

are directly related to wages and the cost of newsprint.

### Conclusions.

We were right and fortunate in building the printing works when we did. It has played a fundamental role in helping build the organisation over the years.

The limit to subsidies given by the printshop is £50,000/£55,000.

Finance must be raised else where.

In the long run I believe that there is no alternative to increasing the price of Socialist Worker. I say this because the major deficit is attributable to newsprint costs and therefore to Socialist Worker. This will increase substantially in the next few months as newsprint costs soar. How much I'm not certain, both 7p and 10p have been floated. However, I feel that the increase decided upon should be held off for as long as possible.

I would like branch secretaries to raise these issues, not only around Socialist Worker but also around financing in general.

Jim Nichol  
National Treasurer.

## **The National Front**

The recent by-election in Newham has shown up the weaknesses in our response to the intervention of the National Front in elections. These are some notes on what can be done to tackle the Front.

At the moment, the Front's main work is in elections, which overrepresents their strength (NF candidates get a large but passive vote) and underrepresents ours (we usually have more numerous serious cadres in the locality beforehand). But if we use our scarce resources carefully, we can blunt the effect of their propaganda where it matters.

It needs to be said at the outset that our main target in the present period is neither the Front nor fascism, but reformism and its ally, racialism, in the labour movement. We have to beware that ultra-left hysteria that sees the Front as a substitute bogey for the ruling class as much as we discourage the conservative complacency

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that the Front is an irrelevance beside our "serious work". To be a serious threat, fascism requires mass unemployment, a ruined middle class and a demoralized ruling class, which is not what faces us at present. The Front has some of the ideas required by fascism, but not the effective power to use them on the streets and in the labour movement. At present, they can get a passive audience - voting - but not an army, and even the effectiveness of their racialism depends on the intensity of working class activity and the degree of worker demoralization in the class struggle. Our response must therefore be aimed not at mobilising "public opinion" or individual acts of moral repugnance, but at activating the labour movement against the Front. This emphasis will become steadily more important in the future, since the Front is making a much more determined effort to recruit workers, to identify with worker interests (talking of national socialism) and even proposing an industrial paper. So far, the Front has not tried to use its industrial membership, but the success of the Ulster Workers' Council cannot have been wholly lost on them. Because their worker membership is often passive, it is open to argument, showing how Front politics are totally incompatible with united working class action and help the ruling class to stabilise its rule. For the moment, elections are the main demonstration of Front support. We should concentrate on working class constituencies (Labour seats) and wards in all cases, and not try to compete in leaflet warfare when we do (few electors read leaflets, and those influenced by the Front will not read our replies). In most General Elections, the Front's approach is smothered in the major debate, but it still has leverage in key constituencies. In by-elections, we should aim to have a clear counter campaign in Labour seats. This will require district co-ordination to ensure 50 or so people are available for the short period of the campaign from several branches - two evenings per week and Saturday morning. Our aim should be to reply to the Front at those points where it collects a worker audience, whether on the shop floor (but factory bulletins and rank and file papers are better methods of approaching the workplace than leaflets from outsiders), selected housing estates, among the shoppers at Saturday markets. Our aim should be to answer the specific issues raised by the front (not simply attacking an abstract racialism or merely calling them Nazis), their lies, how their politics make it impossible to build a united movement of working people to defend pay and conditions, and what the positive alternative to their nationalism is. Leaflets should be written for a specific local audience (a national leaflet will not do) and be used either at NF meetings (eg in markets) or as a means to mount our own meetings (eg on council estates etc). Our members should aim to picket NF meetings with bold placards which embarrass the large

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"respectable" periphery of the NF and attend the meetings to heckle and argue - although Front meetings are often poorly attended, it is important to ensure IS members are properly protected in attending - go in numbers, sit together and keep the largest people on the outside. Market meetings can be important occasions, but here a reasoned alternative rather than hysteria is needed to win an uncommitted audience - with leaflets, sales of SW etc taking place at the same time.

It is useful also to answer letters and articles in the local paper, and to score out (or put counter slogan stickers over) NF posters etc. All this should be part of our response and will assist IS in making itself known among working people in particular localities when we have not already done so. It may be possible to involve SW readers and contacts in the same work. But the work is considerable assisted if we simultaneously involve local TU organisations (which does not mean other idle politicians - IMG CP etc. - unless they are responsible figures in the labour movements). In some cases, the Trades Council might be persuaded to set up an Action Committee through which IS TC members can approach all affiliated TU organisations, shop stewards committees etc. to sponsor both an anti-NF leaflet, and undertake work in their own branches and workplaces, and joining a common campaign. Care must be taken here to ensure that TC sponsorship, however, does not kill any campaign with conservative routinism or token gestures. With effective TU support, local demonstrations of protest against the NF should be heavily dominated by local TU banners. Demonstrations should be designed not to "bear witness" by a tiny moralistic minority, but to demonstrate potential power and proselytise. The leaflet to bystanders helps the second, the trade union banners demonstrate the first. If effective, the demonstration will get a response from those local militants we do not know who are aware of the Front's threat. A minority group inevitably substitutes individual heroics for the demonstration of power (since they have no power) - as the IMG tries to launch itself on any copper. Sometimes, confrontations become unavoidable, but again, any arrests should be used to build political support - by forming defence and aid committees of trade unionists to assist those arrested. By-elections will be the occasion when the Front gets maximum publicity, and it should be our aim to be the challenge to the Front in every working class constituency where they might have effect. In local elections, branches will have to judge carefully in what sections of what wards, the Front can be effective and go as far as is appropriate in the activity outlined for by-elections. At every stage, blocking the Front is neither our central aim nor something which is a diversion from our real task - it can reach an audience we are not in contact

with and show that we are the only serious alternative on the Left. But our seriousness depends upon us always pursuing the same end - to activate working class militants and the labour movement, not substitute ourselves for that.

## AUEW fraction statement IS candidate for AUEW general secretary

The argument that I.S. should not put up a candidate for General Secretary of the AUEW was overwhelmingly carried at the National Fraction Meeting on June 1st. The following is a document from Birmingham AUEW Fraction circulated before the meeting.

The question of whether to stand an IS candidate for the position of General Secretary of the AUEW is not something which the whole of the membership have a right to speak on. The IS members who have the experience within the union and who after all, are responsible for implementing any decision are best fitted to determine the way forward for their own fraction.

There are nearly 1½ million members of the AUEW. There are over 250 full-time officials. There are probably around 5,000 convenors and about the same number of District Committee delegates. The General Secretary's job is the second most important within the Union. In IS there are probably less than 10 convenors and less than 10 D.C. delegates. There are no full-time officials. Our influence within the union is therefore extremely small. There is no chance of an IS candidate getting more than a derisory vote in this election and no chance whatsoever of winning the position.

As a fraction our job must surely be to win serious and militant trade unionists to our politics. This can only be done if IS is first considered by these people as a serious organisation. Backing lost causes is no way to impress them. Precisely because these people are serious they realise that the battle between left and right within the union over this position is going to be very fierce. It is not the case that Bob Wright is going to automatically win the job. The right wing contender John Boyd has been a member of the Executive Council for 22 years and has built up a strong base. It is also the case that in the recent round of elections the left has suffered a serious setback. No-one should realise this more than our Manchester comrades for Panter lost his job as District Secretary to Mather by 5,874 votes to 4,205. In Division 16 the Wolverhampton

arise).

You will have to contact the speakers, make sure they can attend, remind them etc.

What we will do is suggest to you a speaker, a format for the school, supply you with material for practical sessions on request etc.

Speakers you don't need four CC members to speak to run a decent school. There is an awful lot of talent in the organisation that is hidden. Use it.

For example, we have found that the sort of worker members who are on the NAC or who are leading their fractions are almost invariably admirable speakers at schools—and not just on industry (try them, for example, on the history of the SWP).

## COUNTER-DEMOS: THE LESSONS OF BRICK LANE

*Huddersfield SWP*

It was frustrating being in the Brick Lane area on 24th September, and the frustration was made bitter by the knowledge that so many thousands were shouting militant anti-Nazi slogans at the same time in another part of London.

We in Huddersfield have felt especially bitter, because a number of us wanted to go to Brick Lane rather than straight to the Carnival, and were told that we should not—that it would all be taken care of. When a few of us got to Brick Lane, we found that it was indeed all being taken care of—by the police—and that our numbers were totally inadequate.

After discussion, and reading the Cliff article on P.7 SW 30th September, we see the difficulty: getting enough people to Brick Lane without pulling so many away from the Carnival that the ANL itself was split and demoralised. That is a problem of organisation and control. For Cliff to write 'Our organisation will be far better in future' is not in itself reassuring. We need to know that the organisation will be far better in particular respects.

First, even if the SWP wants to limit the numbers going to a counter-demonstration, they should seek definite commitments from as many people as possible to be available if needed; and all of these people need to be organized in groups which can be called quickly when they are needed.

Second, people need to know what to do when they are on a counter-demonstration. There must be many stewards—say about 1 to 6—and the stewards need to be briefed and kept as well informed as possible. Information is essential to morale.

But there is a more basic weakness to our organization for counter-demonstrations and that is the lack of training. It is just not good enough to ask groups of demonstrators to elect stewards on the day. The stewards need to be trained, as do others if it is at all

practicable. There is a tremendous amount of basic know-how which needs to be passed on.

Also, some groups training for demonstrations would be valuable. As many as possible of the crowds which go should have a collective confidence of 'physical effectiveness' but also of the morale of the demonstrators. Pictures in SW can give a great impression of enthusiasm and solidarity in a crowd of anti-Fascists; but many of us know that we often feel very isolated, frightened and miserable on these occasions, and this often comes from not having any of the collective confidence which comes from having acted together before. Basic training would help to get over this.

