

Big Flame

for Socialism

No. 74 May 1979

15p

WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT ANY GOVERNMENT



Big Flame Photo



(Andrew Ward, Report)

Vote Labour - Keep the Tories Out



Big Flame Photo

★ The Elections and Socialist Unity

★ FRENCH STEEL WORKERS:
two page photo feature.

★ GRENADA — exclusive interview
with new envoy.

★ Do we need a Men's Movement?

★ Nuclear Power
at Torness?



★ Plus lots more in the new 16-page
Big Flame.

Inside this issue

Editorial

NO MATTER who wins the General Election, the working class will have to face wage controls, cuts in our services and restrictions on the rights of immigrants, Irish people and trade unionists. If it is a Tory government that carries out these attacks on our living standards and rights, the responsibility will lie squarely with the Labour Government. Despite the ravings of the Tory press, it will not be a "failure of socialism," but of Laobur's own imitation Tory policies.

In our understandable desire to keep the Tories out, we cannot forget that it is Labour that has presided over the near-tripling of unemployment from 545,000 to 1,455,000 that has slashed public spending on health and education, allowing numerous hospitals and schools to close, and is responsible for the obscenity of 'H' Block, the torturing of Irish prisoners at Castlereagh and the ever-increasing restrictions on the rights of immigrants, including the notorious 'virginity tests' at Heathrow. By failing

to produce socialist policies to meet peoples' needs at a time of social and economic crisis, they have paved the way for the return of a Tory government of the most viciously reactionary nature.

BUT VOTE LABOUR TO KEEP THE TORIES OUT

Socialists cannot remain indifferent to the return of a Tory government. Their policies will extend every attack carried out by Labour and open up new and worse ones. They will massively increase cuts in spending on our schools, hospitals and other services to finance their money tax cuts. Slashing of employment subsidies, job creation schemes and other industrial aid, will put many more on the dole. It is likely that they will end the indexing of pensions and welfare benefits to the cost-of-living. To weaken our resistance to these and other measures the Tories have pledged to limit the right to picket, to the closed shop and they

will cut or stop supplementary benefits for strikers' families.

The majority of working class people will choose to vote for a Labour Government not because of any illusions in Labour, but because of the Tory alternative, and the lack of any other credible possibilities. Big Flame rejects the return of the party of the ruling class, whose share prices are already leaping at the prospect of a Tory victory. Therefore we call for a Labour vote, to keep the Tories out. This doesn't mean that we want to let Laobur off the hook, giving it the space to pretend to be more socialist in opposition. It may be easier to develop struggles under the Tories but socialists must convince working people and Labour activists that the Labour Party is a willing prisoner of this system and one which will have to be fought every step of the way.

AND BUILD THE SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

Socialist alternatives to the Tory policies of Labour are at the moment fragmented. But they exist. They are present in the

Lucas Workers' Plan for alternative production to combat redundancies and in the development of rank and file organisation like the Fordworkers Group, in the Women's Movement struggle for the right to choose on abortion and sexuality, in the anti-racist, anti-fascist struggle against the National Front, immigration controls and state harassment of black people, in the vitality of youth organisations like the National Union of School Students and School Kids Against the Nazis and in the emerging opposition of the anti-nuclear movement to capitalism's latest death machine.

Socialist Unity is standing a small number of candidates to put across these alternatives by linking the policies and building the campaigns to win them. Big Flame is active in building support for Socialist Unity and calls for a vote for these candidates as a small but important step in building a socialist alternative. But regardless of the election results, Labour or Tory — the fight goes on.

March 31st was the day called by women internationally to demonstrate for abortion facilities. In many parts of the world, women demonstrated, and in London, our ranks were swelled by a contingent of women bearing banners and singing songs from all over the world.

Compared to other abortion demonstrations, particularly those called to fight the James White and Benyon bills, the turnout was poor. Maybe this was because there were other demonstrations that day, but it is also true that an international demonstration on abortion was not seen as being urgent and important by a great many people.

One of the things that came over most clearly in the speeches at the rally in Trafalgar Square is that abortion is an international question. A woman comrade from Spain spoke of how difficult it was to get not only abortions but also contraceptives in her country, where both are illegal. She described some of the terrible things women do to themselves there to prevent having unwanted children. She told us in no plain terms that for women in Spain, and for women in a great many other countries in Europe, it is really important that the right to legal abortion in Britain should not be lost. Many thousands of women come to this country every year to have abortions, to avoid police harassment and damage to their bodies at the hands of backstreet abortionists.

If a Conservative government comes to power after the election, there is no doubt that our rights to abortion in this country will be attacked. So next time we take to the streets to fight for free and legal abortion on demand, let's remember that we're fighting alongside our sisters abroad.

*Not the Church, not the state
Women will decide their fate.
With a nicknack scallywag give a dog
a bone,
Margaret Thatcher piss off home!*



Contraception — so that we don't need abortions: abortion on demand — so that we don't have to die. Italian feminists on the demo in London. (Big Flame photo)

Prisoners of Europe

DUBLIN — 21st April: As part of the 'For a workers' Europe' campaign around the European elections a meeting, attended by 250 delegates, was held in Dublin to draw attention to Europe's political prisoners. The meeting was organised by Provisional Sinn Fein and attended by delegates from organisations from France, Brittany, Corsica, Belgium, Flanders, Denmark, the Basque country and Portugal. From England the United Troops Out Movement, the Prisoners Aid Committee and Big Flame were

represented.

