

# TOWARDS A NEW COMMUNIST MOVEMENT: A PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST ORGANISATION IN THIS COUNTRY

Summary: The political situation in this country today is characterised by a major and total attack by Capital on the strength and power of the working class. This attack is being met with only a sporadic, sectional answer by the proletariat. In this situation, Big Flame has, potentially a great deal to offer to the working class. Of all the revolutionary organisations, Big Flame is the only one which has the possibility of explaining the crisis, and developing a strategy of class struggle based clearly on the politics of class autonomy. But Big Flame's usefulness to the class is limited by its tiny size, predominantly petit-bourgeois class composition, failure to clarify its political perspective in the class, and complete lack of social power. This has meant that working-class militants close to our politics have been reluctant to join an organisation in which, and through which, they will have little power. And for black people, the prospect of joining a practically all-white organisation is unthinkable. All these limitations have meant the development of a 'small organisation' mentality in Big Flame, which puts the needs of the organisation before the objective needs of the working-class, particularly the need to urgently elaborate a series of strategies for class struggle, based on the fundamental understandings of our politics.

Although Big Flame remains the only organisation which has taken seriously the task of being the political articulation of the struggle against wage-labour, this does not mean we are the sole representatives of that tendency in the working-class. Because of the crisis, there are increasing numbers of individual militants (among them many members and ex-members of IS and the CP, and many working-class organisers who have never joined a revolutionary organisation), and some grass roots organisations, which are clearly a part of the same tendency to which we belong. Now is the time to make a qualitative step forward in the organisation and social power of our tendency- the communist tendency in the working class. We are arguing that we should join forces with these militants and organisations to create a new communist and revolutionary organisation, based on the politics of class autonomy. This would be the leading reference point for the regroupment of a new proletarian communist movement, with a strong public presence at all levels of society--through the media, in factories, hospitals, schools, working-class communities. Over a period of time the movement would become a major subversive attack on reformism, presenting the first serious mass political and organisational alternative in the working-class to social democratic institutions, ideology and culture.

This document is intended as a more detailed explanation of our conference resolution, and should be read together with the resolution. In order to understand the practical proposal and the political project behind it, we must start with an analysis, in broad lines, of the current situation on the one hand, and of our organisation on the other.

## 1. Major characteristics of the present situation.

As is generally agreed on the left, we are going through a period of defeat for the proletariat. It's not a final or historic defeat, but it is succeeding in shifting the balance of forces towards the bosses. This period of defeat follows the stalemate which came with the setback to the proletariat represented by the result of the Common Market referendum.

So today, in this country, the situation is characterised by a total, general political offensive by capital. Faced with this attack, the proletariat finds itself completely unable to respond in the united mass way which would be necessary to even maintain its standard of living. The  $\$6$  policy, and now the 4½%, the huge inflation, the cuts in public spending, the massive unemployment—all of which amount to an attempt to impoverish further and further large strata of the proletariat—have met with a very limited and sporadic and sectional response. There has been a notable absence of mass and unified initiatives from the proletariat.

But the attack by capital is more than just an attempt to lower the living standards of the proletariat. It is an attempt to decompose the class, to attack it in its strongholds, to totally change its face, its attitudes, its traditions, its organisation and to increase its internal divisions. It is a major attempt to reduce once and for all the ability of the working class to struggle against capital, to mess up the system of wage-labour, profit and exploitation; a major attack on the strength and power which the proletariat/in England particularly in the 60s and early 70s. developed

This total attack against the composition of the proletariat, centres around a total restructuring of industry (which extends into the public sector and the community). Capital is in no way planning a return to the 30s, with no National Health service or Education service, and mass starvation on the dole. Rather it is planning for what it hopes will be a tranquil and stable (and highly profitable 80s. In industry, this means a general plan of 'rationalisation', which means an attack on the rigidity of labour i.e. the capability by the industrial working-class to resist mobility, manning cuts, speed-ups, lay-offs, redundancies, natural wastage, and the capability to impose its own needs over those of production—an ability which has always characterised the English working-class as one of the strongest in the world at the level of shop floor power.