Individually too, many of us need some training in handling ourselves, and some SWP districts will be able to organize this. Most active anti-Nazis are very courageous people, but many of us have almost or absolutely no experience of fighting. We have to face the fact that we may need to defend ourselves on occasions, and we need to be confident, if only in the knowledge that if we get punched on the nose it won't be the end of the world. Huddersfield SWP is hoping to organize something on these lines, so that on future counter-demonstrations we will at least have some stewards with some self-confidence and know-how.

It is far better for every one of us to add our weight to the numbers in an anti-Fascist crowd than not to bother. Numbers matter. But members of a revolutionary party know that organization, education, and experience matter too; and that applies on the streets as much as anywhere else.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SWP AND THE ANL—TIME FOR RE-ASSESSMENT

*Roger Welch*

*(Chelmsford SWP)*

*Les Hearn*

*(South London SWP)*

There can be no doubt, except on the part of sectarians, that the success of the ANL in relating to young people has been of great benefit to the anti-fascist movement. There have been two disasters, however, that the SWP has ignored or glossed over:—

1. the successful 1,000 strong NF march to East London on May Day—the day after Carnival 1.
2. the successful 2,000 strong NF march to East London ON THE SAME DAY as Carnival 2.

The first was dismissed by Socialist Worker as 'irrelevant, the second was seen in terms of ORGANISATIONAL blunders by the SWP and the ANL. In fact, on both occasions, the NF succeeded in making the point that despite the size of the ANL, it has been unable to take up the challenge when it has been given by the Front. We think this is most clearly shown by the arguments over Carnival 2.

The arguments against mobilising people to go from Hyde Park to Brick Lane/ East London or going directly there on their coaches were given by Tony Cliff in SW (2nd October) as follows:

1. The Front wanted to disrupt the Carnival
2. It would have led to disintegration of the ANL.
3. It would only have been a repeat of Stockport and Hyde anyway.

In our opinion, argument 1 is totally fallacious. If the NF marching on the same day as the Carnival means they are confronted by tens of thousands as opposed to several thousands, to whose benefit is that?

In relation to argument 2, where would the disintegration have occurred? Certainly not with the young people who turned up. Providing the lunatic idea of marching everyone (against their wishes?) to Brick Lane was rejected, those who arrived at Hyde Park would have been given the choice—Go and defend Brick Lane if you feel able and willing to do so, or stay here and march to the Carnival in Brixton. Not only was this not done but both the ANL and SWP persuaded people AGAINST GOING until it was too late. Nor is it true to say this can only be seen in hindsight. All experienced anti-fascists know that the major problem involved is not actually in stopping the Front but out-manoeuvring the police. This could have been done had the numbers been there. We can only conclude that the fear of disintegration was related to the liberal-reformist celebrities-MPs who support the



ANL. In an article we wrote for Pre-Conference IB2, we warned that whilst the ANL could *not* be dismissed as a classic popular front, there were inherent dangers of popular frontism unless the SWP maintained its political independence. We believe the events at Carnival 2 totally confirm this.

In relation to argument 3, we knew the NF were marching to Hoxton area of the East End. Had we had the numbers we could have sealed off all possible routes and the police would have been unable to stop us. Rather different to several thousand anti-fascists attempting to cover the whole of Manchester.

We believe the blunders were *political* not organisational. They were caused by the fact that the SWP leadership, frightened by adverse publicity in the capitalist press and by the prospect of the liberal-reformist element withdrawing from the ANL, decided to put the respectability of the ANL before the concrete political task, i.e. mobilising those who arrived at Hyde Park to confront the NF. Surely as revolutionaries we all know that mass movements built on the wrong politics not only fail but in fact act as obstacles.

To avoid this happening to the ANL we call upon branches/districts to send a resolution to the next NAC/Party Council along the following lines: 'This branch/district condemns the leadership of the SWP for refusing to mobilise the anti-fascists in Hyde Park at Carnival 2 to go to the East End to attempt to stop the NF march. Furthermore, this Branch/District calls on the SWP to argue for an emergency conference of the ANL at which the SWP should fight for the adoption of the following:

1. No free speech for fascists
2. This to be attained *not* by state bans but by the self-activity of the ANL, including physically preventing the NF from marching.
3. ANL propaganda which not only exposes the Nazi nature of the NF, etc. but which also attacks its ideological appeal i.e. racism, by rejecting all forms of immigration controls.
4. The establishment of workplace branches of the ANL whose ultimate objectives will be to expel fascists from Trade Unions and remove *open* racists from official labour movement positions.
5. ANL propaganda and activity to secure labour movement support for black self-defence groups.

It may well be that this differs from the approach put forward in our pre-conference article. Then we argued for the SWP to do this independently of the ANL. This was because at that time—before Carnival 1—the ANL was not a mass movement. The majority of its activists were revolutionaries. This is no longer so. The task of revolutionaries *now* is to give a *political* lead to the tens of thousands of people drawn into the anti-fascist movement by the ANL, even though this may lead to the loss of the 'big name' celebrities and the respectable image of the ANL. This is not sectarianism—we are not demanding that the ANL is composed of revolutionaries or even socialists—but a recognition of the fact that the above proposals lay the only basis on which the NF can be countered effectively *for the time*

*being*, and in doing so gaining time and an audience for our socialist ideas. If this is not done, we believe the tendency on the SWP's part to fall into the trap of putting unity before the concrete political needs of the situation will continue and we will betray not only all those who believe the ANL can stop the rise of the NF etc but also ourselves.

## THE SWP AND THE ANL

Simon Turner

goes on.' On that basis Paul Holborow made the announcement at Hyde Park. We failed to deliver: a major mistake that must not be repeated. It was never an option 'to seal off all possible routes' that the Nazis could have taken, as is alleged in the above article, since we had taken what I believe was the correct decision that the Carnival should go on. The increased sophistication, manpower and resources of the Police since Lewisham would have ensured this—as the experience of Hyde, Ilford show.

*Second the direction of the ANL.* It is also argued that the platform of the ANL should be narrowed by the adoption of the no immigration controls position. The SWP attitude is clear: we fight to persuade ANL activists to the no immigration controls position without making it a condition of participation in the ANL and thereby giving the Labour Party, CP supporters the excuse to jump off. But the desire to 'harden' up the programme of the ANL is also an easy cop-out.

The real weakness of the ANL is its lack of workplace and rank and file trade union work. As a result of the successful carnivals, there is a very real danger of complacency and our comrades are not facing up to the widespread passive (and often not so passive) racialism on the shop floor. With the possibility of a General Election in early April, and the Nazis having already elected 300 candidates, we have to be in the forefront intaking the ANL into the workplace. That means seriously implementing the suggestions coming out of the ANL TU Conference—1. getting ANL activity off the ground in every workplace where our comrades are—selling badges, leaflets holding meetings etc.

2. Sending speakers around TU bodies, shop stewards committees etc. to get sponsorship.
3. Campaigning for Trade Unionists to buy a page in the local newspapers against the Nazis and their racist ideas.
4. Setting up a joint campaign committee on industrial estates.
5. Organising support for the special ANL conferences being held for miners, engineers, print and media workers, civil servants etc.

A serious attempt to implement this perspective is the SWP politics being demonstrated in practice—rank and file orientation, no reliance on officials, self activity etc. This is how our reputation and influence is built inside the ANL. Such a perspective is also of great benefit to us as a party, serving to substantially widen our industrial periphery and fits in very closely with the organisations proposals coming out of the December NAC. We have already begun to derive important results from the ANL in terms of some recruitment, and important developments around 'Rebel' and rather more intangible, but no less important, general influence and standing.

The danger we face is not the programme of the ANL, but our failure through impatience and shortsightedness to seize the real opportunities that the ANL has opened up for us and undoubtedly exist if we do the consistent work.

The above article needs a reply both to set the record straight and more importantly to deal with the direction of the ANL.

First, the facts about Carnival 2. It was both the ANL AND SWP's intention to have both an adequate number of people (several thousand) in Brick Lane, and to ensure that the Nazis would not succeed in their declared objective of disrupting the Carnival. Hence the slogan 'defend Brick Lane, the Carnival

## ANL—A BALANCE SHEET Central Committee

SWP Internal  
Bulletin  
Pre Party Council  
No 2 May 1979

Now that the General Election is over, it is appropriate to carefully consider the whole experience of the Anti Nazi League. Such consideration is also necessary for our organisation in the light of the Tory election victory and how the SWP relates to the probable resurgence of the labour left—chiefly through the operation of the United Front. Finally we also need to consider where the League goes to from now.

### What the Anti Nazi League has done.

An essential component to the discussion is to briefly document what the ANL has actually been directly responsible for organising. Because the pace has been so hectic it is easy to forget that in fact the League has only been in existence for some nineteen months. Over that period of time we organised the protest against the whitewash of the Waffen SS, Judge McKinnon's remarks about 'one - down - a million to go' Kingsley Read, Carnival 1, Carnival 2, and the 30,000 strong 'Carnival' in Manchester. At a different level over 9 million leaflets have been distributed in factories, schools, colleges, housing estates, among gay people, and nearly ¼ million badges have been sold. A reasonably accurate estimate is that between Carnival 1 and Carnival 2 something like 400,000 people had been involved in some form of anti-racist anti-Nazi activity.

A direct result of this activity on a scale unprecedented since at least CND was to inflict a deeply humiliating defeat on the Nazis. On the basis of their influence both in May 1976 GLC elections where they polled 119,000, the Nazis cockily announced their decision to stand 300 candidates in the General Election with a view to becoming Britain's fourth political party and even made out that they were in the same League as the Liberals. All commentators agree that those confident predictions made just under two years ago now lie in ruins. Their 303 candidates received a total of only 191,706 votes an average of 1.3 per cent of votes cast in the constituencies where they stood. Nowhere did its support increase relative to the General Election 1974. In Greater London for example probably their most promising and well organised area NF candidates polled only 2 per cent of votes compared with 4 per cent in October 1974.

