
MayDay Rooms Pamphlets: 02
Agitprop Notes

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Series Introduction



For centuries the pamphlet has been the medium of choice for agitators, poets, ranters and revolutionaries. Wherever people have needed to spread ideas cheaply, quickly, and outside of the official press, they have made their own short-form publications. Most often pamphlets are produced for the moment: dissenting ephemera to be quickly consumed, and then passed on or cast away. Today, as frictionless pixels glide across scrolling backlit screens, the fluttering of paper leaves might seem leaden. Yet the pace of contemporary media is determined not only by its immense speed of production and its cacophony of voices, but also the speed with which things are trashed, or disappear, as the crowd of each moment falls quickly into the silence of high-tech historical forgetting.

Returning to the pamphlet is a gesture of defiance. Our archival work returns so often to the pamphlets of past struggles. Returning to the pamphlet means salvaging the materials by preserving them in a world that would otherwise hide them from view; keeping hold of documents that were never supposed to last; and reading them outside of their time. But here we are returning pamphlets in order to make something new: writing and making once again in this tradition, against an official press. If once that official press was the newspaper and the book, today

it is the monstrous monopoly platforms that guarantee that everyone can speak but nobody can be heard; media that reduce thinking and action to instantaneous opinion, always ready to be washed away by the steady flow of the next day's news. We hope that these pamphlets offer an alternative historical time: bringing moments of the past into the present, and making some critical space in opposition to capitalism's pointless and unceasing dynamic of creation and destruction.

The MayDay Rooms Pamphlet Series brings together reproductions of documents from radical history while offering a space for extended engagement and critical reflections on their contemporary relevance. Each pamphlet will contain newly created content – including essays, poems, and illustrations – set alongside reproductions of materials to which they are responding.

The first two pamphlets in this series arose from an open call for submissions. These have been grouped thematically: the first centres on histories of activist film and photography in the 1970s; the second on the material production and design of printed radical ephemera. Both interrogate the histories of social movements that have disappeared from view, as they were defeated, left by the wayside, or pushed underground. In unearthing this important material, and once again presenting it to the public, we hope to fashion a perspective that allows new social movements to find courage and inspiration in the struggles of those who have come before them.

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MayDay Rooms Pamphlets: 02

Agitprop Notes

In the first vignette of *One Way Street*, Walter Benjamin writes that literary effectiveness can only come into being through a strict alternation between writing and action. He argues that inconspicuous forms such as leaflets, newspapers and placards allow this more than the “pretentious universal gesture of the book.” This second issue of the MayDay Rooms Pamphlet series explores the relationship between action and print media bringing the processes of production and design of political ephemera from our archival collection into the foreground.

When Benjamin noted down this thought in the 1920s, radical publishing was an industrial pursuit. Although placards might be daubed with paint, presses the size of factories printed the newspapers that Lenin extolled, and they were delivered into the hands of the people by parties who hoped to seize state power. The middle decades of the twentieth century saw world-historical shifts that changed all that: the left’s confidence in the Communist Party declined after Khrushchev’s Secret Speech in 1956; in the West a ‘new left’ rose to prominence; resistance to the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons saw the birth of the counterculture; great civil rights movements exploded into being in the US and in Ireland; the decolonial struggle wrapped around the world. Meanwhile, the dreamworld

of full employment shuddered to a halt. When students formed a vanguard in 1968, few predicted that this was just the beginning of the final decline of heavy industry in the West, although the agitators in Italian auto plants might have sensed it.

The end of one stage of industrial capitalism was presaged in the formation of new, informal modes of publishing. In the radical underground a new and unexpected domestication of the technologies of print occurred. The single centralised printers of the old parties gave way to hundreds of Gestetner machines – cast-offs from the new bureaucracies of 1950s offices. In Paris, the most striking graphics produced in the uprising were screenprints by the Atelier Populaire. In Britain, similar poster workshops emerged in squats, while small offset litho machines could outpace the old hand-operated letterpresses that had been favoured by poets and artists.

Tens of thousands of pages were cranked out on these devices. Propaganda was often produced in haste, intended only for the purpose of mobilising people and not to be kept. These informal media covered strike actions, liberation campaigns, local groups and upcoming action. Few publications had individual authors. Instead they appeared under collective names and pseudonyms, or were simply published anonymously.

By considering modes of production in radical publishing, we aim to counter recent attempts to aestheticise the print culture of the 1970s and to commodify its products into artworks ready for the jaws of the market. We see this graphic and cultural production in the service of political action, not the other way around. Primarily, print was a means of communicating widely, using the means available to political groups. Yet these modes of production became integral to how organisations and collectives constituted and reproduced themselves. Groups joined together to set up radical and community printing presses in order to circumnavigate an otherwise commodified and hostile system of media production and distribution, in which it was difficult to publish subversive ideas. Even then, the early years of the underground press were marred by criminal trials on grounds of “obscenity”. Self-organised production and distribution networks emerged from

community centres, squats, radical bookshops, and even comrades’ houses. These became a vital part of the ecology of social movements. There was a dialectical interplay here: not only did these new forms of media serve an increasingly decentralised, subcultural left; but that this new left was forming itself in and through new modes of media, developing from the mass party, to the social movement, to the counter-public sphere.

Both Jess Baines and Nick Thoburn have written about “socialist-” or “communist objects” in describing radical print production. Baines proposes that, “in contrast to the enslaved, sedated and ‘finished’ thing-possession of bourgeois commodity culture, the socialist object would be a co-worker, an active and equal comrade and like its mode of production, enriched the bodies of the socialist project’. The pamphlet is not intended as a static commodity, but as a type of movement and production which gives material form to types of organisation, experimentation, orientation and authority. The contributions to this publication were chosen from an open call. They showcase the variety of print culture during this fractious period by considering the importance of controlling the means of production and communications and demonstrating that ongoing experimentation in forms of propaganda remain vital. Reproductions of original documents from radical history sit alongside these new works, offering an opportunity for extended engagement and critical reflections on their contemporary relevance.

Social Commentating’s *The Irish Question* shows us that political print culture does not have to be relentlessly serious. Instead, content and design can be vivid, funny, cutting, tender and through this, deeply powerful. Resistance Comics, the work of political cartoonist Brian Moore (aka Cormac), was used as a starting point to create a series of responses, to probe and provoke the enduring neo-liberal and imperialist approach to the governance of the North of Ireland by Britain and the Republic of Ireland. Resistance Comics was part of the wider Underground Comix movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Although the movement is most associated with figures such as Robert Crumb in the US, reprints of his comic strips featured in British publications like *The International Times* and *Oz*

magazine. Meanwhile, the French Situationist practice of détournement of comic strips influenced the left print culture in Great Britain and the North of Ireland.

The style and production of Resistance Comics mirrors aesthetic trends in global movements of counterculture but articulates this through local struggles. Screen-printed in rainbow colours in Belfast in the mid-1970s, it offers vibrant narratives of disobedience to British Imperialism and treatment of the people of “Ulstah”. Surrealist images walk the cells of the comic strip giving us lessons on feminism, socialism and anti-imperialism. However, unlike much satire, Cormac’s characters demonstrate a fierce commitment to politics expressing solidarity with the lives of people struggling in the North of Ireland. Social Commentatings’ new work is a kind of détournement, which puts Cormac’s characters in conversation with a series of defeated and sardonic characters, alienated by the present reality in the North of Ireland. Extracts of text in the form of questions, statement and inner-thoughts from the speech bubbles in Resistance Comics such as “speaking as a proxy of the Irish working class, I condemn the capitalist pig dog lackeys of the imperialist etc etc etc” or “and what was happening in the minds of the average British citizen? Them bleeding Irish on telly again.” These are coupled with disinterested observations made by Social Commentating’s sparsely drawn figures. The people in the comics comment on power-sharing, lifestylism, and a deferral to the political solutionism of capitalism, but all hints of rebellion are lost (“we are now so ‘post-protestant, post-catholic and post-sectarian; it goes with our sourdough bread. We are going through a rebrand.”).

Esther McManus’ graphic work *Getting the most out of a duplicator* focuses on Big Flame, and in particular their pamphlet *Agit-Prop Notes* from which our own publication takes its name. Taking up the mantle of the practical and skill-sharing elements of collective production, McManus interweaves fragments of text from the 1970s pamphlet with sequences of new comics. This technique highlights a resonance with contemporary struggles and methods of producing DIY publications, particularly popular stencil duplication methods like Risograph and silkscreen. Instructions such as “put the date at the bottom” are coupled with lines such as “as Marxists we should have

a sense of our own history, extenuating how processes of print and duplication have an important political dimension.” The piece brings these processes and politics into the present, using the form of comics to bridge the gap between Big Flame’s publications and contemporary conditions. The graphics fluctuate between the aesthetic of an instructional manual and that of a scrapbook; it relates the work of the duplicator to that of the machine of choice for contemporary DIY political print-culture, the Risograph.

McManus’ work exemplifies Big Flame’s approach to collective production and low-cost design-principles. Boundaries between activities are not distinct and propaganda, as a medium, by which radicals reproduce themselves and their cultures. The original *Agit-Prop Notes* is reproduced alongside the piece. The pamphlet remarks, “One-learns about duplicating or layout by doing it and then only do the lessons of other people’s experience start to make sense.” McManus builds on this relationship between doing and knowing, and shows the ongoing importance of collective practical experience, productive processes, and knowing the limits and qualities of your physical materials.

Guglielmo Rossi’s essay *You Must Live Your Politics* addresses the intersections of design, politics, and propaganda-making on the radical left in the 1970’s. His study also focuses on materials produced by Big Flame, alongside its splinter group, East London Big Flame. Rossi’s essay refuses contemporary trends, either to simply reanimate the politics of the 1970s, or to aestheticise the products of these political movements into venerated artworks. Instead, he offers a visual and political analysis of activist materials, demonstrating how provisional, low-cost principles of design were formed out of the politics of collective production, and how ‘prefigurative politics’ became decisive in the principles of design. Propaganda and communications are treated throughout as a medium through which political movements flow, and out of which they produce themselves. His essay offers both an account of how the politics of this time differed from earlier radical political movements, with new commitments to libertarianism, inclusiveness, and the politics of everyday life; and an explanation of how the groups involved used emerging print technologies to create the grounds through which this politics could be both lived and communicated.

The essay considers how this nexus of collective making and collective politics can be traced in the ephemera that these movements left behind, albeit in a world in which refiguration never arrived at a figurative politics proper.

The reproductions of materials drawn from the MayDay Rooms Archive that accompanies these new works showcases the different functions of political print production and distribution in the 1970s. Arnie Mintz's illustrations provide a biographical account of working in the print industry in the UK and organising during the Wapping Dispute. Mintz's work shows how workers can subvert print to organise, build their own power and resources, and communicate with workers in other branches of industry. The pamphlet about Union Place in Stockwell shows how skill-sharing around technologies such as print, audio and visual production could help build communities in struggle, moving away from an idea that these technologies are imposed on people, but rather seeing them as the basis of something that people do together. The final archival section reproduces documents illustrating the breadth and variety of radical booksellers, local political presses, newspapers, print workshops, and countercultural libraries in the 1970s.

Agitprop Notes

: *text no. 1/3*

The Irish Question

SOCIAL COMMENTATING







The Irish Question

It's time to lie down and be counted



ARE WE NOT ALL OPPONENTS OF
BRITISH IMPERIALISM?

This week's
sectarian headcount
and the scores are
IN.



UNIONIST DIES
AGED 98



Looks like we WIN
by a head

ARE WE NOT ALL OPPONENTS OF
BRITISH IMPERIALISM?



I self-identify as both Catholic and Protestant.
I am religiously fluid

What are you?

I'm half and half Citizen.

We are now so
post-protestant,
post-catholic and
post-sectarian it goes
with our sourdough

We are going
for a rebrand



SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM. ARE THESE THE
ALTERNATIVES FACING HUMANITY ?
AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH IT?

Call it a refresh.
with the added
smell of capital



We aim to keep
household
income low &
homelessness big



Our new tag line.

Three years without
a government.

Now
that's what I call
power-sharing



*THERE IS NO REVOLUTION BY POXY!
THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING
CLASS IS THE TASK OF THE WORKING
CLASS ITSELF.*

Would you like
to take your seat
yet?



Well not really. I am
getting my
expenses and doing
bugger all.

What about your MLA's salaries?

I was being paid to be
prepared to go back to work. And
boy was I prepared.

— just let me finish
rolling this fag



HEH HEH ANOTHER YEAR AND THE
DICTATORSHIP OF THE BOURGEOISIE
STILL RULES THE FREE WORLD AND I
LIKE IT

Dublin will come and
get us when the market
is right



But you said I would
benefit
economically!



Oops sorry!

How much
£ was the
peace dividend again?



Whatever it was it's
all gone
now



I think it was burnt in the
cash for ash
scandal



*SPEAKING AS A PROXY OF THE IRISH
WORKING CLASS, I CONDEMN THE
CAPITALIST PIG DOG LACKIES OF THE
IMPERIALIST ETC ETC ETC*

You can't. You are the

UNEMPLOYED AND UNEDUCATED

You must accept the
reality
of neo-liberalism



I can't swallow that

And we gave you the

GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

OK people! Pay attention!

I've just been told
everything is
honky dorey



We do love
British style capitalism



Don't be afraid we have
Irish style
capitalism too you know?



It's just a bit
Dublin centric.

AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE
MINDS OF THE AVERAGE BRITISH
CITIZEN?
THEM BLEEDIN IRISH ON TELLY AGAIN.

Is Dana
making a comeback?



I'm turning over
to watch
Strictly



WE DON'T MIND REPUBLICANS OR
LOYALIST BOMBS AND BULLETS. THEY'RE
GETTING NOBODY ANYWHERE AND
DOING NOTHING TO UNITE OR EDUCATE
THE WORKING MAN OF ULSTAH.

Is there any chance of

welfare reform,
better housing,
improvement of local services?



Hang on. hang on.



We don't want you to
recognise any
common interests of
working class people across BOTH
sides of the border

Well that
sounds like
a BAD
idea



*IT'S TIME TO LIE DOWN AND BE
COUNTED*

The sectarian head count announce
final results.

We now have a
MAJORITY

You better have a plan cause
when you get rid of that
border
the fight has only begun



So we are a nation
once again? -



- now the real troubles
start.

VIOLENCE IS ENDEMIC TO CAPITALISM
AN OLD TRADITION IN IRISH POLITICS

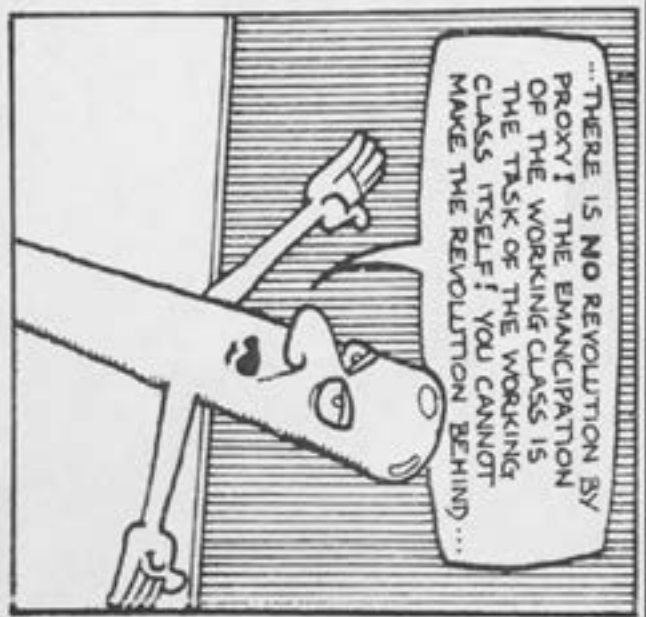
Look:
The remaining piece of the peace
process



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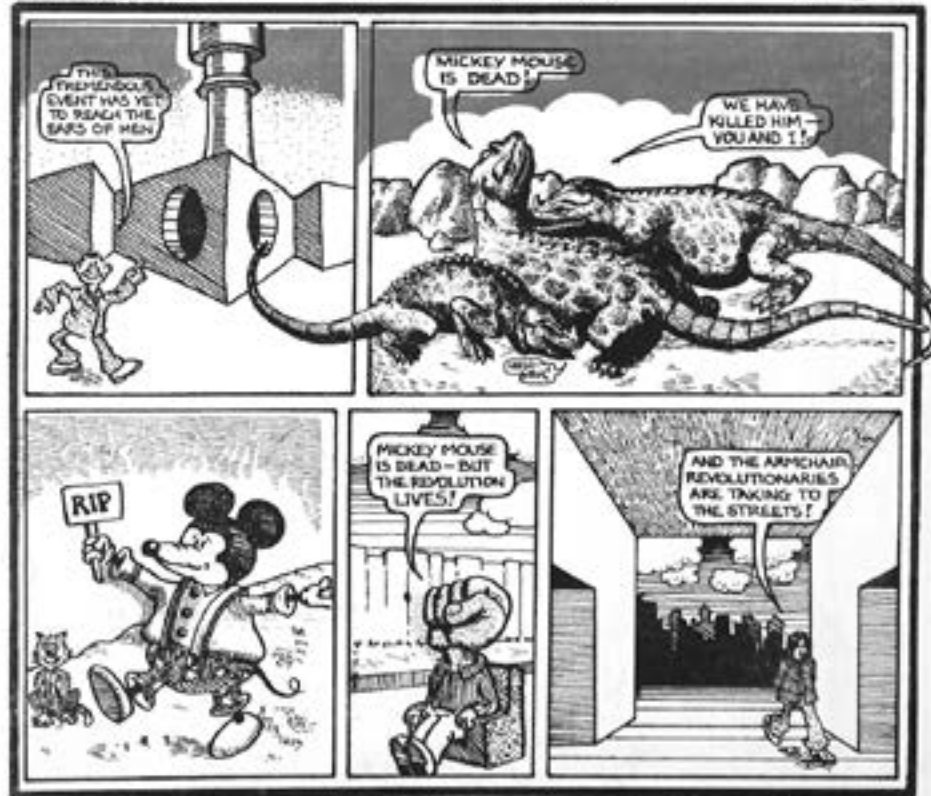






RESISTANCE COMIX

Nr. 10 IN IRELAND THE PRICE IS 10P ELSEWHERE THE PRICE IS 15P



Resistance Comics

Resistance Comics

Resistance Comics hailed from Belfast and ran for ten issues that appeared between 1975 and 1978. They were the work of revolutionary cartoonist Brian Moore (1946-2011). Brian, who used 'Cormac' as his pseudonym, was radicalised by what he saw and experienced on his home streets that were under military occupation, and became a left wing political activist. The characters that Moore invented include Paddy O'Looney and Red Biddy; the issues contain a regular comic strip titled 'Revolution by Proxy'. The cartoons were incisive and hilarious, showing the reality of living under British rule and exposing the contradictions of the operations of the regime in the North of Ireland. After Resistance Comics, Moore's work appeared in An Phoblacht, Republican News, Socialist Challenge and Fortnight magazine. A collection, *Cormac Strikes Back: Resistance cartoons from the North of Ireland*, was published by Information on Ireland (IOI) towards the end of 1982.



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF PADDY O'LOONEY



DO YOU SEE SPECIAL BRANCH MEN IN EVERY PUB? S.A.S. AT EVERY CORNER? ARE YOU SURROUNDED BY TOUTS?

DO YOU THINK YOU ARE A THORNTON?

I'D RATHER BE A LIVE THORNTON THAN DEAD BANK!

DO YOU THINK YOU ARE A THORNTON?

I DON'T TAKE ANY MORE! EVERYWHERE I GOOK - POLICE, S.A.S., AND YOU ASSHOLES!

POOR KID'S CRACKING! TUBERCULAR! SHOOK TREATMENT WILL HELP!

HEY, BRADY! IT'S YOUR BROTHER! GET OFF YOUR FEET AND GET THE THROCK OUT!

WHAT?

EDITORIAL DIGRESSION #1
WE ARE TOLD THAT CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND CERTAIN POLITICAL GROUPINGS FIND IN THIS BLAGGARDY A REFLECTION OF THEIR OWN IDEAS AND NOTIONS. NONSENSE! THIS TRUE PROVISION - WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO BE WORTH OUR ATTENTION?

BUT IF YOU REALLY ARE A THORNTON SUPPOSE I TELL YOU THE SECRET... WELL, YOU'LL SHAME!

WHAT'S THE SECRET... WITH DEAR MURPHY'S MURPHY SPIN IN THE BAR...

EXCUSE ME, MURPHY... COULD YOU REPEAT THAT FOR ME, PLEASE?

NOW, SIR - WHAT CAN I GET FOR YOU?

DICK TRACY??

IS ANYTHING WINGING OUT, YOU'VE GONE BOUTE VAGUE?

NO - NO - IT'S JUST THAT YOU LOOK LIKE... NO, YOU DON'T... BUT FOR AN INSTANT I THOUGHT... AN INSTANT! TWO INSTANTS!

THE PRINTS? CRASH UP NOW, SIR!

SHERLOCK HOLMES?? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?

THE FIRST TIME THAT YOU, THE "RESISTANCE COMIX" FROM THIS UNFORTUNATE TION YOU WON'T BE THE TWO CHARACTERS LESS, I HUMBLLY APOLOGISE, IST ETC. ETC.

HAT IS PADDY O'LOONEY, THE IRISH SECTION OF THE SIXTH INTERGALACTIC REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT... THE ONE WHO IS NOT IN A BLACK HAT IS RED BIDDY...

RED BIDDY IS A FEMINIST AND THE SCOURGE OF IRISH MALE CHAUVINISM!

YOU CAN SNEER IF YOU LIKE, CYNIC, BUT YOU CAN'T IGNORE HIS UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO LEFT-WING LITERATURE!

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO...? CAN HE POSSIBLY BE ALLUDING TO THAT TURGID SERIES OF ARTICLES, "NOTES FROM A REBEL SNUG"? OR PERHAPS THE BEST-SELLER, "A BARROOM ACTIVIST"?

I AM, OF COURSE, REFERRING TO HIS MIOUS, BUT UNPUBLISHED, ILLUSTRATED "THE ROLE OF THE BAR STOOL IN THE FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM"

HEY HELLA! IT'S BAD ENOUGH HAVING TO LIVE IN A TREE WITHOUT GETTING THE LIKES OF YOU COMING OUT AND URINATIN' ALL OVER THE PLACE!

I QUOTE FROM THE OBITUARY: "AT HIS OWN REQUEST HIS REMAINS WERE CREMATED, PLACED IN A PAPER BAG AND FLUSHED DOWN A TOILET (THE GENTS) IN O'D'S BAR DURING A SINGSONG"

SHIT! HAVEN'T SHOWN SUCH A MESS SINCE THE LAST BRIT RAID!

MURPHY'S... HIS... PROCKET... A. MR... A MAN... SURE... PLACE.

BY CLOSING THE THE BODY, MIND AND SOUL OF MURPHY WERE FREELY DISTRIBUTED OVER THE FLOOR OF THE SALOON; AND BEFORE ANOTHER DAYSWEPT GREYENED THE EARTH HAD BEEN SWEEP AWAY WITH THE SAND, THE BEER, THE BUTTS, THE GLASS, THE MATCHES, THE SPITS, THE VOMIT.

AND SO IT GOES

TELL YOU HIS STOCK... E. INIA.

FOR SOMEONE THIS IS THE END

agression

HE!
HE!



2

A L'ATTAQUE!



3

GLOP!

?!?



4

BURP!

PTOU!



← THIS STRIP IS FROM THE PAPER «IRLANDE LIBRE» WHICH IS PRODUCED IN FRANCE BY SOME PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT THE IRISH STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION.

WE HAD INTENDED PRINTING THE NAMES OF POLITICAL COMICS PRINTED IN BRITAIN AND THE ADDRESSES WHERE THEY COULD BE OBTAINED - BUT WE CAN'T FIND THE ADDRESSES SO WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE IT TO ISSUE NO 10.

BUT, IF YOU'RE INTO THAT SORT OF THING YOU SHOULD GET "INTRODUCTION TO CHILE (A CARTOON HISTORY)": IT WAS DRAWN BY CHRIS WELCH AND IS GOOD.

IT IS PUBLISHED BY BOLIVAR PUBLICATIONS 10 RODERICK ROAD LONDON NW3 2NL

BUT REMEMBER - COMIX ROT YER BRAIN!





CLASS WAR PRESENTS THE BIRTH OF MOTORMAN PART 2

THE GHETTOS WERE ESTABLISHED AS HOUSING AREAS. FOREIGN LAWS DID NOT APPLY AND THE FORCES OF IMPERIALIST "LAW AND ORDER" DID NOT APPLY. BUT THIS SITUATION COULD NOT LAST INDEFINITELY. OUTSIDE IN THE FREE WORLD, LIFE WENT ON LIKE THIS...



SOME BRITISH POLITICIANS DID NOT SEEM TO KNOW WHETHER THE HOUSING AREAS EXISTED OR NOT. ON 11/2/71 IAN GILMOUR (PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE) SAID, IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION IN PARLIAMENT....

POWER

THERE IS NO AREA OF NORTHERN IRELAND WHICH THE SECURITY FORCES DO NOT ENTER.

MY DECISION TO ENTER THE HOUSING AREAS WILL BE TAKEN BY THE MILITARY NOT THE POLITICIANS.

1971 21 MAR

SIX WEEKS LATER REGGIE MAUSLINE (FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REAL ESTATE FUND OF AMERICA, FRIEND AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATE OF CONVICTED SWINDLER JERRY HODGEMAN) SAID....

GILMOUR IS A LIAR BUT REGGIE IS A CHEAP SWINDLER WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUTH AND LIES.

AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING, IN THE MINDS OF THE AVERAGE BRITISH CITIZEN??

MUCH THE SAME AS USUAL.

LET US NOT FORGET THAT THE BRITS WERE HERE TO PROTECT US.

OUR FAVORITE METHOD OF PROTECTING THE TRUTH IS TO WRECK THEIR MINDS AND SHOOT THEM.

JUST LIKE THE RULERS OF THE SIXTY YEARS.

MEANWHILE A LOT OF DEATH WAS FLOATING ON THE SURFACE. THE TRICK FOUND THEIR POLITICAL PROFESSORS IN THE SDLP.

THE GENERAL AIM OF THE SDLP IS THE UNIFICATION OF IRELAND.

BELIEVE THAT AND YOU'LL BELIEVE ANYTHING.

MEANWHILE UNIONIST BACKWOODSMEN AND LOYALIST LUNATICS BEGAN TO SCREAM AGAINST THE GROWING STRENGTH OF THE IRA.

WIPE THEM OUT!

HANG THEM!

SHOOT THEM!

BRING THEM!

AND THEN BEGAN THE SHORT REGIME OF THE PATHETIC, BUT DISGUSTING, BRIAN FAULKNER.

1976 Brian Faulkner is really a nice dog and basically quite decent minded etc.

WHY DOES NOBODY TRUST ME?

MAKING THIS REVOLTING SPECIMEN PRIME MINISTER, SEALING IRELAND'S FATE.

RESISTANCE COMIX

DRAWN & PRINTED IN BELFAST

NO. 3 10p



RESISTANCE COMICS

NO 4 12 PAGE SPECIAL!! 10p

RESISTANCE COMICS

No 4 10p



AMAZING!!!
TWELVE PAGES!
HO-HO HEY-HEY WEE-WE

RESISTANCE COMIX

NEW ARTISTS FROM THE STREETS OF BELFAST!

CALL BY OWN WORK

RESISTANCE COMIX
c/o BOX 21
SIOBHAN PHOENIX
ANDICA DR. FALLS RD. BELFAST 12

MARK SPARK
a comic for the working class
vol. 21 no. 4

A CHILD OF TEN COULD UNDERSTAND THIS. GET A CHILD OF TEN. I CAN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD OF IT!

STRANGE MARKS IN THE NEXT TWO PANELS!