Examples of restructuring in industry;

- i. the attack on the strength of dockworkers through the containerisation of dock work
- ii. the similar attack on printworkers through the introduction of new printing technologies
- iii. the decimation of the ship-building industry
- iv. the creation of the huge Selby mine project, and the certain closure of many 'inefficient' pits in militant areas.
- v. the introduction of Measured Day work into the whole of the motor industry, and the recent major defeats in Vauxhalls and Chryslers. The exploitation by Ford's of the lack of organisation at an international level of the proletariat. The new 'Fiesta' will be produced at assembly plants in Spain, Britain and Germany—each of which will be able to stab on each other in case of major disputes at any one of them
- vi. the increasing investment in small, easily controllable plants manufacturing electronic components. A similar rise in investment in low risk, capital intensive industry.

This list is in no way complete, and indicates the need for us to rapidly expand our understanding of the whole restructuring/decomposition process. In the public sector and community, the public sector commission and the women's commission have broadly outlined the process going on i.e. the restructuring and decomposition which is being operated in the overall context of the cutbacks in public spending: harder work and less job control for all workers in the public sector; assembly-line education and health care; attack on earnings through holding-down of wages and overtime; stopping holiday and/or sick cover; attack on the high levels of 'casual sickness' and absenteeism. more work for unwaged women workers in the home, because of the cuts in nurseries, schools, hospitals, council repairs, transport and the increasing cost of convenience foods; reduction of womens independent income-through the much higher rate of female redundancies in waged work, through the axing of part-time jobs, and through the changes in legislation in the Employment protection act; the ditching of the Child Benefit scheme; the attack on women's (already very narrow)right to choose, through the regressive abortion legislation; the attempt to divide people living on council estates into 'owners' and 'tenants'.

Underpinning this whole process is the high level of structural unemployment which, in our view, will remain a permanent feature of the situation in Britain in this period. The key effect of unemployment is to deepen the divisions in the proletariat; to further weaken the ability of the proletariat to respond in a united, mass way; to make it even more difficult for an effective political, ideological and organisational challenge to labourism to be made in the proletariat. There are increasing divisions between the unemployed and the waged workers (claimants have seen the value of their dole/SS money drop much faster than real average industrial earnings), and waged workers are naturally more reluctant to take action which might see them thrown on the dole. As women's workload increases, and their independent income drops (if they ever had one), there are increasing divisions between white people who are on the dole or who feel threatened by redundancy, and employed black and Asian workers- and between unemployed black youth, with absolutely no money and rejecting menial and pointless work, and the rest of the waged workforce.

In this situation of division, confusion and demoralisation, it is easier for the fascists to grow and in fact become a dangerous force for the first time since the days of Moseley. Again, all this is said not to depress people. There are good aspects as well, as we'll see later, but the overall picture is that presented above.

## 2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PROLETARIAT

How has this situation come about? How can we help to change it? To understand some of the answers to these questions, we have to make a broad assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the proletariat in this country.

In Big Flame, we have repeatedly and correctly emphasised the role of the rapid growth of working-class struggle and power in this country in the 60's and early 70 's as one of the principal reasons for the deep crisis affecting capitalism in Britain. We could point to the explosive struggles around wages (miners, Fords, building workers hospital workers); the wages drift in the Midland's motor and engineering industry; the struggle around the Pentonville 5; the struggle against work, particularly on the assembly lines, and the refusal of productivity, notably in the mines; the egalitarianism of demands (eg the fight for equal pay, and the miners' demand for a national bonus, rather than a productivity deal for the already better paid faceworkers); the continuing rigidity and restrictions which the working-class has been able to impose (eg in the shipbuilding and engineering industries); the spreading of cycles of struggle- eg the spreading of tactics, sit-ins, flying pickets; people living or fiddling the dole or SS, rather than be exploited at work; the emergence of demands for a guaranteed income (eg lay-off pay in the car industry); emergence of struggles of appropriation- squatting, rent-strikes and arrears, electricity and gas fiddles; the growth of the Women's

movement, and it's increasing part in the movement of working-class women (eg equal pay, the right to choose, women's refusal of violence in the family).

