

### Socialist Feminist Conference-Need to build the regional network

Last month's national socialist tem-inist 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 over-all 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 sexuali-ty 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 eval-uation of the conference and an assessment of where the socialist feminist current is going, what are its strengths, and what are its weak-

### **IMPERIALISM**

Judging from the papers produc-ed 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, particular-ly 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 harrassment, 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 effective-ly. 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 FBB

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 contribu-tions on this theme for publica-

### 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

A general theme is the central
women. The second, Men and Fascism importance of fighting against fasfollows on with the particular roles

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

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 Waver-tree Road., Liverpool 7)

# A Searchlight on Racism

SEARCHLIGHT ('Britain's Antifascist Journal') has excelled itself in the April 1979 issue. Tracing "15 years of racism: from Smethwick to 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; in the late many analyses, the

strength is also its main weakness: the whole anti-fascist movement is endebt-ed to Searchlight for their years of painstaking research on the organisa-tions 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 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

Individuals: £4 12 issues, cheques to AF&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 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 Step-ney Trades Council it again in massive detail outlines the racism experienced 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 theBengalis. 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

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 taker 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 num-ber of white anti-racists and anti-fascists organised through many organised in-cluding 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 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 pamplets give us the hard information to do 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 SIMILARY, 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 N0.6 from IRR, 247 Pentonville Rd., London N1, 95p.



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 oply left-winger or critic to speak out against the film has been John Pilger, who himself reported the war. He commented:

war. He commented:
'The backers and makers of this film '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 rebackage 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 lie'.

war and sligk lie

SLICKLIF

### of all time.

though. In the first part of the film, we are fulled into the quiet normality of a small immigrant community celebrating the wedding of one of its favourite sons, 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.

wood romances.

The action then abruptly switches to The action then abruptly switches to Vietnam where killing the enemy is a messy, maddening and foul business, be-cause 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 final-

See this film if you must, but miss

ly blows his brains out (playing the 'allegorical game'), and the third, Rober de Niro, comes through scarred but dripping with medals and machismo.

### **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 en-tire 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 con-structing 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

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 what Garry wanted was not in fact the same thing as the people were fighting for. Any people who ex-pressed 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 sur-rounding independence negotiations. He set up groups of people who would go around not only intimidating, buth 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 de-gree of opposition. The moment gree of opposition. He 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 peo-ple 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 electoral 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 re-gime developed he moved dramat-ically 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 politic-al 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 Liberafor 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

ed 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 <u>demonstrations</u>.

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 mass-ive unemployment, you did not get a job unless you were a member of

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 revolu-

THE STIRIUGGI 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,

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.

# 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 party for Basque independence and socialism, which is linked politically to ETA-militar, has emerged as the second party in many town councils. In Pamplona, capital of the Basque province of Navarra, it is the biggest party on the council and will probably elect the mayor – a key political position in Spain's municipalities. Herri Batasuna, with 260 council seats, has now shown beyond a shadow what the general elections had already suggested: that

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 convin-

ced that you are challenging in a

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 courcil. The Communist Move-ment (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 loc-ally than nationally. The problem for

# NUKES: ERROR

HE 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 organ-ising 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

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 warkers.

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 lever rediation says that the methods used for manitoring radiation only measures

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.

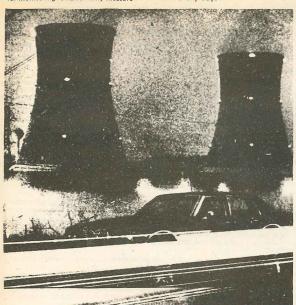
We are now working with broader

ment.
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

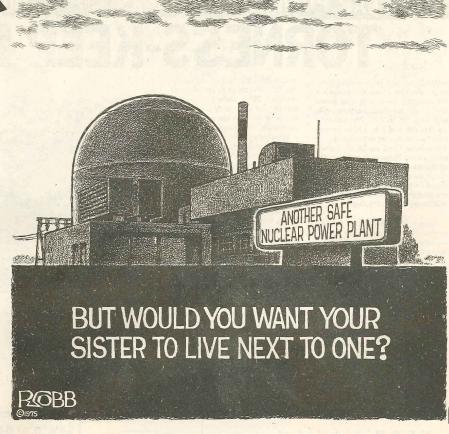
One of the problems facing the Alliance must be its isolation from the black community in Philadel-

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







# IRELAND\_ **TEN YEARS ON**

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, under Roy Mason, is going all out to crush the rebellion in the Catholic

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

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-

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 I8 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 Gail 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 Barty 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 The British administration can

# What Now?

### NO FRIENDS

On paper at least, Mason and the Labour government have run out of friends in Ireland, lexcept, 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, chan ge 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 tunne!" 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 follwed 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.