Amongst the speakers were Ruari O' Braudaigh of Provisional Sinn Fein, who spoke of the 2,000 political prisoners in Ireland, Jackie Kaye (PAC) who drew attention to the 80 Irish prisoners in Britain, and Des Warren (of the Shrewsbury Two) who spoke of his experience in prison resulting from picketing in the 1972 building workers' strike and who criticised the English left for not taking seriously the issue of prisoners.

On Easter Sunday London saw two demonstrations commemorating the Easter uprising of Irish rebels in 1916. The largest, which attracted about 700 people was organised by Provisional Sinn Fein and marched to a rally in Kilburn. The smaller Irish Republican Socialist Party demonstration also marched to Kilburn where an earlier rally was held.

The speakers at both rallies drew attention to the urgency of campaigning on behalf of the Irish prisoners of war fighting for political status. Big Flame had members on both demonstrations.

Facelift

Last September we boldly announced in this paper "Coming this autumn — our new improved paper". Our Australian readers, having suffered a summer as hot as our winter was cold, will be pleased to see that we have kept to our promise.

REASONS

The reasons behind the facelift are many. We have improved the design, and hopefully made the contents more interesting. The back page, when folded, becomes a display for bookshops and conferences, but normally our paper sales will be with the front page showing as it always has been.

FEEDBACK

We rely on contributions from you, news from your local activities and features reflecting your thoughts. If the paper is to be a success we will have to be 'stricter' than in the past, news stories should be no longer than 350 words and features 800 words. We also need to be told in advance that you're sending something in.

DEADLINES

For the June paper we must receive features by Weds. 9th May and news by Weds 15th May. Exceptions will only apply to news that happens after this date and then you must write and tell us.

Articles must be double-spaced and typed if possible.

Lastly, our bank balance isn't too healthy. We need regular donations — if you think the paper is worthwhile then this is the best way to show your appreciation. How about a big response this month? Can BF groups selling the paper make sure that their paper money is sent promptly — otherwise we'll have to take guerrilla action!

This month's donations:
BF Women £5
£1 from GS, Middlesex.
£5 London member
£5 Norwich comrades
£17 standing orders.
A total of £33

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ADDRESS

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"SOME ONE-parent families go without food and clothing in trying to pay fuel bills according to a survey by the National Council for One Parent Families... the survey covered a random selection of 31 families who had asked the council for help. Five out of six said that they went without food or clothing to pay for fuel. Ten suffered from bronchitis and other illnesses related to cold conditions and most lived in old, damp property." (Guardian, 20.11.78)

En och Powell, the man of the people (God save us from the Sun), has produced the working man's argument for making the closed shop illegal.

"I have long concluded that trade union action is, over time, not only non beneficial but marginally harmful to the maintenance and increase of the real remuneration

and conditions of labour."

Presumably Enoch has been helped towards this startling conclusion (after all, the unions are growing at a staggering rate considering his reasoning) by that statistical flair with which he periodically proves that white people have become all but a minority in Britain.

ROYAL PARTY going 1: Princess Anne went out to dinner by helicopter recently. Although her engagement was only 50 miles away from her home, she chose an RAF helicopter instead of an official limousine. "because it is not comfortable to wear evening dress in a car" said a Buckingham Palace spokesman. (Daily Mirror, 23.11.78)

ROYAL PARTY going 2: The Queen's cousin, Lord Lichfield, decided to celebrate the birth of his son with a little party. Amongst the 500 guests were Princesses Anne, Margaret, Alexandra and Michael of Kent. The do, held at the Hyde Park Hotel, cost £30,000. (Daily Mail 28.11.78)

BIG FLAME will probably not be attending the one day conferences in Liverpool and Coventry on "Keeping the tax man at bay." For £43.20, they promise to take us through the whole gamut of the tax system since the 1978 Finance Act. All the latest loopholes in the Corporation, Capital transfer and Capital gains tax will be explained. Sounds like a bargain for the over-burdened businessman.

AWAYDAY

MICKY WAS on the InterCity back from London the other day. He'd been down to see the family. All courtesy of a firm of personnel consultants in the City. Micky explained, "I went down for an interview." He often goes down for interviews. In fact, every time he fancies a trip to the Smoke he opens the paper at the Appointments page and scribbles off a couple of job applications. The secret, it seems, is in aiming high enough to be a credible proposition. The expenses are more lavish that way, too.



Marilyn began to see a lot of other things she had never noticed before. She decided her breasts were getting flabby, and discovered tiny stretch marks there and on her backside. Probably from the gaining and losing of so much weight. Marilyn began to sense she was growing older, it terrified her.

"I still can't act...not really."



ARTHUR SCARGILL'S been defending the practice of his union newspaper, The Miner, of featuring pin-ups on page three. Called to account at a debate in London recently, he repeated his line about it being a harmless and pleasurable feature of modern life.

Here's a piece from a new biography of Marilyn Monroe by Lena Peitonne and William

news

Police Harrassment Enquiry

BRIXTON BLACKS TAKE THE BRUNT

It is unlikely that any of the candidates in the Lambeth Central constituency will mention during their General Election campaign the consistent police harassment that is part of everyday life for large numbers of Lambeth's residents — particularly in the black community.