This list is long, and could be much longer. It illustrates one side of the proletariat - its strength and combativity, its ability to mount autonomous class struggles - that is struggles in which there is an objective separation between the needs of capitalist development and the needs of the proletariat. However, while the actual content of working-class struggle is against wage-labour, against production and the organisation of production, the self-consciousness of this in the proletariat usually has not matched it. Throughout this period, the proletariat remained dominated by reformist organisations - the Labour Party, and particularly the trade union apparatus. And what was - and remains - absent is the political articulation and organisation of the struggle against wage-labour i.e. the tendency of working-class autonomy in the proletariat. Why is this? In Big Flame, we're more or less agreed on this. As Paul T wrote in the August international bulletin; "Basically, because (proletarian) organising and consciousness is trapped within the period of reforms and expansion that dominated the post-war period (that we have characterised as Keynesianism). In this period it was possible to fight and win by sectional, delegated struggle on local and sectorial bases. This tended to confirm the working class within a 'corporate' class consciousness, that was conscious of class divisions, but inward looking, not dealing with society as a whole. The fact that there were many strong and combative class struggles in many sectors which were a key factor in causing the capitalist crisis, did not mean that this consciousness and forms of organising were capable of coping with the different demands of a crisis and recession."

In fact, we can say that proletarian consciousness at a mass level during this period was one characteristic of a successful social democracy, in which the ruling-class is willing to buy off the struggles of different sections of the working-class, as long as no single struggle threatens to recompose the unity of the proletariat, or massively reduce the rate of exploitation. In other words, the ruling-class is willing to pay a certain price to maintain the divisions in the proletariat, and to maintain - thereby - an overall social peace. The social-democratic consciousness of the proletariat in that period was an ideological reflection of its real division, and therefore of its objective weakness and lack of possibilities of developing its power and unity in society. And so, despite the many sectional and hard struggles fought during this period, social democratic institutions and ideology maintained their stranglehold on the class without any major internal political or ideological crisis. And this, undoubtedly, remains the single most important weakness of the proletariat in this country.

But today the situation is changing. We no longer live in a successful and growing social democracy - but instead an economically weak and unstable social-democracy. The power of the ruling-class still rests on the divisions and disunity in the proletariat, but now these are maintained not by buying off the struggles of different sectors of the working-class, but by the absolute impoverishment of its various sectors - in this way deepening the divisions in the class. This has meant that while the dominant ideology of the proletariat remains labourist (ie consciousness based on the weakness of the proletariat in society, and the difficulties of changing that situation), there is nevertheless a deepening crisis in the ability of labourist ideology and institutions to maintain their domination in the proletariat. The huge unemployment, the cutbacks in the social wage, and the falling earnings of all workers, together with the increasing integration of the trade unions into the state and their key part in carrying out these attacks on the working-class - all these have contributed to the most serious weakening of labourism's ability to hegemonise the working-class. And we can see this in the mass absentions by Labour Party voters, massive fall in no's of workers attending TU branch meetings in AUEW and TASS, the switch to the Nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales, the number of traditionally Labour voters who're voting fascist in council byelections and in the growth of revolutionary socialist tendencies inside most militant layers of the proletariat.

### 3. REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCIES INSIDE THE PROLETARIAN MASS MOVEMENT

It must be said immediately that when we use the term mass in this historical situation, for a revolutionary organisation, we don't mean the population, or even the whole of the proletariat. We mean the most militant layers of the proletariat (perhaps 2-4% of the population). This must be our reference in this phase. And if you think that this is small, just for a minute imagine the revolutionary left with a following of more than 1 million people!

So what's happening inside the proletarian mass movement right now? We said before that there is some demoralisation. And in a situation of defeat, the mass vanguards tend to lose their influence and hegemony over large strata of the proletariat and at the same time tend to decrease numerically. For militants now, the situation is more difficult than for a long time. There seems to be no way of taking the struggle forward, of dealing with the huge problems facing the working-class. If for many no solution seems to exist and some cynical attitudes sink in, for many others the need to find the total general alternative - through struggle, organisation and education - becomes clearer. The basic antagonisms in society are clearer. The need for a socialist revolution is clearer.