WELL, FOLKS, HERE WE ARE WITH ISSUE NUMBER FOUR.

I NEED HARDLY TELL YOU THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN PRODUCING THIS RAG IN BELFAST

CONSTANT HARASSMENT BY THE BRITZ!

PERMANENT FEAR OF ASS-ASS-IN-ATION

QUIVER

SHAKE

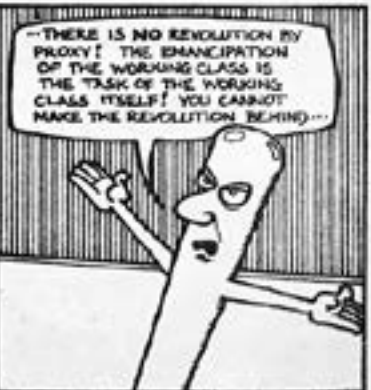
BUT MAINLY IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO DRAW AFTER SITTING ALL DAY IN A PUB.

TIRED AS A NEWB

REVOLUTION BY PROXY

Part 3

THE STORY (?) SO FAR...
 BILLY IS HOPING TO GO TO
 TO BEING WHILE WHO IS HELD
 CAPTIVE BY "TERRIBLE" THIS
 BECAUSE HE IS ADDRESSING THE
 PROBLEM. AS THOUGH PROXY
 BUT'S CONSIDER WITH CARE IF
 YOU'RE THE COME, ESPECIALLY
 I WOULDNT WANT TO RETURN
 ALL THIS STUFF EVER AGAIN





Big Flame: Agitprop Notes

Big Flame started out as a rank-and-file newspaper in the early 1970s, and gradually developed into a revolutionary socialist feminist organisation. It continued to issue a monthly paper and in each edition the following 'Basic Points' were reiterated: building a political practice based on the mass of the working class, not merely its representative layers; combating reformism; 'the social factory'; class first, party second; for the autonomy of each specifically oppressed sector; and a non-sectarian and non-authoritarian political method. Big Flame groups were soon established in London, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. Close links were forged with Italian struggles and ideas through relationships with Lotta Continua. Big Flame was particularly notable for its internationalist perspective and for the key role it played in supporting the 'autonomous movements' of women, Black and LGBTQ people.

Agit-Prop Notes was compiled from Big Flame's internal documents in 1979. The sections of the pamphlet reproduced here focus on print production, however the pamphlet also includes a wide spectrum of 'do's and don'ts' for political activities ranging from organising a local demo or writing a leaflet, to organising a creche or winning a strike.



AGIT PROP NOTES

1.



THIS PAGE HAS BEEN DUPLICATED USING AN ELECTROSTENCIL

YOU CAN WRITE FREEHAND, USING A BLACK FELT PEN OR:

This is typed with an electric typewriter, using a good ribbon. You can get it even crisper with a carbon ribbon - but these are a bit expensive. The advantage of an electric typewriter is that you get "even impression" - ie the keys hit the ribbon and the paper with equal force. On a manual typewriter, the force of the keys depends on how hard you hit them - and no-one hits each key with equal force, so some letters print more clearly than others. As you can see from the next example:

This is done with a small portable typewriter. It's really nice. Use typewriter, with a better ribbon, and hitting the keys a lot harder. This improves your printing, but doesn't do the typewriter much good!

AND YOU CAN USE PHOTOS, WITHIN LIMITS:

This photo is cut from a newspaper. To print with it has to be "high contrast" - ie clear difference between black & white parts of the photo.



This photo is cut from a glossy magazine - usually blue print better (working with a blue photo is just horrible!!)



CARTOONS, OR DRAWINGS, PRINT BEST OF ALL:



LETTERING CAN LOOK BETTER

Using a STENCIL

BUT QUITE A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE THE KUGLER HAND WRITTEN STUFF!

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF A DUPLICATOR

Big Flame Agitprop No. 1

The writing you are reading now has been phototypeset by Leeds Alternative Publications, our friendly movement lay-out merchants. It has been set in 18 point News 9. "News 9" is the name of the typeface. "18 point" is the size. "Getting the best out of a duplicator" has been set in "36 point News 9 bold" and "Big Flame Agitprop No. 1" has been set in "18 point News 9 bold". All this writing has been justified - so the columns are parallel down both sides. It can be left like ordinary typing if you want, like these lines are, where the right hand column is ragged or uneven. It looks more professional to have it justified, but you need access to some pretty modern machinery, and that costs money.

For a more professional look, get your text phototypeset. You should find out about the various sizes & styles of lettering available at different typewriters. Typesetting does up the rest of your work.



Here's another photograph - again, it is a high contrast picture, so it should look OK.

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF A DUPLICATOR

In the practical session you will learn how to actually use the machines. This can't really be taught by writing instructions on paper. All I'm doing here is - outlining what you should do before you get near the duplicator

- giving a few tips about what to do when some of the usual things go wrong.

BEFORE YOU GET TO THE DUPLICATOR

The stencil

The stencil is far more important than most people realize. If you go to an ordinary office supplies shop you will see various types of stencil, from around 15 to 15g each, and people usually take the cheapest. My advice is buy stencils in bulk (in boxes of 50) direct from Renee Pickers. You have to decide what kind of stencil you want. The ones you get in office supply shops may have one or more of these disadvantages:

- they are only suitable for short runs
- they lack carbon backing paper (so you can't read what you are typing)
- the perforation on the backing sheet is in the wrong place (see later)
- they are incompletely marked for paper size (see later)
- they are equivalent to Renee's cheapest, but they cost twice as much
- they may not be multi-head (see later).

If you buy from Renee (or even if you buy from an office supplier) you should:

- ask for a multi-head stencil. This means that you can use it on either a Renee or a Gestetner machine. It's worth getting multi-heads if you ever have to send a stencil away for someone else to duplicate, or if you have access to both kinds of machine.

- think about how many copies you will usually want to run off. You can get a very cheap Renee stencil (about 5g each) which is said to be only suitable for short runs (eg up to 500) - but with care, and only using it once, you can get 2 or 5,000 out of them. The problem is that these are only suitable for Renee machines (unless you want to cut Gestetner holes in yourself) - ie they are not multi-head. Their brand number is "Renee R420X", I think; just check that they are the cheapest, if you want them.

- for a longer run stencil, which is multi-head, get the "5850", sometimes called "BAG" or "Novatype". These are about 11g each. There's an even posher type, which is more expensive, called "Dupatype" or something equally original.

- check that the stencil is fully marked (the 420 and 585 are). This means that it has numbers all down the side, and various dotted lines marking "A4", "A5" and "A6". These relate to the size of paper you are using. What you are reading now is printed on A4 sized paper. A5 is half A4, and A6 is half A5. (By the same token, A3 is twice A4, and A2 - a handy poster size - is twice A3). Good stencils will also have "ASL" and "ASL" markings, telling you where to type if you have put the stencil in the typewriter lengthways, and you want to produce an A5 or A6 print size.

The typewriter

It is a golden rule of any kind of printing that the quality of the original makes a fantastic difference to the quality of the final print. If you type the stencil badly, you'll get a rough print. It's the same as on the front cover - if you use a tacky typewriter, it won't print very well. On a stencil you must ensure that you are cutting it cleanly. This means:

- a) make sure you cut the typewriter to stencil. If it doesn't have that adjustment, remove the ribbon completely. People forget this as often. If you type through the ribbon (ie you leave it set as though it was for typing on paper) you won't cut the stencil properly, and it won't print well.
- b) if the typewriter has an impression adjustment (usually only on electric typewriters), set it so that you get the best cut. Some have four or five settings. You want to cut the stencil without beaming out the centres of the "o's". If I set this typewriter on its softest setting, it types like this, and never knocks out the "o's", but types a bit faintly. If I set it on its other, harder setting, it types better, but occasionally kills an "o" shaped letter.

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF A...

... 10

- a) if you use a small portable typewriter like this one, you will get a fainter and rather uneven type on the printed page. Try and avoid using these little portables, unless you have no other option. If you have to use them, hit the keys very hard. This hurts the fingers, ruins the typewriter, but it keeps the reader with you a bit longer than this kind of fainter typing.
- a) if you are in the fortunate position of being able to go and buy yourself a typewriter TAKE GREAT CARE. It really isn't worth buying a £40 new portable, unless you never want to type a stencil. You'd be better buying a second-hand office manual - which you might hunt down at about £90 or £50. These are very cumbersome, but, assuming they've been reconditioned, can be very good machines. If you can spare £900 or so, buy a new, reasonably robust, portable. The Adler 75 (I think that's the model) is excellent (about £115) - easily portable, cuts a mean stencil, and very reliable. Olympia do an equivalent which is good too. Don't be tempted by the fact that you can get for the same money (or less) a portable electric. Although you'd get them in and they have, they are actually run by rubber bands, and they break down after three years of moderate use. No self-respecting typewriter repairer will touch them. For £200 you can get a pretty clapped out office electric - but don't buy one unless you are willing to take out a £30 a-year service contract, because it will break down regularly, and if it doesn't (ie if the machinery is sound) it will have been sold you cheap because the typeface is out of alignment, and that is very irritating to read if you are a graphics fetishist. Finally, if you are buying for an organization which has a few bob, check with your local education department whether you can plug into their educational discount bulk purchasing scheme. You'll get 50% knocked off - so you can get the best Adler office machine (131c) for £450 now, or a semi-portable Adler, robust, electric (Gabrielle 5000) for about £250, or an office manual for £175. Never be tempted to buy an IBM golf-ball typewriter: they break down frequently, and IBM have a stranglehold over supplies so they are difficult to get repaired. Sorry to go on at such length - but we've wasted about £500 buying crappy typewriters where I work!
- a) be sure to keep your typewriter keys clean. Especially when you type a lot of stencils, the centres of the keys clog up. This makes the next stencil out less cleanly, and if you are typing on paper with a ribbon, the "a's", "o's" etc won't type cleanly. You can buy special brushes and cleaning fluid from office suppliers - but otherwise a stiff tooth brush over the keys will improve things a lot.

Below the typing

People are less keen on reading things which look messy. Even people who type a good stencil and know how to use a duplicator reduce their effectiveness by not paying any attention to the way they "lay-out" their material on the stencil. A few basic rules are:

- use as many sub-headings (in small type) and major headings (in capitals) as you can;
- this breaks up the text and signals people about the exciting things to come;
- leave at least two lines space between paragraphs - this also helps break up the text;
- leave three spaces after every full stop;
- especially when typing leaflets, break up the text with "points" - these can be letters (a), (b), (c), etc) or numbers, or stars (*), or hyphens (-) or whatever;
- underline or use capitals for important bits in the text (though this can be overdone, especially by people who think that almost everything they are writing is of CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE, so you end up reading the text at the top of your voice);
- make sure you have a bottle of correction fluid at hand whenever you are typing a stencil. Usually it is red, and it smells like nail varnish. Avoid the white version, because you might get it confused with the white stuff you can get for correcting ordinary type on paper. Use the correction fluid - it is irritating to read lots of typing errors (as you will have found with the errors I've overlooked in this piece).
- to make the duplicating easier, start typing the stencil at about line 2, and stop well above the "14" line, at about line 66. This is so you can adjust the print position on the machine.
- leave a good margin on both sides of the paper, especially if many sides are

being stapled together. Otherwise you lose the beginning of each line in the staple.

- number each page, and put the article's heading at the top of each page. This makes the job of the duplicator easier, and helps readability when various articles are being put in the same publication;
- put a date at the bottom. As marxists, we should have a sense of history!

Other techniques

You can do drawings and writing on a stencil, as well as typing. It isn't easy to get a good result, but good artists can do wonderful things. You can buy a "stylus" for writing on stencils, but mine always turn out to be too sharp or too blunt, so I use a fine or medium point biro. The trick is to cut the stencil, but to avoid tearing it. You can use lettering stencils (like on the front cover) if you want that kind of appearance.

The electrostencil is the liberation of the duplicator. The front cover illustrates its wide potential. With a well produced electrostencil you can get results almost as good as offset litho printing (except that it is nowhere near as good with photos, as you can see). When preparing your art-work, you should concentrate on getting the images as black and white as possible. On the leaflet attached here the lettering was done in part with a biro, and the lines were drawn with a red felt pen. To make things worse, the stencil wasn't made too well - but it shows what you can do. It's worth tracking down an electrostencil machine. Some office suppliers provide an electrostencil service, as do some offset printers. The Gestetner company (branches in most cities) usually does them (costs £1.75p) - and some political groups, community resource centres, Community Relations Councils etc have them, and let you use them cheap (eg 50p). It really is worth the slight extra trouble of preparing and designing, and then waiting a day or so for the stencil to be made - people are much more likely to read something which looks interesting than ordinary duplicated type. This is especially true of leaflets. It is worrying how many socialists write all the "correct" things, and never get them read because the text looks so bad.

GETTING OVER THE MACHINE

Paper

Often people don't realise that your duplicating success is quite seriously influenced by the paper you are trying to print on. Watch out for the following:

- usually, the cheaper the paper, the more trouble you have on the duplicator.
- paper is usually sold by weight. The most common cheap duplicating paper is 70 gm per square metre (written "70 gm" or "70 gm²"). If you have to use this, try and buy the recycled variety (often sold by Friends of the Earth) - this is cheaper than Craxley (the variety most commonly sold by office suppliers) and better for the trees. But cheap, light paper has these disadvantages:
 - (a) it is less suitable for duplicating on both sides, since the text shows through the paper,
 - (b) especially on a Roneo duplicator, it tends to stick on the drum - ie it doesn't "peel off" so well, though this can be overcome (see below),
 - (c) it is more difficult to "fan" - ie the sheets tend to stick together, so a number of sheets go through the machine at once, and you can waste a lot if you are duplicating on two sides
 - (d) it makes a lot of fluff, which you don't see because it gets pushed into the bottom of the duplicator, where it can gum up the works over a long period.
- heavier paper (usually 90 gm) overcomes these problems, and makes duplicating a lot easier, and improves readability. It is, however, more expensive
- a compromise is either to buy Roneo Novaprint, which is somewhere between 70 and 90 gm, but isn't much cheaper than Gestetner's High White Media (80gm), or to have stocks of both types, 70 and 90 gm - using the light stuff for one-sided jobs (eg leaflets) or things where readability isn't so important, and the heavier stuff for more important things;
- it is well worth phoning round paper suppliers to compare prices (remember to check weights), and to buy in bulk - you'd be surprised how prices vary. Your union branch, rack and file group, political group etc should hold a stock of paper and stencils. Only the rich or foolish buy from high street office suppliers.
- remember you can get coloured paper, which can liven things up a bit.

Trouble with the machine

Normally, you will be using either a Roneo or a Gestetner machine. I use a Roneo almost all the time, but I got the impression that you have less trouble with Gestetners. Most of the "troubleshooting" tips apply to Roneos.

- 1) Paper not feeding off : This is the most common fault. It might be partly because the paper is damp (I should have emphasised under "paper" that you should keep it in a dry, but not hot, place) and/or because it is light weight paper and/or because you haven't fanned it enough. Assuming it is none of these, have you:
 - got the weights down at the back end of the paper in the tray?
 - got the adjustment right on the adjustment knob? Is does the top of the paper overlap with the paper flap on the stencil head?
 - over-loaded the drum? If so, you'll have to patiently remove each sheet until enough ink has been absorbed from the drum;
 The final solution to this problem is to put selotape flaps on the stencil's head, extending the amount of the stencil head which is in contact with the paper as it comes off the drum.
- 2) Dirty back of the paper : clean the impression roller. If the impression roller is jammed in the "up" position, remove the drum and clean the paper out of the teeth.
- 3) Paper not being pushed through under the drum : you may have jammed the tray up too hard - release it, and then bring it up more gently. If the rollers aren't moving you've got problems. Sometimes they start again if you switch the motor off. It can help to remove the drum and clean things up.
- 4) Handle turns freely but drum won't move : take the side off, and you'll see how the handle mechanism works - slip it back into place.
- 5) Sludgy copy : you're running out of ink! This is particularly frequent with Gestetners, where you have to pump the ink up manually. Remember with Gestetners that you can set the inking bar for ink to flow at different points of the drum, so get the ink through at the relevant part. Otherwise set the ink to come through at the centre of the bar.
- 6) Spots of ink on copy : ink is escaping round the side of the stencil and sticking on parts of the machine. Stop duplicating, find the offending ink, and clean it off.
- 7) Faint copy, plenty of ink in drum : on Gestetners, this may be because the inking bar is clogged up. Remove it and leave it in a bucket of cleaning fluid overnight, and hope that this will clean it. Or get it pressure washed. Alternatively, it may be because the "skin" round the drum has stopped functioning. On a Roneo, if you are using a cotton "handloom pad", these need changing every three months or so - it is well worth using a "silk" pad instead, because the keep cleaner and last a year or so.
- 8) Electrical faults/motor faults : Sometimes a mechanically minded person can sort these out - otherwise call in an engineer from the manufacturer.


Remember

- to check that the paper is correctly aligned : move the tray so the margin is right on both sides of the paper
- to leave a Roneo machine with the drum upwards, otherwise ink will seep through and gum up the motor
- to keep everything as clean as possible : buy a tin of cleaning fluid
- to fan the paper thoroughly before you put it in
- never try and force anything if it goes wrong : keep calm : get help.


Good luck.

LAYOUT MADE EASY

This is meant to be a few simple guides to layout for those who have to sometimes prepare artwork to be either printed, or duplicated via an electro-stencil

- 1) **TYPING**- Use if at all possible an electric typewriter with a carbon ribbon to give a clear black print like this - **not a rubbish portable typewriter**. An I.B.M. golf ball is ideal because it means you can change the type if you want - Make sure the keys are clean
- 2) **LETTRASET**- The simplest way of getting large writing for headings. The main problem is getting it straight. You start off by drawing a faint pencil line on a piece of clean white paper. Now if you look at the sheet of lettraset, under each letter is two dashes like this . In fact there's whole lines of dashes. Every time you add a new letter to the word make sure that the dashes are on the pencil line and when you rub on the letter it will be roughly in line. To get the letters evenly spaced most people rely on eyesight but if your 'eye' for that kind of thing is bad then rub the dashes onto the paper as well and then for the next letter place it so that its left hand dash just touches the previous letter's right hand dash - this gives an even spacing between letters. Below are some examples

Good Wonky Uneven

A biro or not too sharp pencil can be used for rubbing on the letters - a biro that's run dry is ideal. Having got the letters on paper they can easily peel off again - so place a ruler over them and then run your fingers along the ruler pressing down - that secures them in place. Now often lettraset develops cracks in it like this  as its put on (especially if its not been looked after - **DO LOOK AFTER IT !!**). The answer to that is to ink in the cracks - if possible using a very fine black pen like a ROTRING - but there's cheaper thicker pens that are adequate. Once the ink is dry rub out the pencil line or if you've put on the spacing dashes then cut the line off.

One of the problems with lettraset is that sooner or later you run out of one letter on the sheet - like in Nottingham where we've had lots of County Council Cuts there's always a shortage of C's. Solution - use other letters - like turning a Q into a C by carefully cutting off the bit of the letter you don't need from the back of the lettraset sheet before rubbing it on. If you don't get it quite right you can always ink a bit in. There's many possibilities - W's to P's or even an upside down **A** becomes an **A** with a bit of inking in

Finally on lettraset remember that there's many different sizes and types - sometimes it looks better to use lots of different ones - but sometimes its good to always use the same type. **AND** there's more to lettraset than just letters and numbers - like:-



FOR SPEED A GOOD BLACK FELT TIP

1) Other Headings

- 4) **PASTE - UP** -> Use Cow Gum ... Use Cow Gum ... **AND NO OTHER GLUE**
BECAUSE other glue's make the paper crinkle as they dry
BECAUSE Cow Gum dries slowly and gives you time to move the artwork into position - shuffle it around a bit.
BECAUSE if ten days later you decide you want to change the artwork you can peel it off in one piece. If you can't it means you've put too much gum on) I DO NOT HAVE SPACES IN COW GUM
 Using either a special spatula ? or any old knife, spread a little gum round the edge of the paper with typing or lettraset on (the back of course) and then place it in position on whatever sheet of paper or card you are laying out on. When you are sure its in position then rub it down by pressing on the edges with a ruler
- 5) **Cleaning Up**- Minimise it by using clean rather than greasy hands. Wipe out greasy marks and splotches with Soapak (or Tippex) To get rid of surplus gum - when its dry get a small ball of dry Cow Gum and roll it over the surplus gum on the layout - it gathers up the surplus (yet another reason for using it)
- 6) **GETTING THINGS STRAIGHT** - You can buy (2p a sheet) special sheets of paper with grids drawn in yellow lines which don't come out in the printing process - they make it much easier to position your artwork and when you've finished with the artwork you can peel it off and use the sheet again. Otherwise you have to fiddle around with rulers and set squares and perhaps draw your own pencil lines on.
- 7) **GENERAL POSITIONING**- Don't try and put your artwork too close to the edge of the page.
BECAUSE it makes the page look cluttered.
BECAUSE when a sheet of paper goes through an off-set litho or duplicator it is held in position by Grippers which hold on to the top 1/4" or so. You **CANNOT** print on the top 1/4"
BECAUSE on some machines the paper also passes under rollers on its edge and these may smudge anything printed on the very edge. In general try and leave at 1/4" border clear round the edge
 Usually it looks better if all the typing is "justified" to the left hand margin like I've been doing for the last 16 or so lines and not wandering around like I was at first

JUSTIFIED

Headings and sub-headings shouldn't be placed any odd where - they should either be level with the left edge

CENTRED

of the typing or else 'centred' roughly in the middle of the type - As a rule of thumb - centring works better for short headings

- 8) **CANNIBALISM**- Layout takes time and lettraset costs money - save time and money by pinching other peoples layout - headings, cartoons, photos.

9) **PHOTOS**- You can't print direct from ordinary photos - they have to be "screened" which means turning them into lots of little dots - so that black areas on the photo become heavy concentrations of dots and grey areas become lesser concentrations. To do this you need to know basic photographic print making and have access to a dot screen. Photos stolen from other publications can be used direct because they've already been screened.

- 10) **Out and Sides**- Often it helps to box in sections you want to stand out (as above) - either by Rotring pen or by lettraset or use lines to separate different articles in a paper - read the Daily Mirror to see how the 'press' do it. Generally keep different articles or different sections in rectangular blocks - experimental layout can be excellent and can be terrible - read Temporary Headings (R.A.R.) for examples of both.

PROCESS CAMERA

This page is to show you the use of the process camera and give a few ideas for layout.

This is all **type** in 10" columns. An extra 2" is allowed for the lines on either side. Thus the total space of 4 columns is 12". The typing and illustrations have been placed up and down to 7". This leaves 12" for margins.

The spacing being used is 6/10 for dots in italics.

The final layout was reduced on the process camera and a black and white copy made. This copy was then used to make an aluminum plate.

The process camera can reduce and enlarge. You don't have to do a full page - you can do individual sections or drawings, etc.

LAY OUT

Here are a few ideas on layout. They are not final, just suggestions.

Use big black lines across the end of each line. This makes sure that the reader knows the line is finished.

When making lists of items or points use dots or stars to make items stand out.

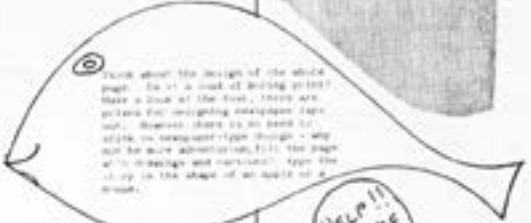
- God Bless The Queen
- Salute For Pope
- Salute Hitler

Monster snail dies

The world's largest snail dies. It is made of metal and is used to make snail shells. It is the only snail dies in the world. It is made in the U.S.A. and is the best snail dies in the world. It is made in the U.S.A. and is the best snail dies in the world.

BOWL

Headlines don't have to be horizontal - they can be vertical or in the slant.



Think about the design of the whole page. Is it a good looking piece? Have a look at the fish. There are pictures for designing newspaper layout. However there is no need to stick to newspaper type design - you can be more adventurous. Fill the page with drawings and cartoons. Try the story in the shape of an oval or a circle.

LEAFLESS



The thicker the lines, the more attention it gets.

Don't forget to allow space between columns and for margins.

Really important quotes can be letterboxed and boxed-in.

If you are stapling sheets together remember to leave a bigger margin on the left-hand side on the first page, and on the right-hand side of the second page.

Don't be afraid to cut out from magazines, comics, papers etc. If you look carefully they are full of good line illustrations.



LETRASTONE

Have you used Letrastone?

