

Socialist Feminist Conference— Need to build the regional network

Last month's national socialist feminist conference was both exciting and confusing. Exciting because there were so many women from all over the country discussing wide ranging topics and activities. Confusing because there was no plenary session during the conference, which made it impossible to get an overall picture of what had happened over the weekend and how the socialist feminist current is developing.

When workshop themes ranged from alternative technology to childcare provision in the EEC, from struggles in the health service to a discussion on whether sexuality is still a political issue, some form of overview is important. There is a discussion in London as a follow-up to the conference. But how can a small meeting hope to come up with a comprehensive evaluation of the conference and an assessment of where the socialist feminist current is going, what are its strengths, and what are its weaknesses?

IMPERIALISM

Judging from the papers produced and many of the discussions, there is a growing feeling that a crucial aspect of socialist feminist theory and practice has to be directed against British imperialism and a recognition that women's struggle is international. While sections of the women's movement, particularly the Women & Ireland group, have consistently argued for a feminist policy against British imperialism and for a recognition of the oppressive nature of the British state, this perspective is often ignored.

At times this has meant that the Women's Liberation Movement has been unaware of, or reluctant to come to grips with the oppression of women who are directly affected by the legacy of British imperialism and the chauvinism and racism which go hand in hand with it.

Women's groups, particularly in London, are working around immigration, racism, police harassment, and in anti-fascist activity. They are trying to find ways to involve more women in the community, as well as develop a theoretical understanding of the relationship between British imperialism and women's oppression.

At the follow up meeting it was agreed that next year's conference will be on this theme of imperialism: it was also felt that it had been wrong not to have plenary sessions this year.

SCARLET WOMEN

The women's movement has discussed for years how to organise meetings and conferences that will allow everyone to participate. But all too often this results in chaos. The socialist feminist current is meant to organise throughout each region with regular conferences. However, few areas do this effectively. This would be the best way to develop along with using the newsletter *Scarlet Women*. A national conference like this year's is fine for those in the movement who are used to crowds and have lots of friends to meet and greet. But they are alienating to the vast majority of women who attend them. So it is essential that local and regional meetings are organised.

LOW EBB

At a time when relations between the women's movement and the 'traditional' revolutionary left are at a low ebb (see, for instance, the dismissive, sectarian article about the conference in *Socialist Worker*), there is a great need to discuss organisational possibilities for socialist feminists. *Big Flame* welcomes contributions on this theme for publication.

NEW ANTI-FASCIST PUBLICATIONS

Sexuality and Fascism

THIS PAMPHLET consists of the three main speeches given at the BF Day School on "Sexuality & Fascism". The Day School was prompted by debate over the issues raised at the Campaign against Racism and Fascism Conference (June 1978) where antifascism, antiracism and anti-sexism were presented as in competition with one another for top priority. Despite the eclipse of CARF as a national organisation by the ANL, these issues still echo through the movement. More now, in fact, because that movement is larger and broader based.

The documents in the pamphlet set out to tentatively throw some light on these issues. *Women and Nazi Germany* outlines how nazism took sexual politics very seriously and explains various policies towards women made by the National Front. A general theme is the central importance of fighting against fascist Master Race theories. In action

that men, as men, played in Nazi Germany and looks at men today. *Women and the National Front* examines in detail some statements about women made by the National Front. A general theme is the central importance of fighting against fascist Master Race theories. In action

these theories unite the fascist attitudes to racism and sexism, explaining at the same time why the NF, for example, are against white women having abortions, black women having children and multiracial sex. They also give a great deal of insight into policies of repatriation and violence against immigrants.

Big Flame is against the politics of simply attacking fascist organisations, and argues that the white-dominated left (including ourselves) fails to take either fighting racism or sexism seriously enough. It is an informed and controversial pamphlet. well worth reading.

(20p including postage, from *Big Flame*, 217 Waverley Road., Liverpool 7)

A Searchlight on Racism

SEARCHLIGHT ('Britain's Anti-fascist Journal') has excelled itself in the April 1979 issue. Tracing "15 years of racism: from Smethwick to Brick Lane", and therefore Searchlight's own history, the leading article give us often forgotten details of the Smethwick Parliamentary seat won, in 1964, for the Conservatives on openly racist ticket.

A persistent criticism of SEARCHLIGHT has been that it's strength is also its main weakness: the whole anti-fascist movement is indebted to Searchlight for their years of painstaking research on the organisations and individuals of the far right, both in this country and all over the

world. However, until recently this meant SEARCHLIGHT's emphasis often implied that modern forms of fascism like the NF can be dealt with by simply exposing their Nazi roots. In fact, what is needed is to pull up the roots of fascism in the many soils where they flourish — nationalism, racism, authoritarianism, sexism — in the general conditions of capitalist society. Searchlight has increasingly taken up these themes and despite the Editorial of July 1978 incorrectly blaming the failure of the previous month's CARF conference on 'certain women, Gay and Left groups' for seeking to "continuously confuse issues" by

seeing sexism as a dominant theme have even recently reversed their position and produced an excellent pamphlet on the very issue of sexism: 'Women and the NF'.

Returning to the April issue, read it and subscribe to Searchlight for its regular feature 'What THEIR papers say' as well as an interview with Joshi (the General Secretary of the Indian workers' Association), extracts from 'Police against Black People', John Plummer on immigration controls as well as news and reviews.

Individuals: £4 12 issues, cheques to A&F&R Publications, 21 Great Western Buildings, 6 Livery St., Birmingham 3.

Racist threat to blacks

The recent publication of *POLICE AND BLACK PEOPLE* by the Institute of Race Relations as evidence to the Royal Commission caused a considerable stir in the media. The pamphlet details in meticulous detail police malpractice towards black people including policing against the community, such as over-manning of black events and 'fishing

expeditions', and failing to protect the community from racist attacks. It documents police violence used on arrests and in the police station. Then it goes on to show how it is that black people cannot expect to find justice in the courts.