Today, there are two revolutionary tendencies inside the proletariat - both of them weak, but growing. The first, best represented by IS (although it's also represented by left-wing worker militants in the CP, IMG and the WRP) is categorised by radical trade unionism, a conception of politics which sees it as something outside of the struggles in communities and workplaces which has to be brought into those struggles by the party, and a crude (industrial) workerism. The second tendency, to which we belong, is based on the politics of class autonomy, and the struggle against work (wage-labour) in the waged workplace and in the community. Militants of our tendency understand the possibilities of organising inside the struggles of the people with whom they work or live to build the power, confidence, organisation and unity of the class - and tend to reject the conception of "revolutionary socialism" inherent in seeing work in the reformist organisations of the class as an end in itself.

Our tendency is very fragmented and often expressed through spontaneous or isolated organisation. Big Flame is the most coherent, organised force inside it. The first tendency is stronger inside the organised labour movement, particularly among skilled, white and male industrial workers and among recently radicalised white-collar workers. Our tendency is stronger in other sections of the proletariat - particularly women, unskilled workers and semi-skilled workers on assembly line production, and black people.

What is absolutely clear is that in this situation of crisis inside labourism - which manifests itself particularly in its inability to maintain a hold in the most militant layers of the proletariat - it is the tendency of class autonomy (which represents a total attack, and a total alternative to reformism) which has the most potential. And what is equally clear is that unless the class autonomy tendency is rapidly able to emerge from its isolation - and become an organised public political force, with a strong proletarian face (and known to working-class people through its actions, its broad and bold campaigns, and its spokespeople being seen on TV and the newspapers, and through its presence in a large number of waged workplaces and communities) - then the IS tendency will win the struggle for hegemony in the proletarian mass movement. This will be a sad day for all communist forces in this country, because it will result in a stunted development of the movement - including only a fraction of the sections of the class which in the end could be won to the communist struggle. This day comes ever nearer, precisely because the IS tendency - despite its incorrect politics - has succeeded in establishing a presence in a significant number of workplaces, and even a limited presence in society as a whole. The immediate result of this has been an expansion of the proletarian base of IS (despite the huge political divisions which continue to wrack the organisation). Many of these militants are in reality sympathisers of our tendency (though most of them will have never even heard of Big Flame), but they are joining an organisation which has no understanding of the needs of the current situation; of the possibilities of struggle against the deepening divisions in the proletariat (indeed it is an organisation which has no comprehension of the meaning of material divisions in the class); of the extent of rejection of wage-labour in the proletariat.

The situation is urgent. We have to face the challenge of building an organisation which can meet the needs of the proletariat in this situation.

#### 4. THE UNIFICATION OF THE PROLETARIAT. THE NEED OF THE SITUATION.

What are the needs of the situation? When we analyse the political situation anywhere we always consider three components. The level of the struggle - i.e. the radicality of the clash. The degree of crumbling of bourgeois institutions - i.e. the relative weakness of the enemy. And the level of unification of the proletariat - i.e. the unity of our own ranks. These components are obviously dialectically inter-related. But in a number of important situations recently - notably Chile and Portugal - the growth of unity in the proletariat has been more or less the consequence of the other two. And in the past this has, to a large extent, been true of Britain too. In our view, this is no longer true. Today - as we have already described, we're faced with a situation of capitalist offensive, and division in the proletariat - combined with an important crisis within labourist institutions and ideology. Clearly, the key factor which would deepen this crisis within labourism is the unification of the proletariat. In other words, the major characteristic of the situation now is that the unification of the proletariat comes first, and must today become the absolute priority in the activity and intervention of revolutionaries. What we are saying is that in general, only initiatives which go towards the unification of the proletariat - which directly pose this question - will make the clash more radical and contribute to the crumbling of the institutions and the development of the embryos of the new. For example, if only two years ago a struggle of skilled workers to increase their differentials might have represented a radicalisation of the fight, nowadays it would play into the hands of the political and ideological offensive of the bourgeoisie; it would contribute nothing to the unification of the proletariat, it would radicalise nothing, and because of that win nothing.