The month-long visit by the Special Patrol Group last November was just one example (see *Big Flame*, January 1979) when thousands of people — predominantly young blacks, but also including squatters, council tenants in the most rundown estates and many others (including two Lambeth councillors and a local vicar) — were virtually terrorized off the streets with a frightening mixture of raids, stop and searches, roadblocks, arrests on 'sus', and sheer bloody-minded harassment.

The visit prompted an angry response in the area and a protest march of 250 people was successfully organized at very short notice. Black organizations and individuals formed the group Blacks Against State Harrassment (BASH). Its base is in Brixton, and it demands an end to all racist and repressive legislation (for instance on 'sus' and immigration), an end to the racist practices of the judiciary, to all forms of police harassment of black people, and to 'special police squads designed to operate against the black communities' (such as the Special Patrol Groups).

DIPPING

At more or less the same time a second group, Lambeth Against Police Harrassment, came into being, mainly involving activists from the local anti-racists (AIL-Lambeth Against Racism — ALARM — and the Lambeth Anti-Nazi League) and from the labour movement; but it also drew in teachers, parents, youth workers, and playground workers who had previously been uninvolved. Their demands followed those of BASH quite closely. A dossier currently being prepared by them for publication has its three main demands: 'Scrap SUS Now', 'No Return of the SPG and For a Popular Watch Committee', and 'A Public Enquiry Into Police Behaviour In the Borough'.

On February 12th, following an incident in the 'Two Brewers' pub in Clapham, in which several youths were arrested for alleged 'dipping' (picking pockets) and the stabbing of a plain clothes policeman, the police took the extraordinary step of marching into the offices of the Council for Community Relations in Lambeth (CCRL) and lifting three of the Council's black employees 'in connection with the incident'.

Herman Ouseley, one of those arrested, tells the story:

'It seems they were looking for someone with a sheepskin coat. When Mr. Meghie said he had one, they arrested him. I told him that I also had a sheepskin coat and was arrested too'.

The qualifications for arrest were simple indeed: if you were black and wore a sheepskin coat, you were under arrest, as Lloyd Douglas discovered when they picked him up on the way out the door with the other two. As soon as the news got around, representatives of several local black organizations and white supporters mounted a picket outside that remained there all day, until the last of the three was released eight hours later. None of the three was charged.

One immediate effect of this incident was the breakdown of the police-inspired community liaison committee, which, for just over a year, had operated as a rather transparent public relations front for the police. It talked about things a lot, and achieved absolutely nothing. Since that time public pressure has pushed Lambeth Council to set up an enquiry in the immediate future into police-community relations.

STUFFED

The composition of the enquiry has yet to be finalized. Some members of the working party to set up the enquiry have fought for the sort of panel that will be both accessible and credible to the black community. A bunch of retired lawyers and stuffed shirts pontificating and finger wagging simply will not be enough.

Colin Murray
Lambeth Against Police
Harrassment (LAPH)

RESOURCES

Over the last 18 months, support has been growing for the project among residents, trade union and community activists in this fiercely parochial textile and engineering town in West Yorkshire.

The aim of the project is to provide resources for local people to use in their campaigns, express their views creatively or get information on aspects of everyday life: housing, industry, health, welfare. Several activities are already in progress: a cheap print service, a study of local industry, a start to the information service, fund raising events and arts workshops in the communities.

The enquiry takes place in Keighly Town Hall on 15th May. You can contact Keighly



Brixton Police Station Picket; Union Place Collective.

DUNLOP, SPEKE, CLOSED

Talks lead to dead end

THE 500 MEN who attended that last mass meeting inside the Dunlop plant in Speke could be excused for being cynical. They were told that the fight was just beginning to save their jobs but they and everyone else knew that the majority of the 2,400 workers had accepted the redundancy money and the fight would be continued by very few.

Already ex-Dunlop workers have used the redundancy money to pay off arrears in the Housing Office in Speke. Other workers interviewed on TV were saying they'd taken the money because they expected to start a new job in a few weeks. A familiar tale to the many Standard workers still on the dole after a year.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

The one we can't afford to lose. That's what we were all saying on Merseyside when the 90 day redundancy notices were issued. For those of us watching the men filing out of the gates for the last time, the question was, what went wrong?

The civil disobedience tactic succeeded in bringing the closure to the attention of the public, but never really involved the community or even more than a minority of the workers themselves. The hope that it would force the government to come to the workers' aid was a non-starter and became more unlikely once the no-confidence vote took place.

The action committee's desire to get the company round the negotiating table set the tone from the beginning. No talk of occupation, no action which would make the company reluctant to talk.

THE "ACTION" PLAN

What was it the Committee wanted

the final weeks of the Campaign was a gift for Dunlops management. They must have been rubbing their hands together in glee. The plan accepted a loss of 1,000 jobs and gave the Company a blank cheque on productivity and manning. It also was a guarantee that an occupation would not take place. By stringing the Committee along with hints of talks, management knew that the day of closure would go by without a hitch.

EXPERTS

Blaming the bankruptcy of the workers plan on Tony Lane, a Communist Party member who researched it, is too easy. Its reformist politics are an accurate and direct reflection of the Labour majority on the Action Committee. Nonetheless, it's worth questioning the emerging role of the experts who advise shop stewards committees, especially when they reinforce militants' distrust of the far left without providing any revolutionary lead to the struggle.