But necessary as the figures and statistics are to an informed discussion of the ANL, they do not tell the whole story. Throughout its existence the League has been viewed by sections of the SWP with a varying mixture

of elation, and apprehension, pride and reticence, nervous confidence and worried doubt, summed up in the saying: 'every success has a thousand fathers, every failure is a bastard! To draw up an accurate balance sheet of the ANL we have to look at its politics and the united front in operation.

### The politics of the ANL—the united front

The concept of the ANL grew directly out of the experience of Lewisham. There was a significant number of people around who would not join the SWP but who were willing to become involved in the fight against the Nazis. Subsequent events showed just how wide that milieu was.

It was clear however that the SWP could not on its own, harness that willingness. An organisation involving forces wider than the SWP was clearly needed—hence the ANL.

It is also important to remember that as a small organisation the practical experience of the SWP in operating a major united front initiative was very limited indeed.

At nearly every point we had to feel our way on what for us was completely new terrain. Problems which loomed large at the beginning receded in importance only to be replaced by unexpected and unpredictable ones. There was however an overriding principle which determined our approach. From the outset, the ANL ran on the principle 'unity in action' not the passive soggy unity of the lowest common denominator. We made it clear that the ANL was a united front of both reformists and revolutionaries, and adopted a relationship with the reformists of both working with them and against them. Thus for example the SWP involvement was never disguised in any way. (This was important for the relative failure of the subsequent witchhunts in the press). This approach of unity in action also meant that the ANL was not an exclusive organisation—it tried to scoop up anybody who was against the Nazis and encouraged activity at all levels from leaflets to counter demonstrations. This had two results. *Firstly*, a large and credible movement could be built quickly which firmly labelled the NF as Nazis. Before the ANL, we were in a small minority in calling them Nazis. Now even Callaghan is obliged to take up the tag. This very quickly threw the Nazis on to the defensive and it became increasingly difficult for them to pose as a respectable political party—a central plank of their strategy. The atmosphere became less favourable in which they could make headway. The emphasis on activity against the Nazis in a number of quite imaginative ways, —kids, football terraces, pull the plugs etc finally hit on the head the other argument prevalent at the time: that ignoring the Nazis was the best way of dealing with them.

*Secondly* the very success of establishing the ANL as a broad and active organisation meant that we in the SWP HAD A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE FOR OUR POLICY OF PHYSICALLY CONFRONTING THE Nazis whenever possible. It meant that we were no longer in relative isolation but leading a much wider body of people to see the necessity of such an approach. It also meant that our argument that the Nazis were the perpetrators of violence was much more

widely accepted even in sections of the liberal and bourgeois press and media. The glib equation between hooligans of the right and hooligans of the left is much less frequently made. The contrast in the treatment by the media of Lewisham on the one hand and Leicester/Southall on the other is striking.

There were a number of other important consequences for the SWP.

1. For the first time for many years we have small but significant following among kids. 'Rebel' has been established, and although much remains to be done, a positive step forward as far as youth is concerned has been taken.

2. The taboo within the labour movement surrounding the SWP has been much reduced. Although we need to be modest and realistic about our influence, no longer can our political opponents pass us off as an irrelevance. We have proved that we can successfully lead a mass movement many times our actual size.

3. The fact that the CP came in late on the scene, and even when they were in, could not impose their normal deadening influence under the guise of a passive call to unity, has produced further tension, confusion and demoralisation within their own ranks. This will make it easier for us to put further pressure on them on other issues, particularly in industry.

4. The experience of the ANL helped to counter a trend within the SWP which was particularly prevalent after Lewisham, but had had a currency before. This was the belief that we were solely for military style physical confrontation with the Nazis separate from the commitment to campaign and propagandise on the widest scale possible to build a mass anti-fascist movement. The experience of the ANL demonstrates the obvious point that the two things go absolutely hand in hand. It is also the case that other less happy and more frustrating experiences with the ANL (Ilford, Winchester, and before the ANL was formed, in Walsall and Hyde) demonstrated equally convincingly that whereas we in the SWP as a matter of principle are for knocking the Nazis off the streets, the relation of forces and the circumstances on the ground often mean that this will not be possible. The police have learnt a lot from Lewisham. It did not help them at Leicester but it has done so on a number of other occasions.

5. On the debit side, the most striking thing is our failure to substantially increase the sales and circulation of SW as a result of our activity within the ANL. (There is increasing evidence that there has been some modest but significant recruitment out of the ANL, and a process which could accelerate for a few weeks in the aftermath of a Tory election victory.) The reason for the failure to substantially increase the single and most tangible and important barometer of our political periphery is clear. The combination of the low level of industrial struggle under Phase I, II and III—3 years hard slog, and I believe more importantly the triumphalism of the SWP after Lewisham had left the SWP very isolated indeed from the movement. The habits of 'working with' and against the reformists no longer exist inside the party. Much more common was

the take it or leave it attitude of 'if you don't agree completely with us, you are against us.' With such an atmosphere inside the party, the careful methodical approach of painstakingly building up through the regular sales of SW a network of people interested in our ideas fell by the wayside. Thus for most of 1978 SW was frequently not sold at ANL meetings, and few attempts were made to build up industrial contacts out of the ANL work and so on. If one of the lasting benefits of the ANL is to reestablish that central method of work within the SWP, it will be a major achievement. Failure to do so will seriously hamper our ability to relate to the possibilities before us in the wake of the Troy election victory and the likely resurgence of the Labour left.

#### **The ANL and the future:**

It is impossible to predict exactly what is going to happen to the Nazis. It does however seem reasonable to expect them in the short term at least to go into decline. We therefore need to argue within the local ANL and at the forthcoming ANL national conference that the organisation and structure of the ANL should be at the level which reflects the needs of the time. If in the summer a racist hysteria sweeps the country the ANL should respond at a high level in terms of resources energy and time. If as seems more likely, the activities of the Nazis are sporadic and intermittent, then the ANL nationally and locally should respond accordingly. It means that the ANL will not continue at the same level of activity as before the General Election. But for example there will continue to be opportunities at a local level—particularly in the factories, trade union and schools—for further anti-racist, anti-Nazi activity.

We should firmly reject any suggestion of winding the ANL up. Although we have been reasonably successful in checking the Nazis this time, the economic and social conditions in which they could flourish still exist and indeed will get worse. The ANL therefore has to aim to maintain its structure intact and be in a position to respond should the need arise.

We also need to preserve the main orientation of the ANL—namely the fight against the Nazis. Precisely because there is a distinct possibility of the Nazis rising again, we cannot 'narrow' the platform of the ANL—e.g. by making 'no immigration controls' a condition of membership of the ANL.

At the same time, we as the SWP must continue to argue for our positions within the ANL—no immigration controls, black self-defence groups etc.

Over the next few years we can expect the Tories to turn the racist screw. While we should be cautious about committing ourselves in advance to precisely what is going to happen, we should recognise the impetus and audience the ANL has created for wider anti-racist propaganda and activities. This means that at local level a real attempt needs to be made to draw the ANL branch and its periphery into wider activity.

Nationally the ANL should attempt to react when the Tories make their plans known—for example on the new Nationality Act, further immigration controls etc. If

there are racist murders this summer, or a dramatic increase in intimidation and harassment, then naturally the ANL must mobilise on the widest possible scale.

In the meantime the national ANL must organise the Southall Defence Fund, the campaign around Blair Peach's murder and for the disbanding of the SPG.

## **WORKPLACE BULLETINS—NOW'S THE TIME TO START IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY**

**Lesley Klein  
Sheffield District Organiser**

The SWP's resolve to produce workplace bulletins must now be strengthened with a vengeance if we are to find a place in the fight back against the Tories, whether it begins this year or in two years time, it will be from the shop floor that we will recruit in this fightback, and our task is facilitated by the existence of bulletins. That was the experience of 72/74, where we maintained a consistent orientation we were able to recruit heavily in the factories.

In Sheffield last year the District Committee discussed our industrial perspective and committed itself to longterm building in the workplace, involving sales of the paper at factory gates and more importantly redoubling the effort to produce and maintain bulletins. The argument was an easy one to win in an industrial city like Sheffield, and it was meant that the work of the district has been directed towards this, possibly, but intentionally at the expense of other areas of work. It was agreed that as the District Organiser the bulk of my work would be around the few industrial comrades we had.

Producing a monthly bulletin is not easy as it requires commitment and attention. Often the comrades in the workplace are reticent to be put on the spot in this way. It means that usually someone from outside the workplace has to be responsible for getting to know the particular industry, the unions involved, the union branches, officials and so on.

From our experience we have found that when dealing with a workplace, the SWP bulletin is far preferable to the rank and file bulletin. Every time a new bulletin is discussed the same argument comes up—'no one will read SWP stuff, there's only a couple of people who read the paper, the CP/other lefties won't touch it, and I really need their support at work, people will more easily identify with a rank and file bulletin'. The rank and file bulletin is the soft option. Our members inside are not put on the spot about their politics in general, just their attitude to

the unions. At one factory in Sheffield our comrade didn't want to upset the Shop Stewards committee and CP members, and so produced a R&F bulletin. He was forced to print the most appalling pro-Russian article and the bulletin had no cohesion, no general direction and no real point.

The SWP bulletin is more honest in cases like this. That's not to say that the R&F bulletin has no place—in fact one of our most successful local bulletins was an industry wide R&F bulletin—the Sheffield Engineer—because it is financed by local shop-stewards committees and with the strength of the CP in Sheffield we would not have got a look in with an SWP bulletin.