We have to build an organisation which is clearly capable of contributing directly towards the process of unifying the proletariat. And for us, that means building an organisation which can be one of the embryos of the revolutionary party - the mass party which exists in an organic relationship to the mass of the proletariat, and which thereby plays a key role in the unification of the proletariat through the dialectical relationship between that process and the struggle for the unification of the vanguards inside the party. We should emphasise that when we talk about building an organisation which can be one of the embryos of the revolutionary party, we mean precisely that. We do not mean building an organisation which we conceive to be the revolutionary party or even the embryo of the revolutionary party.

There is another reason why organisation takes political precedence in the coming period. It is the essential unpredictability of the situation; the possibility (though not the certainty) of the return of a Tory government some time in the next two years; the uncertainties within wages policy (the public sector commission says that there will not be any return to free collective bargaining, because this would be incompatible with a planned capitalist economy. In our view it is unlikely that there'll be any return to free collective bargaining, but the twists and turns that may be imposed on the T.U. leaders facing a crisis in labourism make it impossible to make an absolute prediction, particularly in view of the possible return of the Tories); the whole series of sharp and often fragmented struggles which have already begun (Leyland, Clayton, Rolls Royce, Ford, Halewood, Trico, the tunnel-mining industry, Smiths industries, the series of hospital workers' struggles, the struggles of black youth) and which are taking place in the overall context of retreat; the international instability - despite the defeats in the Mediterranean, notably Italy and Portugal, and in the Middle East, the bosses are having a bad time in Southern Africa, and a race/class war in Rhodesia and S.Africa could have crucial effects both in destabilising the monetary system, and radicalising important layers of the population in Britain. Unless we have rapidly built an organisation with the clarity, flexibility, confidence, power, influence in the proletariat and the ability to take strong and bold initiatives as the situation changes month by month, then the existence of our tendency will have no social meaning or effect whatsoever. We'll be blown to the winds.

## 5. BIG FLAME

Could this organisation be Big Flame? Can Big Flame meet the needs of the situation? We don't think so. To explain why, we have to look at the strengths and weaknesses of our organisation, particularly as it's developed over the period since the last conference.

There is no doubt that politically, Big Flame has - of all the revolutionary organisations and groupings in Britain - best maintained an internal unity and an ability to (fairly) coherently describe what was happening in the face of the political and economic crisis and the attacks on the working-class. There has been some rich internal debate in the group, and there have been none of the major splits in our organisation which have plagued practically all of the other tendencies. Though we have many, many weaknesses, we have nevertheless managed to recruit a number of working-class members and at the same time build the skeleton of a national organisation. Both things must not be underestimated; they've happened partly because of the correctness of our political line, in its broadest sense, and partly because of great efforts.

Yet in the period since the last conference, the influence of Big Flame has not grown significantly. It remains the only organisation which has taken seriously the task of being the political articulation of the struggle against work (wage-labour). It is the only organisation which self-consciously presents itself as an alternative - based on the politics of working-class autonomy - to all the 101 species of social democracy, reformism and radical trade unionism which exist in this country. And its politics - against work and exploitation under capitalism; against working-class powerlessness and division; against the oppression of different sections of the working-class; against pressure-group work in the reformist organisations of the working-class as an end in itself; and for mass work in the waged workplace and in the community to build the autonomy, power and confidence of the proletariat - these are the politics of a significant section of the militant layers of the proletariat. But despite the potential of our politics, despite the resonance that we all know our politics have in certain sections of the class, despite the mass nature of our politics, Big Flame remains a marginal group on the revolutionary left, in the proletariat, and in society as a whole. For many comrades in Big Flame, and for some whole groups, this has caused a crisis of morale - despite the fundamental strengths of our organisation and politics. It is time these problems were met head on.