WHAT NOW?

The flying pickets which have been organised throughout the country on Dunlop plants are beginning to bite — workers at Fort Dunlop in Birmingham are being laid off. It's ironic that the most effective action against the company should

Teachers Vote for Action

DELEGATES at the National Union of Teachers' National Conference in Scarborough in April voted almost unanimously to immediately embark on a campaign of withdrawing 'good will' in pursuit of our salary claim. Members are asked to refuse to carry out voluntary activities outside school hours and to stop using their cars on school business.

Last year these sanctions were extremely effective. Split site schools had to close as teachers were unable to ferry themselves from one building to another, and withdrawal from dinner duties led to school kids going on strike in response to their being locked out of schools in the lunchtime. It was the latter which really won us an increase.

DISCIPLINE

This year the situation is different. The claim is much larger as teachers' salaries have fallen so far behind those of other non-manual workers during the years of incomes policy. The nine per cent already offered has only been won on the backs of other public sector workers who have already taken action. In the large secondary schools in urban areas many teachers will think twice about withdrawing 'good will' when the result may be more school kids' strikes, which they see as undermining their own authority and classroom discipline.

Unfortunately, the left-wing motion for no cover action, a half-day strike, and longer strikes in selected areas, was overwhelmingly defeated.

One unsatisfactory aspect of the current claim is that it widens wage differentials with teachers lower down the scale — overwhelmingly women — who stand to gain much less than Heads and others at the top. Demands for a flat-rate increase barely received a hearing.

CANING

One good feature of the conference was a lobby of school kids demanding an end to corporal punishment and recognition of the National Union of School Students (NUSS). This was one of the issues which the left prioritised, but we were not given the chance to debate it. Now that the EIS (the main Scottish teachers' union) has come out against corporal punishment, teachers in England stand almost alone in Europe in wanting to keep it!

In the debate on racism, there was a clear majority in favour of positive discrimination — both in recruiting ethnic minority teachers and in re-orienting the exam curriculum. Yet again, affiliation to the Anti-Nazi League was rejected.

The mood of the conference was positive and I got the feeling that many of the delegates were prepared to fight if the new government attacks their wages and education standards. On how to fight, precious little guidance came from the executive. But there's nothing new in that.

The excellent bulletin, Women in the NUT, can be obtained (30p, including postage) from Carol Regan, 23 Kenilworth Gardens, London S.E. 18.

mass fight are almost certainly over. The other problem about the picketing is that it could present a severe test to the solidarity of the other Dunlop workers — especially when the plan is rather ambiguous about exactly how Speke jobs can be saved without at the same time hitting jobs at the other British plants.

Hopefully though, it's still too early to write the obituary on this struggle. Several hundred Speke workers are determined to save some jobs at Dunlops and they could still succeed. It's hard to think that they would have done worse if they had occupied

Keighley Aid Centre

A 2,500 petition from local residents has helped to force officials to call a public enquiry into the demolition of Temple St Sunday School in Keighley. The Council only decided to demolish this large Victorian building when they were faced by a growing

FRENCH STEEL: The Towns That Won't Die

(All photos on these pages and on the back page are by Pol Gornek and Helen Banberger militant photographers met in Longwy. To them - thanks.)

Lost jobs or joint struggle internationally. Those are the options facing steel-workers throughout Europe. Below, Peter Anderson reports on the recent explosive struggles against mass redundancies in France - struggles which involved workers from the European steel industry, not just from France itself. And next month Big Flame will take a further look at an industry in which such different issues as new technologies, import controls and state racism are all day-to-day problems facing worker militants. The British Steel Corporation is by far the largest steel company in the EEC. It was also, until recently, the management that was most ruthless about cutting jobs, not least because of out and out collaboration by British steel union 'leaders'. But by now all the European steel companies are united in a cartel called 'Eurofer' and backed by the EEC Commission: their aim is to slash a quarter of a million jobs - one in every three! - throughout Europe. And the joint fightback of French, Belgian, and German workers sets a shining example for their colleagues in other countries...including our own.

Until the end of the last century, all workers at the Usinor steel-mills had to begin their workday with a prayer. By now, some of that paternalism has disappeared but from providing jobs, Usinor still owns most of the houses in the towns where its plants are and is closely involved in the running of the local schools and hospitals. Towns like Denain and Longwy in North-East France are steel towns; if the steel mills close, they will die. Usinor wants to centralise its steel production in Dunkerque, a coastal site, better located to use imported ore and coke which comes by sea. They want to close steel production totally in Denain and partially in Longwy - with 6,000 redundancies in each town.

VIOLENCE - PART OF A TRADITION

The extremely militant and violent fightback of the Denain and Longwy steel-workers has taken the Usinor management and the French government by surprise - they expected the trade-union leadership to be able to sell a package which included retraining grants, £7,000 redundancy payments, early retirement and a £1,500 repatriation bonus for all immigrant workers who in any case can be deported by force. Denain and Longwy are tight-knit communities with a long tradition of working class resistance.