BLOOD ON THE STREETS is concerned with the East End of London.

Published by Bethnel Green and Stepney Trades Council it again in massive detail outlines the racism experienced by the mainly Bengali community of that area on the streets in terms of violence, the failure of the police to take up complaints of the Bengalis. It documents the situation in education, housing, the trade union movement, jobs, the media and far right groups like the NF.

Both of these informative pamphlets come out of a background of rising state and fascist violence against black people while on the one hand peace of mind living in this country is shattered and the possibility of living here at all undermined by the immigration and nationality laws. Two major forces have taken on this racism. The first, and most important, is the self-organisation of the black community which, especially since the Hot Summer of 1976, has taken many steps forward in developing its own organisations and demanding support from the white community. The second force is the increasing number of white anti-racists and anti-fascists organised through many organisations including the trade union movement and the ANL.

We are in no position to comment on the problems and successes of the black movement in this period, whites just need to get on with the work of taking up the issue of racism with white working class people. Both of these pamphlets give us the hard information to do so. One is left wondering, however, of the value of submitting such detailed evidence to the Royal Commission and making demands such as the accountability of the police to the community as a whole.

Similarly, although *BLOOD ON THE STREETS* provides so much information it calls on the police, the Commission for Racial Equality and the government to take action to restore the confidence of its citizens. Neither of these pamphlets offers a strategy for effectively dealing with the institution of racism but they should leave no-one in doubt of its existence.

Blood On The Streets (Sept '78) £1. 58 Watney St., London E1.

Police Against Black People: Race and Class Pamphlet No.6 from IRR, 247 Pentonville Rd., London N1. 95n.

...regarding lies of all time.

Cimino made it all up!

What happens is that by making something that never took place one of the central themes of the movie, the makers are able to say left and right, liberation fighters and oppressors, are all the same. If our boys hadn't come up against this sort of thing, they wouldn't now be finding life so difficult. Never a moment to consider the thousands of Vietnamese permanently disabled or deafened or the napalmed areas where it will be impossible to grow anything for generations. Just about the only left-winger or critic to speak out against the film has been John Pilger, who himself reported the war. He commented:

'The backers and makers of this film are reported to have spent 14 million dollars sifting the ashes of one of history's most documented atrocities — in order to repackage it and re-sell it as a Hollywood 'smash' that will make them fortunes; to reincarnate the triumphant Batman-jawed Caucasian Warrior and to present a suffering courageous people as sub-human Oriental brutes and dolts; to convert truth into lies.'

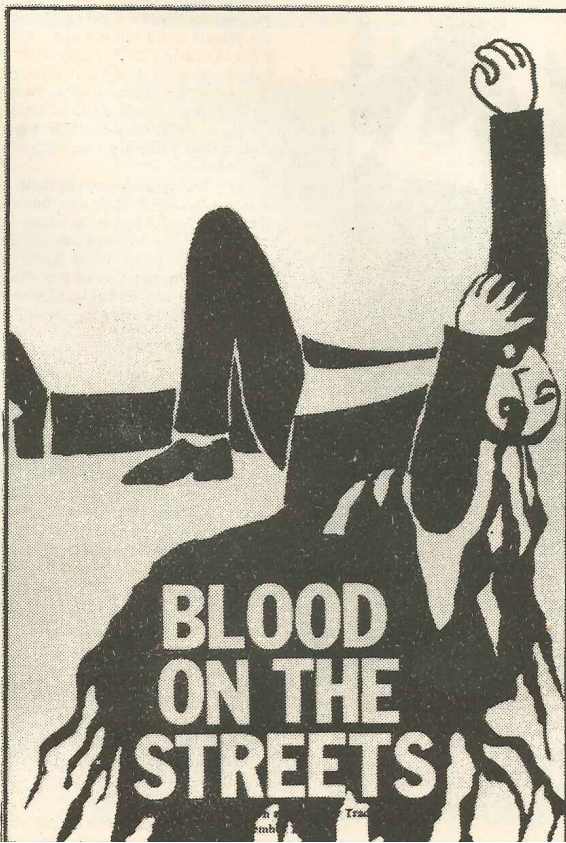
SLICK LIE

though. In the first part of the film, we are lulled into the quiet normality of a small immigrant community celebrating the wedding of one of its favourite sons, who, as a volunteer, is shortly to leave with his two buddies for Nam. They live and work in a small, shitty working class steel town where life is already brutalized. They (the men) get their kicks, drinking and backslapping, spending as little time as possible with women and going hunting in true frontier style, where if you're tough and hard, you can kill the enemy with one clean pristine shot, and then celebrate. Two shots to kill a stag, we are told, is 'pussy'.

Not that even this section of the film is accurate: it's an idealised immigrant community that only exists in Hollywood romances.

The action then abruptly switches to Vietnam where killing the enemy is a messy, maddening and foul business, because the enemy fights back and wins — though we would never know that from the film. Of the trio, one loses his legs, the second loses his mind and finally blows his brains out (playing the 'allegorical game'), and the third, Robert de Niro, comes through scarred but dripping with medals and machismo.

See this film if you must, but miss it if you can!



New Jewel for Socialism

A BIG FLAME INTERVIEW

At dawn on the 13th of March, 80 armed members of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) went into action against the regime of Eric Gairy. They closed the airport, arrested government members and supporters, and burned down the barracks of the Grenada Defence Force. Within hours of the armed action, the entire apparatus of the Grenadian state had collapsed, leaving the NJM in complete control of the island. Gairy, who was in New York attending to his favourite hobby of UFOs, at a United Nations committee on the subject, was out of power.