In our resolution to the conference, we say that we consider the main weaknesses of Big Flame to be:

a) its size - far smaller than the tendency it represents. Even if we were to have 'perfect' politics and 'perfect' organisation, Big Flame's tiny size would be a major handicap. It means that we can never present ourselves as a force, as a focus of power, even on the left - except, perhaps, in Liverpool. It means we can never take meaningful national initiatives. It means our resources and our comrades are always stretched, and we can rarely transfer resources into areas of new priority, even if we have (rarely) made such a 'bold' decision. It means we have real difficulty in being anything but marginal.

b) its prevalent petit-bourgeois composition in contrast to the prevalent proletarian composition of our area of influence. Big Flame is not an organisation with a proletarian face. In this it compares badly with many other revolutionary organisations. In our organisation, working-class people have practically no power. Combined with the lack of clarity of certain aspects of our politics, and the apparent lack of social power and lack of possibilities of changing that much, this prevents many working-class people of our tendency from joining Big Flame. Why should they waste their time going to meetings etc. of an organisation which seems to have (at first and second sight) little chance of affecting at a mass, social level, any of the problems of the proletariat, and in which they themselves will have practically no power? The same is true for black people and women. And yet we are all aware of the many working-class militants who are a part of our tendency, who may even be close to Big Flame, and who refuse (or who are unable for geographical reasons) to join our organisation. And these are only the militants that we know personally. There are many others in parts of the country where Big Flame does not exist, and still many more who have joined other organisations rather than remain isolated in the wilderness.

c) its lack of a strategic programme of struggles. There's no doubt that we have lacked clear strategy in a whole series of struggles in which we've been involved- and that this has affected the ability of Big Flame to grow as a force inside the proletariat. But in our view, our tendency does have the fundamental basis in its politics for that clarity. The simple fact is, though, that the urgent clarification of our strategies for struggle has never been given the absolute priority which it deserved in Big Flame. This has not been the political failure of certain individuals in the organisation, or the particular organisation and composition of the NC. It runs much deeper than that, affecting every commission, every branch, every base group.

This failure has been the result of prevalent minoritarianism in Big Flame. That is, the political and personal complacency about being in a small group, with tiny influence and limited responsibilities; the habit of seeing our goals and tasks only according to our own possibilities and never according to the necessities of the masses. It is not to take seriously our responsibilities as communists in a communist organisation. It is the feeling of security, cosiness, power that we have in our circles. It is the fear of making decisive effects on other peoples' lives- a fear of the responsibilities of any kind of social power.

d) the organisation is held too precious- not enough ideas are taken from outside the organisation. This is the failure to understand that Big Flame is not the sole manifestation of our tendency (the communist tendency) in this country. There is an important debate of ideas going on in many areas, but in Big Flame there is the prevalent idea that if we don't understand something, we have necessarily to work it out ourselves, without taking into consideration the possibility that someone else may have worked it out, and we might join forces. It is the habit to consider ourselves the centre of the universe.

All these problems have existed for some time in Big Flame. Many comrades are aware of them in some shape or form. But they have never been tackled head on. The question we are posing is--can these problems be resolved in the context of the continuation of Big Flame? Again, our answer is no.

## 6. WHY A NEW ORGANISATION?

In our view, now is the time to make a qualitative step forward in the organisation of our political tendency. To propose to the many individual working class militants, to a few intellectuals, and to the few local groups and organisations who belong to our tendency- to join forces and make together a new communist organisation. A politically centralised cadre organisation with a mass line, and with a proletarian face, which would be the leading reference for the recomposition of a communist mass movement i.e. the communist tendency in the proletarian mass movement, and which could thereby be a real force in the struggle for the unification of the proletariat.

Big Flame cannot be this organisation because it is trapped in the vicious circle which we have described: its small size, petit-Bourgeois face and lack of strategic programme of struggles make it an organisation with very little credibility for many working-class militants, many women, and many black people inside our tendency. And this is reflected inside Big Flame in the relative powerlessness of working-class people and women (and total absence of autonomous black organisation). The only way to move forward towards the kind of organisation necessary for this situation is to make a sharp break from our vicious circle, and that means a sharp break from Big Flame.