SUPPORT THE STEEL INDUSTRY
LONGWY WILL LIVE

And although the Communist Party gets the votes of the steel-workers and their families, its ability to hold back the struggle is limited. As a militant told me:

"Yes, the violence of our struggle was useful - though we regret that two of our members were seriously injured. It made sure that we were recognised and we were able to get the forces of law and order removed from the streets of the town. The police have been told to stay in their stations, you won't see one in the streets. In fact, the street fighting wasn't much to write home about. After the four years of the last war, the Liberation, resistance from the roof-tops, the tanks - last month was pretty small beer..."

FIRST ROUND VICTORY

The first stage of the struggle of the Usinor workers of Denain

and Longwy - which included stopping trains, smashing up the town halls, blocking the motorway - is now over. It has been a success in that the government has been forced to announce that there will be no redundancies in

1979 (instead of 7,000 in the original plan) and that the future of steel production on Longwy and Denain is "under review". But the militants realise that they need a different strategy to build a wider unity amongst steel workers. Their immediate plans are:

- To bring the struggle back into the workplaces. To have a series of rolling stoppages which will cripple output without losing pay for the workers. Whilst I was there, an important piece of equipment was kidnapped from the Longwy plant as another means of stopping production.
- Rank and file links are being built between militants from the different Usinor plants. Since the company's strategy is to transfer production to the Dunkerque plant - it is essential to get the support of the Dunkerque workers. And in fact (surprise, surprise), the Dunkerque section of the CFDT trade union has been suspended by the union's executive for supporting the March demo in Paris and establishing links with other CFDT branches!

- International links are being built with steel workers from Belgium and Luxemburg. A Committee of the Three Borders meets regularly and has trade-union delegates from steel plants in the three countries. An important meeting is planned to take place in Luxemburg on May 19th as part of the "For a Workers Europe - Against the Bosses Europe" campaign for the elections to the European parliament and an international demonstration of steel workers will take place later this year outside the head-quarters in Luxemburg of the European Steel Community where the infamous "Davignon 'plan'" was hatched - the blueprint for the redundancies now taking place in steel plants throughout Europe.

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL LINKS

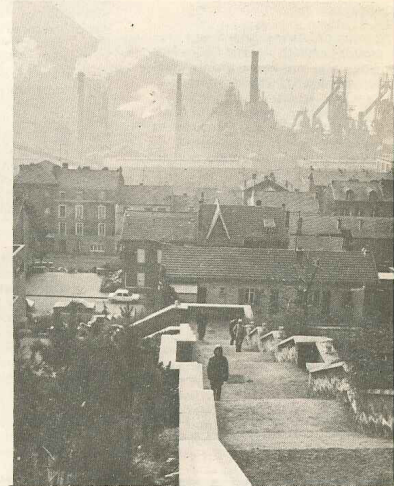
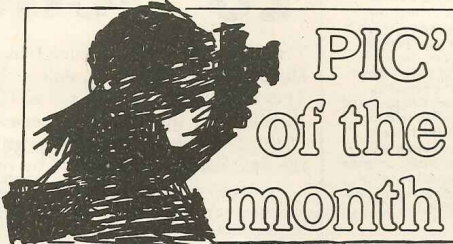
Steel workers in Longwy and Denain have won the first round in their opposition to the 27,000 redundancies the French government and the steel companies want to implement by 1981. Their strength comes from the total support of the communities where the plants are located. Now, Longwy and Denain have to build the struggle on a national and a Europe-wide basis; and that's a different story.



The sacking of the steel employers' headquarters in Longwy. The offices were pillaged and all files burnt.

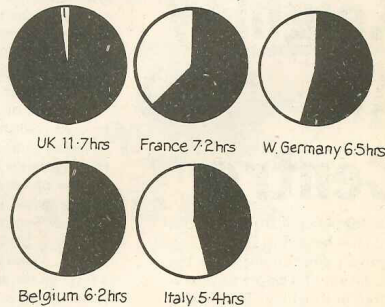


A road-block near Longwy. During this period all traffic in and out of the town was controlled by the strike committee.



Longwy: atmospheric photo.

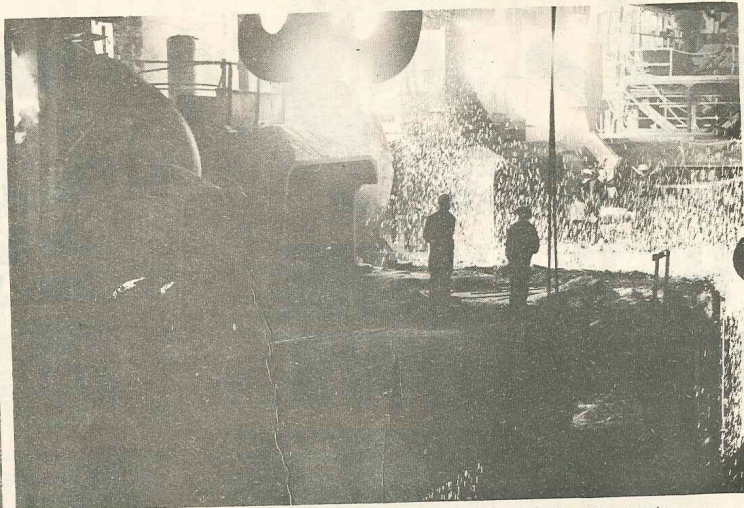
Hours to produce 1 tonne of steel - 1977



British government graph which 'proves' how it takes longer to make a tonne of steel in Britain than in other countries. Only problem is that the French government puts out a chart which has the same figures except that French steel-workers



Inside the steel mill at Longwy: closure has now been postponed till 1980.



