growing unity and effectiveness of socialists. We will be listened to if we make our voice heard, together.

b) There's an immediate task for the left: to convince the strikers of the need to take their case out to the public as the firemen did so effectively last year. There's a danger of the struggle being isolated from its potential support amongst the people who suffer from it. Strike committees should picket the public with leaflets and posters, arguing for their case. The bosses have the media — we have the streets.



Bus drivers support Day of Action

Manchester bus drivers have been in dispute since before Christmas over pay. The employers wanted to link the pay rise to a productivity deal which included the introduction of a cancellation machine on one-man buses. We spoke to some of the strikers at the Hyde depot; 'We've been offered 5%. I've got two kids and take home £42. The offer is laughable. It's more than pay, it's a build up of grievances brought about by management. The bus drivers were out on strike on January 22nd, the public sector day of action: - 'We're out today in solidarity with the day of action but from now on we will be having lightning strikes.' Another striker explained the effect on the public: - 'We don't want to make the public suffer but you've yet to show me a lower paid worker. Anyway, the employers make all these noises about being concerned for the public but the only time they thought about budging was when we had Saturday strikes. The big stores were losing millions and soon started screaming to the councillors to settle the strike.'

ORGANISE... TO WIN

● Help to create united campaigns of all militants and supporters of the low paid.

These should pressurise local union structures to set up local, united strike or dispute committees, holding regular mass meetings, and obtain the support of other Trade Unions and Trades Councils.

Local strike committees are essential to stop a sell-out by the union leaders. For example, in Nottingham, shop stewards in all Public sector unions are meeting to work out a joint strategy.

The Pay Action Campaigns organising for £60 and 35 hours and uniting militants of NUPE, COHSE, GMWU and TGWU in demanding an all-out strike.

The Fightback Campaign against cuts in the Health Service, contact: 30 Camden Rd., London, N.W.1. 01 - 560 3431, ext. 679.

The Campaign for Action in NUPE contact: Ray Varnes, 47 Leyland House, Poplar High St., London E.14.

These campaigns should be supported wherever they exist.

● Publish regular strike bulletins.

These are essential to keep union members informed, especially those that are not involved in selective strikes.

● Organise local selective strikes to

include all those who want to strike.

● Organise action that hits them and not us.

No weekend or overtime work.

● Organise local demonstrations

These will stop strikers being isolated from their communities.

● Publicise the low-paid case to the people who use the service.

Leaflet workplaces and shopping centres. Stop the media whipping up fear among those most vulnerable.

For example, Nottingham Cuts Committee, which is backed by the Trades Council, Tenants Federation and NUPE, leafletted council tenants where they pay their rent. "What price an empty bin" has also been distributed through tenants associations and says,

"most public sector workers are a direct service to the community ... it is important that if you want to protect services and see that working people get a living wage, you give the strikers your support."

● Organise local public meetings to get solidarity action.

● Raise funds to help the strikers.

This will also help to raise the issues of the strike in your workplace or community.

CLAIMING • A GUIDE FOR STRIKERS

WHATEVER STORIES you may read in the Sun and the Daily Mail about Britain being the only state that pays its strikers, don't be fooled — claiming any benefit when on strike is not easy. And getting the money for yourself is all but impossible.

But if you are on strike with little or no strike pay then you can claim Supplementary Benefit for dependents — wives and children. Married women can normally make no claim.

Single people or men with 'wives' at work could find it difficult. In a strike where claiming is well organised they will be more likely to get money.

You can claim if you are on strike, locked out or laid off and if you choose not to cross a picket line (you cannot claim if you were prevented from crossing a picket line — so make sure you choose not to).

Procedure for making a claim is more or less the same as for supplementary benefit

plementary benefit

Get form B1 from the unemployment benefit office and go to the DHSS armed with your own and your wife's recent payslips...for striking women living with unemployed men, it is the man who must make the claim.

Also take:

- child benefit book
- other pension and allowance books
- rent book, bank book, rate demands
- mortgage payment book or statement.

Workers paid weekly will get no supplementary benefit until one week

after their last day and those paid monthly must wait one month before any payment.

That said, married men can expect to receive benefit on the lines of this table:

wife	£12.45
children	
16-18 years	£9.55
13-15	£7.95
11-12	£6.55
5-10	£5.30
under 5 years	£4.40

The DHSS policy is NOT to make discretionary payments for such as clothing and heating as normally paid to other claimants. This may be waived in special cases, e.g. acute disease.

Married women, as already

stated, even if normally the major breadwinner, have no general right to claim for themselves, husbands or children.

Separated women with children may claim for the children but not for themselves, in which case they may be entitled to urgent need payments, as are single men and women.

Single men and women are expected to survive on £14 a week. So if your last pay was £69, no money will be paid for at least five weeks.

Thereafter supplementary benefit will only be paid to make the striker's income up to £10.50 a week. But even this could be refused if they think you have relatives to whom you could reasonably look for help.

General details of rates are in Supplementary Benefit leaflets SBI, NI 196 and FBI. The specific leaflet relating to trade disputes is SB2

About one in four male local authority manual workers gross less than £55, equivalent to social security level for a two-child family.

Labourers working as corporation flaggers take home less than £40, and they stand to gain some 60p net under the 5% policy. "Five percent's all right for these top nobs. Food costs them the same."

The Shah has gone, the Bakhtiar government wobbles, and the Ayatollah Khomeiny, like a prophet, utters words of advice to his followers. But behind these personalities there lies an economic and social reality — a reality that explains the political instability of Iran today.

THE STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE

IRAN 1979

Can popular power win?

Despite rapid industrial development and a massive infusion of wealth (through oil), Iran remains industrially undeveloped. Most of the industry is concentrated in small areas, around Teheran, for instance. Most of the country is left behind. The power of multinationals in Iran means an industrial structure that is vulnerable to the whims of foreign businessmen and to the ups and downs of Western market forces. The towns are overcrowded; inflation is high (200% in three years according to the Government's own statisticians); incomes vary enormously; rents are astronomical; housing is abysmal, except for the wealthy; and corruption has become a disease, bringing enormous material benefits to those close to the Shah.

In these ways Iran is not untypical of many 'third world' countries that are economically tied to imperialism. And as in other countries, major changes in the nature of production — both in agriculture and in industry — have removed the class basis for the Shah's authoritarian monarchy. In a way the Shah brought about his own downfall by his very role in promoting the forces that have transformed Iran in recent years.

IRAN UNIQUE

Where Iran is very different from countries that have developed in similar ways in recent years is the combination of the above developments with other special factors.

First is the role that the Shah's regime has come to play as regional policeman for imperialism in the Middle East and as America's agent against 'Soviet expansionism'. This has enabled the Shah to obtain an enormous array of sophisticated weaponry (he spent nearly £5000 million on arms in 1977 alone).

All this, of course, could not prevent the overthrow of the Shah, but it does mean that the US government and its allies will do all they can to influence developments in Iran and, in particular, to prevent the victory of an anti-imperialist movement in Iran.

RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION

The second important feature of Iran is the religious opposition. The Iranian Shia Moslem sect developed as an opposition to Arab domination in Iran, and has almost always played an oppositional role. Led, since 1963, by Ayatollah Khomeiny it has become more radical in its opposition, and this largely explains its appeal to the mass of Iranians.