A successful armed insurrection like this is without precedent in the British speaking Caribbean. The new government, which has declared itself socialist, faces the unenviable task of constructing a new society in an island of just 110,000 people, which is heavily dependent on agricultural exports and tourism. And although the government enjoys the support of the masses, it must tread carefully to preserve both its newly-won power and its independence. **Big Flame interviewed Fennis Agustin, a Grenadian and long-time black activist in London, who is now the High Commissioner Designate in Britain for the Revolutionary Government.**

Could you briefly explain what the situation was under Gairy?

Gairy came into power as a result of widespread labour unrest, which started about 1950. He made his mark by leading the 1951 General Strike. From this point he became the undisputed leader of the country. The problem though is that what Gairy wanted was not in fact the same thing as the people were fighting for. Any people who expressed their differences with Gairy were quickly crushed. Gairy believed that the revolution was in fact made. This ties in with a statement he made some time later on, during the black power era. He said, 'They talkin' about black power, but look at me, I'm a black man, they have black power, that's what they want'. Although he became increasingly repressive from 1952 onwards, he first used directly repressive measures beginning in 1967. This was most apparent in the period surrounding independence negotiations. He set up groups of people who would go around not only intimidating, but physically assaulting people. Then he moved towards independence, but it was clear that his move towards independence was not one of any plan or concern for the island's people. Riding on the natural feeling of the colonial peoples to be independent, he saw

independence as one step towards tightening his grip on the island.

GAIRYMANDERING

The other area in which there was increasing repression was the attempt by younger elements in the community to express some degree of opposition. The moment this started Gairy appointed a new group on whom he relied, the 'Mongoose Men'. Without a doubt these were all ex-criminals - the records can prove that. Some had as many as 37 previous convictions, ranging from assault to grievous bodily harm. And he relied on these people to maintain himself in power.

Another area to refer to is that of elections. As the outside world sees it Gairy was elected as prime minister. But when it is seen that about 10,000 names on the elec-

toral register of 40,000 are either dead or have not been in the country for years, then gerrymandering is too nice a word to use to describe what went on. And apart from this, he has refused to register the younger element - people under 25 - 5000 of these names have simply been left off the register.

What local and international interests did Gairy represent?

Gairy was not only corrupt. Increasingly as opposition to his regime developed he moved dramatically to the right. So whilst on the one hand there have been well-known connections between Gairy and the Mafia and numerous criminals, on the other he has established relations with right-wing political leaders such as General Pinochet of Chile. In fact, Gairy is on record as saying that Pinochet is one of the world's greatest democrats. He sent members of his defence force to Chile for training. Arms caches from Chile were found by the NJM when their armed forces took control.

ORIGINS OF THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT

The NJM came out of the black power movement in the early 1970s. It was the coming together of two different groups: Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation (JEWEL), a cooperative and farming venture, and the Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP), a group led by the NJM's present leader, Maurice Bishop. In 1972 there was a conference of the two groups and it was felt that their aims were not far apart. Out of this came the New Jewel Movement.

From the very beginning the question of taking power by arms was seriously considered and not ruled out. But the tactics employed by the NJM varied from time to time, according to circumstances. At particular times a high emphasis was placed on mass action and the use of mass demonstrations.

As regards the trade unions, the NJM decided around 1974 that they could not place any faith in the existing trade union movement. This was dominated by the Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union, the vehicle Gairy himself had created in the early 1950s. Gairy did have an element of support through this union, but it was support based on patronage. In an island of massive unemployment, you did not get a job unless you were a member of the union.

NJM had some success in their attempts to create their own unions. One branch of this - a bank employees union - entered into a conflict with Barclays Bank in August 1978 over the question of recognition. The union branch was immediately recognised after the revolution.

Spain: Cities go Left

THE APRIL local elections produced a sizeable shift to the left. Most cities and towns over 50,000 population have voted in left wing administrations and mayors in the first free elections since the 30's. The results represent a swing to the left compared to the outcome of the general election in March, which merely confirmed the pattern established in the previous elections in June 1977.

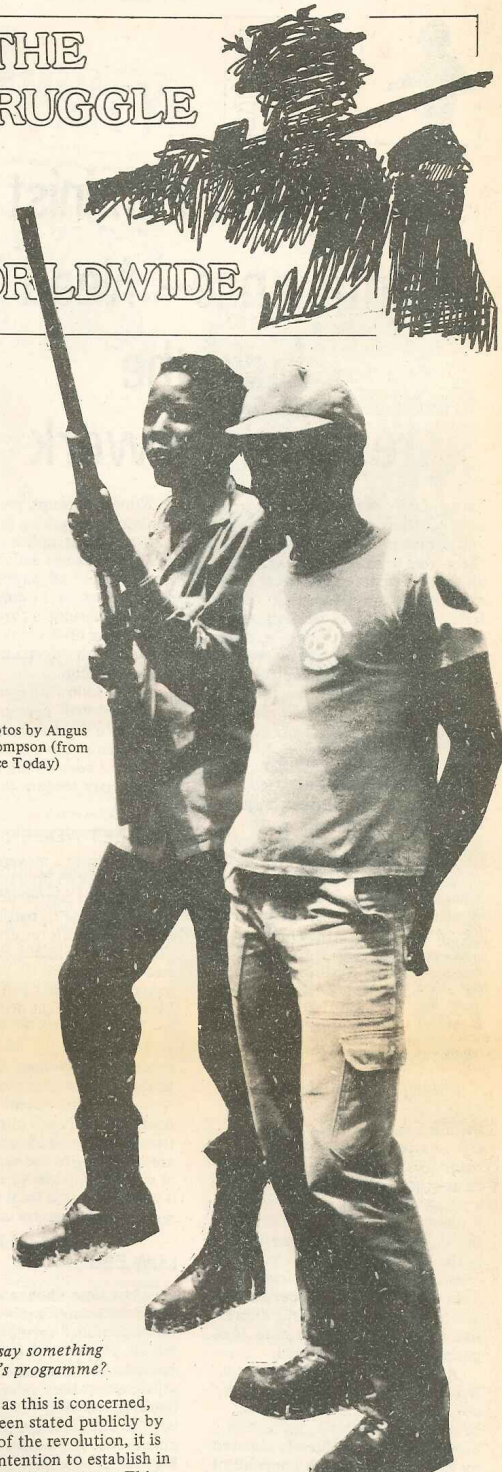
The moderate socialist party, PSOE, did well in the local elections but in some places lost votes to the left. The Communist Party fared better than in the general election. Many towns will now elect Communist mayors, above all in the Barcelona satellite of Santa Coloma where the PCE won a massive 45% of the votes.