What we are arguing for, is a simultaneous proletarianisation of the political organisation of our tendency, increase in size and clarification of our political positions. To change any one of these factors while leaving the other aspects unchallenged would contribute nothing to breaking the cycle.

We are also arguing for a sharp increase in the power of working-class people, women and black people in the political organisation of our tendency. It is therefore essential that those working-class militants or working-class organisations, women or women's organisations, black people or black organisations interested in joining forces to create the new organisation, are an integral part of formulating the politics and structures of the organisation, and its relation to the movement around it. This would be their sole guarantee of power and autonomy in that organisation.

And we are not afraid to involve those comrades who respond favourably to this initiative in the process of political clarification of our tendency. To create this new organisation, we are first going to have to write the best ever manifesto of working class autonomy, the best ever strategic programme of struggles. We need the experience of all comrades of our tendency. We are not the centre of the universe.

At this point, it's perhaps important to stress that we're not asking for the immediate dissolution of Big Flame. The creation of the new organisation will take some time. In our resolution we're arguing for the maximum of one year. During this time Big Flame will continue to exist-continuing all our other activities, but with the creation of the new organisation as the overall perspective which situates the rest of our work. Big Flame will be dissolved on the very eve of the foundation of the new organisation.

## 7 WHY WE REJECT THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

The alternative proposal to our own opposes the creation of a new organisation, arguing instead the need for political centralisation and clarity of political line inside Big Flame. This, they believe, is the key factor in Big Flame's lack of influence and failure to grow. According to their project, Big Flame should attempt to slowly recruit more and better, have a better education programme, concentrate a lot on the membership we have at present, make a stronger and permanent National Committee. Change the name of the organisation.

This is what we consider to be the bureaucratic-administrative solution. It is the solution which changes nothing. It is the solution through which we want to improve things without going to the roots of the problem, and therefore without making revolutionary changes. The roots of the problem do not lie simply in our failure to elaborate a strategic programme of struggles. This is just one of at least three crucial factors. The comrades have constantly failed to grasp the inter-relation of all three- our tiny size, our lack of a proletarian face, our lack of perspectives inside the class struggle. And they totally underestimate the importance of the small size and class composition of Big Flame in causing our problems. They are determinist in the sense of their belief that all Big Flame needs in order to grow is the absolutely correct politics; we wish this were true-if it were, we're sure Big Flame would already be ten times the size of IS or the WRP. But simply the size of IS or the WRP shows that groups which take all sides of organisation seriously can grow, despite their politics(though only to a certain size). We think it is crucial to move forward simultaneously on all three fronts, and in fact this is the only way we can urgently break the cycle in which we're trapped. Political centralisation alone will do nothing to transform the reality of Big Flame as it's perceived by most working-class

militants in our tendency, but outside Big Flame.

Furthermore the comrades are posing a gradualist solution in a situation of great urgency. Perhaps they don't comprehend the urgency of the situation. As we've pointed out, it is now as the crisis inside labourism mounts, as the political and economic crisis in society becomes more and more serious (particularly for the proletariat) that the battle of ideas and influence inside the most militant layers of the proletariat between our tendency and (broadly) the IS tendency becomes most keen. We have to build now an organisation capable of representing a credible pole for class autonomy in relation to the neo-Trotskyist tendency in the proletariat. Otherwise there is a serious danger of our losing that battle—not for ever, but certainly for a considerable period. As we've said, the situation is urgent. The relative powerlessness of our tendency is directly affecting—in the class situation. Our responsibilities are to the class struggle and particularly to our political tendency inside the class—not just to Big Flame. We must seize the time.