But there are progressive and reactionary elements which are bound to come more into conflict the more the religious leaders move from opposition to a position of power. On the one hand, Khomeiny talks of removing the basis of Iran's economic dependence on imperialism, of transforming production so that it serves the needs of the Iranian people and not the needs of the West. On the other hand, he talks of the constitution being based on the Koran — not as rigidly as in Saudi Arabia, but nevertheless insisting, for example, that women wear the chador (long shroud) to hide the

contours of their body.

Another indication of the divisions among the Moslems is the existence on the one hand, of vigilante forces who go around tearing up Marxist leaflets, tearing down wall posters and disrupting left meetings, and, on the other hand, Moslem militants who are very close to Marxism and who hold continuous and open discussions with the left.

But the opposition is far more than being a religious opposition, and Khomeiny may well find that the Koran is no longer so popular when it becomes a symbol of oppression rather than of opposition.

DUAL POWER?

The massive working class participation in the Iranian opposition since last September has been both spectacular and novel. It involves unskilled and semi-skilled factory workers, qualified technicians and engineers, white-collar workers at various levels and service workers. It was the main force leading to the Shah's removal, in that it hit imperialism's interests in Iran at their most vulnerable point. And it now appears to be leading to the most exciting development in Iran so far — the beginnings of forms of workers' councils and dual power.

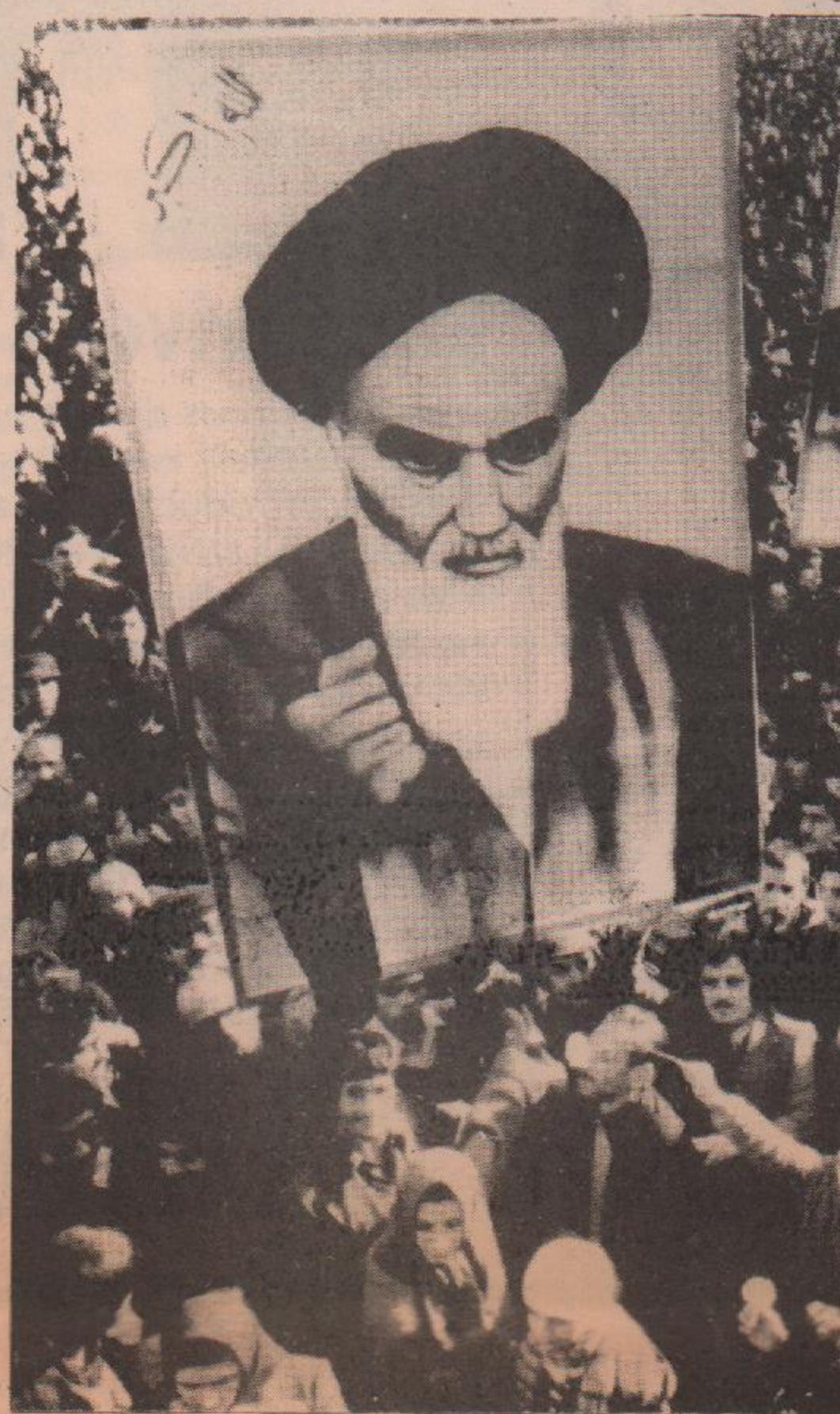
So far, it seems, we have the first tentative steps towards organisations of the working class at shop floor level. Most of these are strike committees; and are very widespread. But some have developed further, holding daily meetings, electing delegates, reading and discussing strike bulletins from other strikes and leaflets from Left organisations, discussing how to develop the strike most usefully, and analysing the situation in Iran in general and their part in it.

POPULAR POWER

In addition, as reported in BF in January, there are such instances as the people's occupation of Mashad, which indicate a developing pressure for popular rule, for people's control over their own lives. These instances of alternative power structures, moreover, are crucial. For the existence of alternative power poses a threat to any form of regime in Iran that ignores the wishes of the Iranian people — whether a military regime created with American backing, the current Bakhtiar government, or a regime that in some way incorporates religious leaders (including Khomeiny) together with members of the National Front (the main parliamentary opposition).

The left, however, is very weak. The state of the organisations on the left means that they can only play a marginal role at present. The left was forced underground and into exile in the years under the Shah, and has only been able to come into the open in the last few months. Moreover, while the religious forces have been in opposition, the left has been unable to take on anything like the leadership role.

But the strike wave has opened up possibilities, and it seems that elements of the left are playing a role in trying to develop strike committees into workers' councils. The experience of this will be important



both for the left and for the prospects of alternative power, and will no doubt put the left in a stronger position once it becomes the leading oppositional force.

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

What can we expect in the next few weeks or months in Iran? Certainly the Bakhtiar government cannot last long. Its purpose is to provide a temporary balance between the immediate demands of the opposition movement and the wishes of the far Right, which remains strong in the military hierarchy in particular. Thus the Shah is gone, but the change remains strictly formal and the regime's structure intact.

The far more difficult transition for the imperialists will be the transition to a new regime. Here Khomeiny must play a part, and it is still far from clear what his role will be and how the elements in the opposition will line up around him.

Meanwhile the strike wave continues on a massive scale, and the economy remains shattered. Iranian people have tasted a hint of democracy and are hungry for more. Iranian women, for their part, have begun to see something that is neither the Shah's fake liberalisation nor the false 'protection' of Islam, and they will never again be completely taken in by either.

It is too early to say what effect Khomeiny's arrival in Iran will have on the political situation. Already the Army's attempt to re-assert control has left many dead in the streets. Whatever compromise the different ruling groups stitch together, there is no doubt they will try to impose it on the backs of the Iranian masses, whose heroic struggle is far from over. The departure of the Shah is just one important step. We must make sure that it does not demobilise the militant solidarity that we have for the people of Iran. However much they have needed that solidarity in the past, they will be needing it even more in the days to come.