INDEPENDENCE

The greatest triumph has gone to

THE STRUGGLE

WORLDWIDE



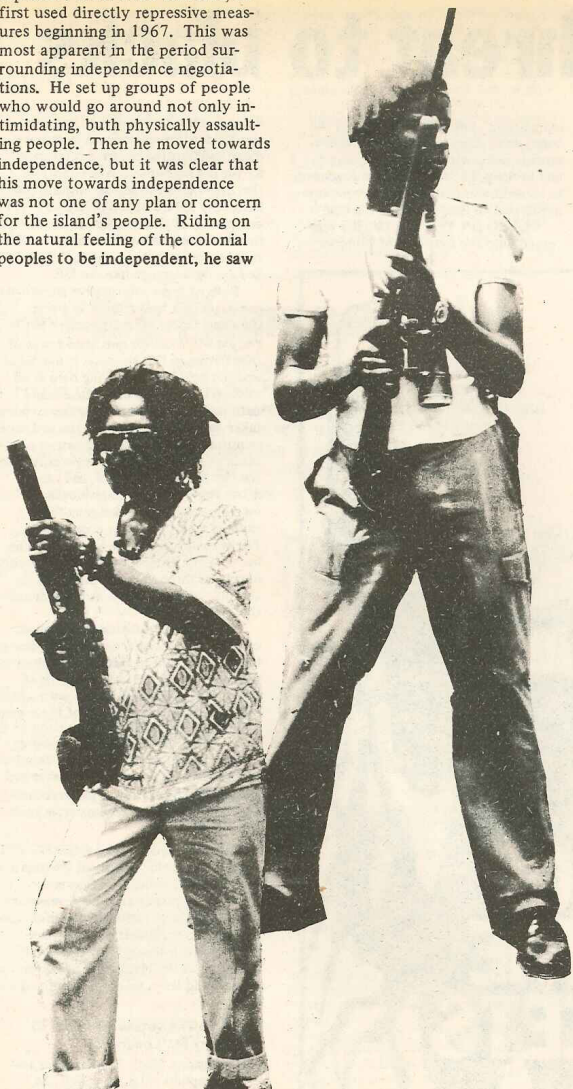
Photos by Angus Thompson (from Race Today)

Could you say something about NJM's programme?

In so far as this is concerned, and it has been stated publicly by the leaders of the revolution, it is the NJM's intention to establish in Grenada a socialist society. This is the intention, but as it is said, we are a practical people. To develop socialism, on an island of 110,000 people, requires a particular degree of skill. And we have to be aware that there are major forces around who will not hesitate to jump in if they become convinced that you are challenging in a

direct way what they consider to be their rights and privileges.

Given this danger, we think it extremely important for all of you who are sympathetic to what is happening in Grenada to publicise it - because we certainly aren't going to get unbiased coverage from the regular press.



country, whatever Madrid thinks.

ESTUPENDO!

On the far left, the best results have come in for the ORT-PTE coalition. In Estepona, a tourist resort on the Costa del Sol, these two marxist parties will form the biggest bloc on the council. The Communist Movement (MC-OIC), which is distinguished by its advanced positions on women's questions (it stood more women candidates than any other party), called for and got a limited but committed vote which entitles it to the odd seat here and there.

The shift to the left in the town halls suggests that the voters expect the workers parties to be more effective locally than nationally. The problem for

NUKES: INHUMAN ERROR



THE DISASTER at the nuclear plant at Three Mile Island in America has focused a lot of attention on the question of nuclear power, its dangers and the alternatives to it. In the past opposition to nuclear power has been a relatively fringe activity supported by what are sometimes referred to as the "brown rice people".

One group which has been organising for some time against nuclear power is the Keystone Alliance in Philadelphia. Philadelphia is near enough to Three Mile Island for people to feel directly threatened. In fact if the winds blew their way from Three Mile Island they'd have just six hours to get out. The Keystone Alliance are experiencing a massive increase in support as a result of this.

Mark Breslow, a member of the Alliance, is interviewed for us here by Noel Ignatin of Urgent Tasks magazine.

"The Keystone Nuclear Alliance has been going for about a year now. Trying to stop nuclear plants, to turn to solar energy and renewable energy technology. We think that this would be more conducive to full employment and safe conditions for workers.

Since the disaster at Three Mile Island we've been organising vigils to demand immediate evacuation of an area of 20 miles around the plant and 50 miles downwind. This still has not happened.

It's taken an accident of this magnitude for groups like ours to get the attention to publicise information. For example no one knew that the Three nuclear plants run by Philadelphia Electric are more dangerous than Three Mile Island. It was public information but no one seemed to know it.

RADIATION

But there is still a lot that is not coming out. Dr. Sternglass, one of the country's leading experts on low level radiation says that the methods used for monitoring radiation only measure

1/10th to 1/100th of radiation. But what people breathe is just as dangerous but people don't know this.