# NESS-KEEP IT GR



SCRAM and the Torness Alliance have called for direct action against the construction of a nuclear power station, for the Bank Holiday weekend, May 4th to 7th. The action, on May 6th and 7th, will be part of a festival including exhibitions, workshops, films, music, etc., and all in sunny Torness, 5 miles south of Dunbar, 30 miles east of Edinburgh on the rocky Firth of Forth. Local Friends of the Earth groups are planning transport, and there will be space for camping.

Despite the 4000-strong demonstration last May and a tractor procession in June, by September the Secretary of State for Scotland (Bruce Millan) had approved the (Bruce Millan) had approved the capital investment for two 660 megawatt Advanced Gas Cooled Reactors (AGRs). The official cost estimate is £742 million, which will create less than 2000 temporary jobs and 600 permanent ones. Not many local people will be em-ployed, and of course the Scottish electricity consumers will pay over £500 each. Another AGR, at Dungeness B, has already cost over twice the original estimate.

The South of Scotland Electricity Board plan a total of eight AGRs at Torness, to generate 5280

has 70% overcapacity (the normal margin is 25%), while Scotland's demand for electricity is growing at only one per cent per year. The only reason for a new reactor is to prop up the British nuclear industry for 'the future'.

The reactor which blew up in Harrisburg was water cooled, while the AGR is gas cooled. So 'it can't happen here', claims Tony Benn. But in June 1977, the AGR at Hinkley Point B (Somerset) was

shut down after a water main frac-tured, flooding the pumphouse. The maintenance workers had to spray the reactor with fire hoses to keep it cool. During the shut-down, which lasted six months, down, which lasted six months, it came out that the boiler tube was corroded, from 'causes unknown'. In October 1977, the AGR at Hunterston B (West of Glasgow) was shut down for repair when suddenly 2000 gallons of salt water from the Clyde seeped into the pressure ves-sel. As in Harrisburg, officials blamed it on 'human error'. Repair work costing eight million pounds is still unfinished; replacing the lost electricity supply will cost £28 million. The design of Torness is modelled on Hunterston B.

All AGRs produce plutonium;



Torness will generate several hundred kilograms per year. As well as increasing the potential supply of nuclear weapons, it will add to the unsolved problem of disposing of nuclear waste. The long-term effects of low level radiation on masses of people are unknown. The known risks of nuclear

accidents are kept officially secret. As many people are coming to

realize, the need for increasing electricity supply is not desperate. In-stead, we can conserve energy through 'combined heat and power', district heating, and insulation. And we can generate electricity through wind, water, and solar systems. Developing and producing technology could provide many more jobs, even within the current labour force of the nuclear industry. These arguments are developed in the current issue of Under currents magazine.
The Torness reactor is opposed

by local farmers and Scottish coal miners. We should join them on May 4-7.

For more information on the Torness reactor, see *Torness, Keep It Green*, by Mike Flood (a Friends of the Earth pamphlet).

### U.S.S.R.-no friend of oppressed people

Dear Big Flame,

There are two important points raised by your interview with Anthony Barnett (April Big Flame) on the China-Vietnam war that must be taken up.

One of them concerns his attitude to a potential withdrawal from Kampuchea (Cambodia) by the Vietnamese. Nowhere in the whole interview (as you print it) does Anthony Barnett address the question of whether or not the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea was correct or incorrect. question of whether or not the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea was correct or incorrect. As I agued in an accompanying article, because of the dangers of a regime propped by foreign bayonets being unpopular with the Kampucheans themselves, recent Vietnamese actions have to be classified as a serious mistake, and at that one which will very likely also lead to (further) bureaucratisation within Vietnamese mistake is already history, simply to demand its 'immediate' reversal would be to neglect its important consequences, including the overthrow of the oppressive Pol Pot regime. But it remains necessary to state openly that the invasion was a mistake, and to work for the perspective of prompt Vietnamese withdrawal, so that the working masses of Kampuchea have a genuine chance of running their own affairs and of allying with others by choice and not by force. Barnett is silent on the original invasion, and simply opposes 'immediate' withdrawal without hinting at the desireability of the Vietnamese pulling out as soon as possible. Such a position all-tooninting at the desireability of the Vietnamese pulling out as soon as possible. Such a position all-too-closely resembles the self-serving apologetics of Moscow and Hanoi: it has very little to do with the real interests of the working people of Indochina.