UNITY SPROUTS IN BRUSSELS

THE RULING CLASSES of Europe frequently meet together to discuss and coordinate their strategy — but this is not the case for the revolutionary left, which often has neither the resources, nor the desire to be part of a Europe-wide co-ordination.

That's why a conference held last month in Brussels is important. The aim of the conference, which brought together 15 left-wing groups, was to get agreement on an electoral platform for the elections to the European parliament.

Because of the many problems involved, of the groups signing the platform, only VS (Denmark) and Proletarian Democracy (Italy) have definitely decided to put up candidates. Sinn Fein is organising a boycott campaign, and in the other countries, meetings will be organised to publicise and win support for the campaign.

THE PLATFORM

The main points of the campaign are:

- * Opposition to the EEC and the European parliament.
- * For the rights of the individuals and against repression.
- * For the creation of jobs.
- * For the support of agricultural workers (badly hit by the reorganisation of the industry).

- * For National Identity and self-determination, to include support for all those national minorities fighting for their independence.
- * For Womens Liberation
- * For the Democratic rights of soldiers. Against NATO and the unification of European military power

* For a people's culture in opposition to a consumer culture directed by monopoly 'Showbiz' capital.

* Against Nuclear Power

* For an education system based on the needs of working class kids.

SONG CONTEST

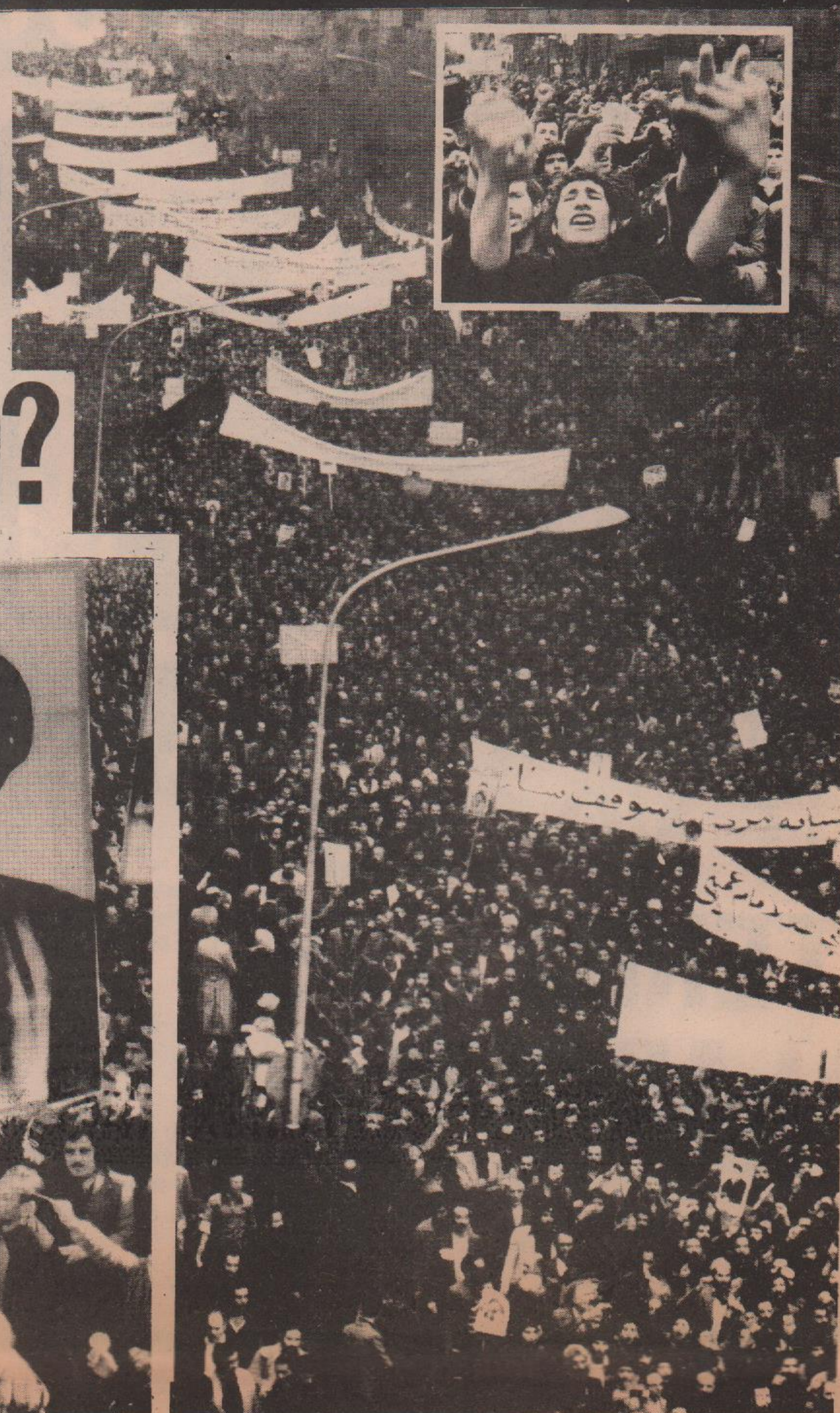
Amongst the meetings organised for the campaign, there will be a 'Counter-Eurovision' contest to take place in Brussels on March 30th — the same night as the Eurovision song

contest. Progressive musicians from all over Europe will be attending and a record is planned. As part of the campaign, Big Flame will be organising a meeting on unification — the English and the EEC experience.

An important point to come out of the meeting is the ability of groups from different countries and different political positions to work together. It is quite possible that during the campaign we will be able to build the basis for further co-operation. All the groups present recognise the need for international cooperation but are rightly wary of any international organisation composed from above.

Who Signed

Amongst the groups that have signed the platform: P.L.S. (Belgium), Democrazia Proletaria (Italy), K.B. (Germany), M.C., O.I.C., P.T.E. (Spain) O.U.T. (Portugal), P.S.U., O.C.T., (France), VS (Denmark) Provisional Sinn Fein (Ireland), Big Flame (England)



LETTERS



Bombings-2

Dear Big Flame,

The article in January BF, headed 'Ireland: The Forgotten War Comes Home', left me wondering what newspaper I was reading.

The emphasis of the article was that the pre-Christmas bombings were a result of 'bad logic'. Maybe what the author meant to say was that s/he didn't argue with the tactics of the Republicans. But this is nothing new, there are many campaigns and struggles which we support, even though we may not agree with all the tactics used. Surely Big Flame has always been distinct on the British left because of this, throwing our weight behind struggles, despite tactical disagreements, recognising that forwarding the *autonomy of people in struggle is far more valuable and constructive than standing on the sidelines and criticising*. So why are things different when it comes to Irish people fighting British Imperialism? Not because of bad logic on the part of the Republicans; rather, perhaps, because of a failure of people in England to even apply any logic to their understanding of the Irish struggle.

Meanwhile, as I write this letter, there's a lorry drivers' strike which has hit the country much harder than the wave of bombings before Christmas. Am I to expect an article in the February paper supporting the drivers' demands but claiming strikes to be illogical?

Anti-imperialism is no small thing, it is not for us to decree what is good or bad logic in our publications, rather we must say to people in England that the next time they moan about 'mad bombers' they should first question why Irish people should have to suffer British Imperialism and ask who benefits from it.