The major effect of Three Mile Island is that a large spectrum of progressive groups which previously had not been much interested in the nuclear issue are much more aware of it. Our base is increasing enormously as this has meant people are aware of the government's lies.

It is important for the Anti-nuclear movement not just to focus on the fact that you can get killed but to also emphasize the alternatives. A lot of people are drawn in due to the immediate danger but we don't know how long they will remain.

One of the important things about the anti-nuclear movement is that it has been decentralised. Each area will make its own decision but will contribute to the success of the movement.

We are now working with broader groupings of people and hope to have anything up to 100 groups sponsoring our demonstration. These would include trade unions, church groups, community groups and others."

ISOLATION

One of the problems facing the Alliance must be its isolation from the black community in Philadelphia.

On the day of this interview, black organisations were demonstrating for better housing. The question for groups like the Alliance — composed in the main of whites — is how they relate their concern about nuclear danger to the other social problems people are dealing with every day.



THE PEACE Movement was a total failure. That was the lesson of the article in the March issue of Big Flame.

But what has happened since? What are the chances for peace now?

Peace is a long way off. The British administration, the Northern Ireland Office, and Roy Mason, is going all out to crush the rebellion in the Catholic community.

As the Bennett report, and the police surgeon, Dr Irwin, have revealed, torture is used to extract confessions from prisoners in the absence of other convicting evidence. Up to 90% of prisoners are convicted on the sole basis of these "confessions". In the special courts there are no juries to doubt the lack of evidence.

In this way Roy Mason can claim that British justice is fair. According to him "terrorists" are just ordinary criminals convicted in open court.

To confirm this, since March 1976 no political prisoners in Long Kesh prison camp are allowed "Special Category Status", unless they were convicted before that date.

Three years later the British administration are still insisting that over 300 prisoners — arrested under the Special Powers Act — forced to confess in the special interrogation unit at Castlereagh — convicted in the Special courts — and sent to the notorious H-blocks of Long Kesh, specially built for them — are not special at all — just ordinary criminals.

RESISTANCE

It's the British treatment of the prisoners that has aroused most resistance in Ireland. The prisoners them-

self, the camp guards, that they now won't even "slop out" their chamber pots in the morning. After having the contents regularly thrown over them by the guards, many now leave the pots overflowing in the cells, that way the guards leave them relatively in peace.

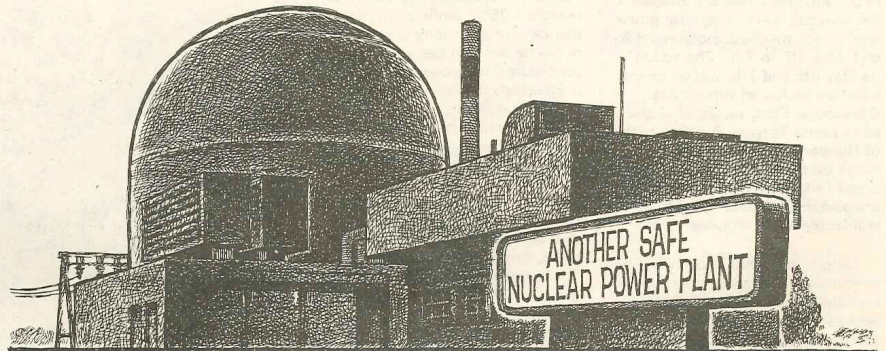
Outside the jails, thousands of people have marched for the restoration of political status for the 370 prisoners who now wear only their blankets rather than the uniform of a criminal. The protests are organised by the mainly female Relatives Action Committees.

Though largely ignored by the British media, the actions of the prisoners and their supporters, have attracted international interest.

DELUSIONS

Mason is finding it increasingly difficult to hide the reality of British-occupied Ireland. His claims that the IRA is beaten look pretty pathetic after recent attacks in the Six Counties where a RUC base at Kinewley was practically demolished, 8 mortar bombs were dropped into the army base in Newtown-Hamilton and banks and offices were blasted in 18 towns in one evening alone.

The British administration can no longer rely on the Irish government in Dublin remaining silent about their methods. The old Fine Gael government has been replaced by Jack Lynch's Fianna Fail party. Lynch does little of practical value to change British policy but he has been forced to criticise conditions in Long Kesh. His party is committed to calling for British withdrawal. So is the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the north. For years the SDLP has agreed with everything the British did or said, in the hope of obtaining government positions. But now the British are ruling directly without SDLP help. So the SDLP, out in the cold, has been



BUT WOULD YOU WANT YOUR SISTER TO LIVE NEXT TO ONE?

ROBB
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IRELAND_ TEN YEARS ON

What Now?

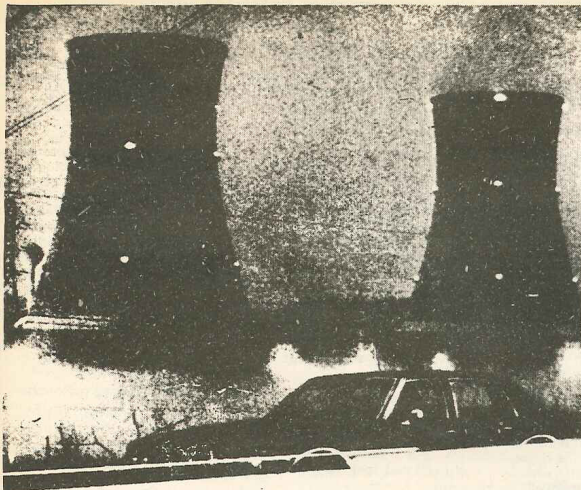
NO FRIENDS

On paper at least, Mason and the Labour government have run out of friends in Ireland, (except, of course, for Powell and the Ulster Unionists). So 15,000 British troops, 8,000 members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and another 8,000 armed policemen keep him in power. It's the British military presence that prevents real progress, or indeed, change of any kind. And it's the hard line adopted by Mason that prevents peace.