What's more, the second point where Barnett must be challenged makes the resemblance to Moscow apologetics even closer! He talks of 'quite generous support to the revolution' on the part of the USSR, and cites Brezhnev's 'emphatic insistence' on support for national liberation struggles. Frankly, this sounds like a sick joke. Leave aside the question of the just struggles against Brezhnev's regime for national rights or national liberation, such as exist in Czechoslovakia and inside the USSR, from the Ukraine right through to Soviet Central Asia. Leave aside Soviet opposition to all popular and progressive struggles in such countries as Argentina, Iran (before the Shah was ousted), Eritrea and Somalia. The central issue which Barnett buries in silence is that of the objectives of Soviet Union basically want to further the liberation struggles of the oppressed, or is its essential objective to seek diplomatic, military and economic accommodation with the imperial-ist West?

accommodation with the imperial ist West?
Whilst from time to time the Soviet regime may do things of which the oppressed – in Angola or South Africa, for example – can take advantage, its basic aims are opposed to the interests of working people.

working people.

Fo suggest that such temporary support is 'quite generous' is to suggest that it is reliable. There are tens of millions of people, in Latin America, who have learnt from bitter experience just how wrong that is.

Comradely,
Chris Marshall
(Norwich Big Flame)





### LAB-CON TRICK

Dear Big Flame,
It's breathtaking how little
information is buried in the hours
of election programmes and phoneins broadcast everyday. I'm sure I'm
not the only one who feels none the
wiser — just a bit number for it all.
One question interests me
above all. We know that Thatcher
wants to rob from the poor for the
sake of giving incentives to the
rich, and so her tax cuts are going
to mean bad news for most of us.
Labour, using different methods,
also intends to cut our living
standards. Will there be any
difference between Labour and
Tory in the end?
D. Patterson, Carlisle.

### Law'n'order Why the silence?

Dear Big Flame, I have been watching eagerly

Dear Big Flame,

I have been watching eagerly the space reserved in your paper for the Great Debate on the issue of Law n' Order which you described as the Left's Silence". So far, the Silence is stunning, and will no doubt appear less than useless to the Socialist Unity candidates in the forthcoming general election. On The one hand you are seeking to provide an alternative explanation of crime that can satisfy the electorate, and on the other hand, satisfy the Marxist criteria for the establishment of the material conditions that would lead to the eventual eradication of crime and other forms of anti-social activity.

We live in a society where the basis of our social relations was founded on deception — crime and disorder are the manifestation of the continual capitalist accumulation of wealth. Crime and all other forms of anti-social activity can only be grasped and analysed in the knowledge that our social relations in a commodity society are in general anti-social, i.e. our social relations are upside-down. Crime, as understood here, is no minority activity — crime is apparent everywhere, it is the necessary feature of capital. To seek to explain otherwise is to perpetuate the "crime", and in the face of it, taking "two steps back."

I accept that it is not enough to point out the failure of the existing theory and practice of crime and punishment, though it's a beginning: we must see the various forms of anti-social actions within the overall framework provided by Marx's work on Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. The socialisation of society will not come about by proffering the slops of the bourgeois mentality on doorsteps, even if it is dressed up as the "alternative criminology."

David MacDonald, Manchester

### Sexism& Masculinism

Dear Big Flame,
Your reviewer posed the
question, "what is men's politics"?
The question, used as a starting
point for a look at Achilles Heel,
was never really explored and an
opportunity to examine Men's
Groups in general was completely
missed. The cursory review that
followed didn't provide any
analysis of the role of men in
sexual politics.
As a member of a men's
group, L neither want to retell
men's history (just another kind
of chauvinism) nor act as protector to my feminist friends (warding off the wicked sexists in typically "male" ways). What I do
want to do is probe my own sexism
and the sexism that is so imbued
in the culture around me. To

in the culture around me. To understand the "masculinism" that as a man is embedded in all my social interactions. Most of all to actively challenge the role playing and its accomthe role playing and its accompanying ideology that underpriss the oppression of women. The most practical important example of which is child care, I want changes in all these things to come about through a revolution that is excisite:

ution that is socialist.

For some this will mean reconceptualising socialism. Sexual politics (the politics of the personal) is the micro end of the micro-macro continuum. But

since it is the starting point its character dictates all other conditions. I don't want a revolution that doesn't inloude a dismantling of the "masculinism" that oppresses all women and many men. Socialist theory and praxis isn't socialist in these terms unless it has at its revolutionary cize a challenge to our current sexual ideology A challenge that offers a new personal potentiality to us all.

a new personal potentiality to us all.

The Men's Group movement isn't just about men's polities. It's about Socialism. The movement has partly come abolf because of the failure of the Left to deal with its own sexism, and not just because of the lead shown by feminists (although this of course has been fundamentally important). The parties of the revolutionary Left just can't assume they're anti-sexist because they recognise Feminism. They also can't get away with paying lip service to sexual politics.