In Solidarity,
(Name supplied)
North London Big Flame

Bombings-1

Dear Big Flame

Last month (Ireland: the forgotten war comes home) you said: "We don't blame the IRA for considering a new bombing campaign in Britain. But we don't think it will help." The reason for this, you say, is that "a new bombing campaign in England would actually increase calls for more repression." Leaving aside the strong possibility that a new bombing campaign will increase public pressure on the Government to withdraw from the North (which is presumably the IRA's objective), I find your views naive.

Hasn't every national liberation movement in history provoked by its struggle exactly the same kind of reaction from the left in the oppressor nation as you expressed last month? Any attempt to expel an imperialist power and to win national freedom will bring down on the working class in both countries a wave of repression. But what's the alternative you offer to the IRA: "strengthening the United Troops Out Movement?"

There are obvious difficulties in expressing public support for bombing campaigns. No socialist should welcome that kind of tactic, war or no war. Personally, I'd rather you kept quiet than add — for the first time, as far as I know — your voice to the chorus on the British left "Bombing campaigns are counter-productive (Newsline, a few weeks ago).

Grim Realist, Liverpool Big Flame



IRELAND — TEN YEARS ON The British Army Mutinies

LAST MONTH'S Big Flame described how the Bloody Sunday massacre of 14 unarmed people by British paratroopers created a wave of anti-British feeling all over Ireland, north and south. This had been the British government's great fear all along.

Ireland is a happy hunting ground for get-rich-quick international companies — often British — but increasingly American, West German, Dutch and Japanese. Republicanism has always been a powerful belief in Ireland. If a mass Republican movement developed all foreign businesses would be nationalised, the wealth would be kept in Ireland instead of exported to capitalists the world over.

PETTY REFORMS

Fearing this, the British government decided that massive, violent repression was not the answer to the angry people of the Republican ghettos of Northern Ireland. Even when the British Army invaded the Republican no-go areas in massive strength in 1972 they could not crush resistance. They only increased their own casualties.

The government decided to offer a few petty reforms to the northern Catholics, to try to buy them off from supporting Republicanism, and get them to support the pro-British Catholic group, the Social Democratic and Labour Party. (SDLP)

SUNNINGDALE

A "Council of Ireland" was to be set up with northern and southern representatives, but it would only cover minor issues like tourism. Basically, the life of ordinary working class Catholics, dominated by unemployment, low-pay, overcrowded housing and the constant fear of Army violence, would remain unchanged.

REJECTED

In fact, when it came to an election, it was the northern Irish Loyalists — not the Catholics — who rejected the Sunningdale agreement. The vast majority voted for candidates of the United Ulster Unionist Council — people like Paisley and Craig. They wanted no concessions, no reforms — nothing — that sounded like Catholics getting equal treatment. As for the Catholics themselves, most voted for the S.D.L.P. which supported the Sunningdale proposals — but few of them were very excited about it.

GENERAL STRIKE

The final crunch came in May 1974. A new Loyalist body — the Ulster Workers Council — called a strike against Sunningdale. Electricity workers came out early. Industry — with jobs reserved mostly for Protestant loyalists — began to grind to a halt as the strike spread and the Protestant power workers

walked out of the generating stations. In some workplaces the Loyalist terror gangs like the UDA threatened workers into coming out — but they weren't generally needed.

THE ARMY TAKES SIDES

Most Loyalist workers and trade-unionists opposed the Sunningdale agreement, but weren't sure if a strike would really work. Then

union leaders — were a pathetic failure. The mass of local trade unionists — mostly Loyalists — didn't want to know. The strike gave them a new sense of their own power — the feeling that they once again ruled a Protestant Ulster where Catholics were kept in their place.

On 28th May, Brian Faulkner, chief of the Sunningdale-created local administration, resigned. The British strategy of small reforms had totally collapsed.

The truth was covered up. No hint of the military mutiny was allowed into TV or newspaper



Republican News Photo

they saw the attitude of the British troops. When the UDA — many openly armed with clubs and pistols — set up barricades to stop people going into work — British troops stood alongside them chatting and joking. When ordered to remove barricades from

reports. Even with their plans in ruins, the Labour Cabinet had no word of complaint about the troops.

TRADE UNIONS UNITED?

But there was no hiding the main truth of the strike. That northern Irish workers are sharply divided.



Republican News Photo

certain spots, the troops obeyed. But then stood back and watched approvingly when the barricades were re-erected 50 yards away.

The Labour government was helpless when its own chosen instrument — the army — turned against it. "Back-to-work" marches — organised by the northern Irish trade

Most of the Catholics regard themselves as Irish and want freedom from Britain. Most Protestant workers are "loyal" to Britain and fear any concessions to Catholics. The idea of "trade union unity" is a myth. Only the northern Irish union leaders are united. The union members aren't. This was shown clearly when the leaders called for a return-to-work and received virtually no support.

Many of these same leaders continue to peddle the "unity" myth in their support for the virtually non-existent "Better life for All Campaign." This campaign tries to unite the northern Irish workers by ignoring the issue that divides them — Britain's occupation of the Six counties.

Like the back-to-work marches during the UWC stoppage, the "Better Life for All Campaign" is a pathetic failure.

Only when the question of national independence is tackled will there be the hope of workers unity.

Next month: The Peace Movement — From Tragedy to Farce.



Big Flame Photo

Supermarkets

Dear Big Flame,

Not having noticed many empty supermarket shelves myself I suspect that I have discovered why the newspapers have been full of "Crisis", "Empty Shelves" "Famine". It must be that for the

first time in their lives male journalists are going into supermarkets and witnessing the crush, the queues and heavy bags experienced by women all over the country every week of their lives!

N. Jones, Liverpool.

DONATIONS

Money in this month includes £10 from a South London member, £2.21 from Liverpool BF and £15 in monthly standing orders — which adds up to £27.21 We urgently need money — our account is 'Big Flame Newspaper' account number 0008738 and the code of our Lloyd's Branch is 30-95-11.

'REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM No.3' NOW OUT. Includes: 'Barcelona Tenants Up In Arms'; 'Italy — a New Politics'; 'Shop Stewards as Full-Timers'.

From: BF Journal, Room 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC 1. 40p (+ 15p postage) and from all good left wing bookshops.



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

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

NOTTINGHAM BIG FLAME MEETING "The Situation In The Middle East" Wed. 7th Feb. 8 pm.

NOTTINGHAM ANL MEETINGS Tues 6th Feb. Speaker from Bradford Asian Youth Organisation.

Wed 21 Feb Speaker from Virk Brothers Defence Committee.

ANL meetings at International Community Centre at 7.30.

NOTTINGHAM — FREEDOM FOR ZIMBABWE MEETING Speaker from Mozambique. Thurs 8th Feb. 7.45 — Afro-Caribbean Centre.

'SEXUALITY AND FASCISM' Documents from Big Flame, including: 'Women and Nazi Germany', 'Women and the NF', 'Men and Fascism'. Price 20p (inc. p&p) from 217 Wavertree Rd, Liverpool 7.

MANCHESTER SOCIALIST Unity Public meeting. Speakers from S.U., Public sector struggle, Direct Works etc. Monday Feb. 12th, 7.30, Star and Garter, Fairfield St. (below Piccadilly Station).