★★★★★

★★★★★

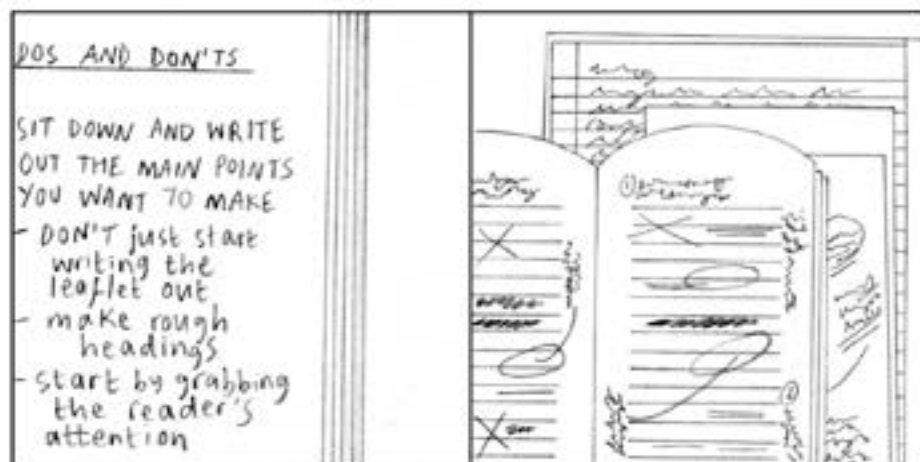
★★★★★

Getting The Most Out of a Duplicator

ESTHER McMANUS

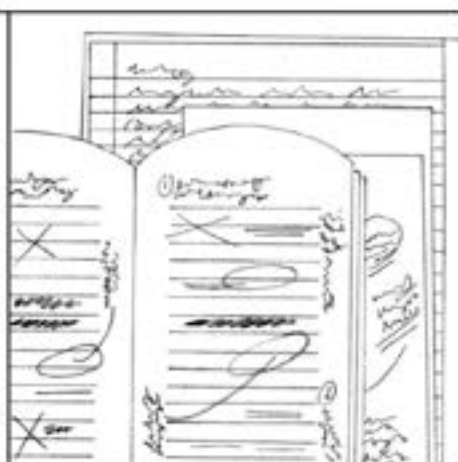
THE BEST NEWSPAPER IS THE ONE YOU MAKE YOURSELF

WRITING

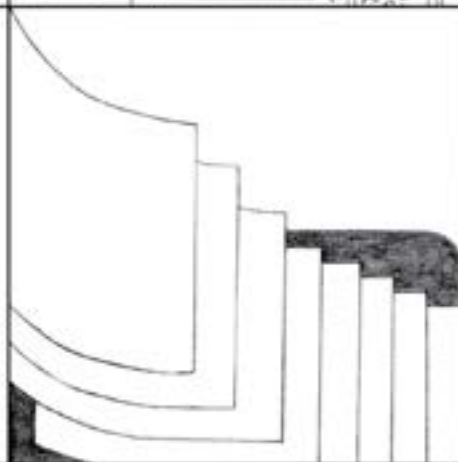


LAYOUT

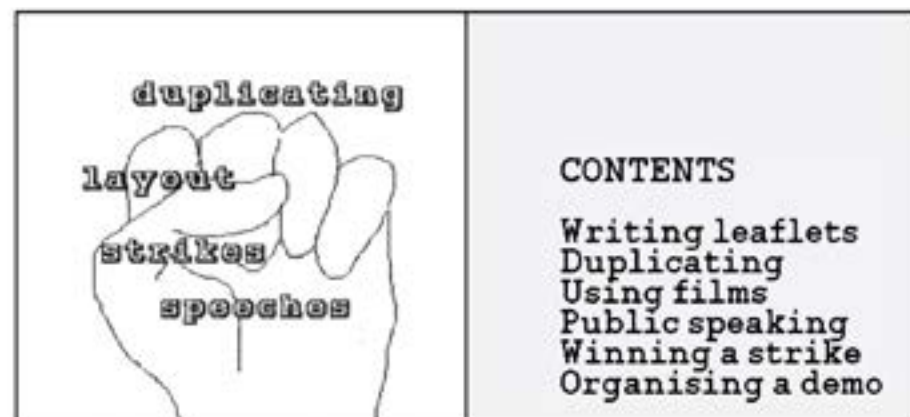
DISCUSSION



PRINTING



WE CAN CREATE EVERYTHING WE NEED



HEAR AND FORGET
SEE AND REMEMBER
DO AND KNOW

JULY
1980



Put a date
at the bottom:

**As Marxists
we should
have a sense
of history.**

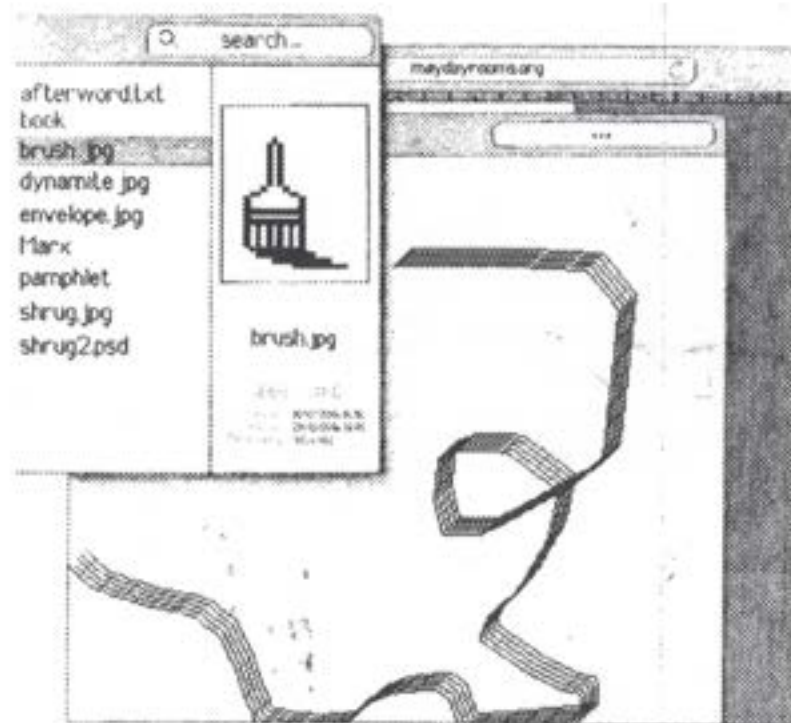
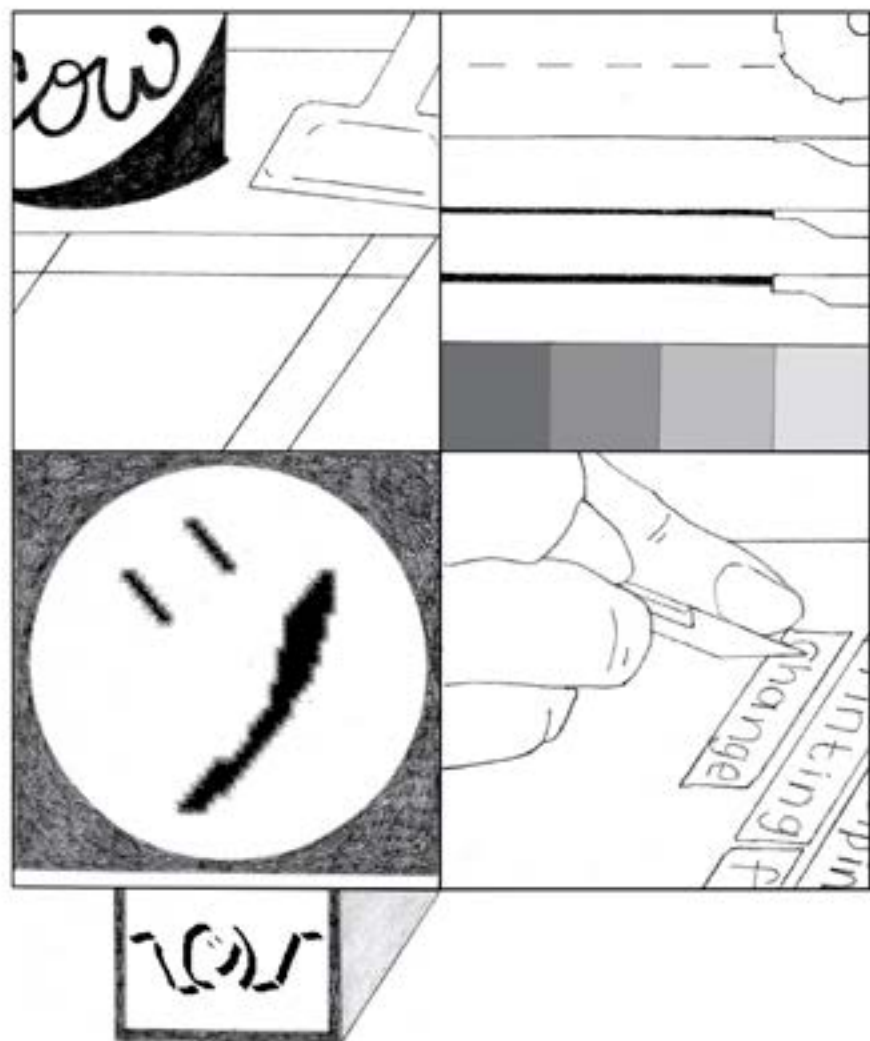
Don't use long
or unfamiliar
words or jargon.

The amount of
jargon the left
use (including
Big Flame) is
a disgrace

The collage consists of several panels:

- Top Left:** A stack of envelopes with various addresses, including 'BIG FLAME', 'STAVROS NOTES', 'DAVID', 'TIR L', 'MIRIAM WOODS', and 'HARVEY SOLIDARITY'.
- Top Middle:** A text box with the text: "Mass circulation publications printed on large presses preclude much local self-expression. As a printer/publisher in your own neighbourhood, you have a better chance to express what you want to say."
- Top Right:** A drawing of a fish with a speech bubble containing the text: "Think about the design of the whole page. It's no need to stick newspaper-type design. Why not be more adventurous, type the story the shape of an egg or a house." Below the fish is a row of asterisks: * * * * *
- Middle Left:** A newspaper clipping with the headline "SLOW AMPLIE'S SWEAT & HEALTH" and a sub-headline "15 P." Below the headline is an illustration of a woman holding a child, with the text "A MORE" below it.
- Middle Right:** A text box with the text: "do-it-yourself printing here is no censor other than you or your friends. This is not simply a freedom; it also makes you more responsible for all libel, or copyright infringement and for the ultimate shape of the paper"
- Bottom Left:** A drawing of a hand holding a pencil, with a speech bubble containing the text: "to develop a perspective based on the actual struggles of women against capitalism."
- Bottom Right:** A text box with the text: "In the other hand, because most people will be printing for their own community purposes, the grassroots culture can find a voice. By making things relevant at a local level, more people become involved in solving their own problems themselves."

the stencil
is more
important
than people
realise...



People are less keen
on reading things
that look messy.

Getting the best
out of a duplicator

In the practical
session you will
learn how to
actually use
the machines

RISO

+44 7814 267448

Have you tried sending
from an old
dows machine?

had to do this

stencil.wiki/colors

100% 75 50

| JAPANESE NAME | HEX | PANTONE | RGB | CMYK |
|---------------|--------|---------|-------|-----------|
| ブラック | 000000 | BLACK U | 0,0,0 | 0,0,0,100 |

NOTE: Each model requires its own specific version of black ink.

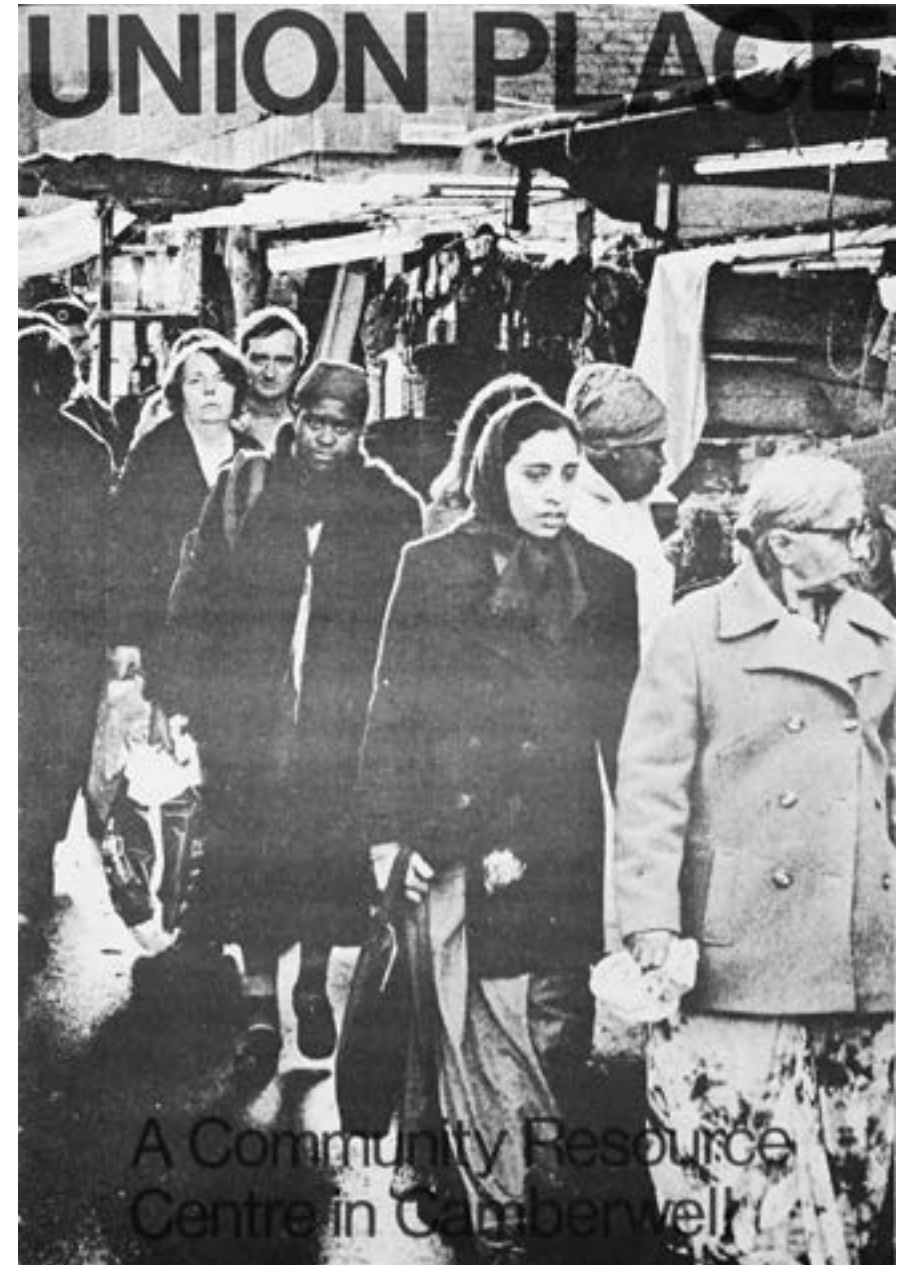
POSTED: 14 Oct 2014 15:26
by issuepress

Archive supplement no. 3/5

Union Place: Community Resource Centre

Union Place

Union Place was formed in 1974 in North Lambeth with the aim of providing a meeting space alongside facilities for publishing and printing for local trade union branches, a tenants' association, and other community organisations. The space helped people learn how to use these technologies, and demonstrated how organisational uses of media such as leaflets, posters, photographs, and video tapes can transform the community. Groups that used the space included Walworth Pensioner Action Group, The Black Parents Movement, Kennington and Camberwell Claimants Union, a food co-op, a women's health group, and Bonfire Press, which published a monthly newspaper "reflecting the views and circumstances of workers and wageless tenants and homeless in the area."



UNION PLACE

**Community
Resource
Centre**

122-4 Vassall Road,
London SW9 6JB.
01-735 6123



HOW UNION PLACE BEGAN

Union Place is a collective, working from two adjoining shop premises in North Lambeth. It was formed in 1974 by a group of people living or working locally, in the belief that consciousness, organisation and action in this deprived area of South London could be assisted by providing people with practical means of communication.

The purpose of the collective was to provide printing facilities, to help people learn how to use them, and to show the organisational uses of media such as leaflets, posters, photographs and video tapes by our own involvement in activities in the community.

We formed an Industrial and Provident Society under the rules of the Registrar of Friendly Societies. Our constitution defines our collective form of organisation, our non-profitmaking activity and our aim: "to provide for the use of local trade union branches, tenants' associations and other community organisations, meeting space and facilities for publishing and printing; and to serve in other appropriate ways as a centre in support of community initiatives."

When we first rented these premises from the Greater London Council there was much basic repair work to be done. The roof was leaking, the wiring and plumbing needed renewing. As we repaired and decorated, we also gradually obtained or made the items of equipment necessary for a simple poster-workshop and offset litho printing facility.

There was an immediate response from groups in the area - and the activity after a year was felt by the Arts Council Great Britain (Community Arts Panel) and the Gulbenkian Foundation to justify financial support. The Foundation made us a grant of £3000 towards further equipment. The Community Arts Panel have given us an annual contribution towards operating costs and salaries.

WHY THIS AREA?

Union Place serves parts of Lambeth and Southwark...the poorer northern ends of both boroughs. The London Borough of Lambeth and the Department of the Environment selected part of N Lambeth as the subject of one of the three Inner Area Studies. They did so on the basis of statistical indicators of poverty and housing stress. The more detailed survey carried out in the course of the ensuing study by consultants Shankland Cox showed unemployment in parts of Lambeth to be as high as some of the worst affected areas of Britain.



The Council's Planning Department has published studies revealing serious mismatch of jobs and skills, as clerical and portering jobs in the new office blocks have taken the place of former manufacturing jobs, as firms have closed down or moved away from London to avoid rocketing land values, rents and rates. Skilled and semi-skilled workers in the former factories have been forced to look for lower paid, less skilled and often more distant jobs. The result of the economic and social changes in our area, the DoE report confirmed, is remarkably low family income; a very high proportion of young mothers obliged to work to supplement family income; a greater than normal number of young and old people dependent on the relatively few wage earners.

Housing, schools and health services are under heavy pressure - increased now of course as a result of cuts in public expenditure. There is evidence of racial and other forms of social stress in the community. In particular, relations between local black youth and the police force have been strained.

In the riverside areas of neighbouring Southwark, the movement down-river of the docks, the decline of the printing industry and the emigration of other industries that provided many male skilled and semi-skilled jobs has resulted in high unemployment in the Bermondsey employment office area. The North Southwark Community Development Group and Southwark Borough Council, as well as the Home Office Community Development Project in the area have published reports of the deprivation that has followed.

There was, and still is, no similar provision to that of Union Place in this area. We attempt to fulfil the need for practical support for the efforts of local people to articulate their distress and organise to defend their interests in circumstances which deteriorate year by year.

GROWTH OF ACTIVITY

In the 3½ years since it was formed, the activity in and around Union Place has increased many times over. It has come to be relied upon by many people living, working and organising in the two boroughs. During 1976, for example, the printing facilities were used by more than one hundred and twenty different groups. Many of them came back up to a dozen times during the year to print different things. The rate at which the facilities were used trebled between the first quarter and the last quarter of that twelve-month period and it has continued to increase during 1977.

It may help to make these activities more easily understood to illustrate by a few examples. Typical of groups who we work with are tenants associations, street groups and other housing action groups. Lambeth Self-Help Housing Association for example say:

"The shortage and poor condition of housing in Lambeth is perhaps the borough's main characteristic. The problem has defeated the management systems of the borough council. Homeless and badly housed groups' only hope of achieving improvements is to express their needs and organise to press their demands on the authorities. Many posters, leaflets and photographic evidence of housing neglect produced by housing groups at Union Place have played an important part in these campaigns."

The following are also characteristic users: Walworth Pensioners Action Group made a poster to publicise their club. The Black Parents Movement have printed leaflets. The Aguirre Craft Cooperative and the Sabarr Bookshop both made posters here to advertise their opening. South Island Place children's play centre come regularly to produce a duplicated newsletter by and for children, parents and youth-workers. A homosexual mutual support group has printed photographic placards for a demonstration, as well as several posters and news-sheets. The new Women's Centre has publicised its existence.

A local literacy project writes "We have twice published in book form, and have produced printed photographic materials for teaching purposes. Working at Union Place with the patient guidance of the staff and generous use of resources, has made this kind of work feel easy, local and cheap. It has also enabled many of us to acquire new skills."

A further example of use of Union Place printing facilities is Vauxhall Manor girls comprehensive school. We are working with groups of fourth year girls to produce printed booklets of their own work. The teachers say: "Writing for others, rather than just



the teacher, especially if it ends up in printed form, demonstrates to the children that their work is recognised as important and so boosts their confidence. Reluctant readers can suddenly take off and devour written material when they find something that reflects what they feel. They are involved in the whole process of publication from beginning to end. They can actually see the end-product as a result of their labour, thinking of ideas, writing, collecting pictures/photos, designing, layout, production, collating. The end product belongs to them and is not viewed as something outside of themselves. It helps to demystify the printed word and so give them confidence for future reading."

PRINTING AT UNION PLACE

During this last year, aside from the general growth in printing work, we have branched out in two new ways. First is the Bonfire Press publishing project, discussed further below and in a separate leaflet. Second, we have begun to offer more opportunities to learn printing in more purposeful sessions, in the shape of regular "workshops".

We received a grant from the Home Office Urban Aid Programme to organise a series of four week-long holiday "Communications Workshops" for teenage school students in



our neighbouring schools. These were tremendously well received by the students. The work they produced was of a high enough standard to comprise an exhibition, which we later took round the participating schools. Nor was the effect on the young people a passing one: three of those who came on the workshops have later attended "link courses" at the London College of Printing.

We are also currently providing a weekly workshop on different printing methods for community workers sponsored by the Directorate of Social Services of Lambeth Borough Council. One of the community workers attending the course says:

"With the knowledge gained, it's very difficult to imagine now how one could initiate community projects without using posters, leaflets, video. The course at Union Place has taught me the basic skills necessary to produce them myself and eventually to pass these skills on to the groups I'm working with. The facilities available at Union Place are unequalled in the borough, and the friendly, informal atmosphere mean that one would not hesitate to encourage local people to come along and use them."

The increase in activity and the many people in the area now having a basic grasp of simple printing processes has made it both necessary and possible to expand the collective from six to sixteen. We have organised the new enlarged collective into distinct "process groups" responsible for developing the use of the following equipment:-

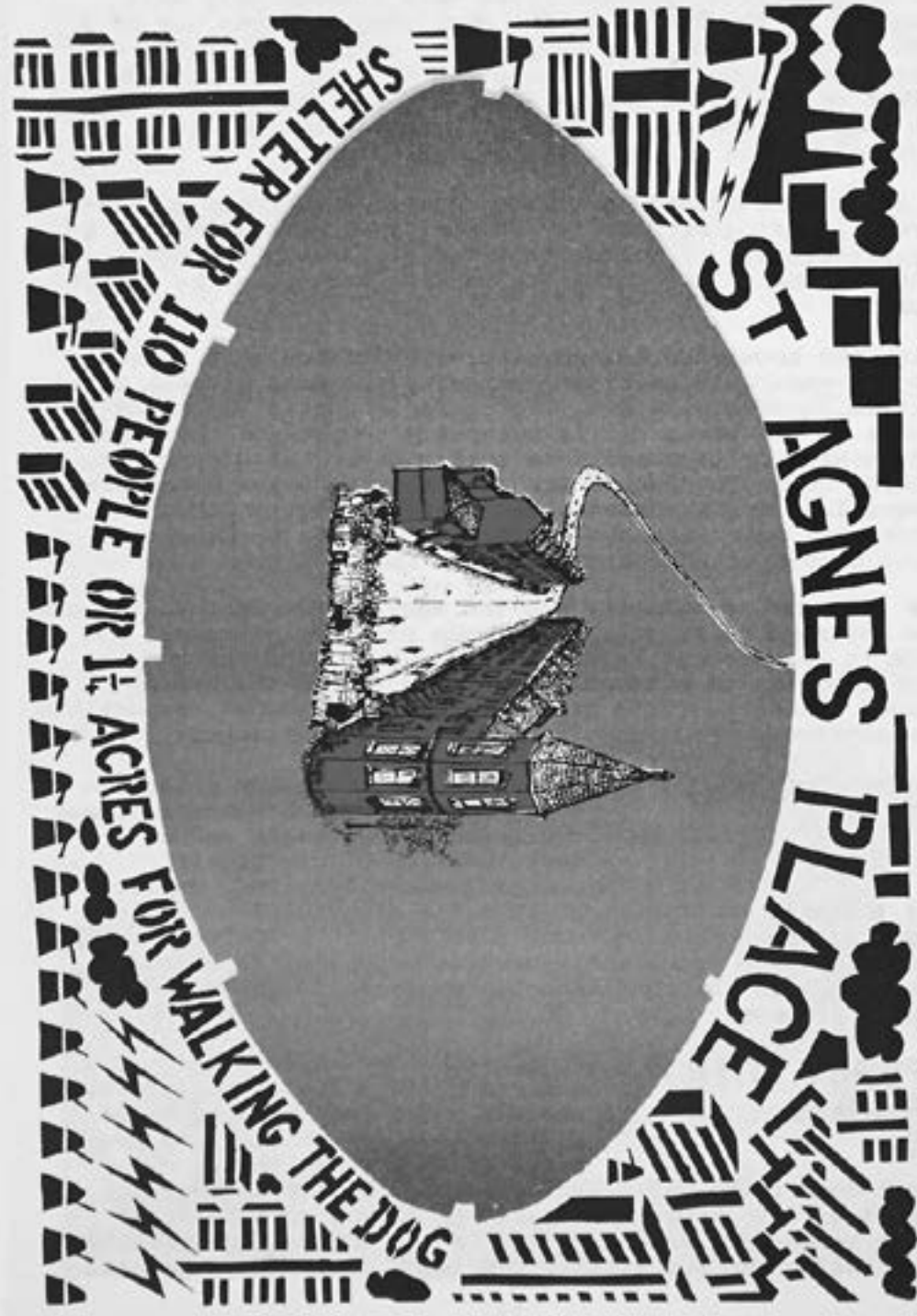
DUPLICATING

We have an electric IBM golfball-style typewriter; an electric duplicator (Gestetner) and a Gestetner ES 455 electronic scanning stencil cutter. Duplica-

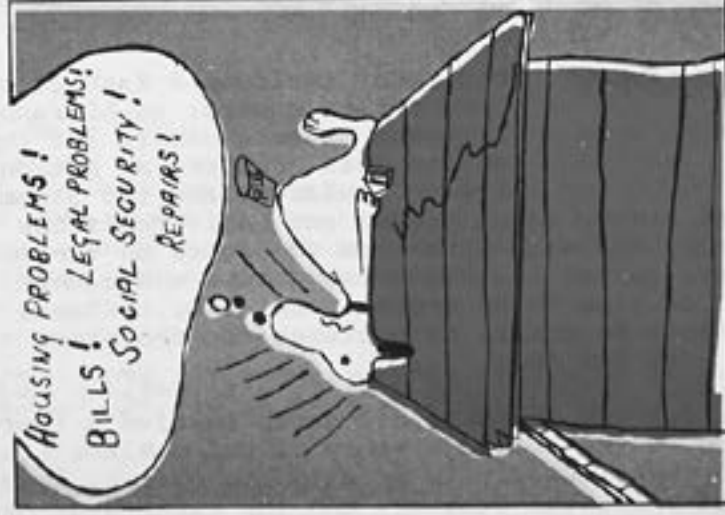
ted leaflets are the simplest means of printed communication, and the cheapest. Many groups begin by getting out a simple message using the typewriter and duplicator and in this way gain the confidence to progress to litho and screen process.

OFFSET LITHOGRAPHY

We already have an A4 sized Gestetner 210 offset litho press, shortly to be complemented by an A3 sized machine. Plates are prepared by CT process on our own print-down frame and plate developer. Offset lithography, "small offset" as our equipment is known, more than any other invention, has brought down the cost and complexity of printing and put it into the reach of ordinary people.

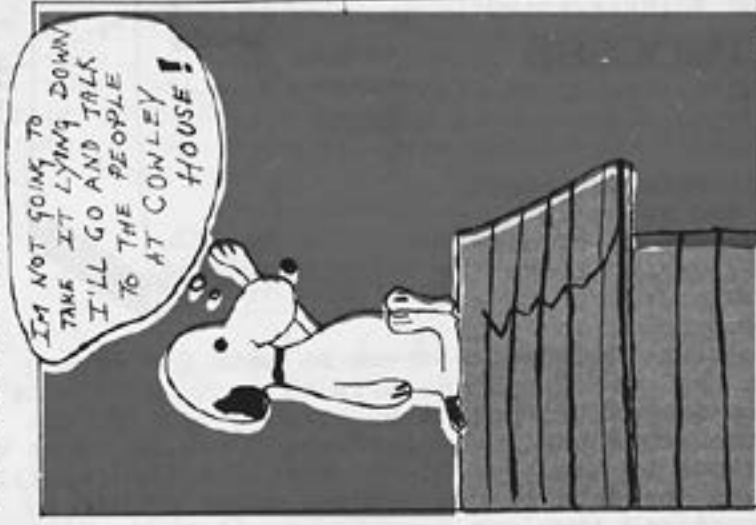


COWLEY HOUSE



OPEN: 2.30 ~ 4.30
MONDAY - TUES. - THURSDAY
PENSIONER'S CLUB TUES.

ADVICE CENTRE
103 COWLEY RD.



CANCEL

OF ALL 105

COWLEY ESTATE

ADVISORY NO.

POSTAGE PAID

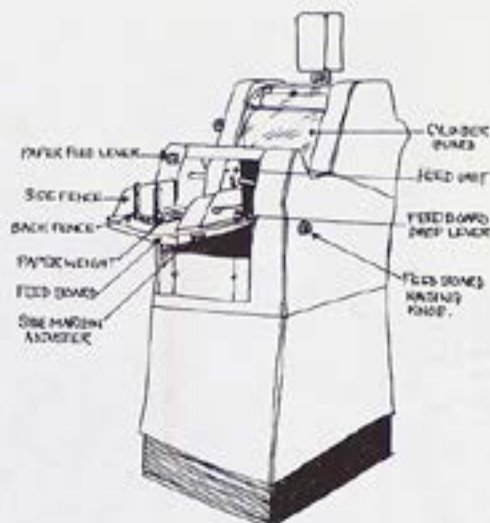
TELEPHONE

735 2241

A thousand sharp impressions on good quality paper in one or two colours can be produced without difficulty in an hour, at a cost of little more than the paper and ink. The operation of the equipment can be learned in a few sessions.