BRITAIN

August this year marks the tenth anniversary of British troops being sent onto the streets of northern Ireland. Already the state is preparing for that anniversary. "Light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel" articles, assuring us that all is well, have already begun to appear in newspapers, TV and radio will not be far behind.

They shouldn't be allowed to get away with these cover-ups. The war in Ireland won't go away until British interference is ended. The United Troops Out Movement in this country should be supported in its campaign to withdraw British troops. Already a number of Labour MPs followed by Smith and Pardoe of the Liberals, have called for withdrawal. The Young Liberals have called a demonstration for withdrawal in August. We need to expand such movements until the pressure on the government becomes too great to ignore.



The disaster at the nuclear plant at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (above) led to protests all over America including New York (below).



WHY A MEN'S MOVEMENT?

In circles even smaller than those normally inhabited by the revolutionary left, the developing Men's Movement is causing a bit of a stir. There are even signs — such as Jill Tweedie's heart-fluttering review of the men's magazine *Achilles Heel* in the *Guardian* — that the movement is coming out of its closet, and may have some important things to offer the socialist movement.

This article looks sympathetically at the men's movement, and examines the criticism of it made by socialist feminists and the orthodox left. It is written from the point of view of one who wants revolutionary organisations to adopt these new insights into sexuality. Our aim, writes Paul Holt, should be to destroy capitalism without destroying ourselves in the process.

The seriousness of the men's movement is probably best demonstrated by the two issues of *Achilles Heel* — 'a magazine of men's politics' — published by a collective in London. The magazine covers a wide range of issues, from fairly theoretical topics like 'masculinity and fascism', 'sexism and male sexuality', and 'the problem with patriarchy', through to more personal notes on 'men's health', 'the diary of a male househusband', and a discussion of experiences in men's groups. It also includes cartoons, poems, and photos, and the whole thing has a lively and creative feel to it, thanks partly to the original and bizarre design of the magazine. It has sold like hot cakes — yet hardly anyone seems to know what the men's movement is about, and most of those that do are either enthusiastic members of men's groups or are in varying degrees critical of the movement.

WHY A MEN'S MOVEMENT?

It is far too early to try and give a definitive set of reasons why men started, in 1973, and then again a year or two ago, to meet in groups all over the country. We would probably all agree that we felt various pressing needs: to learn how to express our emotions and make real relationships with men, to understand and try and change our sexist and exploitative attitudes towards women, to try and deal with our sexual repressions...to name but a few. For a lot of us, a major stimulus forcing us to try and deal with these problems was, and is, the influence of the women's liberation movement in general, and our personal and political relationships with feminist women in particular.

But my impression from the people I met at the Manchester Men's Conference is that plenty of men have identified with the men's movement without this political kick in the pants from feminists. They've come from a general awareness of the limited nature of their emotional lives, and, in some cases, from an extension of the insights they've gained in therapy or from contact with eastern religions.

Some men have a history of work in the socialist movement, and have come to reject the movement as irretrievably sexist and/or because they feel that the only realistic thing one can do is to change oneself. Some still regard themselves as socialists, but are fundamentally critical of orthodox socialist activity.

Yet another set of men in the movement, surprisingly well represented at the Manchester conference, are those of us who identify with the socialist movement, are active in trade unions, political groups, and united fronts, but who believe that socialism has to be filled out by the practical and theoretical insights of sexual politics.

SOME OF THE ISSUES

Because there are so many strands of thought in the men's movement, some of the criticisms

outright hostility which comes from the most orthodox of the left — best put to me as 'I don't need men's groups, I've been in men's groups ever since I was in a gang. I haven't got any problems, it's Margaret Thatcher and Jim Callaghan who've got all the problems'. Such people neglect the major insight of the sexual politics movement — that we are all fucked up living under the yoke of capitalism, and that we are going to have a hard time creating a better world unless we begin now to deal with the sexism, racism, and authoritarianism which is deeply ingrained in everyone's personality.

Another line of attack is to be found in a remark by David Widgery: 'Quite a lot of people who couldn't see what [the left] was all about anyway pushed off to have kids, lick their wounds or do their horoscopes' (*Time Out*, 9-15 March 1979). True, there are plenty of men in the movement who have rejected the left, and they've made the classic liberal individualist step of assuming that they can get their personal lives into a healthy state without any revolutionary change in society. Where the hippies believe in LSD, they believe in men's groups for personal therapy.

But the blanket criticism misses the mark. The fact is that many, if not all of us on the left are 'wounded'. Some of the wounds are inflicted by an oppressive social system, in which men comply with those massive influences making us pretend to be tough, resourceful, rational, and unemotional. But some are self-inflicted in the left-wing movement itself. This movement too is dominated by tough, rational, unemotional men, and they insist on structures and activities which require just those qualities — and a lot of us are being burned out, finding ourselves unable to sustain relationships with women and children, becoming depressed and ill, because we blindly follow the dictates of orthodox Leninism.

Men's groups can be a place where we examine these hierarchical structures and masculine methods, and where we try and find ways of making revolution without making ourselves into human computers.

ARE MEN OPPRESSED?

The most important criticism of the men's movement comes from socialist feminists. It is important because it comes from people who have a deep understanding of sexual politics, and aren't blinded by the myths of the traditional male left that sexual movements are divisive and that only capitalists have personal problems.