### 8 THE PROJECT—BUILDING A NEW COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

We want to stress that there are two aspects to our proposal. The first is the building of a new communist organisation: as we've already described, a politically centralised cadre organisation with a mass line. The second, which would be the central task of Big Flame over the next year, and then of the new organisation, is the attempt to build the embryo of a broad proletarian movement for communism in this country. We place a great deal of importance on this second aspect of the proposal. As we say in the resolution: "What must be stressed now is that the importance, the power, the credibility of the new organisation are directly proportional to the capability of stimulating the development of a movement around it—and that the movement will actually grow (from its embryos) into something more than a series of incoherent, spontaneous, unorganised experiences only if it has a clear pole of reference inside it -- the new vanguard organisation."

We'll describe the possibilities for building that movement and some of the initiatives that will have to be taken in section 10. For the moment, we'll just affirm that in our view the situation today does present a real possibility for building the embryo of a popular movement in this country, and we'll elaborate in broad outline some of the characteristics of the movement:

- \* the public affirmation of communism as a revolutionary goal of class struggle. The public separation of communism from Stalinism. The resurrection of all sections of the Communist Manifesto relevant to today's struggle.
- \* a movement with a proletarian face which is openly subversive in its intention to do away with the present state of things. To have proletarian spokespeople who become well known; and who will boldly justify (on TV, radio, in the papers) the struggle against work (e.g. Chrysler workers playing cards or dominos; people refusing work and staying on the dole or SS and doing a part time job; the actions and self organisation of, for example, black youth at the Notting Hill Gate carnival; the struggle (in all its forms) for free gas and electricity. In other words giving a social, and socialist justification for actions which will otherwise be presented as anti-social in the media. Reinforcing the revolutionary side of the consciousness of the working-class. Giving a public self-consciousness to certain hidden or isolated aspects of the autonomous class struggle.

- \* a movement built around an attack on capital's attempt to restructure itself and its attempt to decompose the proletariat. A movement which is therefore opposed to slogans such as "No return to the thirties" and "Fight for the right to work". A movement which is an essential part of the recomposition of the proletariat.
- \* a communist movement which contains in itself the beginnings of a communist, proletarian culture which is an affirmation of life. Giving a proletarian framework in which existing revolutionary cultural work (theatre, films, music, circus) can break out of its present stagnation. A movement which breaks with the sterile tradition of dogma and sectarianism which exists on the left in this country at the moment. A movement of ideas --about socialism, communism, Marxism, science, technology, our history, sexuality, international struggles. A movement which recognises as fundamental the all-round needs of the individual, and provides the stimulus for every individual to develop and grow (the struggle against individualism and for individuality.)
- \* a movement which through its mass work (including also mass campaigns and bold, imaginative actions) develops a strong presence in the majority of proletarian workplaces and communities. What we are advocating is the embryo of mass organisation, based on those who are directly involved in the struggle. The only consciousness ruler would be that militants would be involved in the struggle, and beginning to think of themselves as communists. It would be a movement without membership cards, but with a strong sense of identity.

Clearly, what we're describing is the characteristics of the movement in the fullest stage of development. This is not something that can simply be built by the subjective actions of a limited number of people who take it into their heads that such a movement would be a 'good thing'. Only social movements of the whole proletariat and within the proletariat (i.e. only the objective conditions) will enable the movement we're describing to come into existence and flower. What we're saying (we'll elaborate later) is that aspects of the embryo of this movement already exist. But they exist without organisation, with no pole of reference, with no identity--and therefore without power.

What will be the relation between the new communist organisation and the growing movement around it? This cannot be predicted in great detail, for the reasons we've mentioned above. They will be united by both being expressions of the different needs of the communist tendency in the proletariat-- the tendency of class autonomy. Militants of the new organisation will understand the centrality of the task of stimulating the development of the movement, and they--and the new organisation - will play a key role in being the leading reference point for the clarification of ideas and strategies inside the movement. We can parallel with the relation between the clandestine section of the MIR in Chile and the wider organisation and fronts around it ( though obviously this parallel is to an extent limited in that the fronts in Chile developed at a time of class offensive). And we can say for sure that women cadres of the new organisation will play a major part in the autonomous development of the movement of women--and the same would be true of the other autonomous sections of the organisation and the movement.