But we are convinced that for long term work in specific workplaces, or in an industry like steel where the CP does not dominate, the SWP bulletin is preferable because we are producing it with long term party building in mind. A comrade at work who has a regular bulletin coming out may not be popular with everyone but he/she will find that it pays off. The chances of recruitment are better, there is a base there if a dispute blows up and with a bulletin we are in a far better position to intervene. There is a permanent SWP political presence which does not rely solely on the one comrade or comrades inside to carry all the arguments, it can create arguments for the comrades to pick up on.

The long term work with bulletins does pay off, the best example in Sheffield being the Real Steel News SWP bulletin which now has a good deal of credibility. This was a more complicated operation than normal aimed to cover a number of workplaces rather than one. But after more than a year not only does the bulletin have some effect but it was possible to organise a substantial number of well attended meetings, some organised by Shop Stewards Committees with a French steel worker who visited Sheffield.

The best bulletins involve non SWP members in writing and distribution as well as collecting money towards the cost. This takes time and so for the first few issues you should expect to write the whole thing and fork out the money for it. But sooner or later if you keep your ear to the ground you will include something that appeals to someone and they can be approached for assistance. Mistakes are often made—wrong information, too much emphasis on attacking shop stewards instead of management—but with thought most can be avoided.

The key to production of bulletins though is the long term commitment by a branch or district to continually monitor the work and provide the back up. Without help in writing, production, layout, printing, distribution, SW sales and morale boosting no bulletin will get off the ground. If in the discussion comrades will be having now about the fightback against the Tories and where our priorities should lie, a commitment is made to produce a certain number of regular bulletins, then after a period of time we will be in a far better position of being rooted in local industry and a number of workplaces.



At the time of writing the only unions to come out with a detailed programme against the cuts have been NUPE and TGWU. The suggestions for blacking, non-co-operation, token strikes etc. are ones we would enthusiastically support. The really telling tactics—occupations, work-ins, link-ups with other unions and with the private sector are of course, absent. Nevertheless, the officials have stated that *any* action against the cuts will be backed.

The other unions have had a variety of responses. NALGO has said next to nothing. The NUT has an 'Action Committee' which will back certain actions when requested by the associations, but does not campaign nationally. The GMWU have been almost silent, and the UCATT line on the attack on Direct Works has been feeble.

But we *can* expect things to change in all the public sector unions. As the pressure grows there will be some campaigning in the individual unions, with token strikes, days of action, demonstrations. And there is every possibility of widescale national mobilisations across the unions, with perhaps a repetition of the huge November 1976 London demonstration.

We shall back each and every official call. Indeed whenever the union leaderships announce anti-cuts policy we should be looking for ways of raising it in workplace and branch meetings, and getting it acted on. But at the same time we need to be setting the pace with our own policies, and keeping the most intense pressure on the officials.

In general opportunities for us are likely to be considerable.

For us fighting the cuts is part of our general anti-Tory work. It is not the preserve of just our members who are directly affected by the cuts, but must be the concern of all our districts and branches.

Seventy per cent of our intervention will have to be done by comrades not involved in a particular workplace or union affected by the cuts. This is not just because our base is small but because we are much more effective when our activity is a combination of comrades intervening from a particular rank and file group/fraction, and comrades working from the outside. (Pickets of AHA's and work around fortnightly signing on are two examples.)

At the same time we have to make sure that work does go on from the 'inside'. Each rank and file group and caucus needs to use every opportunity to draw militants into activity and towards the ideas of militant rank and file.

The problem for us is that despite considerable opposition to the Tories and the cuts, it is still very unclear as to how much real action will take place and over what time-scale. In general therefore our aim is to use the more favourable political climate to maximise our propaganda impact and to where-ever possible organise activity drawing in the maximum non-party members.

1. We should organise a series of local public meetings against the cuts. These should be called under the widest possible rank and file umbrella, together with local R&F groups and wherever possible TU bodies. In many cases the Right To Work Campaign provides the best formula as it is known in the movement, allows us the

maximum flexibility, and most importantly makes clear the political connection between the Cuts and unemployment.

We must also use the network built up for the Defend Our Unions conference, especially where the issue of picketing or TU rights is involved, eg Wandsworth, Croydon.

It should be possible for us to pull credible non-party local speakers, from a variety of industries, Firemen, Hospital workers etc. which will not only give us the opportunity to go round the firestation, hospitals etc getting support for the meeting, but also attract large audiences.

2. We should use the same formula for calling local activity. We should organise as many pickets and occupations of AHA's as possible, arguing for following Lambeth. We should picket and occupy Tory or Labour Council binges. We should picket Councils who are closing Direct Works Depts and so on. These should not be seen as stunts but public activity which we get as many involved in as possible.

Of course action may well start independently of us, in which case we must respond quickly with solidarity pickets etc.

3. We must plan campaigns inside each particular union, to fit the situation. e.g. NUT rank and file campaigning for one day no cover, half day strikes, meetings of teachers, parents and kids whatever fits the situation in each union and locality.

In some areas it may be possible to organise activity between several unions, eg the half day strike in Hackney. But this will depend very much on the local situation:

Rank and File papers, particularly those in industries affected by the cuts will obviously give good coverage, and where possible provide the most up to date report on any action taking place.

4. We should work in local Cuts Committees. In most cases these are fairly loose committees which draw together the left with the lower strata of the local TU bureaucracy. We should differentiate ourselves by pushing for as much action as possible. In particular local demos are receiving very big support, and can really help in boosting morale that it is possible to fight the cuts.

5. Our general propaganda against the cuts should be in SW. We will need regular coverage from all areas and unions, reporting everything that is going on, and providing the arguments that counter the right wing and the reformists.

More detailed articles should appear in Socialist Review and/or R&F papers.

6. Because of the gap between the verbal opposition and the active opposition to the cuts, we should produce a cheap, short SW agitational pamphlet.

Apart from the case against the cuts and for the alternative, the pamphlet should concentrate on as many examples as possible of how to fight the cuts. It doesn't matter how small the example eg, notices on typewriters saying this work is blacked, the point is to spread and encourage the little bits of activity that are taking place.

## RACE WORK AND BUILDING IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY Central Committee

The Socialist Workers Party has, thanks to its role in the Anti Nazi League and its opposition to immigration controls, the reputation of being the fighters against racialism. The Labour Party is hopelessly compromised by its active involvement in implementing racist measures while in government, and even the Communist Party supports 'democratic', 'non-racist' immigration controls.

Nevertheless, our reputation as the most consistent and active anti-racists has *not* been translated into large-scale recruitment of blacks into the SWP. We remain predominately a white party. In a country where there are 2½ million blacks, forming the most oppressed section of the working class, this is a very serious handicap.

Therefore we distinguish between 'race work' and 'black work'. Race work is our general anti-racist activity—for example, the campaign we mounted in 1976 against the tide of racist, anti-immigrant hysteria that swept the country. Race work is aimed primarily at white workers, at breaking down the ingrained racist prejudices produced by four centuries of British imperialism.

Black work is our intervention in the black community. Its aim is to win to our party black people who know all too well about racism, but who need to be convinced that the way to fight it is a united working-class struggle against capitalism.

Obviously the two forms of activity are connected. Our anti-racist campaigning and role in fighting the Nazis gives us an opening into the black community. But experience has taught us that it is very difficult to recruit and hold Asians and Afro-Caribbeans. There is no reason why black people's suspicions of white organisations and specific cultural traditions should dissolve overnight.

At the same time, it is clear that under the Thatcher government we can expect a number of important opportunities for developing both our race work and our black work. The Tories are drawing up new measures to restrict immigration: 'The new measures in preparation include a total refusal of entry to male spouses, a more severe restriction on work permits, a further limit on entry of parents, grandparents and children over 18 and an end to allowing permanent settlement to those who have worked in Britain for four years or more. The government is also committed to preparing a register of immigrants' dependents—an operation of great complexity involving vetting in countries of origin' (*Economist* 18 August 1979).

The government is also pressing ahead with plans for a new Nationality Act, which may well deprive many black people of their right to live in Britain.

The recession which forecasters now unanimously predict for next year will push unemployment close to the two million mark. Black people will, as usual, suffer especially from the rise in unemployment, while the Nazis and other racists will step up their propaganda, demanding jobs and houses for 'Britons' not blacks.

We will need to increase our anti-racist activity over the next year. The precise form that this activity will take will depend on the timing and nature of the Tory attacks. Clearly, the links that the ANL has been able to develop especially with a number of Asian organisations (eg the representation of IWAs on the ANL steering committee) provides us with greater openings for united-front activity against immigration controls. At the same time, we should continue our own independent anti-racist propaganda. We should produce a new edition of *The Case against Immigration Controls*, which is rapidly becoming out of date.

A much more serious problem, however, is the question of what form our black work should take. A number of leading black comrades, most notably Kim Gordon and Tony Bogue (now in the American ISO), have over the last 18 months developed a perspective centred on the idea that we must build *Flame* as 'an independent revolutionary organisation of blacks'. A resolution was passed at the last SWP conference endorsing the call to build the 'Flame Organisation', although this resolution did not go as far as the supporters of 'independence' now claim.

This perspective has been put to the test over the last year and, we believe, found wanting. The notion of 'an independent revolutionary organisation of blacks' is both theoretically confused and in practice an *obstacle* to building in the black community. It must be rejected if we are to develop our black work in the right direction. Since a considerable number of our best black comrades support this perspective quite a lot of this document is taken up with showing why we believe they are wrong.

### Why 'Independence' is Politically Wrong

Independence is defended by its supporters at two levels. First, in terms of a theoretical analysis of the position of blacks within British (and American) society, and second, at a practical level through the claim that we cannot recruit and hold blacks except through an 'Independent revolutionary organisation of blacks'.