SCREEN PROCESS

Our screen process equipment consists of two printing tables, many screens of different sizes, drying racks for more than 100 posters, and a light-box for producing photographic stencils. Stencils can be made for screen process from the most simple materials, such as cut-out paper or stop-out paint applied by brush direct to the screen. On the other hand, complex images can be built up from photographs by means of light-sensitive stencil films. Screen process, because it can produce large prints in several colours and involves manual operation, is often the most exciting and satisfying for people who have not printed before.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Equipment includes a Yashica single lens reflex camera; an Algraphy Lithotex process camera for reproducing flat artwork; an Astron 5x4 in. enlarger and two 35 mm

enlargers. We aim to teach groups and individuals how to use photography and work with them to decide on the most effective ways to use it. For those groups who cannot spare people or time to do urgent work - for instance to provide evidence in court, or pictures for the press - we will do the work for them.

Future plans for the photographic group involve a thorough documentation of the social history of Union Place's area of operation, particularly in relation to current land use and the local political-economy, and the effects of changes in both on the local community. To this end we have initiated a contact-sheet library of local photographers' films that eventually will provide a comprehensive pool of images for use in future exhibitions, publications, the local press and other processes at Union Place.

VIDEO

We now have video equipment at Union Place: a Sony Portapak (camera, portable videotape recorder and a small TV for playback). We also have access to editing facilities locally.

We have made some use of video in recording local events, but our main use has been on the workshops for community workers and local young people. The latter produced videotapes called "Working People", a study of local people's attitudes to their jobs, or lack of them; and another called "Whose Park?", an investigation of the conflict of interests between young people, park keepers and local interests over their differing attitudes to the use of a local park.



Video has a number of advantages: it uses a popular medium, television. The equipment is easy to learn how to operate and it is relatively cheap to run. In the future we intend to use more video in the community, as a tool which groups can employ both to clarify their own aims and ideas and to articulate them to a wider audience.

PUBLISHING: BONFIRE PRESS

In 1975 and 1976 members of Union Place collective were involved with other local people in producing a monthly newspaper reflecting the views and circumstances of workers and wageless, tenants and homeless of this area. The experience convinced us of the need for a continuing, non-commercial medium of expression, a publishing facility accessible to ordinary people rather than something exclusive to professional journalists and authors. We knew there were

writers and potential writers living within these two boroughs whose work would never see the light of day if left to the publishing market. And there were many who, though they could perhaps not write, could nonetheless talk to others who could write.

So we began in 1976, on a trial basis for one year, a "community publishing" venture. During the year we published two booklets. The first was a compilation of memories of the General Strike, 1926, by people who had been involved in the mass scenes at the Elephant and Castle, and in the Council of Action. The second was a collection of articles by local women about work and family and housing struggles in South London. It reflected a dominant concern of Union Place collective, of which half the members are women, with the particular forms of oppression that women experience and their characteristic strengths. Waterloo Action Centre said of this book: "The sections on women cleaners at the Shell Centre and the involvement of women in collective action via tenants' associations have produced a lot of discussion here with people comparing their own experience and problems."

We are also in the process of publishing a longer book, which is a personal account of alcoholism, homelessness and life in institutions, written by a local person

These kinds of publication are in demand for adult literacy schemes. Cambridge House, one of those with which we work, say "The decision to communicate to a larger audience than a personal friend is an important turning point for people who have been for years convinced of their own incompetence in the skills of communicating.

The publications produced by Union Place have caused a lot of interest among people we've shown them to, and who've bought copies.



Their standard of graphic presentation make them an especial treat to recommend to the people who most concern us, the literacy students...As a project committed to opening up more possibilities to more people of using print to exchange and analyse a common base of experience, we ourselves have had reason to be glad of the existence of a community publishing project like that of Union Place."

Bonfire Press now has an office of its own, shared with other community groups, in Acre Lane, Brixton. Our programme of work for 1978, dependent always on our obtaining adequate finance, includes several booklets on the political economy of the area, expressed in the words, drawings and photos of the people of these two boroughs. They will contain a strong emphasis on the situation of women, in particular.



The local library service is enthusiastic about developing a readership for local work and are cooperating with us in reaching readers. We distribute nationally through the Publications Distribution Cooperative. But most important are local sales, and we are experimenting with new methods of distribution, such as selling from barrows in street markets.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Union Place, as well as being a communications centre, is also a place where people can come together and discuss things they want to do. Although our space is insufficient for some of the activities we would like to take place here, we are able to serve as a meeting place for a number of community organisations that we have been instrumental in starting.

Kennington and Camberwell Claimants' Union

Anything between half a dozen and twenty people meet each week to help each other over "claiming" difficulties. Some are unemployed and on the dole; others are on social security or a pension. There are women and men, with or without children. They not only help each other to know and get their full benefit, but also discuss and keep aware of trends in economic circumstances and government policy, and

campaign actively for higher rates of benefit and less repressive procedures.



Food Co-operative

The Food Co-op is a group of about sixty people who join together to buy vegetables and fruit cheaply at Spitalfields wholesale market, and so to avoid paying supermarket prices and profits. The goods are resold to members at cost on a Saturday morning. The co-op normally manages to keep its prices to about 20 per cent below the cheapest in the area. Everyone takes turns at buying, selling and keeping accounts. Co-op members discuss trends in prices and profits, and the cost of living. They try to avoid buying produce that originates in countries with oppressive regimes, such as South Africa or Chile.

Women's Health Group

A group of women, including student doctors, came together to provide advice and help to women who either wish to find out whether they are pregnant and what to do about ending a pregnancy if they wish to do so; or to talk about anything that affects their health as women; or to consider the problems of dealing with the National Health Service. This group has now moved to the new Women's Centre, where it has room to expand; however women in the Union Place collective still continue to offer pregnancy testing and advice to local women at 122 Vassall Road. The group actively supports the National Abortion Campaign and groups organising against hospital closures.

FUTURE: UNCERTAIN

In three years Union Place has grown from an idea into a solid reality. But its future is, for all that, very unsure. Our annual expenditure now amounts to about £12,000. This was met last year by £8000 in grants from supportive bodies and £4000 in revenue from printing.

NONETHELESS, THE TURNOVER THUS DESCRIBED INCLUDES ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF REALISTIC LABOUR COSTS. We have the equivalent of one fulltime salary to share between five fulltime workers. By far the greater part of the very substantial effort that is put into the running and developing of Union Place by members of the collective is ENTIRELY UNPAID.

We estimate that if we are to continue at our present level of operation, including the development of Bonfire Press, we need a revenue of £60,000 a year, over and above our printing revenue. Only a figure of this amount, modest enough for the extent of the activity that is happening here, can enable us to carry on without exploiting those who work here. We need much more than that if we are to find and expand into new and permanent premises and to improve and extend our activities.

We have recently received a welcome gesture of support from the Gulbenkian Foundation in the form of a one-off grant of £3800 towards much needed new equipment. Financial support toward salaries and overheads is now a vital requirement. Without it we cannot continue for very much longer.

...

Jan 1978



Agitprop Notes

: *text no.3/3*

You Must Live Your Politics

Publishing Practices
and Libertarianism in
MayDay Rooms Archives

GUGLIELMO ROSSI

122-4 Vassall Road
London SW9 6JB

It is important to talk about examples from past experiences, showing how direct action has been used to upset the norm and to revolutionise established ways of thinking and living. Referring to the history of black radical feminist groups in *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power*, Lola Olufemi suggests how “it’s easy to get radicalised just by paying attention to experience.”¹ The experience Olufemi refers to – of black radical feminist groups – denotes certain kinship to the one at the centre of this text. Important to both is the idea that theory doesn’t appear only in academic literature, but can be lived and shared. From this perspective direct action becomes a way to rehearse and enact an alternative vision of society – and community organising is understood as a way to procure immediate change in a group’s material circumstances – in opposition to capitalism’s hegemonic power and the inequalities it sustains through race, class and gender divisions.

Olufemi’s book further reminds us that the UK government’s austerity measures of the past years have most severely affected vulnerable people. While long-standing issues of social inequality have become prominent during the current pandemic across mainstream political discourse. In this context, the imperative statement you must live your politics and the past experiences of left libertarianism it is associated with, are still relevant today. These are an example of how politics can help to imagine and articulate ideas – considering collective organising as an alternative to the parameters around which life is defined and organised through welfare, legislation and other services provided by the state.

This text looks at a number of ideas and practices that informed the work of activist groups of the alternative or libertarian left in 1970s Britain. The politics of this movement are discussed through a variety of materials, part of MayDay Rooms’ archival collection, with the aim of illustrating the entangled relationship between the processes followed by the producers of publications, their political values and visions for the future, and the graphic and visual qualities of their print production. The material considered, often crammed inside boxes weighing on the archive shelves, is varied: loosely bound pamphlets, magazines and newspapers, typewritten bulletins, leaflets, newsletters and meeting notes, mostly produced by short

1 Lola Olufemi, *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power*, (London: Pluto Press, 2020), p.34.

2 The rise in demand for printed documents for internal business communication emerged with the increase in office work during the 1960s. In order to fulfill this demand, small-scale offset lithographic printing – which could usually print A4 or A3 paper formats – developed in conjunction with another piece of office equipment, the electric typewriter. Print historian Michael Twyman described the impact of typewriters on “the growth of small lithographic printing units within firms and other organisations beginning from the mid-Twentieth Century – when typewriters started to be used for making original artwork to be photographed and printed by offset lithography.”

lived groups and political organisations. Across various formats and different page extents, a number of common traits also stand out: these documents are mostly printed in single colour (usually black); are characterised by dense blocks of text, yellowing pages and include scarce and poorly printed visuals. Seemingly unpretentious, these aesthetic and material qualities underline the documents’ ephemeral nature, suggesting a sense of urgency that prompted their production, and indicating the economy of means characterising their making.

Focusing on the interplay of political ideology, group organisation, and the form and content of printed publications produced across the decade, this text builds on literature spanning across a centuries-long history of radical publishing and political activism. Broadly speaking, this literature voices the relationship between print and protest, it affirms the importance of publishing to the dissemination of Socialist thought, and the role of publications as agents of group formation, identity and coherence. Across political, cultural, and alternative media studies, the context of the 1970s is often described in terms of the numerous independent groups active outside the spectrum of party politics and populating the left-wing political scene. This is a narrative which runs in parallel to ongoing changes in printing technology: becoming increasingly popular across the previous decade, electric typewriters and small-scale offset lithography allowed a renewed access to the means of text composition and print, and also determined a steady increase in the production of radical publishing.²

Within the political and technological context described, my interest verged towards the publications’ making-processes and the social relationships surrounding their production. As offset lithography became a relatively affordable and simplified process, a wider range of people gained access to design and printing technology. And because the skills and knowledge required by printing changed, the boundaries between authors and producers of publications also changed – becoming narrower. Holding this view while moving across different sources, this text investigates different ways in which the interplay between political thought and print occurred. After an introduction to the British social, political, and economic context of the period, my analysis focuses on the organisational practices

of the left-libertarian organisation Big Flame and on selected publications produced by the East London group part of Big Flame (ELBF) in particular. Through the narrative, my personal interest was driven by the creative approaches of Big Flame members towards collective work, collaboration, and by the following questions: what were the strategies employed by group members in making their publications, with the aim of operating consistently with their political vision? How have the different aspects of the publications' production – such as writing, editing and design – been affected during this process? And how have these processes informed the publications' visual qualities, revealing close relationships between their form and content?

The Making of Socialism and the Making of Publications: the Organisation of Media Production Around Political Ideology

Over the past decades, some of these questions have been discussed within the field of cultural and alternative media studies – considering forms of publishing produced at the intersection of social movements' organisation and media communications. Literature on the topic has generally considered 'alternative' the forms of media produced outside mainstream institutions and networks,³ and defined as 'radical' those media communications expressing "an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives," and generally aimed towards social change.⁴ Media and communication scholars Chris Atton, Nick Couldry and John Downing, who developed significant ideas in the field, have stressed the fundamental role played by alternative and radical media in expressing the views of social groups not represented in mainstream media. Yet, key to my interest in the publications' making-processes is the transformative potential that radical media had over the practices of media production. This is a point that Atton expressed in reference to the production of text, visuals and distribution processes, further suggesting that these practices are socio-cultural processes that can deeply affect traditional notions of "professionalism, competence and expertise."⁵

In the context of the 1970s, the technological change described earlier – involving simplified design and printing processes, and increased access to skills – becomes particularly meaningful in relation to the publishing activities of

3 Chris Atton, Nick Couldry, 'Introduction', *Media, Culture & Society*, 25:5 (2003), 579–586 (p.579).

4 John Downing, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (London: Sage, 2001), p.v.

5 Chris Atton, 'Alternative Media', in *Encyclopaedia of Social Movement Media*, ed. John Downing (London: SAGE, 2011), p.16.

6 This approach to organisation was heavily criticised by American activist Jo Freeman in *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, available at <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm> [accessed 7 October 2020]. This influential text argues the impossibility for a group to establish the conditions to work collectively outside a hierarchical structure; and that power structures within the group "will be formed regardless the abilities, personalities, or intentions of the people involved." The first version of the article was presented at a conference held by the Southern Female Rights Union, in May 1970, and was subsequently edited and published in several journals: *The Second Wave*, 2, 1 (1972); *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 17 (1972-73), pp.151–165; and *Ms. magazine*, July 1973, pp.76–78

7 Comedia, 'The Alternative Press: The Development of Underdevelopment', *Media, Culture & Society*, 6:2 (1984), 95–102 (p.97).

8 Nicholas Saunders, *Alternative England and Wales* (London: N. Saunders, 1975), p.269.

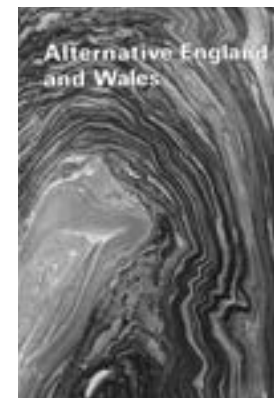
9 *Ibid.* Big Flame, is included for the first time in the 1975 edition of *Alternative England and Wales*, and is described as an independent revolutionary organisation 'strongly believ[ing] that the revolution can be won within the community and factories through collective action', while being non-sectarian and non-aligned

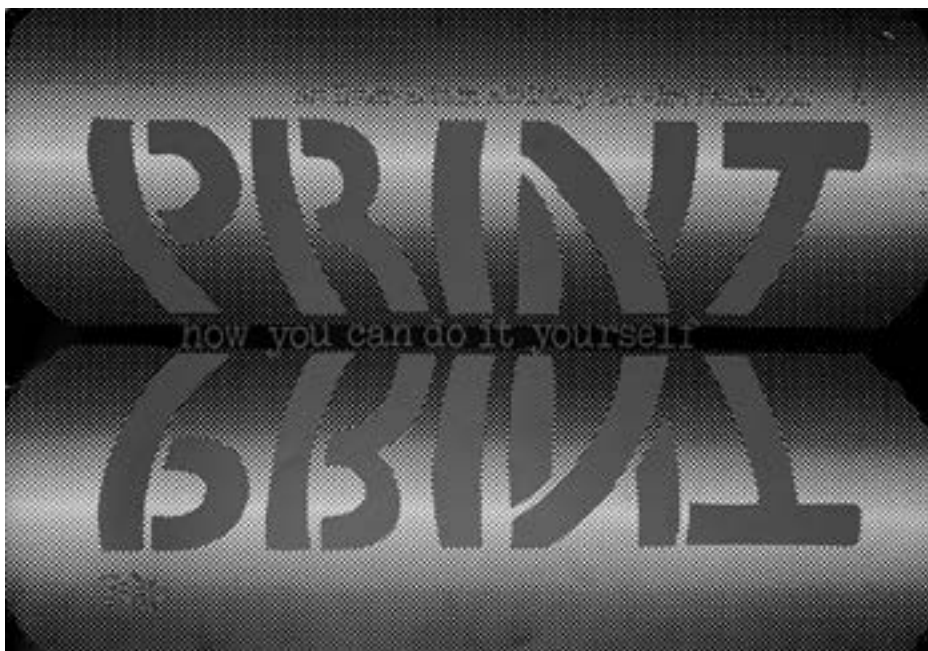
collectives and groups sympathetic to left-libertarian thought, because of their radical approach to organisation. These groups are generally characterised by a refusal of social order in favour of a non-hierarchical and collective structure. Often they follow the belief that the more informal decision-making processes are, the more responsibilities are shared across group members, and the more external participation is encouraged, the more closely they will come to resemble the ideal of democracy shared by group members, and foster ideas of social empowerment and emancipation.⁶

This way of organising defined a different approach from the communication model of traditional left-wing groups. Two distinct approaches are distinguished by Downing in *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication* (1984): the 'Leninist' model and the autonomous model of communication. The first one followed Lenin's vision of the newspaper as an organ of the party – here the press performed the role of transmitting the perspectives and priorities of the party, its philosophy and goals, and relied on the party's finances to subsist.

The autonomous or self-managed model was instead characterised by the participatory approaches to media production introduced earlier. Becoming commonplace across libertarians from the late 1960s into the 1970s, this model provided a framework to independent groups whose financial resources were limited and that largely depended on volunteers and unpaid labour.⁷

Describing the extra-parliamentary left scene as a "maze of ideologies and party lines," further insights in reference to the contrasting visions of political groups come out of the encyclopaedic guide *Alternative England and Wales* (1975).⁸ Structured as a directory of themes and resources to alternative living across intellectual, practical and spiritual subjects, the book highlights a key difference in the groups' structure. On one page, traditional groups organised according to the theories of Marx, Trotsky, Mao and Lenin, and were characterised by a leadership party structure. On a separate page, the alternative and libertarian left is described as non-hierarchical, and characterised by groups that often come from a Marxist tradition "but do not follow rigid party organisation."⁹





Writing about printshop co-operatives from the period, media scholar Jess Baines described how organising non-hierarchically worked for a whole network of radical printers, publishers, and distributors of political content. Fundamentally, the rejection of group structure was interpreted by this network of people as an opportunity to express their ideals not only in what they produced, but also in the way they organised.¹⁰ And the entwined view of theory and practice emerging from this history emphasises the role that both the publications and their making-processes played as part of the culture of the period. Fuelled by creative energy, this culture of activism urged people to “take control over someone’s own life” against the ills and alienation inflicted by life in a capitalist society. Hence, publishing and printing were interpreted within this vision: as part of the process towards “liberation.”¹¹ The pamphlet *Print: How You Can Do It Yourself* (1974), a do-it-yourself manual of tools, techniques and practical advice about printing processes, loudly voices this fervour in regard to design and print. Written by teacher and printer Jonathan Zeitlyn and published by the community arts organisation Inter-Action

10 Jess Baines, ‘Free Radicals’, *Afterall Online*, <https://www.afterall.org/online/radical.printmaking#.XulacWpKgWp> [accessed 11 June 2020].

11 Jess Baines, Tony Credland, and Mark Pawson, *Doing it Ourselves: Countercultural and Alternative Radical Publishing in the Decade Before Punk in Ripped Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018, p.31.

12 Jonathan Zeitlyn, *Print: How You Can Do It Yourself* (London: Inter-Action, 1975), pp.2–5.

13 Zeitlyn, *Print*, p.2. Jess Baines writes more comprehensively about this pamphlet in the two articles I have referenced.

14 Timothy Brown, Lorena Anton, ‘Introduction’ in *Between the Avant-Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe from 1957 to the Present*, ed. by Timothy Brown and Lorena Anton (New York: Berghahn, 2011), p.2.

15 Guy Debord, *Society of The Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 2014), p.16.

16 Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, p.11

17 Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, p.37

Trust, the pamphlet opens with an evocative tone and words running across multiple pages in stencilled capital letters (see illustration). The text proclaims that “we no longer just have to consume / we can create what we need.”¹² The various pages introduce a number of printing methods that could be learnt quickly at low cost, affirming the political value of printing as a practice embedded in everyday struggles, and sustaining the demystification of printing knowledge as a form of empowerment. By doing it yourself, everyone, “secretaries, clerks, errand boys, even managers,” can become printers, affirms Zeitlyn.¹³

The view of politics at the centre of everyday life resonating through these pages defines another key aspect of 1970s libertarian culture. The focus on everyday issues is part of a legacy originating from the anti-authoritarian writings of the Situationists, and the counter-cultural and self-management movements emerging out of the May 1968 protests. Central to the counterculture was an understanding of cultural and political issues as inseparably connected, and the consideration of culture as representative of both: the realm in which politics is developed, and the process motivating and lending meaning to political action.¹⁴

The Situationist International’s founder Guy Debord wrote fiercely about how modern consumer society is an alienating force driven by capital, which obstructs people from their real needs and desires.¹⁵ Meanwhile Debord’s comrade Raoul Vaneigem placed the struggle to build a society that rejects the cult of the commodity within the realm of everyday life, beginning with individual social emancipation and with the ordinary way in which people relate. In his words, “anyone who talks about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life – without grasping what is subversive about love and positive in the refusal of constraints – has a corpse in his mouth.”¹⁶ Vaneigem’s words and Zeitlyn’s guide to printing seem to reverberate together, as Vaneigem places the need of industrial societies to produce in absolute opposition to the human need to create.¹⁷

Beyond libertarian radical politics, the understanding of everyday life at the centre of the political debate, characterised an ongoing and broader shift in left-wing political thought: it marked the distinction between an ‘old Left’ and a ‘new Left’. A traditional position, which focused

WE NO LONGER JUST

We are surrounded by it - the world of print. At school, at home, in the street, from adverts to newspapers to books. Even through the television we are surrounded by print.

For the most of us, it is a distant world. The production of all those millions of printed words, designs and pictures is a complete mystery. We are consumers - readers. And yet we can all be writers, printers, publishers as well as readers. In our own neighbourhood, our living rooms or garages.

The powerful world of so-called professional 'writing' can undermine the rest of us by making us passive consumers. The makers of the book, the *Advertiser* or the *Newspaper* appear to have a monopoly on ideas and the means of expressing them. This is clearly not so, as anyone who stops to question it for a moment knows

full well. We can all print whatever we want to say or think in a professional manner in our own neighbourhoods. Modern technology has made this possible.

Have circulation politicians printed on large printing presses provided much local self-expression. As a printer/publisher in your own neighbourhood you have a better chance to express exactly what you want to say. You can be your own reporter, sub-editor, editor, manager, layout, printer and distributor. You won't have as large a circulation as the big dollars, but at least you will be able to tell some local truths or communicate some creative ideas about things that will be most useful and relevant.

In this book we have tried to show that there are various modern machines which can enable individuals and groups to

expensive printing for themselves less expensively and will allow them to exercise control over the entire process from start to finish.

The same technology that has produced the great four-colour presses for the colour magazine has also given us the small litho press for offices. Photographers' offset litho revolutionised the printing world, newspapers, charts, street maps - even managers - are now printers at the flick of a switch.

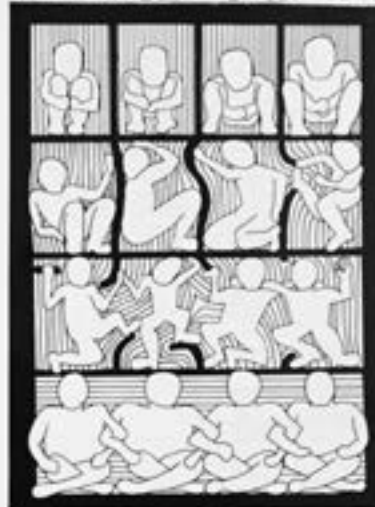
Most commercial printers of course favour small offset litho. They even come to with photographing and call it 'topography'. Whatever you call it, this process is exactly the same as most 'professional' printers use. The past few years have seen the quality of the small offset printing machines improved to a point beyond any other copying method. The actual process

has been simplified. Electrostatic cameras, for example, make plates for offset machines almost instantly. Some of the implications of its development are now becoming clear. In the past few years small offset presses have become available to people outside offices and printing works. Schools, community centres, urban centres, councils and a large number of quick print shops have bought these presses. People are beginning to set up community presses and are teaching others who want something printed how to print it themselves.

In do-it-yourself printing, there is no corner other than you or your friends. This is not simply a freedom. It also makes you more responsible for all that, obviously or copyright infringement and for the ultimate shape and image of the paper.

On the other hand, however

HAVE TO CONSUME



most people will be printing for their own community purposes, the grass roots culture can find a means. By making things relevant at a very local level, more people become involved in solving their own problems themselves, more articles, books, stories and autobiographies will be written by people who were previously only passive observers; more new ideas for the betterment of the community will emerge from all those who will have to live with them.

Many of the new machines can copy pictures as well as words. Instead of producing just a mass of words you can envisage a much more visual language of words, images and pictures. Readers can become not only writers but photographers, cartoonists and designers, editors and printers as well.

Instead of a five-year apprenticeship to become a printer you can go to a

five day course. You don't even need a five minute course for several techniques. This book should help you learn the basic steps. It isn't a total guide to printing. But it does make simple things self-evident. You can print whatever you want, and control each and every stage yourself. This is a practical book for the practical activity described. These have political implications. It is up to you to print work to develop your influence as a community and as a force for others in your neighbourhood.

WE CAN CREATE

The various methods of printing we describe here are being constantly changed and developed. It is not only up to the 'experts' to do this job. Those who use the machines can and do invent new methods. The developments that improve printing and make it a more readily available process should be passed on and not kept secret for the sake of profit. We hope these materials will provide for more technical and practical information. It is up to you, the actual printers to produce these materials, to pass on your tips and your trade secrets so that other people can develop their own voice and use the knowledge to express themselves. Thus, as printing becomes increasingly available, it will be changed into an altogether new form. We would be very interested in seeing your suggestions and passing them on.



WHAT WE NEED

100 posters cost about £2



by silkscreen (see pages 22 - 23)

1000 newspapers cost about £10 for A1 sheets printed both sides



by offset litho printing (see pages 25 - 27)

1000 leaflets cost about £5



by offset litho or stencil duplicating using duplicating or photocopier (see pages 12 - 13)



remember: costs and method used depend on:

- The size of print
- Number of copies
- Size of the run
- Number of colours
- Type of image
- Photographs
- Reduction or enlargement
- Type of paper

Paper costs keep on rising, above all in the basic materials for print, say exact costing is difficult.

on economic issues of the working class and on struggles around the workplace, contrasted with new framework of values – encompassing the interests of various movements and social groups. Authored by three influential intellectuals of the period, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson. *The New Left May Day Manifesto* (1967) argued that “all the issues – industrial and political, international and domestic, economic and cultural, humanitarian and racial – are deeply connected.”¹⁸ A list of social movements and groups reflecting these issues, and defining the intricate scenario described, can be read a decade later in the introduction to *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (1979). To form an incomplete inventory, activist Hilary Wainwright noted “the women’s movement, solidarity movements with international struggles, many shop stewards’ combines [...] local action committees, the antifascist movement, theatre groups, alternative newspapers, militant tenants, squatters and community groups.”¹⁹ Together with pointing towards a number of actors becoming the centre of political action in the years following the publication of the *New Left May Day Manifesto*, the list shows some of the personal concerns raised, and the different expertises and experiences of these groups.

Widespread disillusionment with traditional left-wing parties comes up regularly across printed articles in radical journals from the period. The occurrence of libertarianism is here described in tune with the New Left interest in minority groups, women’s, black, and gay liberation movements, and as a response to the failures of ‘orthodox Marxism’ to deal with these superstructural societal issues.²⁰ The article ‘Dancing on Lenin’s Grave – The Party Ends’ (see illustration) in the magazine *The Leveller* (October 1977) describes the growth of this scenario as evidenced by the proliferation of the ‘non-aligned’, community press, movement bookshops, action groups like the National Abortion Campaign, the Women’s Liberation Movement, the “information explosion” of research groups and advice centres, and agitprop cultural projects.²¹ These were all initiated by autonomous groups of the British Left. The death of the party coincides with a shift in revolutionary perspectives: beginning from the understanding of daily life and political activity as deeply entangled, and of activism as motivated by personal experience:



18 *New Left May Day Manifesto* 1967 (London: A group of socialist workers, 1967), p.2.

19 Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin Press, 1979), p.9.