Discussion between French, Luxemburg and Belgian steel-workers at an occupation of the frontier post in February.

The radio station with a heart of steel

FREE RADIO stations have an essential contribution to make to a struggle. And because there are two unions involved in the struggle in Longwy, there are two free radio stations. The politically independent CFDT has Radio "S.O.S. Jobs" which is small and clandestine and the CGT, the trade union arm of the Communist Party, has "Radio Heart of Steel" which is large and has a studio in the town hall, since the CP is in power there.

The radio stations do not compete with one another; they transmit at different times. Most of their programmes are "round table" discussions or phone-ins. One of the most popular programmes is a militant "What the Papers Say" where reports from the national gutter press are read out and workers discuss what a load of crap the reports are.

HEATED PROGRAMMES

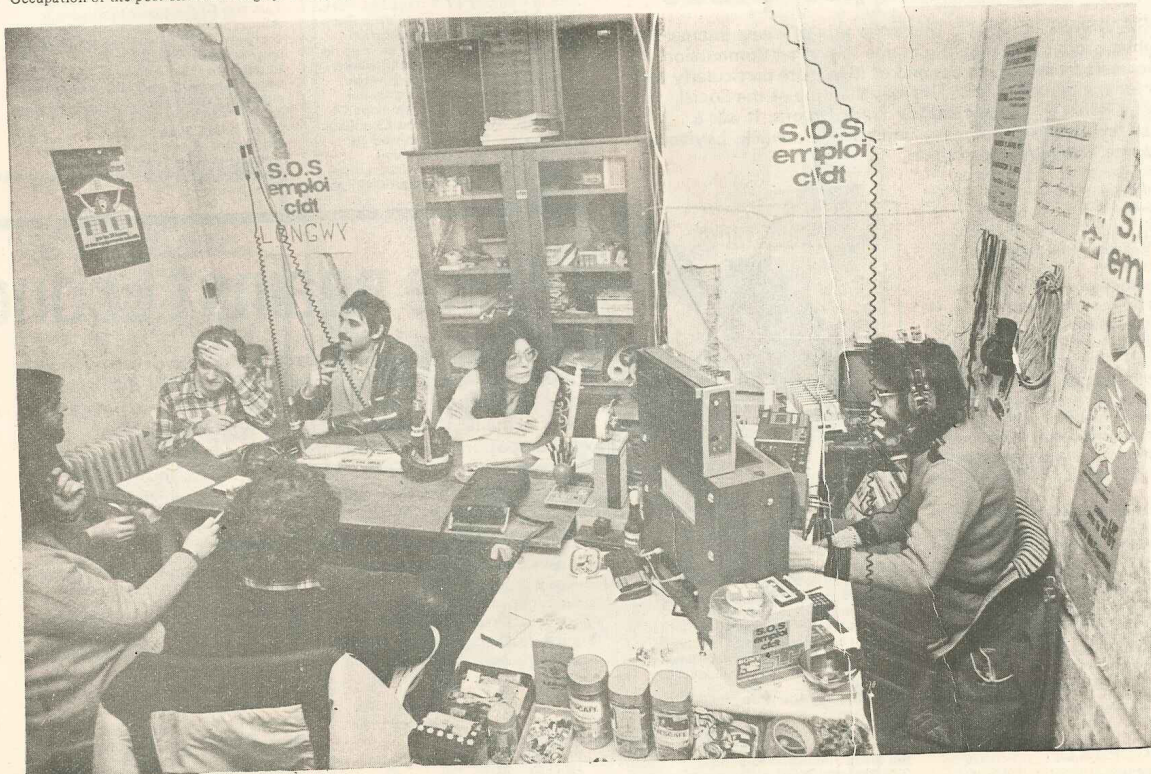
When I was there the two most heated programmes were about the election of "Miss Steel" and the treatment doled out by the local hospital. The youth section of the CGT had organised a ball in which there was to be a "Miss Steel" election. Women members of the CGT phoned in to make it clear that such an event was an insult to women and should have no place in a CGT organised event. The next day there was a "round table" discussion and the organisers of the ball admitted that they had been wrong to include the election — a compromise was reached whereby the election would go ahead but the candidates would be normally dressed and judged by their knowledge of the class struggle! In a phone-in to local doctors, many people complained about the treatment they and their families had got at the local hospital. The doctors' bureaucratic reply: "I'm afraid I haven't got the details of the case you refer to with me..." angered everyone and many listeners suggested an occupation of the hospital to wake the doctors up!

The radio stations have been going a month and in that short time have been vital in uniting the whole town round the struggle of the steel workers. Their popularity is such that according to surveys they have taken viewers away from the telly. Not that French telly is much cop anyway.

For information about the struggle of steel workers in this country read 'Real Steel News', available from Joe Herbert c/o 89 Southgrove Rd. Sheffield 10.



Occupation of the post-office at Longwy: February 1979.



A round-table discussion at 'Radio SOS Jobs'.



Derbyshire's death cloud THE WAY THE WIND BLOWS

THE CHEMICAL industry of N. E. Derbyshire has always had a very poor record over health and safety. Firms such as Coalite Chemical, Vinatex, and Staveley Chemicals are often in the headlines with a new horror story.