The theory of 'independence' involves the following claims:

1. 'Present-day racial oppression and the historical relationship of Europe to Africa and Asia mean that blacks in Britain are a national racial minority' (*Black Nationalism and Socialism* p 60).
2. Black nationalism is, therefore, a progressive force since it represents blacks fighting their oppression.
3. More than that, because of their oppression blacks are the most revolutionary section of the working class: 'their ideological allegiance to capitalism is probably lower than any other section of the working class' (Kim Gordon, *IB* May 1979 P24). Indeed, blacks are 'The section

of the British working class that today feels no compunction at occasionally taking semi-insurrectionary action' eg Lewisham, Ladywood (Kim Gordon, *IB* May 1978 p17).

4. The motor force of these 'semi-insurrectionary actions' is opposition to racial oppression. Black members of the SWP therefore need to develop *Flame* into the 'independent movement of an oppressed people', 'independent of the state as well as white organisations'.
5. What is the relationship of this 'movement' to the revolutionary party? Well, since the SWP is a 'white organisation' *Flame* must be independent of it. However, 'since racial oppression is integral to western capitalism, a fight to the finish against racial oppression is also a fight against capitalism. This is the connection between socialism and the black fight against oppression. It is also the connection to the revolutionary party' (*Black Nationalism and Socialism* p61).
6. However, 'the programme and basis (of *Flame*) is *not* that you must be a revolutionary socialist accepting all the ideas of class struggle, socialism, anti-sexism etc but that you have to want to fight racial oppression "by any means necessary"' (Kim Gordon *IB* May 1979 p24).

The first three points are true, although overstated. Blacks as a group are racially oppressed—they tend to get the worst jobs, to be liable to police harassment, to be used as scapegoats in times of crisis. Their consciousness will therefore differ from that of white workers and their commitment to the system is likely to be less (whether they are therefore a national minority is an academic question). The alienation of young blacks from white society means that they are more willing to take on the forces of the state than white workers. Black nationalism, because it shows that black people are standing up and fighting their oppression, is a step forward.

However, there is a difference between supporting black nationalism as one sign that blacks are fighting back and ourselves building a black nationalist organisation.

The supporters of 'independence' tend to see blacks as a social force separate from the working class which must be won over to its side. The mechanism for doing so is *Flame*, which, although it has a black nationalist programme, is led by revolutionaries.

Therefore Kim and Tony argue that the relationship between *Flame* and the SWP is that of separate but equal allies in struggle. The SWP's job is the class struggle, *Flame*'s the racial struggle.

The comrades involved in building *Flame* are clearly a bit unhappy about such a stark separation. So they talk about 'an independent Revolutionary organisation of blacks'. The contradiction involved in this idea is brought out very well by the advert at the end of the *Flame* pamphlet *Black Nationalism and Socialism*: 'We are an organisation of black socialist revolutionaries fighting for the total liberation of our race...'

But how can socialist revolutionaries, whatever their colour, fight simply for the liberation of one race? Socialism is the self-emancipation of the working class as a whole, irrespective of race, sex, colour or national origin. There is a contradiction inherent in the idea of a 'revolutionary' organisation whose programme is not as Kim Gordon puts it, 'revolutionary socialist accepting all the ideas of class struggle, socialism, anti-sexism etc'.

If *Flame*'s programme is not revolutionary, if it is based on a limited platform of partial demands relating to the struggle against racial oppression (black self-defence, no immigration controls, etc) then it is a black *reformist* organisation. The relationship of *Flame* to the SWP would simply be that black members of the SWP would fight within it for hegemony as one political tendency among others. We might decide to build such an organisation on tactical grounds, but it would not be a revolutionary organisation.

The whole 'independence' perspective is based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between exploitation and oppression. Sometimes their oppression leads a particular group of workers to move into action more quickly than the rest of the class. Thus in France in 1968 it was the young workers, closer to the students in their attitudes and grievances, who pushed the class as a whole into action.

The attitude of revolutionary socialists to such groups is clear-cut. We support their struggles and attempt to give a lead in them. However, we also have to warn against the dangers of isolation, to argue that the only force that is capable of carrying the fight through to the finish is the working class *as a whole*.

In the late 1960s the idea was current among radicals in the US that the white working class has been bought off by capitalism and that the only revolutionary forces were blacks, students, etc. At the time there seemed to be a lot going for this analysis. The great ghetto uprisings—Harlem, Watts, Newark, Detroit, Washington—shook American capitalism. However, the black nationalist organisations which emerged out of these uprisings, most notably the Black Panthers, had their main base among the unemployed youth of the ghettos. They were, therefore, very vulnerable to the state repression which ultimately crushed them.

What is missing from the 'independence' perspective is *the working class*. The link between socialism and fighting racial oppression is seen as being simply the fact that racism is a product of capitalism. The real link is the fact that it is the working class, black and white, male and female, which is the only force capable of destroying capitalism and all the different forms of oppression bound up with it.

Of course, in theory the comrades in *Flame* accept this. The trouble is that they want to have their cake and eat it. They want to build a black nationalist organisation *and* to link it to the SWP. Hence the confused notion of an 'independent revolutionary organisation'. The result can only be federalism—since the party is linked to an



organisation which operates on a different political basis and which it does not control. Formally, we have a united multi-racial party; in reality, black work has been hived off to an 'independent revolutionary organisation' outside our control.

Politically this is an unacceptable situation. We are a revolutionary socialist party committed to the seizure of power by the international working class. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, we 'have no interests separate and part from those of the proletariat as a whole'. To justify 'independence' on the grounds that the SWP is a 'white organisation' is simply to make a concession to those nationalists within the black community who reject the idea of a united multiracial revolutionary party and of a united class struggle.

Flame can be a broad organisation based upon a limited programme of partial demands or it can be the black periphery organisation of the SWP, sharing the same programme as the SWP. It cannot be both. To attempt to build an 'independent revolution organisation of blacks' can only serve to transform the party from a centralised combat organisation of the whole class, male and female, black and white, into a federation of interest group.

### Why 'Independence' is an Obstacle to Building

The defence offered by supporters of the 'independence' perspective will be that it offers the most effective means for building a multi-racial party. They argue that it is impossible to recruit and integrate blacks into a predominantly white organisation:

'The individual black revolutionary whose day-to-day political and social life is increasingly alongside whites only (in the 98 per cent SWP for example) becomes increasingly isolated from his/her black periphery, friends, etc' (Kim Gordon, IB May 1979 p23).

More crudely, black SWP members, if they remain members for any length of time, turn white.

The only way to combat this is to force them to relate to the black community through Flame, an organisation of blacks which fights exclusively around racial oppression.

The trouble is that there is very little evidence that this claim is true. The record of Flame groups is one of extreme instability. A document presented to the Central Committee by Tony Bogue in December 1977 listed the following functioning groups: Coventry, Birmingham, SE London, SW London, and Leeds. There were also two 'non-functioning' groups, in N London and Inner East London.

In May 1978 Kim Gordon gave a different list:

'We are talking of building in the next period upon the small number of black SWP members in the following areas: Sheffield, High Wycombe, Finchley and Barnet, Harlesden, Lewisham and Manchester. We are also talking about creating Flame groups in the above areas on a par with the four viable Flame groups we now have (Hornsey, Brixton, Birmingham and Leeds)' (IB May 1978 p18).

A year later Kim wrote:

'At the present moment we have viable groups in Brixton, Hackney and Birmingham...There are three members in North London who sell *Flame* but do not meet regularly as a group' (IB May 1979 p24).

So not only do the areas where Flame groups exist change, but there has been a steady decline in the number of claimed Flame groups. All this despite the adoption of the 'independence' perspective.

Nor does it seem to be impossible to recruit and hold blacks except through Flame. To take two examples: in North-West London and Bolton, where the local black comrades have opposed the 'independence' perspective, we have been able to recruit, and to integrate into the full range of SWP activities, significant numbers of blacks—13 in NW London, 6 or 7 in Bolton. Moreover in Bolton a number of young Asians identify themselves politically with the SWP.

Perhaps the failure of Flame to grow is a result of what Kim Gordon calls the Central Committee's 'abstentionism' on the 'independence' perspective:

'It is an unfortunate fact but many leading members (including the comrade responsible for race work) of that committee, admit to grave disagreements to conference policy' (IB May 1979 p24).

In fact Conference policy was much more blurred and ambiguous than Kim would like. In any case a majority of the central committee do disagree with the interpretation of this policy given by Kim, especially the notion of an 'independent revolutionary organisation of blacks'. We would have been irresponsible if we had not made our disagreement clear to Kim and attempted to dissuade him.

Having failed in this attempt, far from 'abstaining', we have continued to provide Flame with the resources necessary for it to operate as an 'independent' organisation, reserving our disagreements for the pre-conference period. Flame has failed, not because our 'unhelpful' attitude, but because the 'independence' perspective was *wrong*.

One of the most serious consequences of the Flame perspective is the divisions it has sown among our black members. Probably a majority of them are not involved in nationally co-ordinated black work because they disagree with it or find it irrelevant to their needs.

Moreover, Flame itself, far from encouraging blacks to join the SWP, in some cases serves as a haven for black nationalist elements hostile to the SWP.

'At a recent national Flame meeting one of the leading members of the Birmingham Flame group (ex-member of the SWP) made it clear that in many ways the group was a serious barrier between the SWP and the black community. Among other things, he asked us 'what are you first, black or in the SWP?' and also managed to say 'if you're in the SWP then you're not really black'. (Mort Mascarenhas, Bruce George IB May 1979 p 25).

Unfortunately, those involved in the central direction of Flame give some backing to these elements. Thus Kim Gordon writes of 'the problem of building in the shadow of a much bigger organisation', as if the link to

the SWP were somehow an impediment to building Flame (ibid p 23, emphasis added).

This is the logic of building an 'independent revolutionary organisation of blacks'. Because it has to be independent of the party the emphasis is constantly on the differences between Flame and the party, what divides rather than what unites black and white workers.