20 The disillusion towards traditional left-wing parties is also identified with a number of international events dating back to 1956 and sparking widespread disaffection with the Communist Party in Britain: Nikita Khrushchev, first secretary of the Soviet Union, revelation of the atrocities of Stalinism during the famous ‘secret speech’ that took place during the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (25 February 1956); the brutal repression by the Soviet-installed government during the Hungarian Uprisings, and the British-French dispute in Egypt over the Suez Canal. The lineage of the new Left is detailed by Holger Nehring in ‘Out of Apathy: Genealogies of the British New Left in a Transnational Context, 1956–1962’ in *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960–1980*, eds. Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder, Joachim Scharloth (New York: Berghahn Books), pp.15–31

21 ‘Dancing on Lenin’s Grave – The Party Ends’, *The Leveller*, October 1977, p.14.

Debate

Dancing on Lenin’s grave-the party ends

THE PARTY is over, argues *Bob Dent*. The most significant political developments of the last ten years – the proliferation of the “non-aligned” and community press, movement bookshops, action groups like National Abortion Campaign, the Women’s Liberation Movement, the “information explosion” of research groups and advice centres, agitprop cultural projects – have by and large been initiated by non-card carrying members of the British left. Winds of change have blown from Southern Europe and the “historical” role of the party may itself be part of history.

The mushrooming of political forces outside party structures has the appearance of a mish-mash of disparate activities. But on closer examination the separate activities exhibit similar ideological and organisational features.

All these activities have been initiated over the last ten years by people who, for the most part, have not been aligned to any particular party or group.

Most are undertaken for their own sake. Light years away from the traditional left concepts of duty, recruitment, and activity undertaken “on behalf of” the working class, the revolution, or whatever.

Organization tends to take the form of coordination of activities around specific projects rather than propaganda around a theoretical programme. Structures assembling particular tasks arise from particular circumstances and disband when those circumstances change. National or broader-based organisations tend to be in networks of horizontal links rather than in top-down structures. The accent is on doing rather than demanding.

The recent growth of such projects is significant in itself. But what makes the current period especially interesting is that there has been a shift in revolutionary political perspectives which is simultaneously feeding off and refuelling these non-party developments. This shift can be characterised in several ways which, taken together, sound the death knell of the era of political parties.

- a growing critique of the separation of daily life and political activity, leading to a recognition of motivation based on personal experience, beginning from one’s own perceptions and needs
- a growing recognition of every act as political leading to a totality of critiques far too broad to be encompassed by any single ideology or party

■ a tendency to see theory as a reflection of one’s own practice in the world as opposed to a set of formulae to understand the world ‘out there’

■ without rejecting totally the concept of crises and sharp political breaks, revolution comes to be perceived more as a process, which manifests itself in all areas of human activity. The central question concerns power in all its manifestations. The goal – to take control over one’s life.

How does all this affect the left groups? It stems that the present convulsion of reorganisation within the English left is a response to, and admission of, the left’s failure to connect with these autonomous non-party movements. More and more people are less and less attracted to political parties. So . . . the parties change. The way they change is well described by Henri Simon in *The New Movement* (Solidarity pamphlet no.51):

“The appearance of the autonomous movement(s) has led to the evolution of the concept of the party. In former times, the Party, as a leadership, saw itself as the revolutionary vanguard, identifying itself with the proletariat. It saw itself as a conscious fraction of the proletariat, who had to play a determining role in the raising of ‘class consciousness’, the high level of which would be the essential sign of the formation of the proletariat as a class. The modern heirs of the Party are well aware of the difficulty of maintaining such a position; so they entrust the party or the group with the very precise mission of making good what they consider to be any deficiencies in working class activity. This gives rise to groups specialised in intervention, liaison, exemplary action, theoretical explanation etc. But even these groups can no longer exercise the hierarchical function of specialists in the general movement of struggle. The New Movement, that of workers and others in struggle, considers all these elements, the old

groups like the new, to be of exactly equal importance as their own actions. They take what they can borrow from those who come to them and reject what does not suit them. Theory and practice appear now to be no more than one and the same element in the revolutionary process – neither can precede or dominate the other. No one political group has thus an essential role to play.”

But what of state power, the armed forces, large-scale economic organisation? It’s in this area that the argument for the revolutionary party appears strongest – the need for a conscious and organised vanguard to contest the centralised, hierarchical nature of state power. And it has to be admitted that this argument has dominated the revolutionary left since the victory of Bolshevism. Those currents which have emerged to assert that popular power can be exercised autonomously, in assemblies and councils without mediation by other unions or parties, have definitely been minority currents (there is a rich tradition waiting to be modernised, for a start see Gombosi’s *The Origin of Modern Leftism*). Their practical experience, from Kronstadt 1921 to Hungary 1956, have been physically and brutally suppressed.

But what has put these hitherto minority tendencies back on the agenda has been France 1968, Poland 1972 and 1976, and perhaps most of all Portugal 1974–5. For it was in Portugal that the concept of “partido(s) (non-party) appeared as part of a generalised struggle and not just as a theoretical battle cry of a few militants. People became so pissed off with the manipulation of the various “workers vanguard(s)” that a conscious attempt was begun to work out a politics of non-party organisation.

The left groups usually misunderstand these attempts because they can’t see that organisation and politics can be developed outside of the party system. This need not imply the abolition or destruction of parties. But it does imply a recognition that the claims of the parties to be a permanent ideological vanguard, their claims to universality, can no longer be, and are no longer being, accepted by politically aware people.

The growth in this country of politically motivated autonomous projects and processes, combining life-style and “macro-politics”, parallels developments in other parts of the world and confirms that the Portuguese experience was not specifically local. It confirms that the revolutionary movement has entered a “post-party” era.

The Leveller, a good example of a non-party project, could become a useful tool of communication, where information, experience and ideas can be exchanged enabling us to find new ways of acting more effectively. For one thing is sure, the old ways aren’t good enough.

Organisation tends to take the form of coordination of activities around specific projects rather than propaganda around a theoretical programme. Structures assuming particular tasks arise from particular circumstances and disband when those circumstances change. National or broader-based organisation tends to be in a network of horizontal links rather than in top-down structures. The accent is on doing rather than demanding.²²

The article emphasises the idea of practice being the focus over theory, and the understanding of revolution “as a process, which manifests itself in all areas of human activity” – with the central aim of breaking up forms of power in all its manifestations.²³

A similar vision towards the building of an anti-capitalist movement is at the centre of the introduction to the journal published by Big Flame (see illustration) titled *Revolutionary Socialism* (winter 1979–80). Feminist and socialist activist Lynne Segal describes the shifting away of libertarian politics from the Leninist model of the party – considering its hierarchical structure too similar to the power structures and hierarchies defined by the capitalist state. Instead, the alternative vision developed by libertarians had the objective of offering immediate change to people’s lives, and the libertarian catchphrase “you must live your politics” summarised the ideal that “to change your own life and the world about you now is an important part of building for socialism in the future.”²⁴

Expressing this precise set of ideas, the term ‘prefigurative politics’ implied that ‘a vision of the future is meaningful only if it is acted upon in the present.’²⁵ Hence, the rejection of forms of organisation reproducing power relationships typical of capitalism, the favouring of non-hierarchical and egalitarian approaches to organisation, and the interpretation of revolution as a process affecting all aspects of everyday life, evolved as part of a prefigurative approach.²⁶ When applied to editorial and design processes in the production of pamphlets and journals, the idea of prefiguration also informed the visual forms and aesthetic qualities of publications.

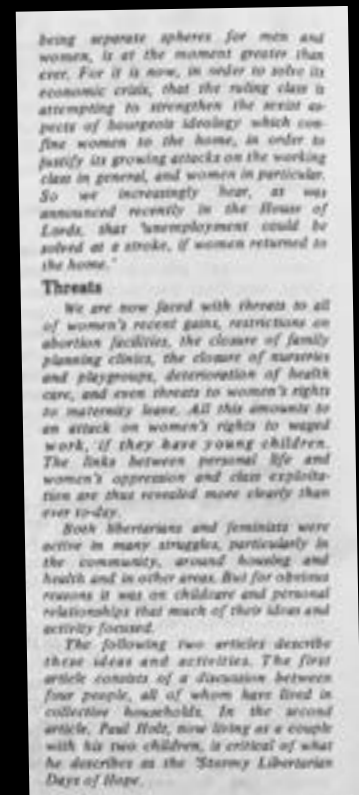
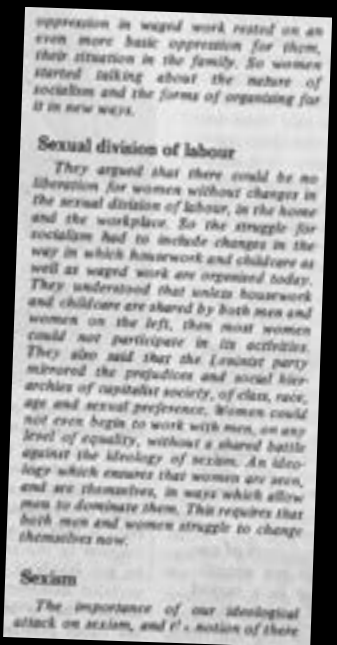
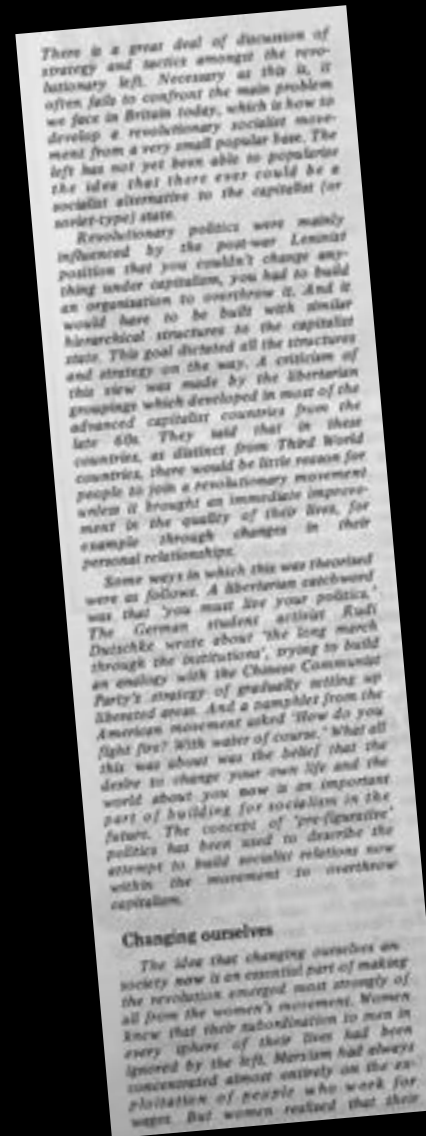
22 ‘Dancing on Lenin’s Grave – The Party Ends’, *The Leveller*, October 1977, p.14.

23 Dancing on Lenin’s grave-the party ends, *The Leveller*, October 1977, p.14.

24 Lynne Segal, ‘Introduction’, *Revolutionary Socialism*, (Winter 1979), p.4.

25 Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Non-violent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), p.16.

26 Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin Press, 1979), p.132.



Mick: I suppose what it comes down to is it's very easy and it's quite common for a lot of political groups to have a verbal and propaganda commitment to some kind of alternative lifestyle which they see as integral to their politics, but when it comes to the crunch very few of these groups are able to live by that practice.

Jack: I don't think that left groups generally have had a commitment to collective living.

When you are walking, running, crawling away from what you know you can't go back to, which is the social structure handed to us by our parents' generation, what we move towards is something so unknown, so unsupported by the social structure we live in, with the whole capitalist structure working against it, that every time you get something together it is not surprising that it can easily collapse.

What has developed over the 10 years of the women's movement has been a bit of space made for ideas like that the working day is too long, that surpluses are good. These ideas have crept in, and some groups give more space to them than others.

Some lefties will argue that the woman left isolated at home with the small children, or going to work and using baby minders, or the man working day and night and coming home tired, and the nuclear family itself is all bad had bad. That is pretty generally accepted. But basically what left groups have moved towards is a social change that will make living in the nuclear family a lot better. They haven't challenged this family, or tried to develop an alternative.

Mick: That's true, but there's so little clarity about what this means in practice. What seems to me to have happened is that the alternative it's based is individualism, where you don't have commitments to anybody, where you're not dependent on anybody and nobody's dependent on you. And though you may live with other people you are only respected as an individual. That has a positive side to it, particularly for women, but it also has a negative aspect. It hides a lot of what people

really need. It hides basically the need for relationships and friendships.

Marge: I think that relates to people you know who are going off to have kids on their own. That's the time when you need stability and security and it's hard for people to provide the necessary stability and security.

I think some people on the left have a picture of themselves as professional revolutionaries which I feel is quite against forming any kind of alternative living situations although they may give lip service to that. What they are really doing is making a political career.

When I told the household I used to live in that I was pregnant and wanted the baby I was told it was counter-revolutionary to have children, real people were involved in the struggle out there and how could I be so selfish and individualistic.

Linda: I think for those of us trying to create alternative living situations there might be a difference between households that come together around children and households where people live together without children. In my situation, I lived with other people without children, and they were not very involved with my child. But then two

other women moved in, one woman who had left her husband nine months before, and she knew that she wanted to be living in a home where we'd all help in looking after the children. Already that was a change of focus.

Jack: Yes. Because of the nature of capitalism (and capitalist ideology) it's quite convenient to be free, and without any commitments domestically: to be able to loon around madly as an activist. The only thing about that is that it's quite easy to lose sight of a lot of the 'textures' of what we're on about. As a result the introduction of children can be a problem. It can cause particular problems unless somehow you manage to

develop an ethos of live and let live, and accept that there are people who are more into interventional politics, people going to 64 meetings a week, and there are those that aren't, and you can still respect each other.

I think a lot more commitment to collective living goes on amongst people who I'd see as less political, perhaps more politically naive or reactionary.

There is a whole branch that has gone into the festivals, and quite ambitious collectives. They're into sophisticated self-sufficient living, craft work, farming and so on. The communes movement is quite impressive, and perhaps there are things that we could learn from them. Of course, they all bugger off into Wales or Scotland and no-one knows they are there and in the short run, they don't have the effect that we have in the inner city politics, which is our arena.

Marge: The story I always tell, I think it typifies the whole thing, is when I was at a hop last year, and I met this bloke in the IMG I used to know. He said what are you doing now, and I said, well, I've got a child and I'm living in a household with other kids and they go to a nursery which I'm involved

For instance, the cover design of *Revolutionary Socialism* (see illustration) exemplifies some of the aspects discussed so far. On the one hand, the diagonals sectioning the page recall the tradition of early-Twentieth Century Soviet propaganda designs produced by artists such as Aleksandr Rodchenko.²⁷ On the other, the geometry created by these graphic elements defines a dynamic template showing a diverse set of images and text. Cut-out pictures of children and of a parent holding an infant are combined with titles running across the page – referring to collective living and organising, childcare, health, and life in the community. Showing a very different subject matter, the cover of the first issue of *Revolutionary Socialism* (July 1977) reflects a similar set of values (see illustration). Policemen arresting protesters in the crowd are pictured as an oppressing force, however, it avoids showing explicit tension or violent action – the confrontation pictured resembles an ordinary dispute – and the officers are the oppressors of a revolutionary

27 See in particular the designs produced by Aleksandr Rodchenko, for the journal *Novyi LEF*, (1928).



process as part of the protesters' everyday routines. The titles at the bottom of the page, referring to a number of struggles abroad (Argentina, Portugal, Middle East) caption the image pointing towards the extent of the revolutionary movement, by placing this everyday scene into an international perspective.

Returning once more to the idea of prefigurative politics, the value of the word 'making' in the title of *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, expresses a similar prefigurative vision. Feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham explains: the desired socialist society "cannot be separated from the process of its making," and socialism is a process to be worked towards.²⁸ Published the year of Margaret Thatcher's election as Conservative Prime Minister, the book voiced the need for a united movement concerned with the issues of workers against the managerial class, women fighting sexism in culture and the division of labour, and Blacks agitating against racial discrimination.²⁹

Finally, the context described so far – characterised by the reshaping of Left ideology, the development of libertarianism, and the growth of radical publishing – must be framed in conjunction with the most severe economic crisis since the 1930s. To determine the tense economic climate of the period were the severe oil price increases during the winter of 1973–74, the rationing of energy via power cuts as a consequence of the coal miners' strike, high inflation rates and widespread organised industrial action. Talks of industrial decay and strikes became ordinary, civil and industrial unrest were perceived as the failure of politicians to govern effectively, and the unions were seen as organisations with the political potential to overthrow governments in 1970, and in 1974 and 1979.³⁰

Looking at London in particular, the long deindustrialisation process occurring between the late 1960s and the 1980s characterised the deconstruction of the city's industrial base.³¹ Unemployment increased steadily through the 1970s, affecting in particular unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Many industries connected with the docklands area of the city disappeared with the closure of the docks (1967–1981) and the relocation of passengers and cargo to Tilbury.³² Manufacturing jobs also fell, from 1.09 million to 0.63 million between 1971 and 1982 – a drop of 42 percent.³³

Furthermore, the fracturing of working class cohesion as a consequence of deindustrialisation, together with alienation within local communities, gave rise to nationalism and racism – aspects that came to be considered a "symptom of a catastrophic breakdown of behavioural standards and means of control."³⁴

Big Flame, East London Big Flame and Publishing as a Prefigurative Political Form

Within this history, the revolutionary socialist organisation Big Flame was founded, firstly as a newspaper in 1970 in Liverpool. It remained active between 1972 and 1984 as a federation of groups across different cities. Throughout this time, Big Flame published the monthly newspaper *Big Flame*, the biannual journal *Revolutionary Socialism*, thematic bulletins, and single issue pamphlets. Circulation figures for these publications were difficult to source, however, a discussion bulletin from 1978 reports a modest number of newspaper paid-for sales: between 1,700 and 1,800 copies, together with ongoing financial deficit and difficulties with editorial organisation and distribution.³⁵

Across a prolific production of printed material, the groups that composed Big Flame spent considerable time analysing their position and relationship to the larger movement. Their views are described as 'Libertarian Marxist' and generally concerned with the abolition of capitalism, private ownership and private means of production – in favour of communal or co-operative ownership and management. This position privileged voluntary association and individual judgement as a way of questioning authority and state power – which were seen as obstacles to freedom and social equality. Furthermore, Big Flame's political programme considered issues of freedom and social equality in relation to the demands of different social groups, whose concerns involved gender and sexuality, class and immigration, embracing a range of subjects at the centre of different struggles.

To maintain a coherent political vision in its membership, the organisation's views are repeated across meeting notes, internal circulars and in published documents for external readers. A summary of the consistency between the various groups is defined in the document 'What is a Big Flame Group', written in preparation for the organisation's first

28 Rowbotham et al, *Beyond the Fragments*, p.50.

29 Rowbotham et al, *Beyond the Fragments*, p.4.

30 Black, 'The Benighted Decade?', p.8.

31 Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: a Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007) p.75.

32 White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p.75.

33 Roy Porter, *London: a Social History* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p.424.

34 Black, 'The Benighted Decade?', p.4.

35 Big Flame, *Big Flame Discussion Bulletin* (Liverpool: Big Flame, 1978). Unpaginated.

conference in 1975. The following statement, also reprinted in *Big Flame Discussion Bulletin* 28/10/1978,³⁶ defines the vague minimum requirements to start a group, and the general ambition of the organisation as follows:

the form and content of [a] revolutionary organisation is determined by the stage of [the] class struggle and the tasks it imposes. But the final aim of the revolutionary organisation is that of arming and leading the proletariat to the seizure of power, the destruction of the bourgeois state and the establishment of proletarian dictatorship.³⁷



Differently from the duplicated document and bulletin mentioned, whose circulation was restricted to an internal audience of Big Flame members, the short pamphlet *An Introduction to Big Flame: Our Politics, History, Structures and Publications* (1978) gathers together the basic points of Big Flame's activism.³⁸ The pamphlet (see illustration) had the propagandistic function of introducing the group to the broader public. The text is characterised by short programmatic statements resembling the archetypal textual form of the manifesto. However, in describing Big Flame's position, the "basic points" are detailed not as a programme per se, but as the key elements to distinguish Big Flame from the main tendencies on the British Left.³⁹ The points express Big Flame's independence from political parties and its non-authoritarian position – describing the intention of "building a political practice based on the mass of the working class" – prioritising the political recomposition of the working-class movement over traditional working-class institutions, such as the unions and the Labour Party.⁴⁰ The brief statements voice the aim of building a revolutionary movement rooted in everyday struggles – and amongst these, declare support for "the movements of women, black, and gay people."⁴¹

The revolutionary organisation must locate its activity in the community and social sphere in response to the changing composition of the working class and the structures of capitalism. We have to look further than the factory to have a total politics and reach all sectors of the class.⁴²

The changing nature of capitalism in relation to the economic crisis, industry's relocation and the consequent increase in unemployment and racism, sustained Big Flame's aim of taking part in a broad range of social issues and struggles, relating socialist politics to the problems of personal life, sexuality and culture. Repeated across multiple texts, the idea of Big Flame not being a party or its embryo, together with the need for a revolutionary party as "a product of a new level of mass struggle" to recognise as equally important the concerns of the working class and of other social groups.⁴³

Emerging from the report of the first national conference in 1975, and followed up in the *Discussion Bulletin* 28/10/1978, is a debate around the structure of the group. At the time, together with the original Merseyside group, Big Flame had

36 Big Flame, *Big Flame Discussion Bulletin* (Liverpool: Big Flame, 1978).

37 Merseyside Big Flame, *What is a Big Flame Group*, Document written in preparation for Big Flame Conference March 1975. unpaginated.

38 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame: Our Politics, History, Structures and Publications* (Liverpool: Big Flame, 1978).

39 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame*, p.3.

40 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame*, p.4.

41 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame*, p.4.

42 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame*, p.4.

43 Merseyside Big Flame, *What is a Big Flame Group*, Document written in preparation for Big Flame Conference March 1975. unpaginated

BIG FLAME women's group 10p



FIGHTING FOR FEMINISM

The Women Question in an Italian Revolutionary Group



formed branches in Manchester, Birmingham, East and West London, and had a fluctuating membership between forty and seventy.⁴⁴ Organised as a federation of independent groups with a loose National Co-ordinating Committee, members debated the need to introduce a structure and a common programme, and the friction between a libertarian and a more 'Leninist' position culminated with the split by the East London group, because of that group's focus on localism and a strong libertarian position.⁴⁵

Within this debate, divergent opinions and ongoing discussions are described as the centre of the collective's reality, affecting its operation, development, and determining an inherently unstable environment. Hence, the need for a defined structure emerged as the membership grew in subsequent years to approximately two hundred. Membership acquisition was granted after a three-month period as associate members. This time included "basic education, mutual learning and the investigation of potential types of activity."⁴⁶ Activities were then described as the work of different commissions or focus groups shaping the organisation's structure, including: "[Industry, Women, Hospitals, Anti-Fascist, Community, Teachers, Students, Ireland, Cultural]." The nomenclature of the different focus groups reflected some of the key concerns of Big Flame's politics; it also suggests a straightforward correlation between the organisation's values and group structure.⁴⁷

The activities of different commissions were further complemented by a range of publications (see illustration): pamphlets were produced with specific focus on the motor industry around the Ford plant in Dagenham (London) and in Halewood (Liverpool). Various publications documented the work of the Women's Commission; some examples are the pamphlet *Fighting for Feminism* (1975), the bulletin *Women's Struggle Notes* (1975-77), and the pamphlet *We Won't Pay* (1973), which documented the rent strikes around Tower Hill estate in Kirkby, near Liverpool.⁴⁸ The pamphlet *The Past Against Our Future: Fighting Racism and Fascism* (1980) describes the work of Big Flame's Anti-Fascist/Anti-Racist commission in response to the rise of the Far Right in the period.⁴⁹

The collage of images on the cover of this publication (see illustration) represents a photo album of the history of

44 Archvearchie, '1975 Debate: National Organisation and Autonomy', Episodes in Big Flame History, No 5. (2009). <https://bigflameuk.wordpress.com/2009/05/19/episodes-in-big-flame-history-no-5/> [accessed 21 April 2018].

45 Big Flame, *Discussion Bulletin*, p.3.

46 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame*, p.10.