In the second issue of *Achilles Heel* Vic Seidler argues, 'As men oppress women, but this doesn't

within capitalist society'. He then goes on to describe this oppression in terms of men having 'to turn our bodies into machines which we can control' in order to live up to the 'competitive, ambitious, strong man' we are supposed to be. The first issue of *Achilles Heel* strongly implies that, because men are oppressed, they have the right to organise autonomously in the same way as women do.

This is where the socialist feminists begin their criticism, and many of us in the men's movement agree with them. They argue that men are not oppressed in the same way as women are, since, by and large, men are the agents of the oppres-

ion of women. They agree that men have real problems in playing the violent game of pretending to be a man, but they say men should be described as 'deformed' (or some such word) rather than as 'oppressed'. And they are hostile to the idea of men developing an autonomous movement, since this would be, in practice if not by intention, another institution guarding and extending the power of men over women.

There isn't space here to say why I agree with the socialist feminists. It isn't however, because I am guilt ridden and trying to make a good impression with the socialist feminists.

They quite rightly point to the

MEN AGAINST SEXISM CONFERENCE 'Relating our personal and our political selves'

Last month 300 men converged on Manchester for a 'Men Against Sexism' (MAS) conference. It was a resounding success. A warm, affectionate and trusting atmosphere was generated, free from the competitive and often haranguing postures men are familiar with when we come together to talk politics and make decisions.

I went to the conference expecting conflict, confusion, mistrust, and disappointment. If these were present, they were not apparent, and credit must be given to the Manchester Men's Group's success in creating a conference structure which enabled the maximum possible interaction in the short space of time available.

Different interests and 'tendencies' were given space to develop alongside each other. Perhaps the predominant common factors were that most men there had had experience of belonging to men's groups had had their sexism challenged in friendships and sexual relationships with women, and had found difficulty in relating their personal lives to their political and work selves.

FILMS

The conference included a cliche, a disco, and two films, and was structured by two sets of groupings: home groups and workshops. Everyone was allocated randomly to the former and left to get on with whatever arose. The latter arose spontaneously from individual and collective suggestions.

A man who had worked with

in Santa Cruz emphasised the need for a personal understanding prior to action against rape. Discussion went on to the relationship between male sexuality and power. Two of the group had experiences of being raped by men and were able to talk from this about the devastating effect the violence inflicted on their sexuality and their emotions.

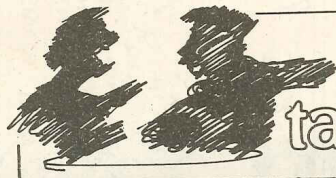
This moved us to consider the ways in which rape is a ritual expression of establishing domination over men in institutional settings such as schools, prisons, and the forces, as well as over women in a patriarchal society.

LEFT GROUPS AND MEN AGAINST SEXISM

Although I describe myself as non-aligned, I have been close to Big Flame in Liverpool for about six months and was therefore attracted to the workshops concerning the Left and sexual politics. A feature of these workshops was their openness and tolerance of experience which in other contexts would provide ammunition for criticisms by left organisations. Questions were posed more than answers given. How can anti-sexist men relate their consciousness to left politics?

A huge gap was recognised between anti-sexist socialist men, often highly educated with professional or 'sub-culture' life styles that enable them to have personal time sufficient to develop a consciousness to support women struggling against patriarchy, and working

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worth
talking about

danger of men in the men's movement simply drawing support from other men and even becoming complacent and smug about our personal 'anti-sexist' development.

The most important thing we can do, it seems to me, is to 'come out' with our sexual politics in all our dealings with people. This involves countering the superman images, the anti-women and anti-gay attitudes we meet everyday. It also means creating structures and activities which will carry forwards the movement against sexual oppression, not separate from, but part and parcel of the general political work we do. Not least, we have to work out ways of creating a revolutionary organisation which is informed by the insights of sexual politics, so that it can help destroy capitalism without destroying its members.

Information about Men's Groups, and all the publications mentioned in the article, can be obtained from:
Men's Free Press
7 St. Mark's Rise
London E8 2NJ

oppression that prevent such a consciousness from developing. It was suggested that demands for a shorter working week plus a decent living wage would provide one condition — personal time — necessary for such a consciousness.

CRITICISM

The conference ended with a plenary which supported the idea of a permanent Men Against Sexism newsletter organised in rotation by different local men's groups and open to contributions from both men and women. A criticism from gay men that the conference structure had not encouraged them to meet separately early on was accepted. A further conference was proposed in the autumn in Bristol.

What is the future for MAS? My own view is that any claims for MAS as an autonomous movement akin to the women's or gay movements, should be viewed with the utmost suspicion: men do not experience the material oppression of these groups, just the opposite.

However, men's emotional make-up and sexuality are repressed and distorted by capitalism and the patriarchal nuclear family, and we have much to gain personally from the struggles of women.

The possibility of collective action by MAS seems to be still far off, if a possibility at all, without prior initiatives from the women's movement to involve men's groups in action on behalf of their demands. It is time, therefore, for an analysis and critique of MAS from the women's movement to help nurture — or kill off — the

**GOOD KING
NEVER
GAVE UP
ON THE
GREAT CRUSADE**

ELECTION TIME!
WE WILL MOUNT
A SOCIALIST
CRUSADE....
THE CRUSADES
DID NOT
STOP FOR US!
THE RIGHT
MAN

THE GREAT DEBATE - PART I
MORE CUTS!
WAGE LIMITS!
MORE FOR
PENSIONERS!
INCENTIVES
TO INDUSTRY

**THAT'S OUR
POLICY!**
WE'VE
REMAINING
O.K.?

THE GREAT DEBATE - PART II
THIS DANGEROUS
RADICAL WILL
UPSET THE "GOOD
OLD DAYS OF
SOCIALISM
GONE?"