MANCHESTER WOMEN'S Day of Discussion. Saturday Feb. 17th 10-6pm Abraham Moss Centre, Crumpsall (for more information contact Debbie Nelson, 061.224.4360)

SHEFFIELD 'The Fight For Better Health In Sheffield' Speakers: Kate Truscott ('Fightback') and member of Hospital Worker Group. Wed 7th Feb. 7.30 Lansdowne Hotel (bottom of London Rd) Meeting organised by Big Flame and SWP.

TIME OFF

Culture Clash Hits Home

The Deputy Head called all the kids who'd won prizes and told us that the Bishop would be there to give us our prizes. She went on and on about school uniform and what the boys should wear and how we should wash our hair. Then she turned to the girls, "And no blue or green tights. I want all the girls to wear flesh coloured tights." "Whose flesh, Miss?" Lorraine asked.

"Free Dinners"

Farrukh Dhondy's collections of short stories are all about young blacks and whites growing up in London, and coming up against racism at home and school. Many of the stories are also about the conflicts young blacks face with their parents who have a different attitude to British society and culture and a different way of dealing with daily racism and violence. In the story 'Salt on a Snake's Tail' Mr Miah appears to his sons as a coward who refuses to stand up to racial attacks. His eldest son Khalil is involved with a local Asian self-defence group, set up after a Bengali was attacked coming home from work. Johl, the younger son has fantasies of becoming a Kung Fu expert so that he won't be afraid of the white gangs who wait for him on the way home from school. One day Johl and his father go out to buy some chairs and are harassed by a group of white youths who had abused them the day before. On that occasion Johl had looked to his father to

stand up to the youths and was disappointed to see his fear. This time Johl loses patience with his father's deference and when the white youths push them around, Johl tries to fight back, but ends up on the ground being kicked in the face. Johl's father shouts at him to run and leave the chairs they have bought on the pavement. When they get home Mr Miah tries to pretend nothing has happened and tells Johl not to tell anyone about the incident. Johl agrees.

"He felt they had lost more than the chairs; they had lost the right to walk on the street. They had lost face. His feet which should have been shooting kicks at the jaws of danger, had followed each other hastily home... They had run away; he didn't want to tell anyone his father was a coward.

But is he a coward or does he just fight his battles in a different way?

While the most striking thing about Dhondy's stories is the way he writes about being black in Britain from the inside, not as an observer, each story has a dynamic and complexity of plot beyond a descriptive account of racial tension. It would be nice to see them available in every secondary school in Britain, as a way of encouraging white and black youth to understand themselves and the racist society in which we live.

By Farrukh Dhondy: "East End at Your Feet", MacMillan 55p & "Come to Mecca", Fontana, 60p.

THE BOY LOOKS AT JOHNNY & Johnny Looks Back

"THE BOY LOOKED AT JOHNNY — THE OBITUARY OF ROCK AND ROLL". Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons: Pluto Press 1978

THE AMOUNT of useful and interesting stuff written on rock and youth culture is small. Anything critical and intelligent would be welcome. This, unfortunately, lets out Parsons and Burchill. Their book is criticism without analysis and modesty. And without this they're just sounding off for the sake of hearing their own voice. Any reader of *New Musical Express* knows just how much they like that sound. Pluto, the publishers, seem to believe it — their blurb says 'Read by two million teenagers every week'. God help us if reading means liking; Woodrow Wyatt is read by five million. Both are employed for the same reason, to stir up phoney controversy by looney statements.

The record reviews and articles by Parsons and Burchill have been getting steadily more hysterical and dismissive of all but the chosen few (the latest choice being Bruce Springsteen). The good stuff they write now and again, particularly Burchill on women in rock, the review of Siouxsie and the Banshees and a few others, is lost in the excess of the rest.

WITHERING

Exactly the same goes for the book. There is some withering criticisms and some targets hit on the nail, like on Rasta on women. There's some good insights into punk and some prophetic comments on the likely break-up of the Sex Pistols. Best of all there's some memorable funny or biting lines. My favourites: "Basically he was a nerd, and as such — Born to Run". (On Iggy Stouge) "They were the type of people who hang out till closing time for fear of what might be said about them if they left." (On punk camp-followers) "The blacks were burning Watts while the whites were burning

joss sticks." (On the late '60's)

FLACCID

But when you start lashing out at everyone, it loses its impact. Under the lash come sixties tax-exile heroes, washed out hippes, boring, macho heavy metal, dead-end intellectuals of rock, virtually all punk and new wave except their own heroes. The only people who get a favourable mention in the book are Joan Jett (of the Runaways) "is the last rock and roll star as you know it in the world" Polystyrene (of X-Ray Spex) and Tom Robinson Band — "Compared to the TRB, every other rock musician is wanking

into the wind."

If you think those comments are excessive, you want to read what they say when writing off the rest of humanity.

The terms they use are not just excessive, they're offensive and sexist. The same phrases appear time and again: 'fat old Tin Pan Alley tunesmith tarts,' (Elton John and Roy Wood), 'ritzzy old tarts,' (the Stones). But wait a minute, weren't our intrepid duo fighting with us in Lewisham and writing about it in *Socialist Worker*, as well as *New Musical Express*? Yes, but before we get carried away, look at a

HOLLYWOOD film-makers are beginning to realise that their customers want films about subjects of social and political importance. Last year there was *F.I.S.T.*, whose message was that the unions were just as corrupt and violent as the bosses they are fighting. This year they have made 'Blue Collar', which also focusses on union corruption — this time as seen from the shop floor.

BLUE COLLAR

By a visitor from the U.S. revolutionary socialist organisation 'Sojourner Truth'.

AT THE OPENING of *Blue Collar*, as the credits are being played across the screen, the camera focuses momentarily on a welder who lights a cigarette with his torch. In that single moment we realise that this film was made by people who know something about factory life.

The ability of a movie to make the audience see, hear and even smell the inside of a car factory is no small accomplishment, especially when one considers that industrial workers can attend the movies every week for a year without once recognising themselves on the screen, and that most middle class people know more about the lives of their counterparts in other countries than they do about the working class right across the railway tracks in their own town.

LOOTING

The plot of the film turns around two black auto workers (Richard Prior and Yaphet Kotto) and one white worker (Harvey Keitel) who, hard up for cash and embittered by the way their union has become part of the forces holding them down, conceive a plan to rob the safe in their union office. Excellent performances by all three actors manage to convey to the last detail that interplay of disappointed illusions, alienation and cynicism which makes up American workers' consciousness. Having successfully (and comically) burgled the safe, the three men discover that what has come into their hands is not cash, but hard evidence that the union officials themselves have been systematically looting the treasury. They decide to sell the incriminating books back to the officials.

What follows is how the 'system' responds with both stick and carrot, and the impact this has on the relations among the three men and their families.

DISCONTENT

While there is no shortage of gangster-ridden unions in the States (most notably, the Teamsters), the United Automobile Workers (thinly disguised in the film) is not one of them. On the contrary, it is the 'cleanest' union in the country, an efficient machine for managing discontent. If its members hate it as the film depicts — and they do — this has less to do with crude corruption than to its organic links with the entire crushing structure of official society.

FRAGMENTED

Second, the auto workers have typically a 'higher standard of living' than what is shown. For example, no auto worker would be motivated to rob because his child needed dental work, since under the terms of contract between the union and car companies, dental work would be performed without cost to the worker.