47 Big Flame, *An Introduction to Big Flame*, p.10.

48 For a list of Big Flame's publication <https://bigflameuk.wordpress.com/publications/> [accessed 21 April 2018].

49 Big Flame, *The Past Against Our Future: Fighting Racism and Fascism* (Liverpool: Big Flame, 1980).

racism, showing the New Imperialism period in the late-Nineteenth Century, the Nazi Party dictatorship in Germany, and more recently the neo-fascist movements of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and the National Front in Britain. The photo associated to the year 1980, refers to the escalating level of racism at the time, and the struggles of Black immigrants. Historian Jerry White writes in *London in the Twentieth Century* (2007) that the rise of the Far Right was a symptom of the contemporary economic crisis, and because London was not ready for the mass migrations of the 1950s and 1960s, “xenophobia, anti-Semitism, colour prejudice” spread as “vices of all classes,” characterising an increasing antipathy to “any newcomer within London’s more settled working class communities.”⁵⁰

In *London: a Social History* (2001), Roy Porter reports that “of London’s 1981 population of 6.6 million, more than one in six was born outside the UK,” and racial tension increased as a consequence of widespread unemployment and poverty.⁵¹ This is the context in which *The Past Against Our Future* was published, supporting migrants’ struggles opposing fascism and racism as a class issue, as it grew in deprived areas inhabited by working class communities. The text describes Big Flame’s programme of “combatting racialism within the white working class, including the racialism of the white left,” and “supporting the growth of an autonomous black movement as the first step to real class unity.”⁵²

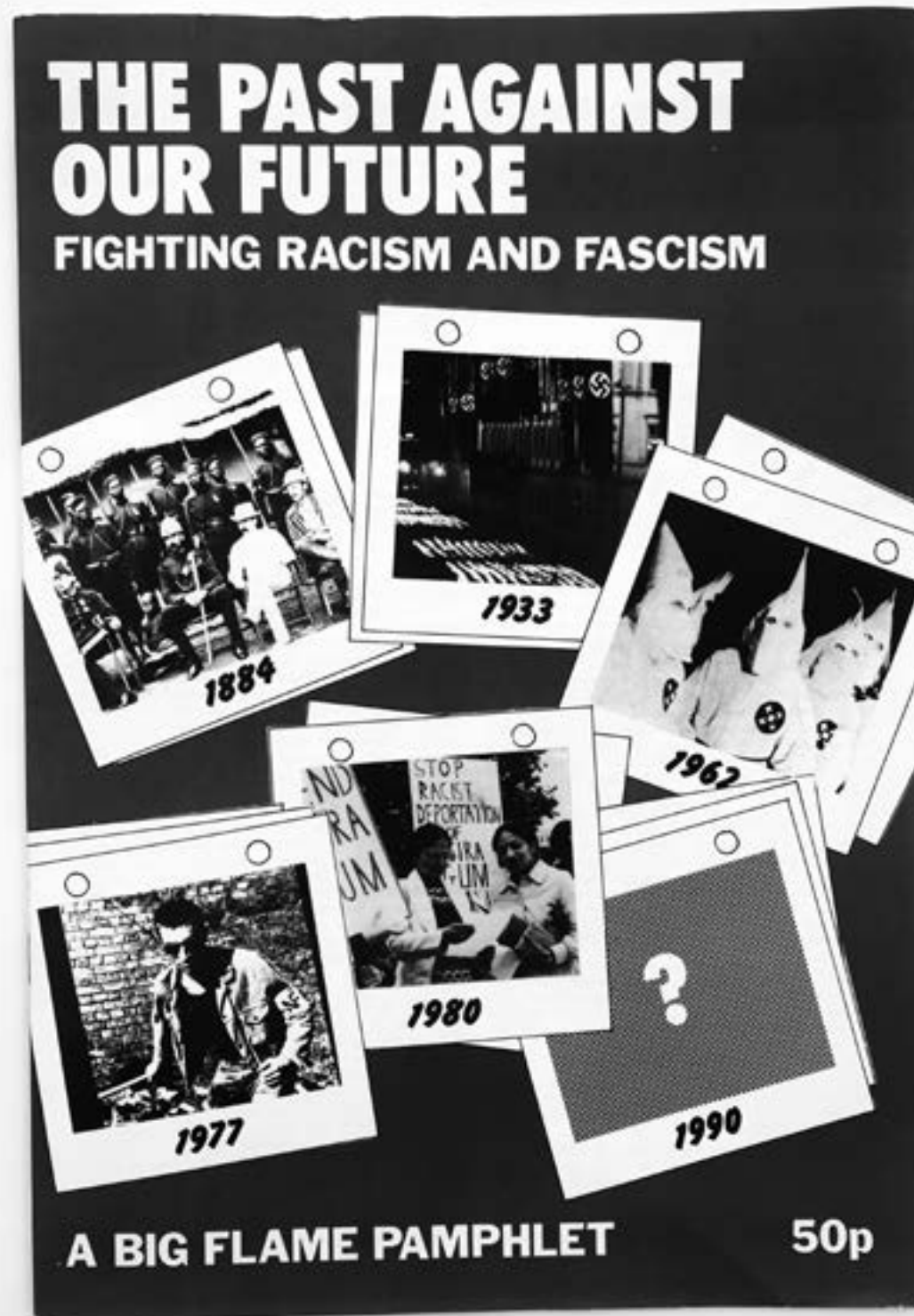
The publishing activity of the East London branch part of Big Flame (ELBF) offers a particularly meaningful interpretation of informal and participatory strategies towards the making of selected publications. The group organised non-hierarchically, and through its involvement in workers and community struggles in the local area. It developed a number of prefigurative approaches to publishing, which are documented in print. The following paragraphs look at the prefigurative political forms that emerge through the writing, editorial and design processes adopted by the group, considering the different ways in which prefiguration provided a space to rehearse a desired vision for the future, with the aim of developing this vision over time.⁵³ If this vision emerges through internal relationships, political action, and the production of publishing, then publications also become a space for the group to reflect,

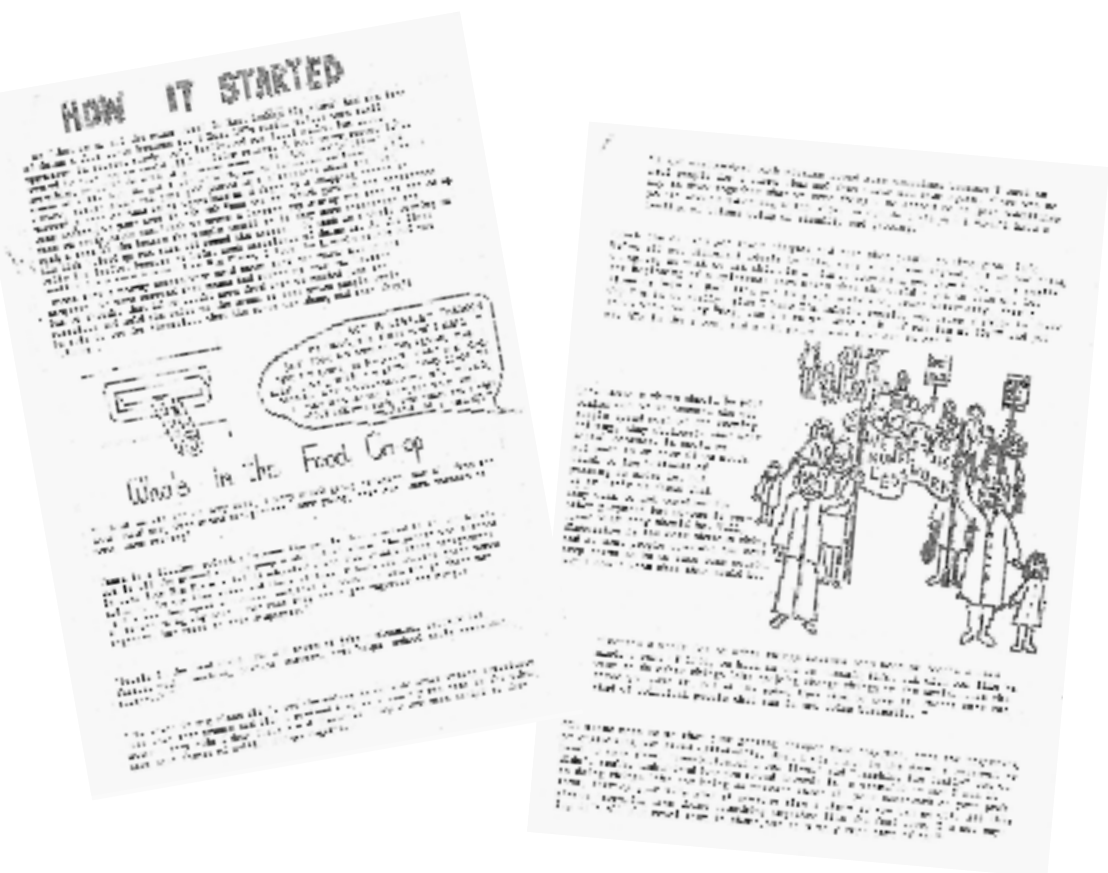
50 White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, p.144.

51 Porter, *London*, p.433.

52 Big Flame, *The Past against the Future*, p.30.

53 Marianne Maeckelbergh, ‘Doing is Believing: Prefiguration as Strategic Practice in the Alterglobalization Movement’, *Social Movement Studies*, 10 (2011), 1–20, p.3.

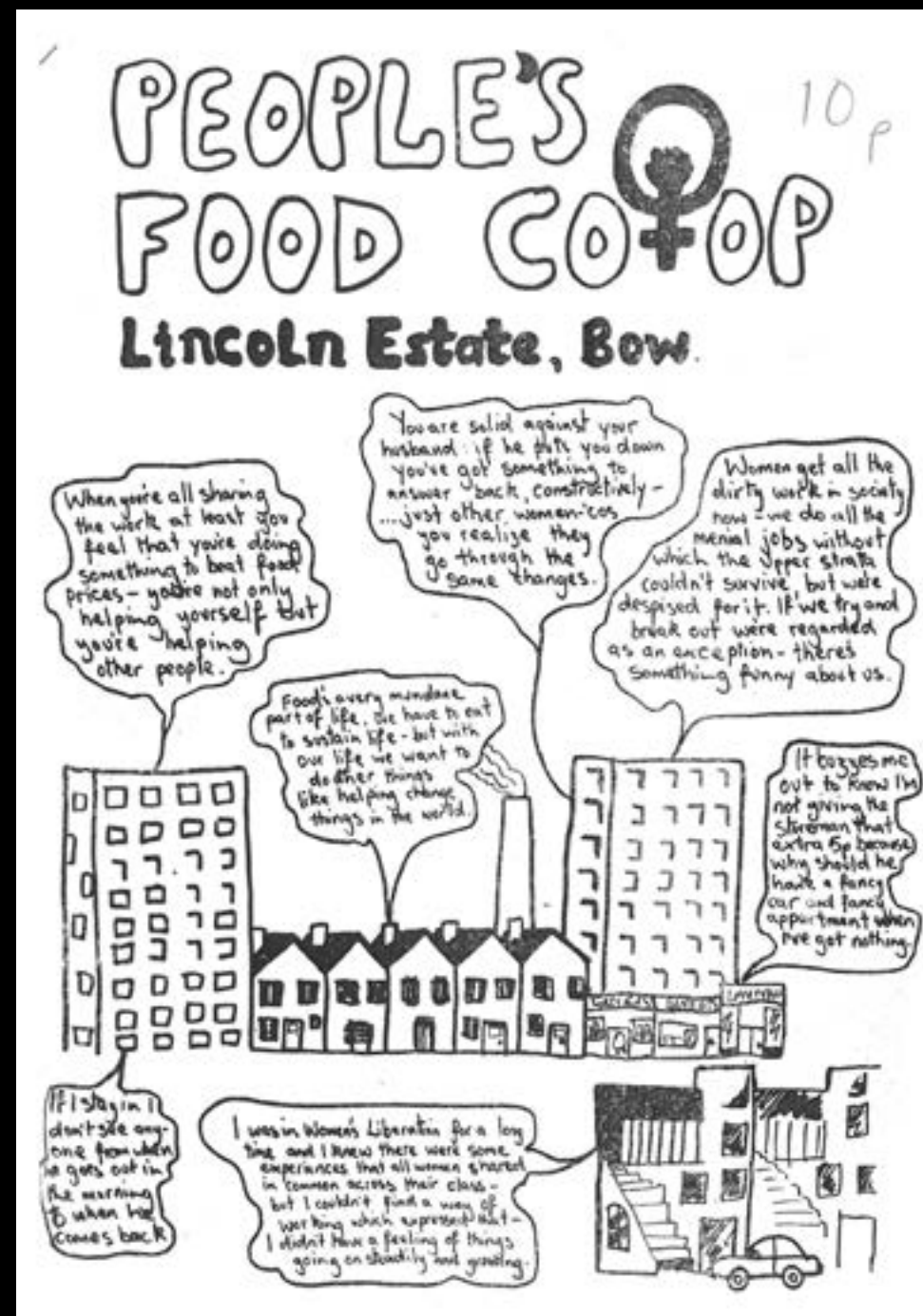




critique and confront these ideas, and the direct experience of the democratic principles they believed in.

The pamphlet titled *People's Food Co-op* (1975) was produced by a group of women in East London Big Flame together with members of the co-operative (see illustration). The publication explains the project, its collective organisation around the Lincoln Housing Estate in Bow, East London, while also documenting people's everyday life in the area. The co-operative formed in 1974 as a reaction to constantly rising unemployment, inflation, food prices, and around the necessity of procuring affordable food in one of the country's most deprived areas. East London's borough of Tower Hamlets was one of the industrial areas most severely affected by the economic crisis of 1973-75 together with Hackney and parts of Haringey and Lambeth.⁵⁴ With similar projects emerging across the city in the period, the pamphlet provided information on how to replicate similar initiatives elsewhere.

54 Porter, *London*, p.453.



WHY DO A FOOD COOP?

QUESTIONS HOUSEWORK



"I think my job in the home is just as important as men's jobs - in some ways it's more important."

"My attitudes have opened out.... like you come home and your children almost have more mothers, have more people to be fond of and love."

"I think the nuclear family is a bit of a drag to tell you the truth because ideally I'd like to get out of this house and go into a large house and live communally... because that's the ideal form of how these tower blocks could be if people were really together - instead of having 100 kitchens have 10 kitchens used by the appropriate amount of people so that all the ladies can have time off 'cause they all do the same thing the same way and they're all as neurotic as hell all popping their pills and seeing their doctor twice a week - for what? - because of the agitation of the tower block. But really it could be so cool and nice if they really got together, if they forgot that one has the better possession than the other, because we should all be working for freedom and not just getting tied up with possessions and making money to buy more possessions that will tie us up even more. We'd only need one washing machine between us all - we'd cut the manufacturers production line because we'd only need few of the special things."

"Raising children from babies is an important job and it ought to be regarded as a job. Men think it's a nice doddle, you're just enjoying yourself, whereas it can be a strain and it's very time-consuming. Women are taking a hell of a load off the state because we do need to replace the population, women are doing it all themselves with no pay and no recognition, in fact they get downgraded. Housework is something that's got to be done and people who live together should share it between them. I don't think that the husband and the children should lead all the work onto one person who therefore is completely restricted."

AND FOOD'S JUST THE BEGINNING

"If we do more things people will become aware that there's more than just what's in their immediate life."

"Some of us have always hoped that the food co-op would be the start of women organising to fight for other things on the estate, maybe setting up a tenants' action group, getting back control of the tenants' hall, doing something about the sewage floods in the flats, the stinking drains and the insects --- but we know that we all need the experience of doing things together, to have the trust and confidence in each other to fight for what we want."

On a practical level, the pamphlet describes the different tasks involved and the advantages of starting a food co-operative: the group met every two weeks, orders were agreed collectively and everyone received the same food. Participants aimed to share jobs: food buying; the organisation of the food into boxes; and the fetching of orders "as equally as possible," although not always successfully.⁵⁵ The co-operative is described as an independent initiative from Big Flame, whose contacts are printed small at the back; circulation of the pamphlet was presumably circumscribed to groups involved in the women's movement and to the local neighbourhood.

On the one hand, the political message of the pamphlet describes the story of a group of people taking action over the rising cost of food; on the other, it illustrates the co-operative's experiment in collectivising an aspect of daily life, finding ways of sharing, and building a local solidarity network. Starting from food and energy prices, the

55 The text refers to instances where a limited number of people could drive, and could therefore execute only the same duties. In other instances women with full-time jobs could commit less time and contributed less.



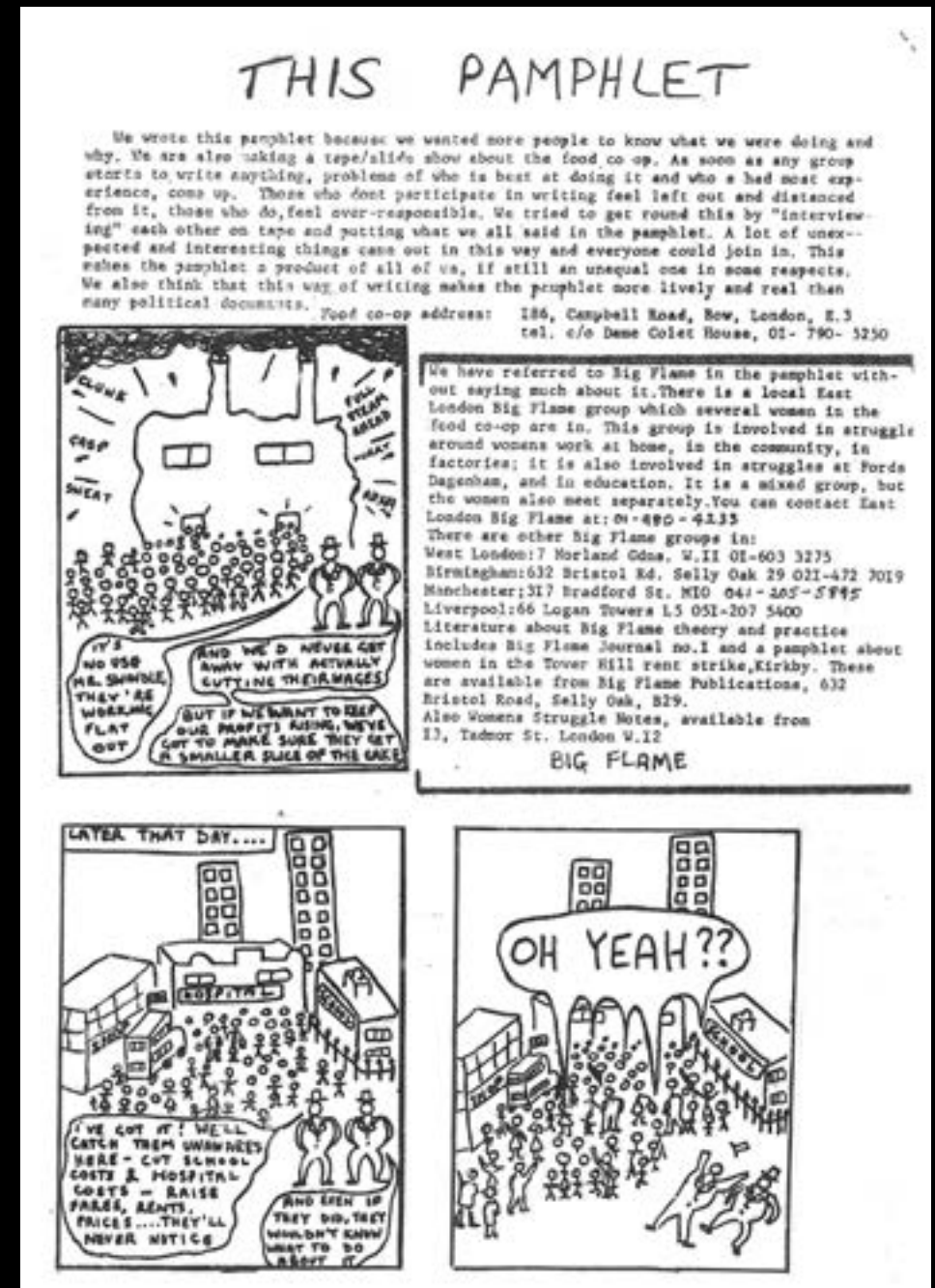
co-operative expanded its critique towards living conditions around the Lincoln Estate, considering rent and the disrepair of social housing, health and childcare, and solitude and isolation in the home. Members of ELBF vividly describe these aspects as “the politics of everyday life.” They denounced the way in which capitalist production had increasingly invaded areas of social life (including the home, schools, social services), and how work and family were both playing a role as part of one system: “the social factory.”

From a design perspective, the handwritten logo on the cover illustrates the project’s political stance, while the subtitle “Lincoln Estate, Bow”, places it within East London’s tradition of working class militancy of trade unions and tenants’ unions. The striking aspect characterising the 16 stencil-duplicated and stapled sheets, consists in the extensive use of quotations constructing the text’s narrative. The blocks of text are extracts from interviews made by co-operative members interviewing each other (see illustration). Interviews were transcribed, edited and selected for the publication, and the page layout intentionally draws attention to this participatory process. Extracts appear loosely positioned on the pages, black and white illustrations fill the gaps in between the extracts, and the speech bubbles appearing on the cover – and sporadically inside the pamphlet – further highlight the idea of multiple voices speaking, with the narrative developing as a conversation. The process of producing the publication is explained on the back page as follows:

As soon as any group starts to write anything, problems of who is best at doing it, and who’s had most experience come up. Those who don’t participate in writing feel left out and distanced from it, those who do feel over-responsible. We tried to get round this by ‘interviewing’ each other on tape and putting what we all said in the pamphlet. [...] This makes the pamphlet a product of all of us, if still an unequal one in some respects. We also think that this way of writing makes the pamphlet more lively and real than many political documents.⁵⁶

Interviewing emerges from this description as a methodology to overcome issues related to skills, confidence, and experience – aiming to develop a process that is “as inclusive

56 East London Big Flame, People’s food Co-op, unpaginated, MayDay Rooms Archive.





as possible.” Rooted in the needs described earlier, together with transforming the routine of procuring food for a single household into a public process, and collective shopping into a form of resistance, the pamphlet’s production follows a similar, collective and prefigurative process. The publication provides participants with the know-how of collective organisation and decision-making, while also being the product of a similarly democratic process, which ultimately shaped the pages’ visual language.

Tape recorders, used by co-operative members in the making of the pamphlet, figure amongst the technologies that transformed publishing into a do-it-yourself production. Ken Worpole refers to them as part of the tools “that have taken the mystery out of newspaper, magazine and book.” They became essential to the oral history projects and his work as a publisher at Centreprise, the community bookshop that opened in Hackney in 1971.⁵⁷ In the hands of members of the food co-op, tape recorders allowed the group to pursue a vision that challenged the centralisation of power in the hands of writers, editors and designers – favouring a collective and open ended process aimed at democratising and demystifying the printed medium.

A different process informed the publication of *Fact Folder* (see illustration), a series of publications authored by members of ELBF and produced in 3 issues between 1972 and 1973. *Fact Folder* was conceived as a counter-information archive of research material for militant organisations. Structured as separate case studies, each issue shows numerous pages of densely typewritten text, packaged inside a paper envelope and seemingly ready to be posted. Amongst the sources used in the writing are: government and company reports; trade union papers; and articles from mainstream newspapers (also described as “the capitalist press.”) Appropriated as newspaper cuttings, some of these visibly stand out against the text-heavy pages, and, together with reproductions of maps, provide the scarce number of illustrations included.

The focus of the series is “the organisation and development of social conflict in UK’s industry and elsewhere,” through an analysis of the changes in the economy as a consequence of the crisis.⁵⁸ Through the pages emerge a number of

57 Ken Worpole, *Writing* (London: Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, 1978), p. 243.

58 *Fact Folder 3*, (Wallasey: Big Flame, 1973), introduction.

Car output disrupted by production stoppage brings strike-hit total to 30,000*

By A. W. Thomson

Continued from page 1

...of the industry...

PRODUCTION CHAOS

TOOLROOM TRIAL OF STRENGTH

...of the industry...

...of the industry...

Rolls-Royce locking out strikers in attempt to break toolroom deadlock

By A. W. Thomson

...of the industry...

...of the industry...

The Future?

...of the industry...

- (1) A long-term industrial strategy to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world...
- (2) ...of the industry...
- (3) ...of the industry...

STRIKE CHRONOLOGY



- 1. Major work done in Coventry last year - 40,000 - down to 30,000...
- 2. ...of the industry...
- 3. ...of the industry...
- 4. ...of the industry...
- 5. ...of the industry...
- 6. ...of the industry...
- 7. ...of the industry...
- 8. ...of the industry...
- 9. ...of the industry...
- 10. ...of the industry...
- 11. ...of the industry...
- 12. ...of the industry...

COVENTRY TOOL-ROOM DISPUTE



...of the industry...

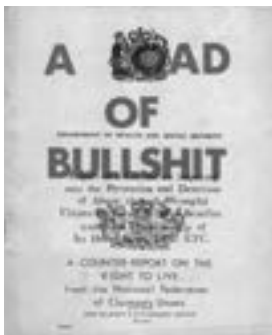
The following article is an attempt to present the background and development of the dispute, 1974 to 1979:

- (A) What was the Coventry Toolroom Agreement?
- (B) The Department of the Employment Secretary in the 1970s.
- (C) The Toolroom as a strike force behind 'shop talks' by Ford.
- (D) The employers' response: at a general level: rationalization, reorganization and other.
- (E) The employers' response at a local level: The Coventry Toolroom Dispute.
- (F) Issues of the Dispute.
- (G) A note on how Coventry was almost lost to Ford's car.
- (H) After 1976 a discussion on the TUC.
- (I) A few more thoughts.

...of the industry...



insights on ELBF's thinking around working class struggles; and the relationships of the group with communities in East London, foregrounded in *People's Food Co-op*, extend here to a number of national and international connections. Research around the River Thames area, described as a geopolitical space of production and transportation, expands from the port of London to its industrial surroundings – and from the disputes of Ford workers at the Dagenham plant, to the struggles of employees in Germany, the United States, and Latin America. Together with monitoring the social fabric and industrial development of East London, this research looks at the changing conditions of working class communities considering different aspects: industry's expansion and contraction during the years of the crisis, industry's geographical relocation and relationships with other capital, changes in work organisation and the impact on workers, alterations within the profession because of technological change, the de-skilling of job roles as a consequence of automation, changes affecting the relationships between skilled and unskilled workers, and migration and unemployment in specific regions.⁵⁹ Single case studies appearing across the three issues include a report on the ongoing struggles of Ford workers in Britain, housing disputes across the country, dock workers' strikes, and chronologies of strikes in the UK.



The format and the design of *Fact Folder* are particularly interesting to consider as they support the series' subversive aim on multiple levels: the A4 brown cover-envelope suggest the format of legal documents to send as correspondence, while the name 'Fact Folder' hand-written excessively large on the front, reads as a caricature – playing around with the publication's content, format, and scope. The crest in the top right corner further describes the documents as a Government report parody: repurposing the British Royal coat of arms, the emblem is here reproduced with a worker (to the left) and a protester (to the right) attacking the lion and the unicorn – while the band running across the Royal emblem shows Mao Tse-Tung's dictum: "If you don't hit it, it won't fall."⁶⁰



The same version of the emblem was used across pamphlets of the Claimants Union in the same period (see illustration), such as the *Claimants Handbook for Strikers* (1973), and the third journal of the National Federation of Claimants

Unions, *A Load of Bullshit: A Counter-Report on the Right to Live* (1972).⁶¹ The cover of this journal is also designed as a facsimile of a Government document. A third pamphlet, titled *Women and Social Security* (1977) and published by the Claimants Union in Manchester, shows a variation of the same logo. On the back cover the protester wearing the balaclava is replaced by a woman, indicating how the same design was adapted to different contexts, and in solidarity with the struggles of different social groups.

The second issue of *Fact Folder* mentions that only 400 copies of the first volume were printed, and announces its intention of "producing articles with militants and friends involved in different struggles," in order to increase external participation in the project.⁶² A contribution from a London dock worker is therefore featured in the following issue. The article was produced following an editorial strategy called 'workers' inquiry', a technique that Big Flame adopted from the Italian Autonomia movement. Workers' inquiries consisted of information exchanges between militants outside the factory and factory workers: Big Flame members recorded conversations with Ford workers about issues in the workplace – such as long working hours, low wages and poor working conditions – and used this content to produce agitational material, such as leaflets and newspapers to "feed back

59 *Fact Folder* 3, introduction.

60 Mao Tse-Tung, 'The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan', in *Selected Works*, 6 vols (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), IV, p.19.

61 The publication is a response to Henry Fisher's inquiry into social security benefits abuse.

62 *Fact Folder* 2, (Wallasey: Big Flame, 1972-73), p.2.

63 Ed Emery, personal interview, 19 January 2018.



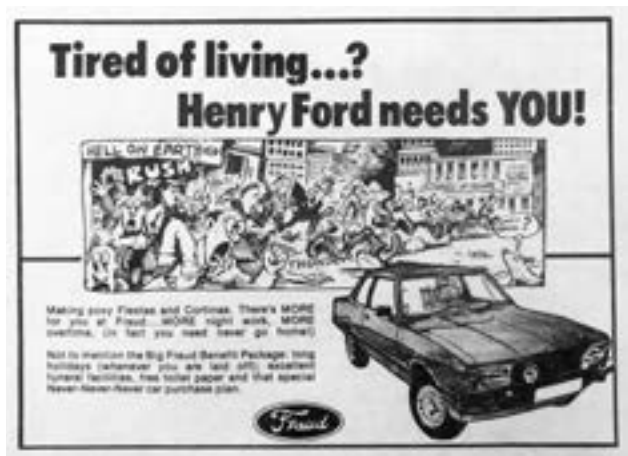
into the plant' the following morning."⁶³ As a strategy, workers' inquiries reflected an editorial approach which combined "knowledge production and political intervention."⁶⁴ using qualitative and quantitative research methods as weapons of class struggle, Big Flame aimed to produce over time a movement of workers that could expand autonomously inside the factory.⁶⁵ Using the leaflet 'Take a Ford Job' (see illustration) as an example, it is possible to see a number of concerns raised by ELBF in solidarity with Ford workers in Dagenham. The leaflet reproduces a Ford job advert (see illustration), together with a number of personal issues faced by workers: dealing with stress and health problems from working on the line; anti-social hours affecting family life and relationships; and issues with mobility unsettling workers by breaking up friendships, solidarity networks and people's sense of place. The leaflet had the purpose of developing relationships between workers who felt unsupported by the traditional trade union structure, especially immigrant workers from different racial and ethnic groups. Reproduced in the top right corner is a subverted version of the Ford logo, reading 'Fraud' in a similar writing style.

The same version of the logo appears in the pages of *Fact Folder*, and of other publications reporting workers' disputes in the motor industry. It was also reproduced on signs, leaflets and t-shirts worn by protesters during pickets and go-slows at different Ford plants, nationally

64 Fabrizio Fasulo, 'Raniero Panzieri and Workers' Inquiry: The Perspective of Living Labour, the Function of Science and the Relationship Between Class and Capital', *Ephemera* Vol. 14: 3 (2017), 315-33 (p.315).

65 Joanna Figiel, Stephen Shukaitis, Abe Walker 'The Politics of Workers' Inquiry', *Ephemera*, 14: 3 (2017), 307-14 (p.307).

66 Emery, personal interview.



Take a Ford job! **Fraud**

.....AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?