This is reflected in *Flame* as a paper. To all intents and purposes it is a black nationalist paper. There is very little about even black workers: it concerns itself almost exclusively with the community. *The series on the history of black nationalism (now reprinted in pamphlet form) contains hardly any criticism of the politics of black nationalism.*

Of course, we are not arguing that we should ignore or abstain from struggles in the black community. But a black revolutionary paper should be constantly drawing the link between the struggle against exploitation and the struggle against oppression, stressing the central role of the working class, covering black workers' struggles, discussing the problems faced by blacks on the shop floor, drawing out the need for black and white class unity, etc.

Again, it is absolutely right to carry articles on the history of black people's struggles for their liberation and thus establish a continuity between the past and what we are trying to do today. But this should not be done at the price of a compromise with the petty-bourgeois politics of the black nationalists. Thus CLR James, whose ideas were quite sympathetic to the 'independence' perspective, wrote in 1944 that 'the party wages a merciless war against the Negro nationalist movements such as the Garveyites' (Black Nationalism and Socialism p46).

One of *Flame's* tasks should be to fight for marxist ideas within the black community. If anywhere it is in *Socialist Worker*, addressed mainly to white workers often with racist prejudices, that we should be stressing the progressive nature of black nationalism. Too often in *Flame* what we find is not ideological war with black nationalism but unconditional surrender.

No wonder that Kim Gordon notes a decline in the involvement of white members in black work over the last year. He admits that the 'independence' perspective 'let many white members off the hook' (IB May 1979 p24). How could it do otherwise when we were told that even black members would lose their connection with the community if they became integrated into the SWP. How can whites build an 'independent revolutionary organisation of blacks'?

### Where to Go from Here

It should be clear from the above that the 'independence' perspective must be rejected on both practical and theoretical grounds.

What do we set in its place? Do we, for example, attempt to build a black organisation on the basis of the limited platform of struggle demands discussed above—a sort of black ANL? Such a perspective would depend on two factors: (1) our expectation that mass black movements against the state were likely in the near future; (2) our ability to intervene in these movements. Neither of these two conditions are met.

One of the difficulties with the 'independence' perspective is that it is based on exaggerated expectations of how black struggles are likely to develop. Hence the talk of building Flame not even as a small organisation but as a 'movement', as if we could jump from a handful of black members to a mass movement in one leap. There have been major confrontations between blacks and the police over the past few years but these conflicts have been sporadic and have not led to the emergence of any organisations of a significant size, even on a nationalist and/or reformist programme. While the changes in the objective situation discussed at the beginning may mean bigger confrontations in the future we are unlikely to see the rapid development of black urban revolts like those in the US in the 1960s.

Even if a mass movement did emerge, we are in no position to respond to it. If anything our black work is more patchy and uneven than it was a year ago: there are those areas implementing the 'independence' perspective; those doing black work on the basis of direct recruitment to the SWP, bypassing Flame; those doing no black work (almost certainly the majority). Our most basic problem is to create the black revolutionary cadre essential to our intervention in the black community.

At the present stage in our development, our aim must be to recruit blacks directly to the SWP. Only if black revolutionaries feel themselves part of a larger organisation which supports them can they develop the confidence necessary to build. The alternative, 'independence', means isolation and demoralisation (hence the general instability of the Flame groups), or, as seems to have happened in the case of Birmingham Flame, adaptation to the political currents within the black community.

Kim Gordon is quite right, however, to point out the danger that if we concentrate on recruiting directly to the party, then the black members may cease to be part of their community. There is no easy way of overcoming this problem except through consistent encouragement by the central and district leaderships to direct black members back into their communities.

The following points seek to summarise the CC proposals for black work:

1. The perspective of building Flame as an 'independent revolutionary organisation of blacks' should be abandoned. Instead we should concentrate on recruiting directly to the party.
2. Flame should be retained as the SWP's paper for black workers. Its content should be drastically altered: as well as dealing with black history and culture and struggles in the black community, it should aim to put over the case for socialist politics and deal with the problems of black workers on the shop-floor.
3. *Socialist Worker's* coverage of black struggles and black history should be improved.
4. Where comrades believe that the conditions are appropriate, Flame groups may be built in particular localities. However, this should be on the clear

political basis that these groups organise the black periphery of the SWP.

5. In general, black work must be recognised as a priority for *all* members. We have a handful of black members; if we rely on them to do all the black work we cannot hope to build a multiracial party. Every branch and district should discuss their intervention in the black community regularly and assign comrades, white as well as black, with responsibility for the work. Selling *Flame* is the job of white and black members alike.

## TRAINING REPORT

### Chris Harman

People come to revolutionary socialism for many different reasons, with all sorts of different ideas which bourgeois society has instilled into them. The purpose of party training is to challenge these old ideas, so as to create within the organisation a cadre of Marxists, who both understand the revolutionary Marxist tradition and are capable of applying it creatively in the day to day ups and downs of the class struggle.

Comrades join us, for example, because they agree with our aggressive attitude towards the Nazis. But they are not going to stick with us and be any use in taking our ideas into the class unless they very rapidly learn how to put across the most basic ideas against immigration controls, how to deal with the argument over import controls, how to respond to racist jokes, what to say if an IRA bomb goes off in a London store, how to reply when someone says, 'go back to Russia' etc. Comrades also need to acquire certain practical skills: to gain the confidence to approach picket lines, to learn how to write and run off leaflets, how to speak in public.

But these basic arguments and skills are not in themselves sufficient if you are going to sustain yourself in revolutionary activity for more than a few months and to be capable of arguing against the various breeds of reformism you encounter within the organised Labour Movement. You need to move on, to acquire some broad understanding of the Marxist view of human history, at least an outline grasp of the workings of the capitalist economy and a fair amount of knowledge about the Labour Movement itself.

### The experience of the last year

Since I took charge of training last September, I have endeavoured to encourage branches and districts to organise schools to get these different sorts of arguments across. More than 70 schools have been held. They break down into four main types:

1. *Basic industrial day and half-day schools.* The aim of these has been to get across to new members the reasons why we put so much stress on intervening in the workplace and around strikes. A lot of stress in them has been on 'practical' sessions, in which the groups break down into small groups which discuss how they, as an SWP branch, should respond to, say, a certain strike, and in which they also have to formulate certain basic arguments (eg over wages and inflation, or over immigration controls).

The point is both to get ideas across to newer comrades *and* to begin to give them the confidence in arguing these ideas themselves. That is why having small groups is so important. In the past far too much 'education' in the party consisted of lectures which most people listened to passively. Lectures are important, but comrades have to be encouraged to articulate the ideas they've got from lectures themselves.

it is accepted, it is then the next logical step to blame the lack of growth of the organisation, in terms of numbers and paper sales etc. . . on the leadership, lack of resources and so on. It offers a scapegoat to the entire organisation, an argument which is not confined to industrial work, by the way.

To repeat, the argument is not about the *number* of struggles, but their *nature*. How successful they are. That depends not only on the political awareness of workers, or their ideological resistance to ruling class ideas, but also to their confidence and their ability to fight. None of these factors works in isolation from the other. In the last period they have combined in the form of a general series of defeats for the working class.

The comrades say that the incorporation of shop stewards is a sign of the strength of the movement. True—if it had been unsuccessful. But it was not. The employers won. Far from being 'ultra-left' to admit this, it is 'ultra-left' not to do so. For if we deny that any change has taken place, we will continue to expect mass pickets on the scale that we saw at Saltley, fights against closure on the scale of UCS, collections for strikers on the scale of Roberts-Arundel, fights against Tory union legislation on the scale of the Industrial Relations Act, and so on.

This takes us to the second point. All of us can look back to the 'good old days' of 1970-74 and remember the fantastic growth of the organisation, the number of factory branches, the increasing sales of the paper, the big public meetings. Was this because the leadership of the organisation then (which is much the same as it is now) was younger, more enthusiastic or blocked up to the eyes with stimulants? Or was it because the great struggles of the miners, the engineers, the dockers and the shipyard workers were winning *despite* the trade union leadership and the Government?

How is it that now the factory branches are fewer and smaller? The paper sales have declined; the districts are not intervening as well as they could. Is it because the leadership is old, tired and has stopped taking the tablets? Or is it because the working class has taken a hammering over the last five years and is in for an even bigger one to come unless the Tories are stopped?

Why is it that the Glasgow District Committee is almost entirely composed of members who joined the organisation between 1970 and 74? Were the CC particularly charming at that time? Or was it because of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, the fight against the Industrial Relations Act and the miners' strikes?

Why is it that the 'old' industrial leadership of the organisation has not been replaced by a new layer of industrial workers? Isn't it because in the last five years it has become much *harder* to sell the paper at work, much *harder* to hold members, much *harder* to recruit, much *harder* to get big public meetings, much *harder* to win a strike, or even have any hope of winning.

The defeats of the last few years have taken this toll on our organisation. Many of the older members *are* tired. We are smaller. The scale of the attacks upon the class are much greater. The demands on our organisation are higher. So resources of the organisation and individuals are stretched. It becomes much more difficult to attend

meetings all over the country, either inside the party or to build combine and rank and file units. We can't afford so many full-timers. The resources of the print shop are stretched to the limit. Local centres are a major financial burden. Thousands of bulletins become very expensive, so go by the wayside.

These are the realities of what has happened in the movement and the effect on our organisation. If the Glasgow comrades have a different experience—a growing membership, big public meetings, successful interventions around the shipyard closures and engineers strikes—let's hear how you did it. That's how Glasgow led the organisation for years. Or is Glasgow facing the same problems as the rest of us? Grunwicks defeated, the firemen sold out, the low paid betrayed, the miners divided, Deep Duffryn closed, Leyland demolished, the shipyards smashed, Fleet Street flattened, solidarity seldom, collections puny, pickets tiny, lock-outs back, by-offs normal, sell outs expected but not prevented.

The catalogue is endless. It grows every day. To admit it is not 'pessimism'. It is the truth. To deny it is flying in the face of reality.