The auto workers, together with the miners (in the big mines covered by union contract) are the highest paid industrial workers in the States. They are also the most militant. Their combativity comes not from their conditions of material hardship, but from the fact that they have won so much and it has turned out to be so little: more than ever, the auto worker finds himself reduced to a 'fragment of a man'.

Third, while social relations between black and white of the sort depicted in the film are not unheard of in the States, they are very untypical. More commonly, black and white workers get on splendidly on the job and then go off home to their rigidly segregated neighbourhoods, never meeting each other outside work.

Fourth, and most important criticism of all, the dilemma faced by

The company builds cars and destroys men.



quote from the *Socialist Worker* article on the NF: "Face to face, they're fat, forty-ish, wizened Nazi wankers having flaccid fantasies of butch, blond, Bavarian boys resplendent in leather hot-pants... In rock as in real life, fascism is the last refuge of bitter old tarts."

CRAP

Aside from the fact that SW

shouldn't have touched that crap with a bargepole, it underlines the fragility of Parsons and Burchill's commitment to fighting fascism, sexism and racism on any terms that can really advance the struggle. The same anti-gay themes appear throughout the book, providing a strange contrast to the generally good line on

women. It is good that music papers are debating politics in a way unthinkable a few years ago. The fact that Parsons and Burchill were instrumental in this should not tempt us to jump on the same kind of bandwagon Pluto have, by falling for this hype.

The fragile pseudo-commitment, arrogance and contempt for their readers (*disco is the*

opiate of the proles, and so on) make a lot more enemies for revolutionary politics than it does friends: just read the letters column of *NME*. There is good stuff being written on rock by people who love music and radical politics, like Simon Frith in the *Melody Maker*. They aren't as flashy as our duo, but we have to be patient. No-one has the right to write the

the main character is quite misleading. Not the nature of the dilemma itself, that of a worker offered a choice between personal advancement and standing fast with his pal, but in the fact that he is black and the potential victim of his betrayal is white. Such examples do occur (although blacks are ordinarily given the opportunity to betray only other blacks) but to single out one of them is to mis-state the essence of US history.

On the contrary, it is whites, struggling to maintain their status as favoured slaves of capital, who are played off against blacks — and ultimately themselves.

FACILE

In spite of the shortcomings mentioned here (and some others like a totally gratuitous porno scene) the film remains an incisive probe into the reasons why the US proletariat, in some ways the strongest working class in the world, remains subordinated to the wage labour relation. An intelligent observer can learn more of the reality of American working class life from this commercial film than from most of the literary and cultural products of the US left which offer nothing but facile optimism and exhortation.

A final note: I saw this film in Chicago and, coming out of the cinema house, I encountered an old acquaintance, a long-term member of the Communist Party and sometime local official of the auto workers union.

"How did you like the film?" he asked me.

"I thought it was great" I replied. "Not perfect, but great."

"I heard it was anti-working class," he said.

"It's not anti-working class," I answered. "It may be anti-union, but it's not anti-working class."

"I thought they were the same thing," he said.

"Ah well, there is the difference between us," I said, taking my leave.

"obituary of rock and roll," as the book's sub-title puts it — least of all these two inflated egomaniacs. And they will turn. The left will not last for ever as this years in thing for aspiring young rock journalists.

The book's dedication to Menachem Begin is only the start.

BIG FLAME PHOTO



LEEDS BECOMES UNITED IN ACTION

LEEDS IS often regarded as a non-starter when it comes to workers defending their interests through militant action. But as the few examples below show, an increasing number of people are determined to lose that image.

'Figures can't look after patients'

'We would've carried on fighting, but we were on our own. We got no support from the rest of the hospital. We're accepting the closure reluctantly. There'll be a few tears come Friday.' This was the comment of one of the Leeds workers who fought to save Seacroft Hospital Laundry.

The Health Authority planned to close it in 1977, and centralise the laundry at Leeds General Infirmary. But while Leeds General couldn't even cope with the laundry it already had, Seacroft Laundry was being deliberately run down. Hospital linen was being deliberately sent to a private laundry.

In June 1977 the workers responded with an unofficial strike. It lasted one week. They got no support from their union, NUPE. One official did go down and talk to management...and proceeded to try and persuade the workers to return to work. As the workers commented time and time again during the strike, 'The union officials talk just like management'.

The women did get help, however, from a number of socialists.

Members of the Socialist Women's Action Group, Big Flame, the Socialist Workers' Party, and independent socialists swelled the picket lines, printed leaflets, and collected money.

The strikers won a limited victory. Two sacked workers were reinstated; no hospital linen was to be sent to private laundries; and the closure of the laundry was to be postponed.

Then last year the workers stopped work for a day to picket another private laundry where hospital linen was being sent. In a final effort to save the laundry, they began a go-slow in November. But the laundry closed last month.

As Leeds Other Paper commented, 'NUPE have spoken of fighting the closure "tooth and nail" but that seems to be all they have done

spoken'.

If workers rely on their union officials to make links with other workers, then they will always be in danger of being left isolated and, apparently, helpless. This is what happened to the women at Seacroft. If other workers at the hospital, not to mention at other hospitals, had supported them, the laundry would still be open today.

There is an attempt, however, to build opposition to the running down of Leeds hospitals. The Nurses Action Group was formed last year by COHSE members at Newton Green Hospital. They are fighting for more hospital staff to be taken on. There are currently between 700 and 900 unemployed nurses in Leeds. 'The authorities give us plenty of figures', they say, 'but figures can't look after patients'.

If you want to support the Leeds Nurses Action Group, write to Louise Denis, c/o ward 18, Newton Green Hospital, Leed 7, West Yorks.

All over Leeds on January 22nd, the Public Sector Day of Action, workers were on picket lines. Above are a few of them.

Imperial Metals

A MONTH long unofficial strike has just ended at the Imperial Metals Plant in South Leeds.

Strikers got letters telling them to go back to work which were sent out by their GMWU national officials. YIM is owned by Imperial Metals who also have plants in Liverpool, Smethwick, Swindon, Wales and Scotland.

The Leeds workers walked out after YIM rejected the national wage claim for a 28% increase to bring the minimum up to £60 for a 35 hour week, and an extra week's holiday.

The company offered 7% and refused to discuss a reduction in hours. The GMWU told the strikers to accept the offer, but at a mass meeting on January 8th, the strikers voted overwhelmingly to strike.

The strikers put 24 hour pickets

on both entrances to the plant, and sent flying pickets across to Merseyside to put a 24 hour picket on the Kirkby plant.

Their strike was important because IMI workers in other parts of the country have been let down by the Leeds workers in the past. There is little tradition of militancy at the Leeds plant (although there have been a number of sectional disputes) this was the first strike involving all the shop floor workers for many years.

The defeat of the YIM workers should remind us that even at a time of great militancy, there are many workers who are being forced to settle for very much less than the 16% Fords' workers got. And of course, the return to work of the YIM workers is not front-page news in the press.

VERY SICK PAY!

Another metalworkers' strike in South Leeds has ended after over two months.