Only last month an explosion at Coalite caused the release of a cloud of toxic chemicals leading to the closure of the nearby M1 motorway. Fortunately, the wind didn't blow the cloud either into the local town of Bolsover or into the ventilation system of the nearby colliery at Markham.

There are even more serious long-term problems. Investigations in Japan show that people working on processes like that of the DCA plant of Staveley chemicals can develop liver damage. A similar plant in the USA was closed several years ago because it was considered 'too dangerous'. Recently after pressure from the unions at Staveley there were tests on the men's livers. Already the men were suffering from a disease called chloracne, caused by exposure to the chemical TCABO.

Chloracne is characterized by crops of black-heads across the face which recur year after year. It now seems that chloracne is linked with the more serious problem of liver damage, as well as to high levels of blood fats, which increases the likelihood of angina and heart attacks.

Fortunately, so far there are no signs that the men at Staveley have heart disease caused by exposure.

Management is now sufficiently concerned about the problem to have removed the worst affected men from the DCA plant. They have also instructed the men to reduce the chances of heart attack by stopping smoking and drinking, reducing their weight if they are fat, and eating less cholesterol containing food (meat, cheese, butter, eggs, etc.).

The men, of course, find these instructions impossible to follow; instead, the instructions only increase anxiety.

KILLERS

Even more worrying is that these toxic chemicals are found literally everywhere - in certain plastics around the house, in wood preservatives on wood used in building, in weed killers that contaminate vegetables and fruit, etc. The government agency, the Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS) is sufficiently worried to finance several large studies of these problems. To ensure that the results of these studies are

accrued on working class organisations must take the issues more seriously.

At present in these factories it is only certain individuals who usually have been on TUC or WEA courses on health and safety, who are actively fighting to improve conditions. Most of the unions still have the attitude that health and safety struggles are about winning compensation cases. They argue, 'don't rock the boat too much or they'll close the plant and we'll lose our jobs'. An additional problem in this part of Derbyshire is the low status in the community attached to chemical workers. The predominant attitude is that 'real men' work in the mines, and only if you can't cope with being a miner do you go to the chemical works. Thus it is particularly difficult for chemical workers to complain about their conditions, which after all, 'aren't as bad as the mines'.

SEVESO

With pollution around the factories a serious problem, there is considerable potential for organising a campaign linking activity by unions and community groups. After the explosion at Seveso in Northern Italy caused the release of a cloud of the deadly chemical dioxin, there was a public outcry against the similar plant at Coalite in the local community. The men then refused to work on the process and it was closed down. The situation now is different, as unemployment in the area is even higher, thus putting the unions in a weaker position and making the problem more complex. The mass media can be helpful - recently ATV made a reasonably good film about chemical exposures at Staveley Chemicals, but it only shown in the Midlands. So nobody involved actually saw it! Hopefully, as more workers and local people become aware of the issues the demands for full investigations and publication of the facts about the chemical industry will increase.

New Big Flame pamphlet

"ORGANISING TO WIN". That's the title of a new discussion pamphlet produced by the Big Flame Industrial Commission.

The years from 1975 to the end of 1978 were particularly bad years for the working class. This was the time of the Social Contract between Labour and the Trade Unions. It was a time of few struggles and many defeats - Grunwick, Leyland, Lucas, the Firefighters and so on.

This pamphlet is an attempt to learn from those years. What went wrong? It's in two parts. Part One is an analysis of why from 1975 we were losing so often: the increasing incorporation of the trade unions into state economic planning; the attempts to undermine the offensive side of the shop stewards' movement; the role of the Labour Government and incomes policy; the economic recession and the increase in unemployment; the growing divisions in the working class and the use of new production methods to undermine the stronger sections of the working class.

Part Two is organised as a manual - a theoretical and practical guide, packed with examples, on how to win struggles.

It has sections on fighting unemployment, closure, manning cuts, productivity and bonus deals. A long section is devoted to the struggle for better wages and the shorter week. It deals with organising on the shop floor, building a rank and file movement for socialism, organising in the trade unions, fighting racism and sexism at work, struggling for better health and safety, and fighting for more unity and against divisions.

START DEBATE



to write down systematically everything we've learnt over the past nine years about the politics of organising at work. But it's not the definitive, once and for all political statement of Big Flame's "line". We recognise that our experience is limited, and that some of our ideas are based too narrowly on the experience of one industrial sector.

So the aim of the pamphlet is to start a debate among militant socialists about how best to organise for socialism and working class power at work. That's why it's in a duplicated format. "Organising to Win" 35p plus 20p postage and packing Cheques and postal orders should be made out to Big Flame Publications. Available from Big Flame (Industrial Pamphlet)



Workers are the driving force!

In the national liberation struggle



Black workers fight for liberation from oppression. A black worker in the foreground is shouting a slogan.

In South Africa, an African is a "bantustan" and not a citizen. In Group Areas, the blacks have no right to live in the areas where they like but are directed by the government as to where they live. In the townships, both apartheid and nationalism are used to oppress the black workers. The African National Congress (ANC) is the main force for the liberation of South Africa. The ANC is not a political party, but a mass movement. The ANC is not a trade union, but a mass movement. The ANC is not a political party, but a mass movement.