## BLACK CAUCUS REPORT

The following are the amended versions of documents presented to the black Caucus of the SWP over the weekend September 8th/9th.

1. The SWP and Flame
2. Introduction to Asian work perspectives.
3. Introduction to Black workers perspectives
4. Workplace perspectives
5. Perspectives for Flame
6. Perspectives for Asian work.

(i) The Black Caucus rejected the general line of the CC document on Race Work. After reading out the document 18 were for rejection; 7 against and 4 abstained. Point 4 of the Central Committee document was subsequent to the Black Caucus meeting changed. The original point read 'The attempt to build geographical Flame groups should be abandoned. Where appropriate discussions groups for contacts and occasion all public meetings should be held under the Flame/SWP banner but the notion of a separate 'Flame Organisation' should be scrapped'. This was changed to read 'Where comrades believe that the conditions are appropriate, Flame groups may be built in particular localities. However, this should be on the clear political basis that these groups organise the black periphery of the SWP'.

(ii) A total of 35 black members of the SWP attended the Caucus meeting over the whole weekend.

(iii) The Black Caucus would like to present its perspectives at all pre-conference District Aggregates where Race Work is on the agenda or where it is not but where the district covers black communities or work places colleges with substantial black populations.

Please contact Race Work Dept. PO Box 82 London E2 for speakers or phone 986 5717.

Some of the background to the debate on the relationship between Black nationalism, socialism and the Party can be found in the new Pamphlet 'Black Nationalism and Socialism' 7 essays by Tony Bogue, Kim Gordon and CLR James. Introduction by Jupiter Harry. 80 pages normal price 60p plus 15p postage or £2.75 for 5 including postage from Socialists Unlimited 265 Seven Sisters Rd., N4.

Obviously the political credibility and confidence of the SWP/Flame members *depends* on the political attitude of the SWP as a whole to Flame. The more hostile it is to Flame, the less credibility we in Flame have. (passed 21 for 2 abstentions).

4. At the moment the exact working relationship between Flame and the SWP is uncharted. We have no examples to work on historically. However we can say this.



The fact that there is overlapping membership of Flame and the SWP; and the fact that there is overlapping politics means that at many levels there will be realties and joint activities.

In the workplaces, joint bulletins and campaigns must be encouraged. At the branch and district level there should be joint educationals. Joint caucusing before meetings of broad campaigns Rank and file meetings, and trade union meetings. Flame and SWP branch committees will discuss joint local and other campaigns. (passed 23 for new one)

## THE SWP AND FLAME

These brief notes are an attempt to clarify the relationship between Flame and the SWP.

1. Flame is an independent black revolutionary socialist organisation that seeks to organise against black oppression and exploitation and for the struggle for black liberation.

It attempts to inject into the black communities and work places revolutionary socialist politics.

We are a revolutionary socialist organisation because black liberation will not come through parliament, but through the self activity of black people and only if it is part of the struggle for socialism and therefore black liberation without building a multi racial revolutionary party.

We believe that the SWP is the embryo of that party.

That is why we are the sister organisation, with definite organisational links to the SWP but with our own membership groups and able to make our own decisions.

Flame is not a 'periphery' organisation of the SWP; as is SWSO.

Support of the SWP and or its full programme is not a condition of Flame membership. (passed 20 for, 1 against).

2. Black people will join Flame on the basis of its activity, on the basis that we have proved to be the most consistent fighters for black liberation and that they have full confidence in Flame's independent structure.

The revolutionary nationalism of the black racial minority in this country not only expresses a feeling against this racist capitalist system as a whole; but also quite naturally a desire for self organisation.

As black members of the SWP we believe that by building an organisationally independent revolutionary socialist organisation, we can in the long run recruit more black members to the SWP than otherwise.

Indeed practice over the past-year shows that with Flame the SWP is beginning to build up an *ongoing* organised relationship with more black people than ever before. (passed 20 for, 1 against).

3. Within Flame, the SWP members are of course expected to be the most active members and to also consistently put forward our revolutionary politics. As the crisis deepens this will become more and more vital. An understanding of reformism the role of the working class in the 'revolutions' of China and Cuba for example, the role of the trade union bureaucracy etc, will ensure that Flame remains truly revolutionary.

## INTRODUCTION TO ASIAN WORK PERSPECTIVES

The last few years have seen hammer attacks on the rights of black people. The rise in racist attacks and murders which has followed the Nazis' electoral defeats go hand in hand with Tory demands for tighter immigration controls and more deportations. The indifference of the police when racist attacks are reported is matched only by their zeal in defending Nazis in black areas, and their savagery in crushing the ensuing community reaction, as in Leicester and Southall.

Meanwhile unemployment continues to hit Asian workers with increasing ferocity: while youth and women are hardest hit, even relatively well organised workforces such as Birmid Foundry in Birmingham have had their share of redundancy.

The response of Asian workers to these attacks has been considerable. Along with such strikes as Fitters and Dessouters, we see the new and exciting development of the community strike as a weapon of anti-racist protest as in East London and Southall.

It is significant that Asian women, who have borne the brunt of all these attacks—whether it is through their right to bring fiances into Britain, or through unemployment (unemployment among Asian women rose by 100% between 74 and 76)—have played an increasingly militant role in these struggles.

But perhaps the most striking response has come from Asian youth. The rapid growth of various Asian youth organisations, and the angry militancy on demonstrations indicate a growing willingness to actively fight their oppression. What is significant about this development is that:

1. The youths are prepared to fight for rights that their parents were content to forego as a price for their immigrant status.
2. The fact that the youth are organising as Southall youth, Bradford youth, or Asian youth rather than Indian, Kashmiri or Bengali youth is an indication of a growing black British consciousness. It is a development that even the more active Birmingham IWAs have been unable to relate to....yet.
3. At times, this increasingly black consciousness has led to unity with Afro-blacks. At the recent London OWAAD (Organisation of Women of Asian and African descent) Conference which attracted 500 black women, there was a large contingent of Asian women. We have also seen Afro-Caribbeans and Asians jointly working in organisations like (the now defunct) Black Socialist Alliance and Newham Defence Committee.
4. The involvement of Asian women at OWAAD is not isolated. We see more and more women actively organising whether in community advice groups or in organisations like AWAZ.
5. We see the growing activity by Asian students inside the colleges and students unions. These developments have implications for the way Asian SWP members operate.

It is no longer enough to meet this growing militancy and willingness to fight among Asian youth with a blanket call for 'Black and white, unite and fight for socialism, join the SWP'. We need to train our members, so that they can begin to take up issues that directly affect them as Asians, as black fighters inside the community, with the perspectives of building around them a periphery of black revolutionaries.

The SWP on its own will not provide that training ground. Experience suggests that black SWP members operating under the shadow of the mainstream campaigns of the organisation get into its political and social circle, and out of the black community. Their activities are increasingly influenced by the campaigns, needs and tempo of the party, related, as they necessarily are, to its broad mostly white periphery, rather than those relevant to the Asian community. The result often is that they either drop out because their perspective does not meet their needs, or else they become increasingly at odds with other Asian militants who begin to see them as mere shadows of a white organisation.

We need a mechanism that prevents this tendency. The last Conference suggested the production of an Asian youth paper, an unrealistic perspective given the resources and experience of our Asian membership.

In the face of the rising militancy and increasingly black British consciousness of Asian youth, we believe that the perspective that meets the needs of the situation is that of extending the scope, activities and audience of Flame to include Asian youth. That would enable our members to reach a far wider periphery, with greater confidence and direction than at present.

## BLACK WORKERS IN BRITAIN PERSPECTIVES

A few facts to start with. A similar proportion of West Indian men work as do white men. But 74 per cent of West Indian women work compared to 43 percent of all women.

Asian men are in jobs as much as white men, so are non muslim Asian women as compared to all women. But Moslem Asian women take jobs less often than the average (only 17% compared to 43%).

African Asians have a similar work pattern to other Asians.

All black workers are concentrated in industries with a high proportion of semi skilled, and unskilled jobs.

91% of West Indian workers are manual workers, 90% of Pakistani workers are manual, 80% of Indians are manual, 70% of African Asians are manual and 60% of white workers are manual workers.

A comparison of statistics between 1966 and 1976 shows that while white workers are increasingly escaping from the drudgery of the shop floor; black workers are not. 30% of white workers were doing semi or unskilled jobs in 1966 while in 1976 only 18% were. The percentage of black workers doing semi or unskilled jobs remained the same during this period.

Black workers are also concentrated in particular factories. Largely because of racist discrimination, blacks are bared from one third of factories in areas where blacks

make up more than 1% of the population.

*More than half (52%) of black workers work in plants with more than 20% of black workers amongst the workforce.*

Partly because of trade union traditions from the West Indies and partly because of the concentration in manufacturing transport and communications and the public services (especially as far as black women are concerned) Black workers are highly unionised.

61% of male blackworkers are trade unionists compared to 47% of whites. The proportion of black women trade unionists is similar to that of whites, about a third. Although this is much lower amongst Muslim working women.

However, the high level of union membership is not reflected proportionately in the number of black shop stewards and branch officials let alone full time officials. Even in plants where the workforce is majority black it is still extremely rare to find a black convenor.

In part this will be because the black workers are the production workers and in much of engineering it is the skilled workers generally white, who make up the voting majority among the senior shop stewards. In part it is because of the gap black workers see between the union as something to which they should belong and the union which they see as doing something positive for them as black workers.

In part it has to do with the still relatively low level of confidence of black people as a whole in their ability to take on the fight against racial oppression. Witness the rise of black trade union activity following the rise of the Black Power movement in America.

Even in factories with more than 50% black workers, like Fords Dagenham, where certain jobs in certain areas are exclusively black and where there is a very low proportion of skilled blacks underlines the disinterest of the trade unions in the fight against workplace racism and the still low level of black anti racist militancy.