MORTGAGE, HP PAYMENTS, IN DEBT UP TO YOUR EYEBALLS, NEUROSIS, PSYCHOSIS, INSOMNIA, SCREWED UP HOME LIFE, WANKER'S CRAMP, MONTHS OF SWEAT, HOURS OF UNPAID TRAVEL, FOREMEN ON YOUR BACK, VARICOSE VEINS - A BACKBREAKING, MINDBENDING GRIND!! IT'S A **FRAUD!**

LEAVING

In the last few weeks Ford have been desperate to get at least 1,000 new starters. We know for a fact that in the last four months 4,000 men have left Dagenham.

- they left because of the low earnings recently due to management's lay-off tactics.
- they left in disgust with the confusion caused by the Unions' cap-out (like giving up our fight for holidays for the next two years - in a one-year contract!)
- they left because they've got Sharing Power - staying away from the mess of working in this slow corp. They'd rather be in an easier job, or take a spell on the Dole.

When they got no satisfaction from this Game, they simply voted with their feet. And despite all the glossy adverts and a massive media campaign, Ford are still losing more men than they can recruit. As a result Ford is now thinking of lowering production schedules.

WORK FOR IT?

At this time we can't say what effect all this coming and going is going to have on long-term workers' organisation at Dagenham. But it looks as if all through the British motor industry the class struggle is making itself felt in ways of fighting that we don't usually think are "militant". Now that traditional ways of fighting - like the all-out strike - have been blocked by the Freeze (with the collaboration of the Unions), our workers seem to be hitting back in other ways. For example:-

- In the period since our "contract" was signed at Ford, not only have men been leaving, but daily absenteeism has increased sharply at both Dagenham and Halewood, messing up production schedules.
- Chrysler workers two weeks ago gave a magnificent display of British workmanship - two out of every three cars that came off the line had to be worked on again for defects.
- At British Leyland, Liverpool... "pieces of metal - steel tubes, files and rasps - were found lodged in a machine on the production line. The line broke down 9 times, halting production for 6 hours".
- And rumour has it that 3 men have been sacked from Dagenham's Garage Section for causing £5,000 worth of damage to cars.

The message of all this is that they can Freeze our wages (and we all know how we've been hit by this), but making us work for them is another matter!

LAYOFFS

At Ford, when management started using layoffs against us, we knew the Unions left us in the lurch, and we ended up paying the cost of layoffs out of our own pockets. But in other sections of the motor industry the fight against layoffs is now coming to the front:-

P.T.O. →

and internationally.⁶⁶

So far, *People's Food Co-op* offered a starting point to talk about prefigurative politics as a rationale to challenge the structure and design of a conventional publication. *Fact Folder*, meanwhile, used workers inquiries as a collaborative process and presented different ways in which ELBF members appropriated published material and subverted its meaning. One more publication to spark considerations around editorial and design process as prefigurative forms is *Red Therapy* (1978). The pamphlet was named after a leaderless therapy group formed in 1974 and involving members of ELBF together with former members of the Communist Party and the International Socialists. Illustrating a different aspect of the group's practice, *Red Therapy* introduces the difficulties faced by the group as they attempted to prefigure their political vision.

Together with full-time political activists, the group involved teachers, social workers, building workers, film-makers, a hospital porter and other people involved in Big Flame's activities around East London: the disputes at Ford in Dagenham and Lesneys' toy factory in Hackney Wick, the food co-operative and a children's playgroup near the Lincoln Estate.⁶⁷ *Red Therapy* formed to explore the borderline between politics and therapy, described in the text as "the synthesis of the personal and the political." Alternative therapy figures as an aid to the group in coping with personal struggles, by bringing together and making relevant to each others' political commitments and personal issues.⁶⁸

Instead of being a remedy to aid recovery from illness, the group envisioned therapy as a form of self-improvement and a means to resist the emotional stress caused by modern society. From this perspective, mental illness represents a form of revolt employed by our body in response to the conditions imposed by society, together with being a "major area of social control, capitalist marketing and profit-making."⁶⁹ The pamphlet records the experiences of the group, including emotions, difficulties, and contradictions faced by members in supporting each other – and the ideological stance of *Red Therapy* appears strongly from the pamphlet's opening (see illustration). To the question "why red therapy?" written across two pages, a succinct answer reads in a smaller font as a statement: "therapy is for fighting

67 *Red Therapy* (London: Red Therapy, 1978), p.2.

68 *Red Therapy*, p.17. The group refers to 'alternative therapy', as opposed to the psychiatric and psychotherapeutic treatments available for people who couldn't afford professional psychotherapy in the 1970s. These were commonly pharmaceuticals or electroconvulsive therapy.

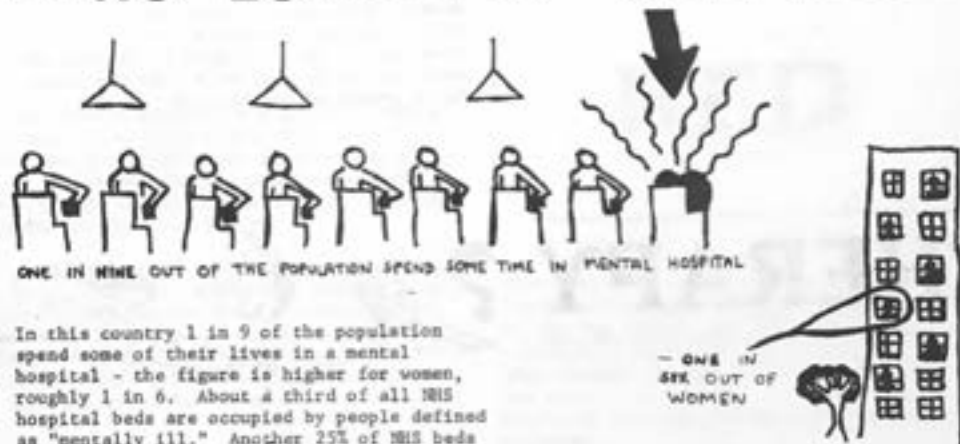
69 *Red Therapy*, p.4.

70 *Red Therapy*, p.3.



Mental Health

— NO LONGER A "SIDE ISSUE"



In this country 1 in 9 of the population spend some of their lives in a mental hospital - the figure is higher for women, roughly 1 in 6. About a third of all NHS hospital beds are occupied by people defined as "mentally ill." Another 25% of NHS beds are occupied by people whose conditions may have come from emotional stress - alcoholism, drug addiction, attempted suicide, accidents and diseases caused by tobacco smoking and excessive eating. In 1970/1 over 380 days were lost from work through various forms of mental disorder - the number lost through strikes was only 11m. The sale of sleeping pills and tranquillisers is a growth industry, making huge profits.

It is clear that "mental illness" is no longer a side issue - it is a major form of reaction, of our bodies' rebellion, against capitalism. It is also a major area of social control and of capitalist marketing and profit-making. Defining people as "mad" or "evil" as an excuse for putting them away or destroying them has been a common practice since the witches of the middle ages and before - but why, at this point in the twentieth century, is "mental health" a growth industry? What have been the changes in our society which have made people's reaction to life under capitalism express itself in this form of "sickness"? Why is it that this form of "sickness" and this form of "treatment" have become so widespread? How is it that straight psychiatry has recently developed so rapidly as a new weapon of social control?



IN 1970, £47.2m WORTH OF SLEEPING PILLS AND TRANQUILLISERS WERE PRESCRIBED (ALMOST TWICE AS MANY AS IN 1965)



THE CHEMICAL FIRM LAROCHE SELL ABOUT 300 MILLION VALIUM AND LIBRIUM TRANQUILLISERS A YEAR (10 FOR EVERY ADULT IN BRITAIN). THEY SELL AT 500% PROFIT



Being Made A Commodity

A hundred years ago British capitalists could increase their profits by expanding into markets abroad, in the colonies, etc. By the middle of this century, that was no longer possible, and to boost their profits they have had to intensify their home markets, selling more of their products to people in this country, depending more on British consumers to keep them going. This meant a drive to sell more cars, washing machines, etc., per head of population, and it also meant that to sell more they had to move into new areas - vaginal deodorants, pop music and fashions for under-eights, are just three examples of markets that didn't exist twenty years ago. This intensified selling has been boosted by intense advertising and consumer manipulation - which the TV has been able to develop to a fine art. Idealised sex roles - the sexy domesticated wife, the responsible stud man, etc., are used to sell commodities and have become commodities themselves; we're told that if we buy a certain product it will make us happy or glamorous and will transform our lives.

The result has been to create new needs, raising people's expectations of consumer luxury, romantic love, sexual excitement, etc. Parts of our lives which used to be controlled by religion (our sex lives, relationships, our personal and spiritual life) have now been invaded by the commodity ethic - we are led to hope for more, and to think we will be able to buy it; while our real life and experience feels increasingly devalued, and we ourselves are made to feel like dehumanised commodities too. This has been one of the growing pressures on us and on our sense of ourselves in the last twenty years.

Every time you change, you'll be glad Harringtons nappies haven't.



THE SEX-SYMBOL AND THE PERFECT MOTHER - TWO OF THE ROLES THAT ARE SOLD TO US WITH A COMMODITY.



I'm Marisa.
Fly me.
Fly National.



internalised capitalist ideology.”⁷⁰ The radical interpretation of therapy developed by the group and central to the pamphlet is yet another instance of prefigurative political forms of thinking and living. Published the same year in the second issue of *Revolutionary Socialism* (1978), the article ‘1968 ~ 10 Years On’ (see illustration) describes women’s health groups “with their perspective of preventative rather than curative medicine,” and free schools “with their emphasis on non-hierarchical learning,” as manifestations of the same vision.⁷¹ Prefigurative politics is once more pictured as key to the relationship between the personal and the political that the group constructed – encompassing all aspects of everyday life, the “entire fabric of social relationship,” and as part of the process towards the revolution.⁷²

Fundamental to the revolutionary process, self-organisation and the vision of life lived communally and collectively also emerge visibly in the design of *Red Therapy*. The pamphlet’s cover shows a raised fist extending the shape of a heart, while the two symbols – the heart and the fist – draw the silhouette framing a group photograph of men, women and children of different ages. The union of the self and the political represented by the photograph and the fist punching through a surface recalls a liberating gesture rather than a violent one. The collective process of making the pamphlet is described as long, “confused and contradictory:”⁷³ people wrote and re-wrote sections while others preferred not to be involved; other difficulties encountered included “different levels of expertise and confidence in writing, layout, [and the] general articulacy” of different group members; people left after having been committed for a long time, and others joined the writing and editing at later stages.⁷⁴ This participatory process can also be observed in the page designs: illustrations appear throughout in a variety of styles, suggesting that different people might have contributed drawings. Page numbers are handwritten, as if added at the last minute before printing – perhaps because the order of the content was not defined until then.

Finally, a form of criticism levelled against the choices made by *Red Therapy* members emerges strongly from the experience of the group recorded in the pamphlet. Disappointment arises from the fact that their way of organising never turned out as intended: neither fully collective nor fully

71 Peter Anderson, ‘1968 ~ 10 Years On’, *Revolutionary Socialism*, Spring 1978, pp.6–10 (p.8).

72 Anderson, ‘1968 ~ 10 Years On’, p.9.

73 *Red Therapy*, p.3.

WHY

At one time or another, all of us had come to feel the need for some kind of therapy, either because we were desperate and needed help; or because we more consciously felt the need for changes in ourselves and in the way we lived our own lives, that went along with the wider changes we wanted to see in society.

RED

When we started meeting as a group in summer 1974, most of us were politically active. We all see ourselves as revolutionaries carrying on anti-authoritarian traditions that sprang for us in the students/workers/women's movements of the late 60s.

Some of us have been active in our jobs - several as teachers, a hospital porter, filmmaker, building worker, social worker, etc. Others have intervened actively in other working situations - in groups regularly leafletting Forde, Dagenham and Lesneys, the toy manufacturers, for example. The women in

Some people in the group wanted to explore the borderline between politics and therapy, to see how therapy and politics could be relevant to each other, and what the relationship between the two could be in our lives and activities. Others saw themselves as people on the left who wanted to do therapy together.

In writing this pamphlet we have tried to put ourselves in some historical and political perspective, as well as describing the concrete and specific problems of getting a self-help, leaderless group together.

We believe that there are a lot of people who are trying to work out some synthesis of the personal and the political in their lives, who feel the need for some kind of self exploration or therapy, but in non-oppressive circumstances, under their own control. We also believe that there are many people who want to change the overall structure of society, but who are alienated and oppressed by most current forms of left-wing activity. We are trying to survive within capitalism, as well as trying to organise and struggle against it.

particular have been active in situations affecting us and the communities we live in - running a food co-op; a playgroup; a local festival; the National Abortion Campaign; squatting and housing actions. Most of us have been in political groups - C.P., I.S., and several in Big Flame. Most of the women have been active in and identify with the women's movement; the men have been increasingly identifying with a small but emerging anti-sexist men's movement.



The process of bringing this pamphlet out has been very confused and contradictory. It has taken ages. It isn't a totally collective effort (though it's as near as you usually get) and it isn't completely representative. A whole number of different people have worked on it, written and rewritten sections. Some of us have done a lot, some haven't wanted to do anything on it at all. We have had to deal with different levels of expertise and confidence in writing, layout, general articulacy. Some have dropped out after a period of intense activity. Some have come in later to pull it through and out into the world. It feels like the longest birth primal of our history.

THERAPY ?



"Therapy is for fighting internalized capitalist ideology."



We have had many long and intense discussions about what we're doing, often very interesting but much too broad for the pamphlet. We have had many frustrating hours waiting for other people to turn up to work. In one another's company we sometimes feel confused about whether to get into our feelings, have a good time or get down to work on the pamphlet. Our internal ideology has no good directives on this problem. Sometimes people have felt that working on the pamphlet was a political 'duty' (bad word) and reacted against it. It was strange at first to be 'talking about' a lot together, trying to talk inside and outside our experience at the same time. Others have felt very good about 'going public' - and had more energy for it.

We don't see or offer up Red Therapy as a model for what other groups can be, but we hope that people facing similar problems and contradictions can gain strength from our experience.

"The problem about the word therapy is that it connotes sick people 'getting better'. I'm not 'sick'. Deep down I'm a healthy person trying to find my power. - The power I need to live my life to the full and confront this sick society. The 'sickness' is the lies I have been taught about myself to make me conform to their rules."

Since we started writing this pamphlet, a lot has changed. The mixed group now meets very rarely, the men's group has dissolved as a group doing therapy for itself (though we helped to start another 'autonomous' Red Therapy men's group); and the women's group continues to meet regularly. Our ideas have developed, and if we started writing this pamphlet now we would add some things and say some things a bit differently. But as it is, this pamphlet represents an important part of our history - which we want to stand by and which we want to share.

democratic. Included in the ELBF archive collection, the text 'Thinking Autonomy' introduces a key contradiction faced by libertarians in negotiating their understanding of 'the personal' and 'the political' as overlapping entirely. As people attempted to interpret all areas of their lives politically – following the mantra “you must live your politics” – the impossible distinction between activism and other spheres of personal and everyday life also became part of their struggle.⁷⁵ The need for therapy emerged from this conflictual relationship and out of a process that over time proved exhausting – as group members strove to define a vision of autonomy in which they believed, and that was also practically viable. Discussions around the “confused and contradictory process” of writing and designing the pamphlet define an approach that fits this troubled vision – where the experimental ways of living and relating developed by the group are reflected in the group’s prefigurative publishing practice.

It remains difficult to assess the group’s success in prefiguring its vision and the effectiveness of prefigurative politics as a strategy. Similarly, it is difficult to estimate the value of prefiguration in successfully sharing tasks and responsibilities equally, and in allowing members to significantly develop personal skills. Nevertheless, the publications discussed illustrate the pervasive presence of Big Flame’s politics across theoretical ideas and the publishing practices employed by its members. In the specific case of ELBF, publications don’t only complement the group’s direct action; they become a tool to democratise and collectivise activities such as food shopping and psychotherapy, while demonstrating processes that seek to democratise the communication system itself. The participatory editorial processes applied to the production of the *People’s Food Co-op*, *Red Therapy* and *Fact Folder*, consisting of interviews, collective writing and workers’ inquiries, attempt to prefigure the vision of the group by removing the “temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future,” and interpreting “the real and the ideal as one in the present.”⁷⁶

The editorial and visual approaches of these publications further resemble different genres: *Red Therapy* echoes the language of a fanzine, *People’s Food Co-op* follows the imagery of a comic book, and *Fact Folder* the parody of an official

⁷⁴ *Red Therapy*, p.3.

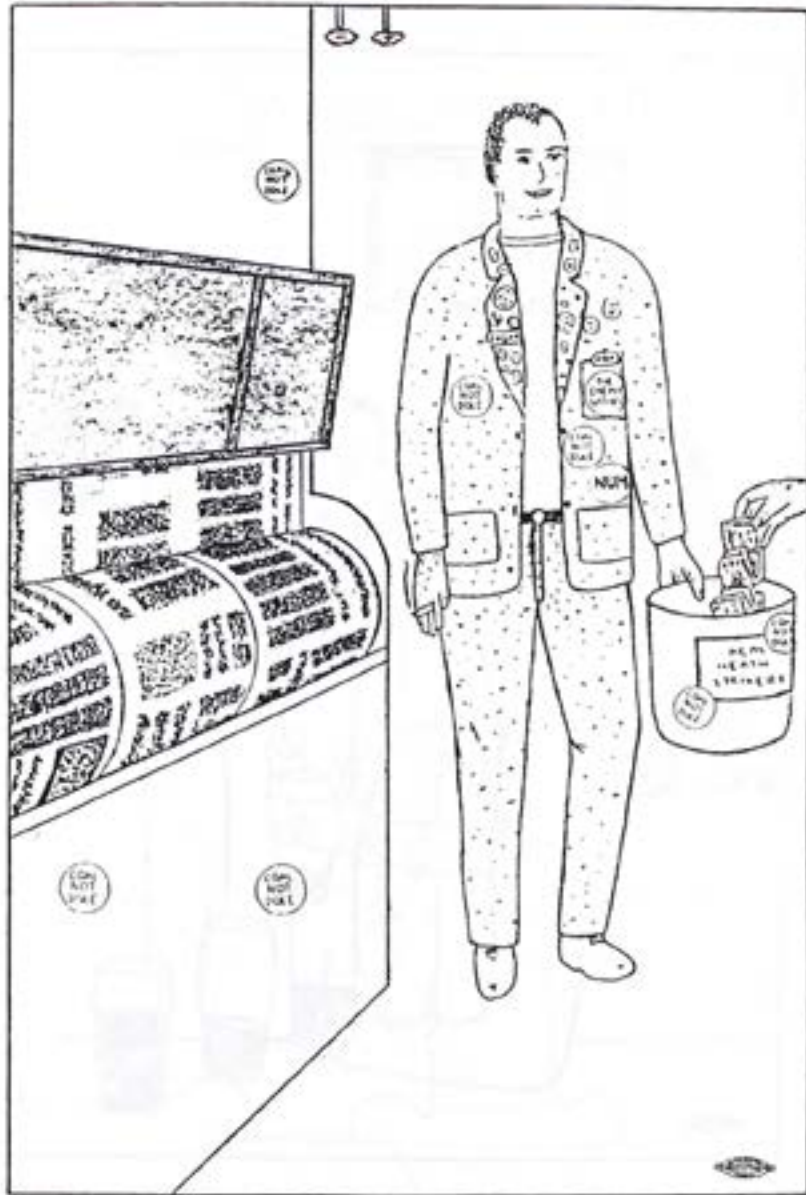
⁷⁵ MDR, East London Big Flame, *Thinking autonomy*, unpaginated.

⁷⁶ Maeckelbergh, 'Doing is Believing', p.4.

report. All together, because of the collective processes described, the publications also demonstrate a hybrid relationship between authors and producers: a relationship characterised by the constantly changing circumstances within the group, and by the ongoing tensions to which the group had to respond and adapt.

The mixed background, experiences and skills of different members also define a group’s set of resources, and its potential to develop experimental approaches to produce content, edit and design. Finally, the experimental and never-settled environment described also takes shape as an aesthetic feature visible in print. We can therefore think of the political vision of ELBF becoming ‘objectified’ in the pages of its publications. Here, linguistic meanings, making processes, and graphic expression, can be considered as tangible manifestations of the politics that prompted them.

The collective processes that are embodied in the archival sources I have described provide an illustration of the lived experiences of a small-scale group of activists, while also showing a vision towards autonomous and communal life that feels as valid nowadays as it was three decades ago. It is difficult not to think about the call for radical change emerging from Big Flame’s publishing in relation to the current situation controlled by the global pandemic. As the media speak about society’s desire to “go back to normal,” the radical vision at the centre of these old and poorly printed pamphlets provide a history of how we might also not do that.



1984 Machine room

Arnie Mintz

Arnie Mintz

Arnie Mintz was a printworker who arrived in England from Canada in 1978. He secured a job in a Fleet Street printshop, where he worked on one of London's dailies. Often described as the "last Bolshevik", he was heavily involved in the Wapping Dispute, where he found himself surrounded by left-communist and anarchist groups. During the strike, Arnie was one of the driving forces behind *Picket*. This weekly bulletin initially circulated news and details of demos and meeting dates between the striking workers. The work included here provides a biographical account of politics in North America in the late-1960s and 1970s and in the UK in the 1980s.

Illustrations
of
PRINTERS
&
PRINTING
in Canada, England and Mexico
1966 - 1992

Introduction

The largest chunk of our waking hours is taken up with working. Illustrated in this booklet are a number of shops and machines in the printing trade. Any likeness to real people is largely accidental.

November 1, 1992

Introduction

It was Ross Dowson who taught me to print. I first met him in 1966. Ross, he was special. He used to run a socialist bookstore at Yonge and Cumberland. He was usually in the store writing or reading. He'd stop to give you his full attention.

He always had an encouraging word for you and a good pocketbook because he knew you and what you'd enjoy. He listened to you and had already stocked that book in the store. Ross never kept you waiting. He had been through periods of isolation and now he was thriving on expansion. And he had answers for all sorts of questions. Even when he was in the offices in the back his door was always open.

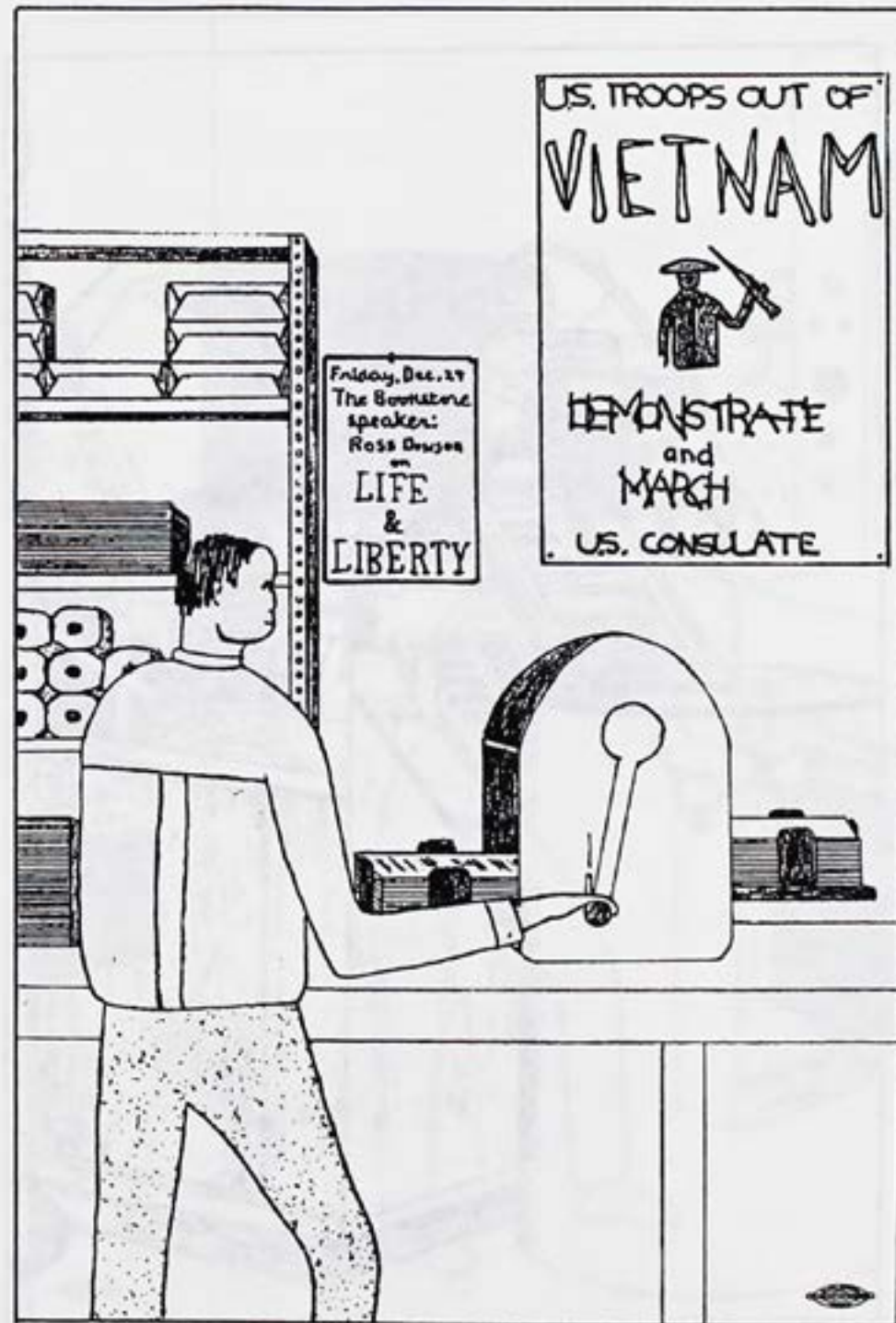
Course Ross had his ways like one of the best things about the bookstore was lunch in the hall behind the store. Lunch was a quarter. Ross'd cook soup and there was bread with honey. Aside from filling your belly the other good part was listening to Ross.

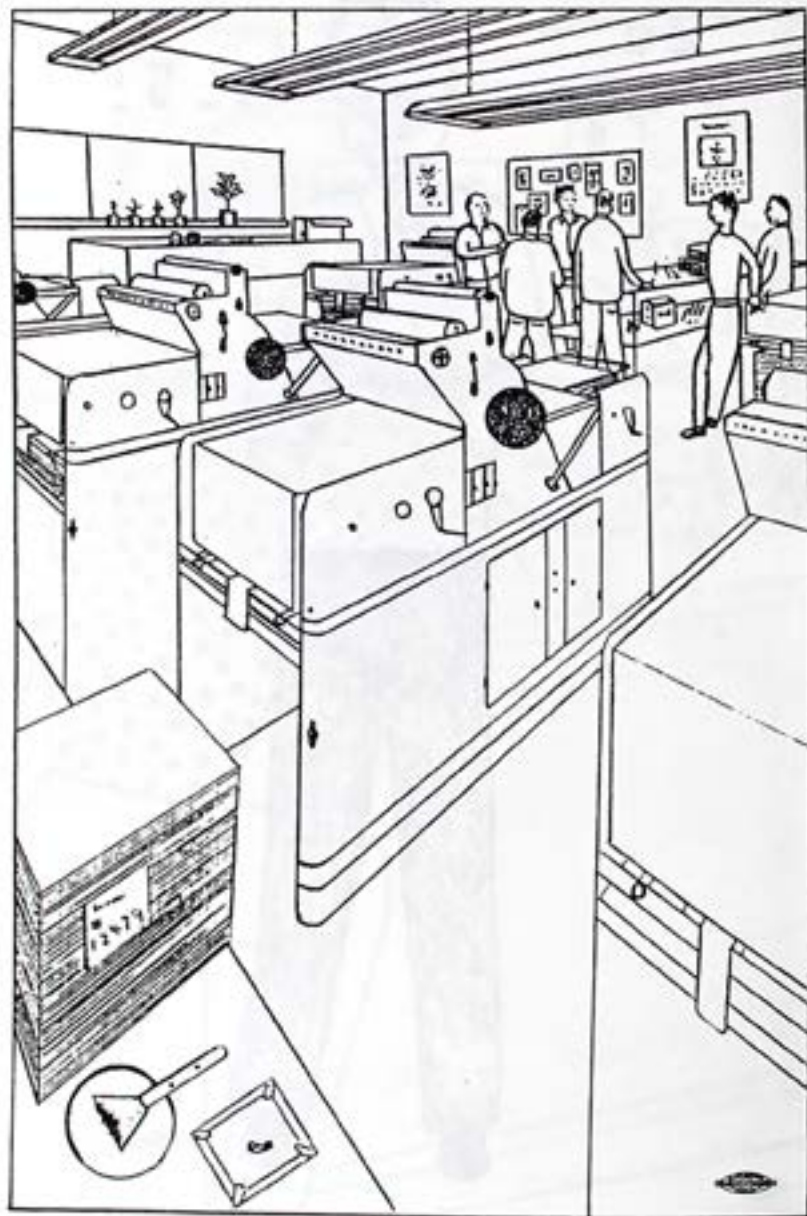
Ross did not know how to run a printing press. He did know how to steer you to it though. He taught real good. Like he explained the basics of any trade is a fault finding system. If you had a problem on the machine there was a cause which could only be for a handful of reasons which

depended on the problem. Like hickies; spots of dirt in the printing. Well that comes down to a short list of solutions. You had to but go through the list one by one, check the machine and voila the hickies are gone.