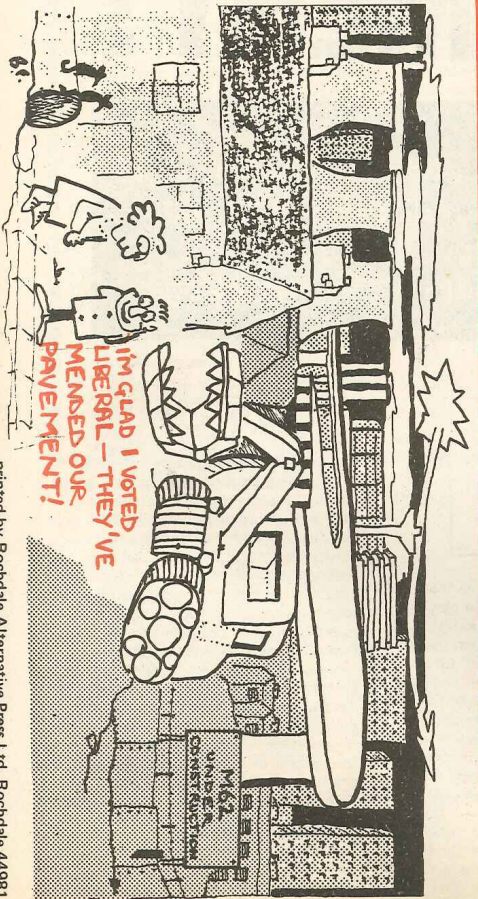
**THAT WAS
OUR POLICY**
AT LAST ABANDONING THE
MODERN PART OF BULLSHIT, HE
TURNS TO THE ANCIENT ART
OF MAGIC !!!!!

**EYE OF ROG... LIVER OF
LEFT-RINGER... H.P. SAUCE...
A PRICE FREEZE... LEG
OF NENT... WINNING
SMILE... POLICE
COMMISSION**

**AND THE MAGIC WORD!
HELP!**

**WHAT BREADFUL
POWER HAS
GOOD KING
CALLAGHAN
UNLEASHED?
DON'T BELIEVE
THOSE OPINION
POLLS! WAIT
TILL NEXT
MONTH'S
AMAZING
EPISODE!!!!**

ANGLE ON:
EDGE HILL:
The cartooned
June 1973. It'
still holds true
today.



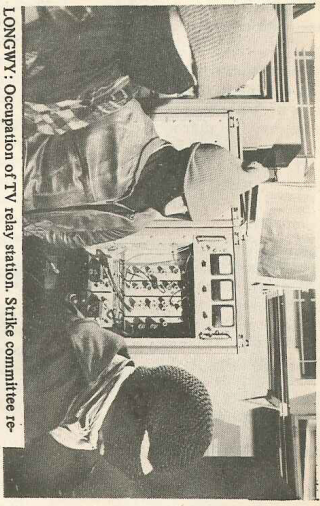
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Big Flame

for Socialism

No 74 May 1979

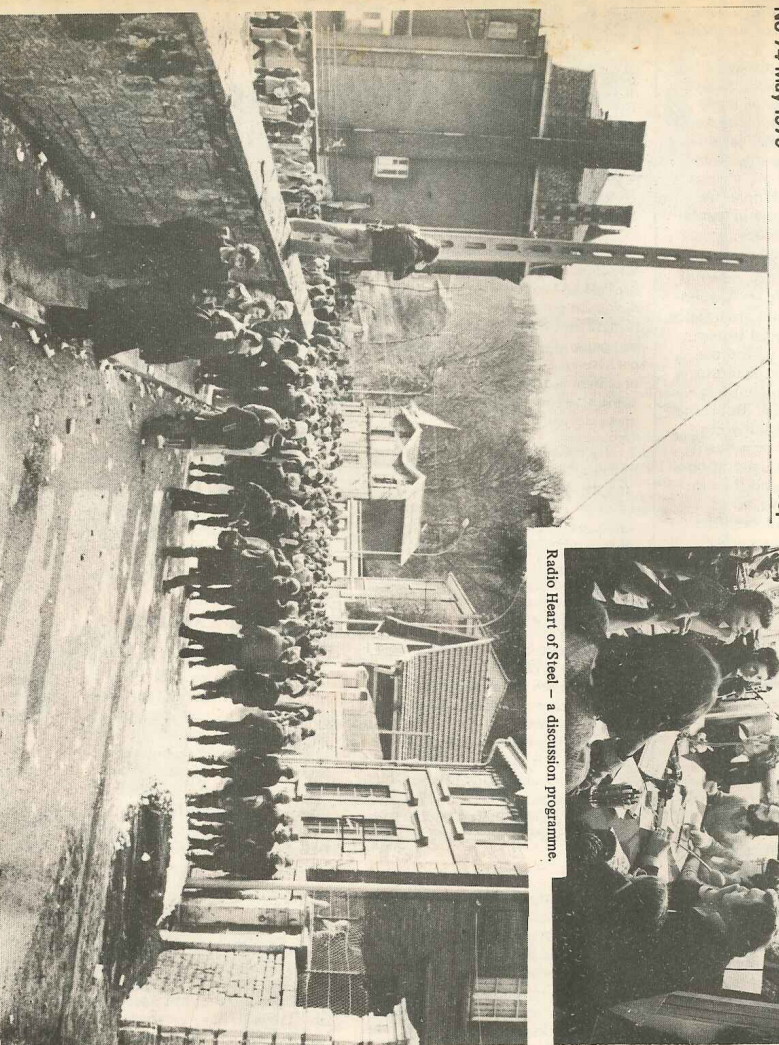
15p



LONGWY: Occupation of TV relay station. Strike committee re-transmitted its own programme.



Radio Heart of Steel - a discussion programme.



LONGWY: the attack on the police station

French Steelworkers: Militant Action Saves Jobs

Photo report-p. 4&5