Colour All the blacks are based purely on the natural colour of a person's skin. No one can change their colour. No one can change their colour.

Strikes sharpen crisis for the ruling class

Since March, there has been black worker action by one or more of the industrial plants in support of wage demands, or critical demands. This action is sharpening the crisis for the ruling class. The ruling class is in a state of panic. The ruling class is in a state of panic. The ruling class is in a state of panic.

Never relax

When we hear talk of reforms from our enemies, we must never relax our vigilance. We must never relax our vigilance. We must never relax our vigilance.

Power

Now, after seeing the great power of the black working class in action, the ruling class is in a state of panic. The ruling class is in a state of panic. The ruling class is in a state of panic.

In trying to cut through the media, and to make Southern Africa a live issue in the North West, activists in Manchester, Preston, and Liverpool, organised a speaking tour for members of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).

In the factory and union meetings, Zola Zembe, Martin Legassick, and Ranto Makou, all members of SACTU, concentrated on the system of pass laws, migrant labour, bantustans, job reservation, etc., by which wages are kept down and African unions suppressed. Despite police attacks, there is a growing history of strikes by African and Coloured workers: EverReady (Nov. 1978), Glacier Bearings (1978), and RTZ (Namibia, Dec. 1978) are just some of the examples. Many of these strikes included demands for union recognition, and some called for a minimum wage of 50 Rand (£30) a week. The public meetings, involving a number of speakers, dealt with the recent political history of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, and the role of British imperialism. (Next month's Big Flame will have an article on Namibia.)

Although many of the meetings were small, there was a great deal of interest. Throughout, the speakers stressed that black Africans were forced to work as cheap labour for the same multinational bosses who force redundancies here. To save jobs in Britain, we don't need import controls or immigration controls. But we must support the struggles for a minimum wage, trade union and political rights for African workers. These arguments are particularly clear in the case of Dunlops and GEC.

Dunlop Holdings control two tyre factories in South Africa: at Durban and at Ladysmith. Between them, the plants have 2100 workers, 1500 of whom are black. The minimum wage at Ladysmith in February 1978 was £18 a week. About half the African workers in Dunlop's entire South African operation earn less than £30 a week. The wage rises since 1973, when Ladysmith workers averaged £8 a week, have been eaten away by inflation (now at eleven per cent a year). But in 1977, Dunlops SA had profits, after tax, of over £3 million. Dunlops claim their African workers have not asked for a trade union. Instead, they were given a 'liaison committee'. It is the self organisation of Af-

A clear message to British workers from South African trade unionists: help us to wipe out low pay and the anti-union apartheid regime and you will help yourself to stop redundancies in Britain.

SOUTH AFRICAN UNIONS TOUR Support African Dunlop workers

In the meeting with GEC (Trafford Park), TASS and ASTMS members had several ideas on how to develop solidarity. One was to produce a broadsheet and pamphlet on GEC's operation in South Africa, as was done for Leyland by Rover stewards and the Coventry Workshop. Another was to push for TASS policy at a national level. Another was to link with other GEC workers, in Preston and elsewhere, to build effective solidarity. It was stated that one obstacle to solidarity was the separation of GEC workers in Britain, who are in different plants and different unions. A further idea was to make use of SACTU to try to contact the relevant African trades unions for engineering workers.

CONTACT In trying to develop the ideas, information, and contacts from the tour, the North West Anti-Apartheid Trade Union Committee will continue to meet. Contact: 59 Tintern Avenue, West Didsbury, Manchester - tel. 061-236 6953. Workers Union, the excellent newspaper of SACTU can be got from left-wing bookshops or from SACTU, 38 Graham Street, London N1 8JX (20 pence + postage).

Strike against Economisers

FOR SIX months there has been a strike for union recognition at the Economists' Bookshop, London. This shop is owned by the London School of Economics, and the Economist magazine. The manager, Gerald Bartlett is a typical anti-union petty despot, infamous within the booktrade for his presidential speech to the Booksellers Association in '76. In that speech he launched into a tirade against trade unions which he called the "modern robber barons"

by Helen Miller, an ACTSS Strike Committee member Last October eleven assistants (out of a shop workforce of 17) came out on strike to improve holidays (at present two weeks in the first year) and pay (less that £40 a week take home) and gain union bargaining rights.

We have organised a successful boycott of the shop, cutting their retail sales by 60%, and estimate they've lost £200,000 in turnover in

solidarity action from the L.S.E. unions, i.e. porters (T & G) librarians (NALGO) and NUS.

Dahrendorf told me that we should go to A.C.A.S. and the fact that we didn't, proved we had no cause. All it proves is that we have no faith in ACAS and so called "independent" arbitration bodies which are under pressure from Government.

His role is to try to keep the situation under control and hope we are starved back to work while his liberal reputation stays intact. We are of course determined that we will win. We are organising events at the L.S.E. to raise money and gain publicity, as well as picketing the bookshop and organising a "blackening" campaign among the publishing unions.

We would appreciate any help in raising money and increasing support for us, especially in ASTMS, SOGAT, NUJ, whose members work in publishing. Their support in our blackening campaign would be crucial. Contributions to our strike fund should be sent to Helen Miller,

The L.S.E. Court of Governors has kept out of the dispute with the backing of Ralph Dahrendorf, LSE Director, who apparently fears that the