Our perspective has to take into account four important factors:

1. Massive race discrimination against black people in getting jobs. Rates of unemployment amongst black youth average around the 50% mark in most black countries. In Brent North London it is 64%.
2. Massive discrimination within workplaces where black workers are employed; ensuring that they remain in the worst jobs.
3. The maintenance of white trade union structures where blacks make up a significant proportion of the workforce.
4. The sharper dose of state racism outside the workplace (Nationality act, changes in Immigration act) coupled with rising unemployment (often with new technology cutting out some of the only non skilled and semi skilled jobs open to blacks) and the cuts (attacking the public sector, a major employer of blacks particularly women) will aggravate all the above factors.

General line accepted unanimously.

## WORKPLACE PERSPECTIVES

As far as points 1 & 2 are concerned, the SWP must push its members to fight now against discrimination, at the factory gates itself and inside the workplace.

Each Rank & File group should attempt to launch one campaign in a particular area to win positive discrimination for black workers in getting jobs and inside the workplace for black workers to get promotion/upgrading. Passed nem con. ●

2) As far as point 3 is concerned we have to recognise the special problems blacks face when they try to become active in the union movement (rejection/paternalism/being bought off). We have to encourage all black members of SWP and our periphery to become more active in the trade union and rank and file groups. We should attempt to hold during the next year a meeting of black trade unionists to discuss the particular problems faced and the possible tactics/solutions. Several prominent black militants could initiate such a meeting through a call pushed in the rank and file groups, SW, Womens Voice, Flame etc. passed 20 for 2 abstention.

3) The problems of black workers. The regular issuing of joint SW/Flame workplaces bulletins up; following the example of SE London where prior to Carnival a joint bulletin went into Stone Manganese and two other workplaces. passed nem con.

## PERSPECTIVES FOR FLAME

Agreement with general line unanimous.

1. Because of the vital importance of building an organisation amongst black workers based at the workplace and the fact that Flame has been uptill now reticent about embarking on such a difficult job more emphasis should be put on our workplace work. More emphasis must be put on assisting the many members and contacts in workplaces producing bulletins and other materials so service them. National industrial cadre schools must be held. An effort to get Flame speakers to shop floor and union branch meetings must be made. Example of this was when Mick Gay visited a building site and hospital to raise money for the Right to Work campaign and drew a very good response. Close links between SWP and Flame are clearly needed to do this. In fact the whole reason for joint organisation makes a lot more sense to non socialist Flame members in the context of our industrial work.

2. We need a dual strategy to relate to black

workers and unemployed youth (who in some areas are a majority of youth) because racial oppression affects us inside and outside the workplace.

Flame needs to pay attention to 'winning its spurs' inside the black community. We need to pay much much more effort to building links with the community, finding out the mood, issues arousing anger ect. Local agitation, consistent local work, paying attention to contacts building links with youth clubs, local black pubs are all *pre conditions* to building a successful Flame group.

Local work, it must be emphasised, will not achieve spectacular results. Grandiose plans should not be made.

National campaigns which may on the surface seem more attractive to the local groups should be looked at critically since they invariably reflect general moods in the whole working class rather than particular issues around which our local groups will win respect.

3. The second generation of black youth are clearly far more militant than their parents whose attitudes and horizons have been fixed in the much poorer Caribbean. Links with the Caribbean. Africa, Asia are less direct than their parents.

Amongst black students there are far more 'thinking' youths than elsewhere. In many ways they represent the advance guard of the black youth movement. Witness the number of FE Colleges run by Black students (and Black student societies) The student movement has now to deal with an aggressive, confident black student organisations.

Work inside the colleges is clearly important; film shows, dances, meetings can be organised inside the FE colleges if Flame goes into them confidently. Already a number of black run student unions know of Flame. The ideas of African liberation strike a cord with students and should be used. In October we plan to have campaign around black prisoners showing the film 'attica' in conjunction with the black prisoners welfare scheme.

4. The OWAAD conference of 400 black women shows the rising level of activity of black women.

The abortion issue for black women is substantially different than for white women. Blacks are openly encouraged to have abortions. This issue should be tied to the issue of sterilisations and DP injections and the forthcoming changed in the immigration bill intending to keep Fiancees out. All this is an attempt to keep the black population down. Emphasis should be on black womens right to choose abortions, marriages, sterilisations etc.

Coverage in Flame on 'women issues' must be increased through better coverage of issues like housing, education nurseries etc. A national meeting of Flame women must be held.

## PERSPECTIVES FOR ASIAN WORK

1. Given the rising militancy and growing black British consciousness among Asian youth; Asian SWP members must begin to build Flame groups (in some areas, primarily Asian Flame groups) which build up relationships with existing Flame groups.

The interchange of experience can only benefit the building of a black cadre, with the perspective of building a national Flame organisation of Asians and Afro Caribbenas.

passed 16 for 1 against.

2. Flame should extend as soon as financially possible, the present Flame to a 12 page paper with four Asian pages and an Asian name on the back. Immediate discussions must take place in SWP and Flame to hammer out the details of this move.

3. If the SWP recruits members from existing black organisations of significance eg IWAs, Asian youth organisations, we should encourage them to remain inside these organisations and push SWP politics from within.  
passed 19 for 1 abstention.

4. Flame/Chingari should operate as a revolutionary caucus within these black organisations of significance.

5. Build Flame/Chingari

## THE FLAME DEBATE Swapan Dasgupta Central London

AT HIS sarcastic best, Dave Widgery once compared the SWP to Sainsbury's. It seems that the obvious lack of sales (recruits) in the Black department is causing the management (CC) to stall plans for the take-off of their new subsidiary company, Flame. At the Black Caucus meeting, a leading member from Brixton accused the CC of being socialist Dr Beechings, wanting to rid the organisation of all 'peripheral' activities in the face of an organisational crisis. The Black Caucus, by 18 to 7 (and 4 abstentions) rejected the 'general line' of the CC's document on Flame and accepted the perspective of Kim Gordon and Azim Hajee calling for the establishment of Flame as an independent, revolutionary organisation.

However, the unity of the Black Caucus was merely illusory. In spite of an apparent closing of ranks resulting from a fear that all Flame groups might be wound up, it was clear from the meeting that the document accepted by the Caucus did not reflect the differing positions of their advocates. The positions that came out of the meeting were:

1. To create Flame as a mass, militant, community organisation advocated by Alok Biswas.

2. To create Flame as a militant black nationalist organisation ('to show we are better black nationalists than them'). This was the position of Azim Hajee.

- 3 Kim Gordon's position of Flame as an independent revolutionary organisation of Blacks.

It was a pity that these differences did not come out into much prominence in the Black Caucus meeting itself. The meeting was dominated by attacks on the rather insensitive document presented by the CC. However the fact remains that there is no single position which the overwhelming majority of the Black Caucus agree to, though for the moment a loose position has been accepted, ie of the independence of Flame as an organisation.

### What Kind of Organisation?

Let us consider Azim's arguments first. His perspective stems out from his personal experiences in Birmingham where Flame was recently successful in organising a demonstration of 200 Rastas against police harassment. Azim feels that this has enabled us to get access for the first time to a militant section of Black nationalists. Obviously, if we are to retain that credibility and not appear 'Uncle Toms' tailing a so-called 'white' organisation, we must retain Flame as an independent organisation with a strong Black nationalist flavour. Azim believes that with the intensification of racism, Blacks are going to become more *race conscious* and therefore we must act accordingly.

Aloke's arguments also stem from personal experiences. In Brick Lane, where the distinctions between community and workplace are somewhat blurred, he finds the local Trade Union bodies largely unsympathetic and unable to comprehend the problems faced by the Bengali workers/community. The response is therefore to form a Flame organisation in the community which will have national links, and at the same time be militantly anti-racist. Aloke did not squarely confront the question of Black nationalism since this a phenomenon largely absent from Brick Lane. In short, Aloke wants Flame to fulfil the role which the IWAs fill in various areas, albeit militantly.

There are certain common threads running through both arguments: a belief in the passive, umbrella role of the party and a failure to comprehend the nature of united front activity.

One of the central pillars of our politics (for which we have been attacked from various quarters) is our belief in the Leninist, vanguard party of the working class. It is a party that does not play a passive and merely propagandist role in the working class, but seeks to unite *all* class conscious workers under a revolutionary programme. The party's role is interventionist in that it seeks to provide a lead to the working class on the basis of their objective class interests. Both Azim and Alok negate this role of the party in favour of a tailist position reflecting the *existing consciousness* of a section of the working class and lumpenproletariat. The credibility of the party is not built through succumbing to all immediate trends (as is popular in a section of the IMG) but at the risk of swimming against the stream, to put forward clear class positions. That does not mean we should be insensitive to Black nationalism and all its different manifestations. We recognise its existence sympathetically, but reject it politically. By focussing all their attention on the building of a Black Nationalist/community Flame organisation, I feel certain comrades are attempting to take revolutionary shortcuts. Almost three years ago (Race Work Perspectives, IB Sept 1976) the CC gave a call for our Race Work to develop a more 'class' focus. It is this that we should be attempting via Flame and Flame organisations. It is on this basis that we have had some success in NW London, in the Bakers Union and in Southall. Of course, it would be naive to expect instant success in terms of membership and then get dejected when this does not happen. This seems to be the CC's line of reasoning. It must be realised that Black workers are still reluctant to involve themselves in what *they see* as 'white' organisations. This suspicion will not disappear overnight. In fact, I believe, our inconsistent record in work among Black workers has in no way helped the situation. At the moment, we can at best hope to draw towards us a limited periphery of class conscious Black workers on the basis of our overall politics.

Some comrades are of the belief that a party-oriented approach would aid towards losing out on the Black nationalists we have managed to get access to. These comrades believe that unless we are sympathetic to their political ideas we have no chance in