Over 700 workers at Cattons and Co. walked out on November 20th for higher sick pay. At present workers get no sick pay until they have four years service. Those with four years service get just £10 a week. And it took years of fighting to get Cattons to concede even that pitiful

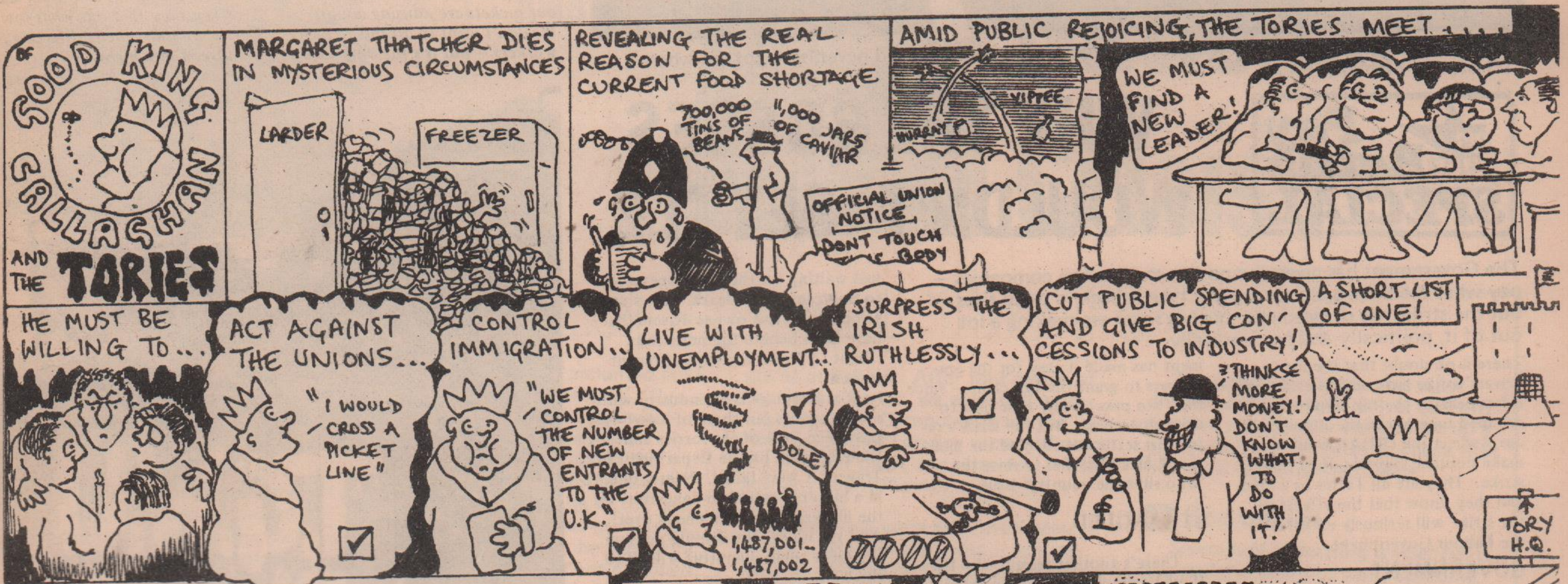
amount

The workers were demanding £25 a week in line with the practice throughout the Weir Group who own Cattons. After months of negotiations last year management offered an increase of £1 a week, bringing sick pay up to £11.

A couple of weeks after the strike began they offered the £11 to those with two years service

or more; with £5 a week for those who have worked for between one and two years.

A mass meeting of the workers rejected the offer. There were a number of mass meetings throughout the dispute, and the majority in favour of staying out increased. After two month's strike, management agreed to raise sick pay to £20 after a year's service (£15 for the first year). The strikers see this as a victory and have gone back to work full of militancy and confidence.

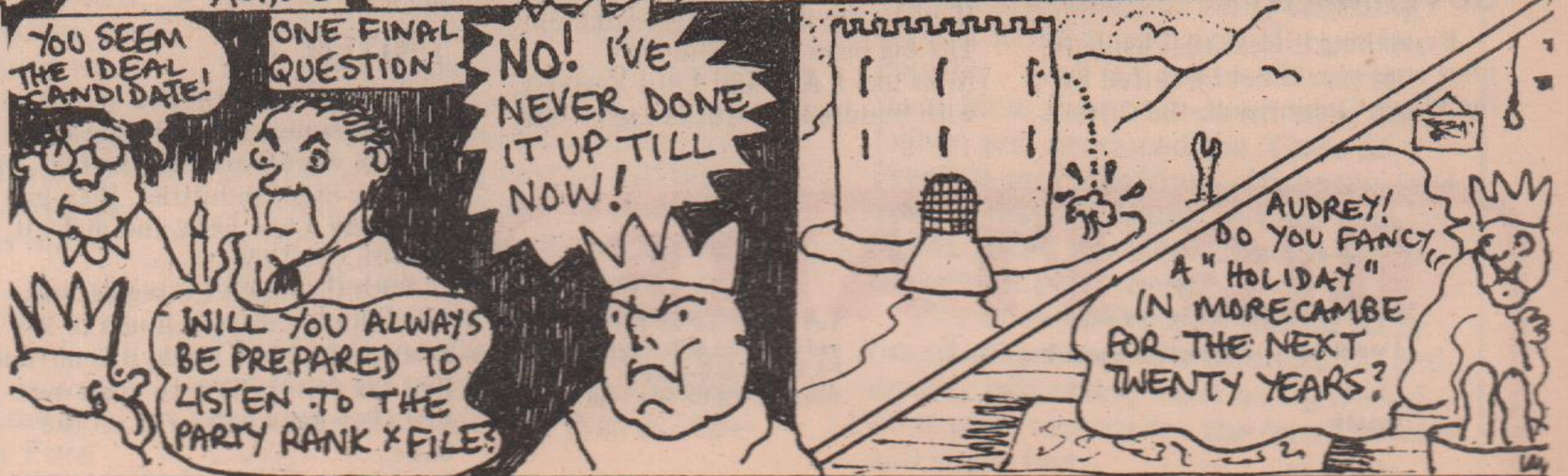


COPY DATES FOR NEXT BIG FLAME NEWSPAPER

FEATURES; Monday 19th NEWS; Thursday 22nd Feb PAPER OUT: Fri March 2nd Articles received after these deadlines stand little chance of being printed.

BIG FLAME GROUPS

There are now Big Flame Groups in:
 North West: Manchester and Liverpool.
 Yorkshire: Leeds and Sheffield
 Midlands: Birmingham, L eamington Coventry and Nottingham
 South East: London (3), Brighton
 East Anglia: Norwich.
 and individual members in many other towns.



BIG FLAME



Jimmy Doran, 35 years in haulage, on the right of the picture. (Photo Big Flame)

'Don't talk to me about secondary picketing! This is our place of employment. I've worked on these docks for 35 years. I started with a horse and cart'. Jimmy Doran works for Brain Haulage in Liverpool. 'These docks owe me a living. My life's been on these docks'.

The pickets we talked to in Liverpool are right behind the union

claim. They point out that the new EEC rules on maximum hours amount to a productivity deal — '...and we want paying for it'. Jimmy dismisses the press reports of drivers on £140. 'How can you earn that legally on a £53 basic?'

How would you feel, we asked, if you win the pay claim and let the Tories in at the same time? It's tak-

en a long time to organise this first national hauliers' strike, but now they're confident. 'We can handle Mrs Thatcher'.

Henry Bradley, a member of the Liverpool Strike Committee, isn't worried about the troops coming in. 'What could they do? There's 60,000 drivers in this country running 32-tonners and there's no way they've got that kind of facilities.'

DRIVERS PICKETS A WINNER!



SOLIDARITY on the line at Tilbury

WARRINGTON STRIKE COMMITTEE 'We're in charge'

IN WARRINGTON the lorry drivers strike committee has its own Code of Conduct, aimed at strengthening the strike rather than weakening it, as Moss Evans has tried to do. Here's how they did it.