The reviewer would like to see somebody take up mass propagand against men's sexism. I suggest this should already be being done by all parties of the revolutionary Left. Starting perhaps by an examination of their own sexism and the male defined modes of operation that pervade their structure.

Rob Imeson, Staffs.

structure. Rob Imeson, Staffs.

Dear contributors.

We hope you will write us enough letters to make the letters page a regular feature of the paper. Lenght of letters should not be more than 400 words — though shorter ones are very welcome. We would like to make it clear that you should not feel obliged to write in a dense, complicated

Because we do not answer a letter does not mean that we agree with it.

We want feed-back on articles that appear in the paper on the 'Worth Talking About' page — they will take up issues that are controversial from a revolutionary point of view.

The Editorial Collective

Classified Ad. rates: 3p a word

UTOM LABOUR MOVEMENT conference on Ireland. Sat May 19th. Goldsmith's College, Lewisham Way SE14. Social in

LIBERTARIAN SPAIN No 2. bulletin of Libertarian Spain Commi-ttee articles on workers struggles trade union elections etc. 20 p, from LSC, Box 3,73, Warmgate, York, YO 2 TZ

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THE SECOND annual charabanc to Scarborough will take place on 29th April. This historic event is part of Leeds Big Flame's relentless effort to prove to the masses that politics is not just demos and smoke filled rooms. It is also donkey rides, fish and chips and the company of friends. \$2 for

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Speaker: Cynthia Cockbur
("The Local State") Sunday
2th May 2 cm. For yeare

20th May 2 pm. For venue phone 01.735.6123

MANCHESTER BIG FLAME Public meeting. May 10th The Chilean Experience, a third road to socialism'? May 10th 7.30 pm, The Ancoats, Great Ancoats St.

COVENTRY BIG FLAME public meeting "Whose Law Order?" Speaker Stuart Hall Tuesday 8 th May 7.30 pm Swanswell Tavern (nr Old Fire Station) Pool Meadow.

NOTTINGHAM BIG FLAME

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NATIONAL 'REVOLUTION' RALLY, Sat. 5th May Noon — Midnight, Speakers: Bernadette McAliskey, RAR, Soweto stud-ent, Films, Exhibitions.

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- an international meeting on the steel industry in Arthus (Lux-emburg) on May 18th/19th.
- emburg) on May 18th/19th. a meeting on European trade unions in Copenhagen (Den-mark) on May 27th/28th. a meeting on 'immigration in Europe' in London on June 2nd.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

A new publication 'An Introduction to Big Flame' is available available for 20 p including postage.

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

From BF Journal, Room 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London

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# NHY A MEN'S MOVEMENT?

In circles even smaller than those normally inhabited by the rev olutionary 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 to wards 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 liber-ation 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 move ment 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 funda-mentally 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 The most important thing we can do 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 every day.



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 un-der 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 'wound-ed'. 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 in-sist on structures and activities which require just those qualities and a lot of us are being burned out, finding ourselves unable to sus-tain 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

### 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 sex-ual 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 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 opposed. ressed, they have the right to organ-ise 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 oppress-

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 autono mous movement, since this would be, in practice if not by intention, another institution guarding and ex-tending the power of men over

There isn't space here to say why I agree with the socialist fem-inists. 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

danger of men in the men's movement simply drawing support from other men and even becoming com-

placent 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 activ-ities 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 publica-tions mentioned in the article, can be obtained from:

Men's Free Press 7 St. Mark's Rise London E8 2NJ

# 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 familar 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 possi-ble interaction in the short space of time available.

Different interests and 'tenden-cies' were given space to develop a-longside each other. Perhaps the predominant common factors were that most men there had had exper-ience 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.

The conference included a creche, a disco, and two films, and as 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.

in Santa Cruz emphasised the need for a personal understan Jing 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 emo-

This moved us to consider the ways in which rape is a ritual expression of establishing domina-tion over men in institutional settings such as schools, prisons, and the forces, as well as over women in a patriarchical 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 ex-perience 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 pol-

A huge gap was recognised be-tween 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

sciousness from developing. It was suggested that demands for a short-er working week plus a decent living wage would provide one condi-tion – 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 pro-

posed 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 move-ments, should be viewed with the utmost suspicion: men do not ex-perience the material oppression of

these groups, just the opposite.

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

The possibility of collective ac-

tion 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







No 74 May 1979

STATUS QUO'D



ONGWY: Occupation of TV relay station. Strike committee re-

AT LAST, ABANDONING THE MODERN ART OF BULISHIT, HE TURNS TO THE ANCIENT ART

LONGWY: the attack on the police station

tant Action Saves Jobs



ANGLE ON EDGE HILL:
We first printed this cartoon in June 1973. It is still holds true today.

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