Every road into Warrington is kept under watch by the strike committee and every lorry that enters the town is followed.

'Last week a picket got up on the cab to talk to the driver of a foreign vehicle. The driver drove off and carried him 25 yards before he was thrown up, pretty shaken up, though luckily that's all. The rest of us had to dive out of the way.'

DISPENSATION

'We got into our cars and chased him. We stopped the driver and held him until the police arrived. We still don't know whether he's been charged.'

The Warrington Committee's aim is to bring production to a halt. 'We will give any haulier based in Warrington a certificate of dispensation if his load is needed for hospitals, animal food-stuffs and other essentials. We realise that our pickets are causing lay-offs. We don't want to do this to other workers — but it's the only way

to win our claim.'

In effect, the strike Committee is controlling production in Warrington, which hasn't pleased the union officials one bit.

'We're getting nothing but aggro from the union. The Executive Council has done nothing to get a settlement. In fact, what with the Prime Ministers' statement on picketing, and the 'code of conduct', they seem to be going out of their way to divide us. 75% of our time is spent solving problems that they have set us.'

14 HOURS A DAY

'The attitudes of the employers in this industry has always been maximum hours — minimum wage. When I started driving we worked 14 hours a day. The E.E.C. regulations are good — as long as we get a decent rise on the basic. Drivers from other European countries laugh when they find out what low wages we are on — theirs' are two to three times higher.'



Pickets on Liverpool docks — 'Without the secondary picketing we'd never have got anywhere'. (Photo Big Flame)



WHY THE BOSSES WOULDN'T SETTLE

The Government has given the nod to the haulage companies — pay what the drivers are asking and take it back in price rises — but the strike has dragged on: the big firms are making a lot out of it, politically and economically.

There is no doubt that the lorry drivers' strike has gone on as long as it has because the big employers, grouped together in the Road Haulage Association (RHA), want to make political capital out of the strike. They are all Tories to a man, and they know that the effects of the strike will seriously embarrass the Labour Government.

GOVERNMENT

By making it clear that hauliers price rises would not be vetted by the Prices Commission, the Govern-

ment has made it easy for the employers to grant the full claim — since they can pass on any cost rises to their customers. But the RHA's refusal to settle has enabled the media and Mrs Thatcher to raise the 'who runs the country' issue.

STRANGLER

There's another reason why the Hauliers are dragging the strike out. The big boys of the industry — firms like P & O and Lord Vestey's, with hundreds of trucks each — are

just waiting for the small operators to be strangled to death. It is smaller operators and owner drivers that have been behind the numerous 'Right to Work' convoys of recent weeks.

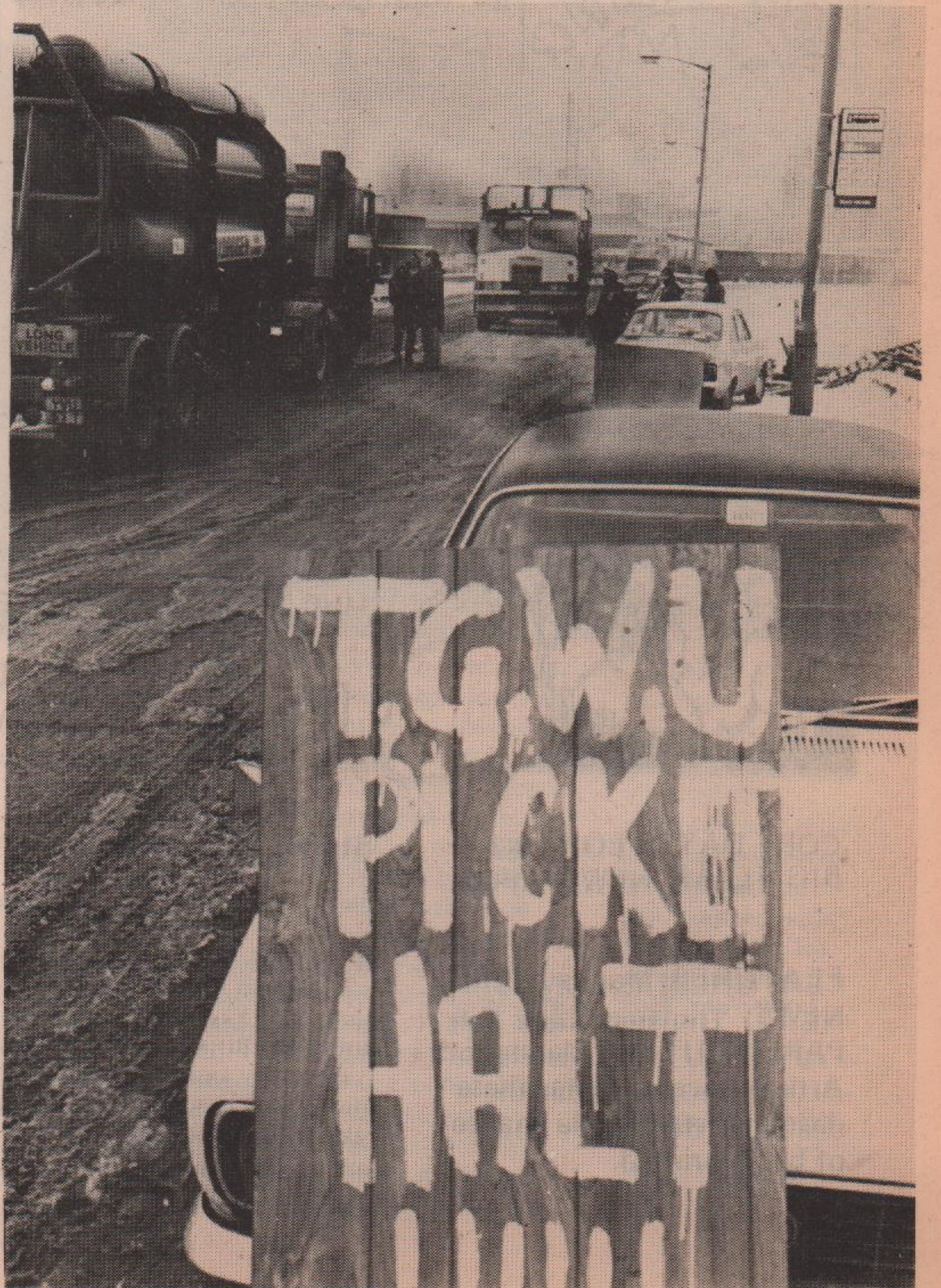
Road haulage is an industry with more than its fair share of 'cowboys'. Last year, 20% of the lorries and trailers tested by the Department of Transport were failed. Nearly one in a hundred were too dangerous for the inspectors to even check over! And the longer the dispute goes on, the more small operators will go to the wall.

UNITED

Big and small, they're united on their resistance to the higher basic that the drivers are fighting for. As in many other industries, they prefer to pay a low basic and make it up with overtime.

With the new EEC regulations, which limit a driver's hours to 9½ a day and 57 in a week, it is obvious that the drivers have to make sure that they get a hefty rise on the basic.

That's what's behind the claim for a £65, 35-hour week. The lorry drivers' claim also includes increased meal and overnight stay allowances, better sickness and death benefits, and four weeks holiday.



Drivers picket at Trafford Park, Manchester. [John Smith (IFL)]

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