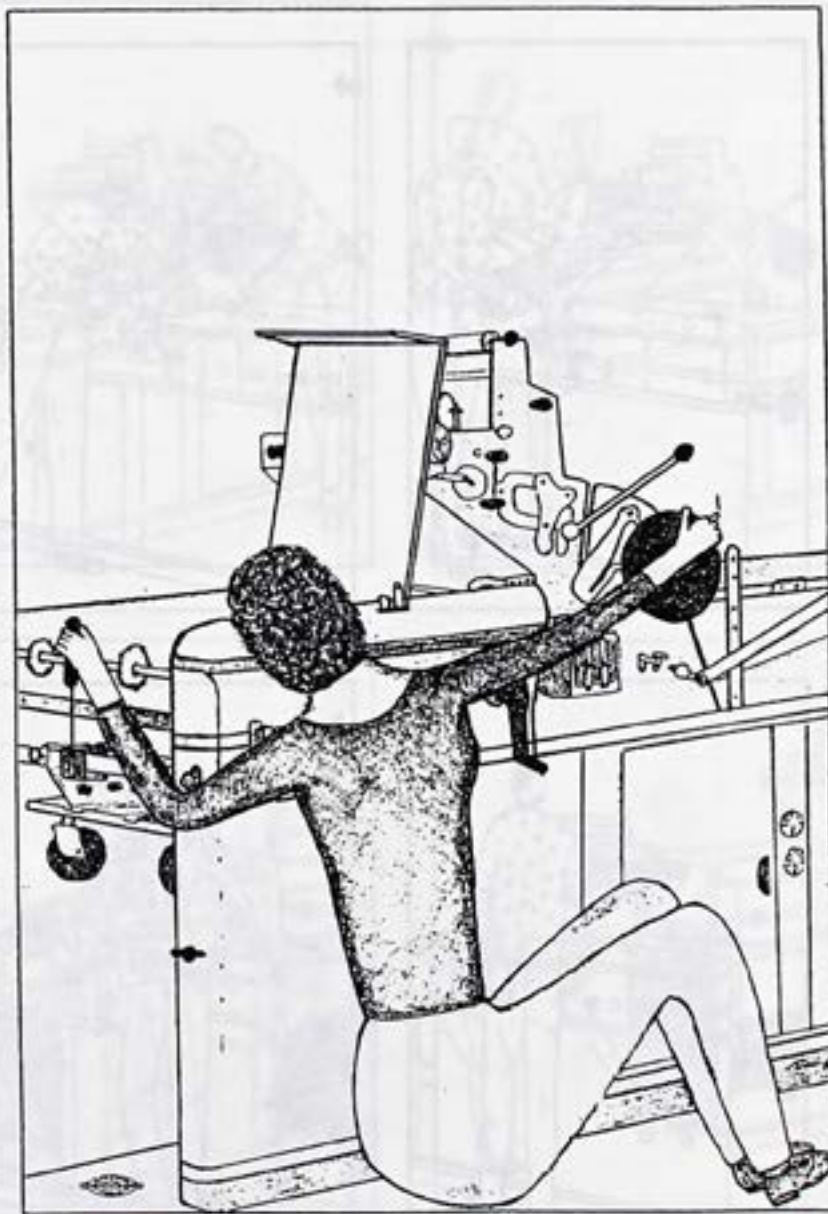
At that time I was a youngster lacking the printing experience to apply Ross's advice. The basic guideline he gave taught me to print. To apply his advice would take years of mistakes, ie. experience.

That was the 1960's. All around the world workers rose up by the many millions. With hindsight there is no doubt this was fueled by the Vietnamese. They carried billions on their shoulders, no question of that. Close at hand it was the Quebec workers rising of May 1972 which changed firm belief into solid certainty. Even hundreds of miles away you could feel the ground rumbling and every worker took a step forward.

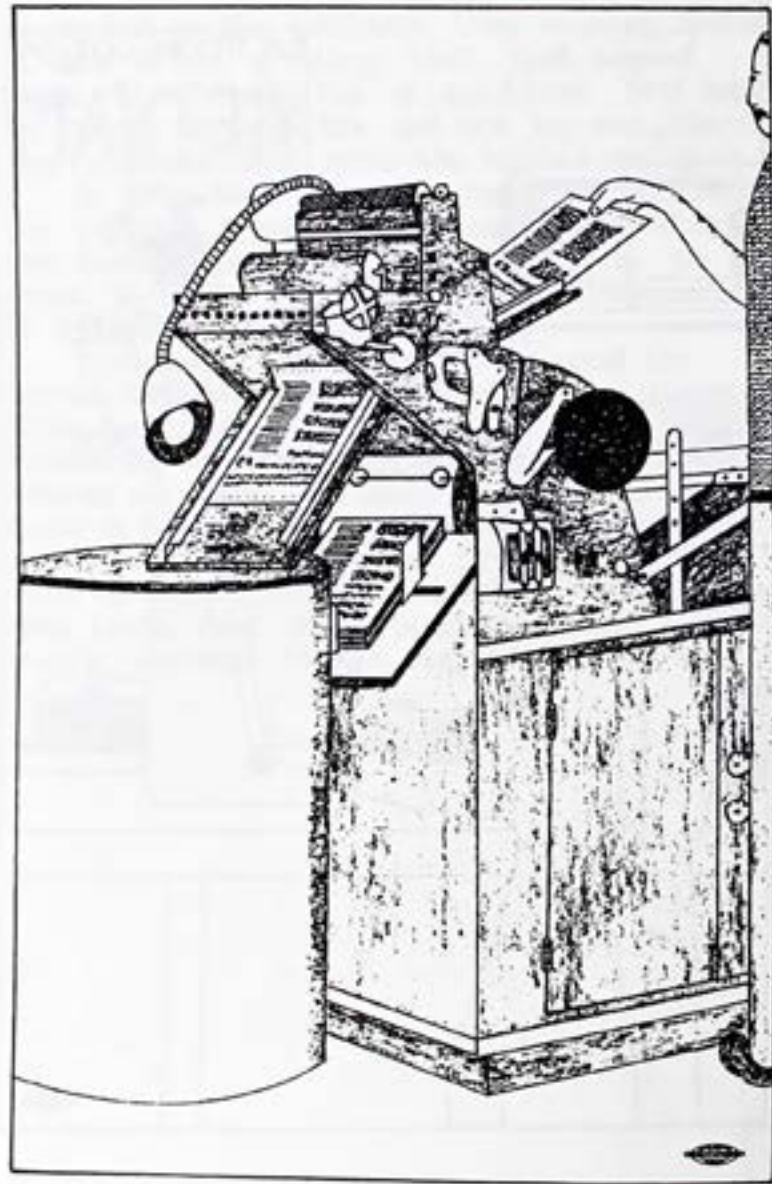




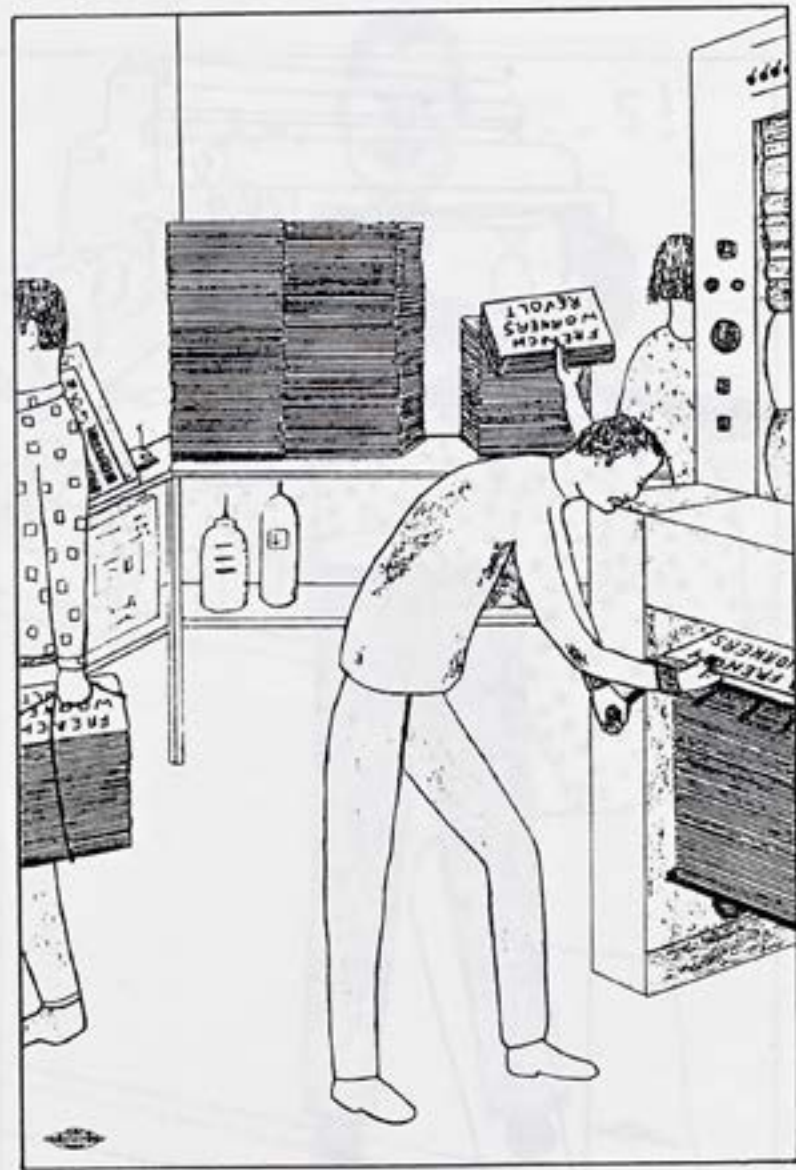
1972 Union



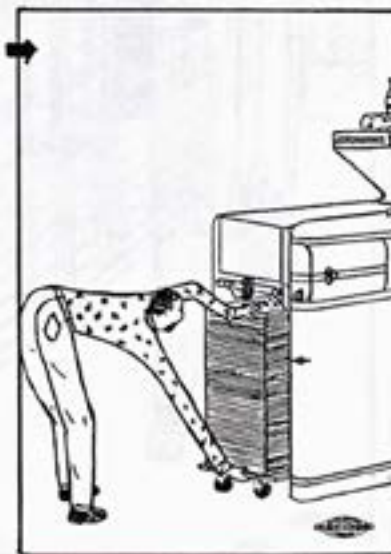
1973 Adjustment

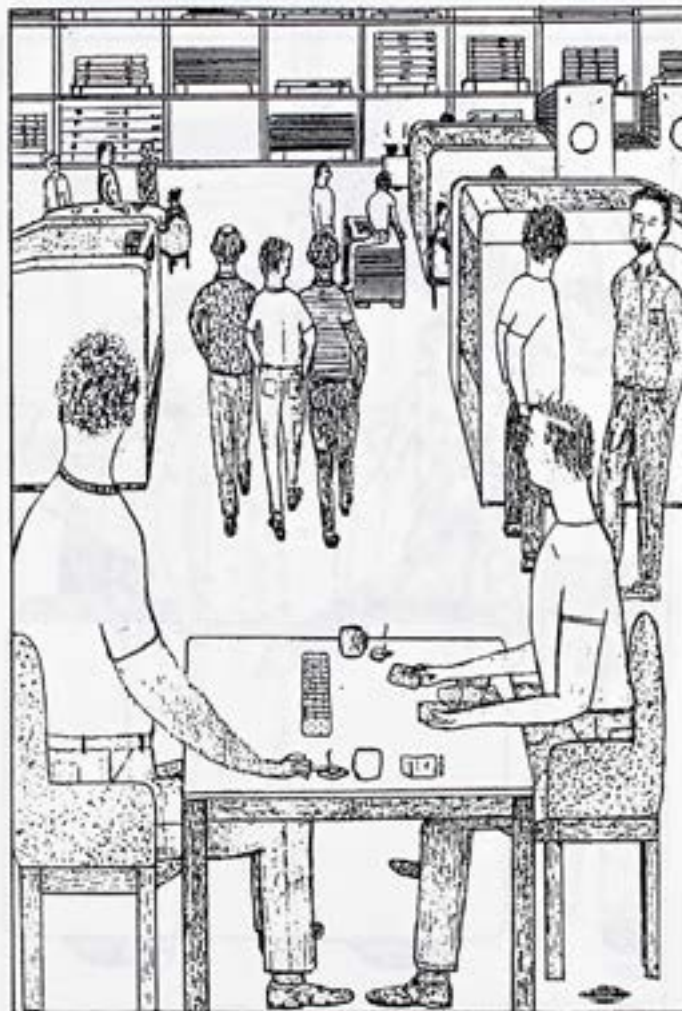
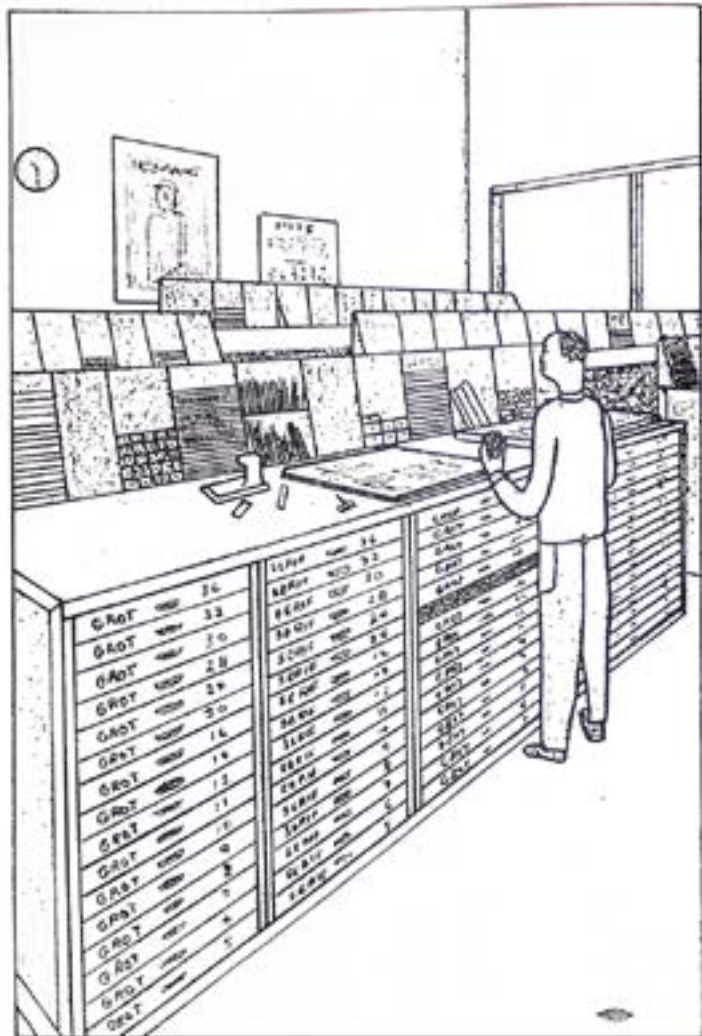


1967 Paper plates

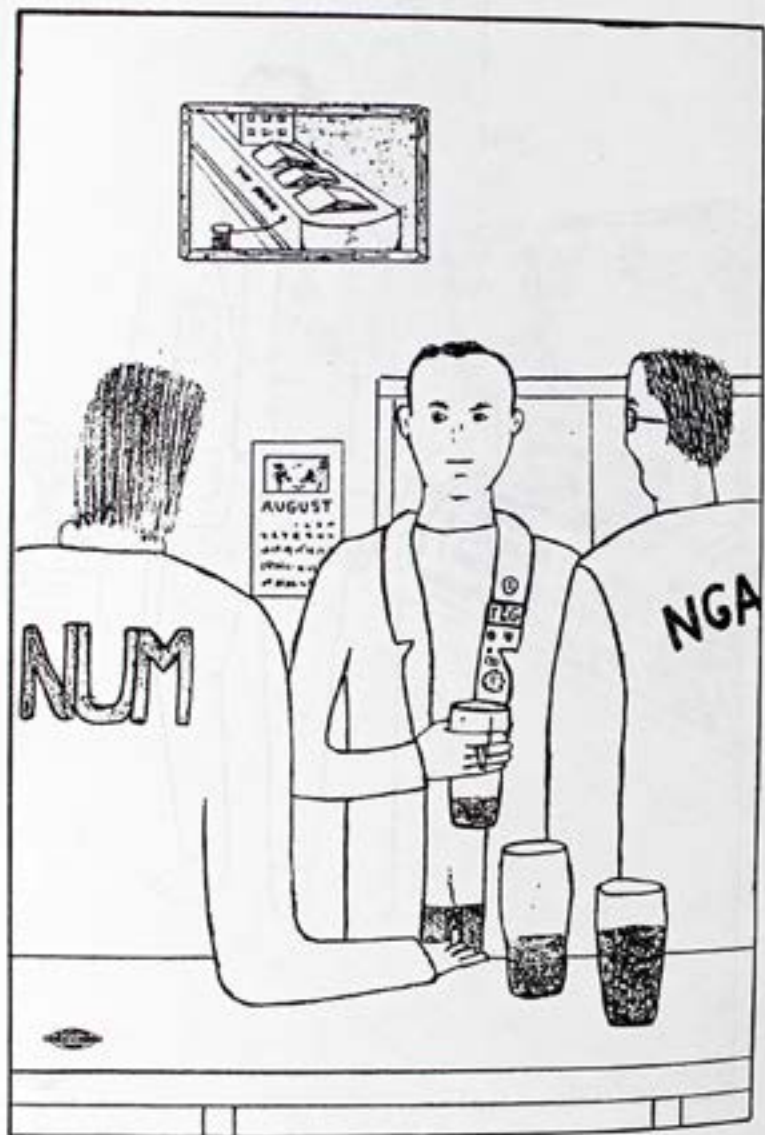


1968





1978 Dispute



1984 Liverpool



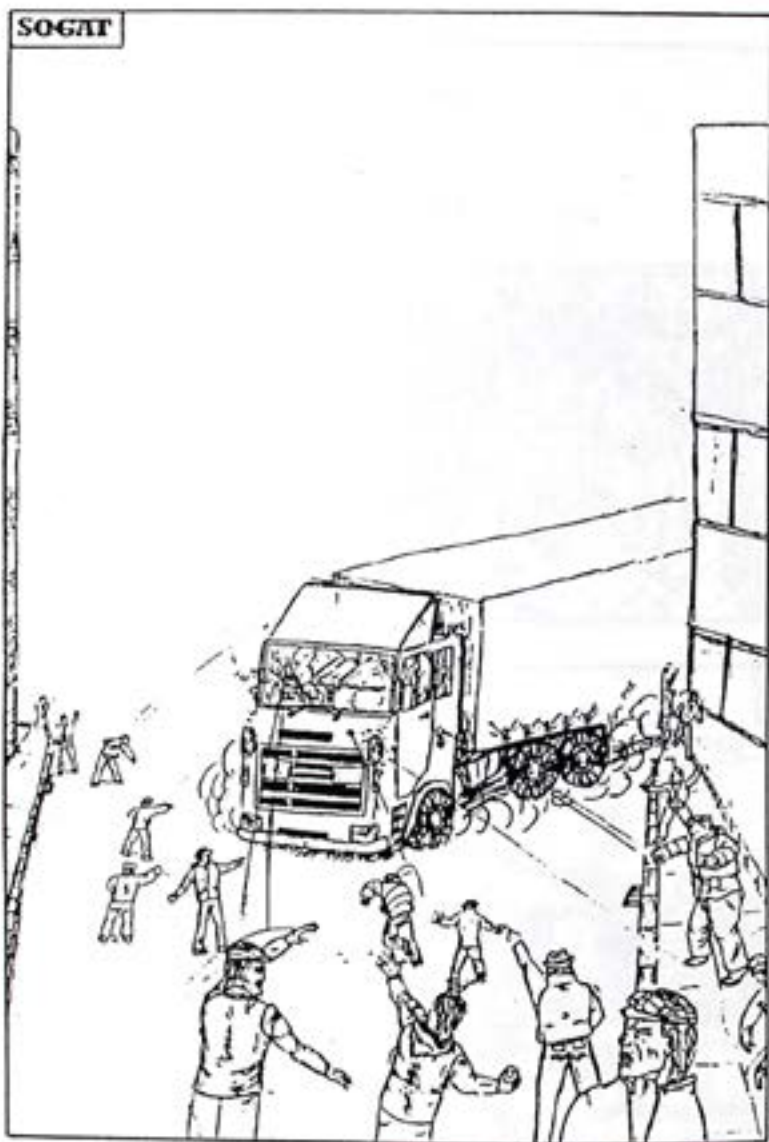
1985 Union office

WORK TO RULE
 DOWN WITH CAPITALISM
 UNION HIRING HALL
 BROTHER · SISTER · DRIVER
 PRESSMAN · PAPER HANDLER
 INKY · STRIPPER · FOLDER
 BELLS · PASTER · REPAIR
 BOY · WORKER · HELPER
 GIRL · COM
 OLD · MAIL
 YOUNG · NATTY
 SECRETARY · FEEDER · BINDERY
 ASSISTANT · CLEANER · MINDER
 LABOURER · MEMBER · PLANNER
 PALEFACE · DARKFACE · LOADER
 PLATE MAKER · ARTIST
 BOILER · SWEEPER
 LITHOGRAPHER
 LUM
 BOD
 RED
 PROOFREADER · CAMERA · CLERICAL
 CAFETERIA · PROOFER · PRINTER
 WAREHOUSE · PROCESS · STITCHER
 WOMEN · APPRENTICE · MAILER
 MEN · OPERATOR · DELIVERY
 RAG · RULER · FINISHING
 PAL · CUTTER · GATHERER
 FLY
 TYPESETTER · ELECTRICIAN
 ENGINEER · INSERTER · KEYBOARD
 US AGAINST THEM



Wapping

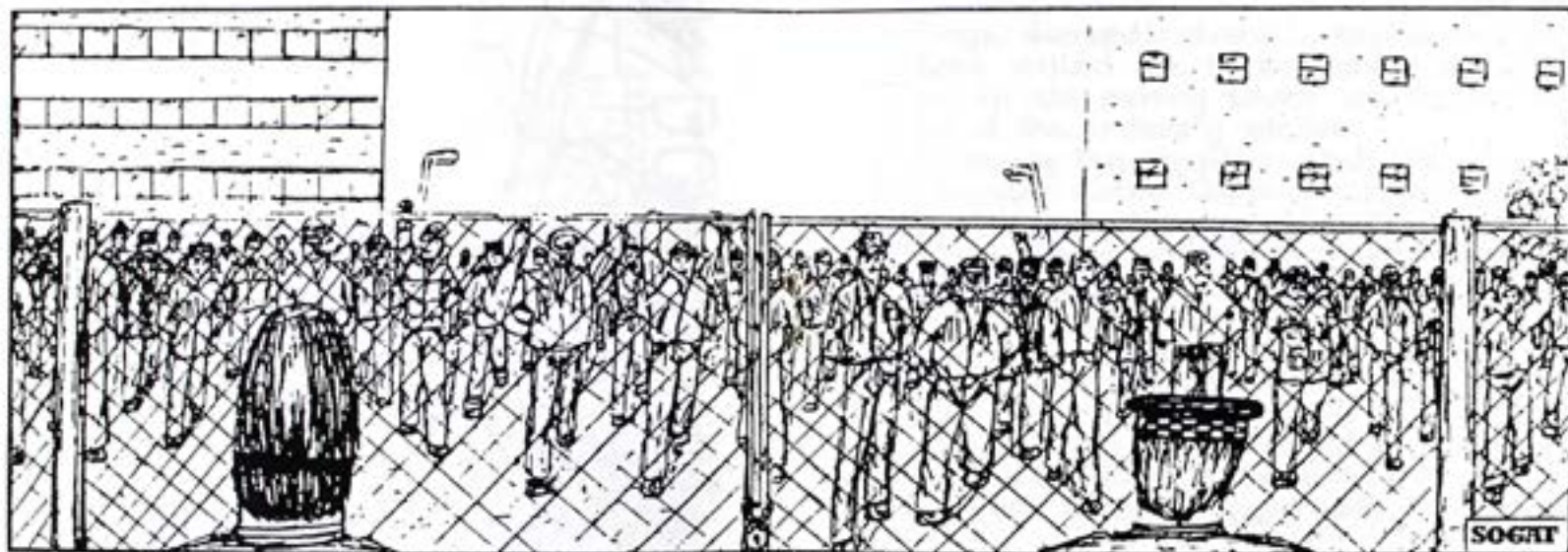
We stood up to the bosses. That is what we won. Wapping, East London was the scene of a printer's strike from January 1986 to February 1987. Not at all the soft



1986 Wapping



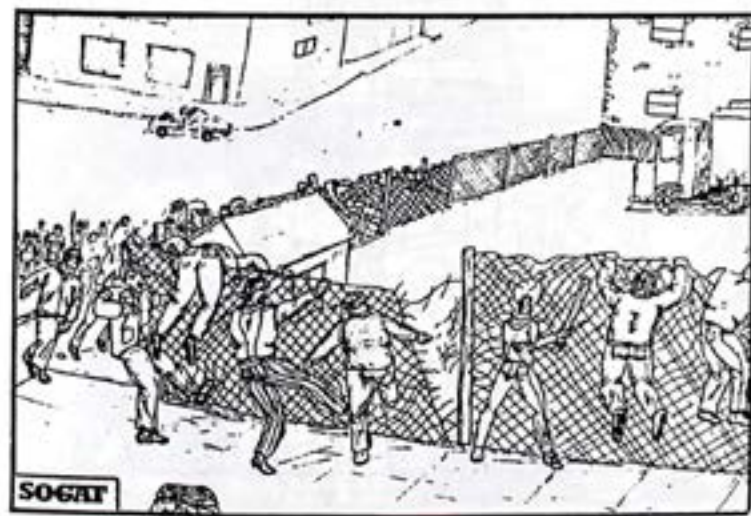
1986 Wapping



artisan but the embattled picket, the scarred warriors, veterans of confrontation.

Printing is a mass industry. From New York to London to Pittsburgh etc. street pickets are the front line for millions of printers worldwide. Wapping was typical of what printers do in many cities.

Wapping was a follow on of the miners' strike. Thousands of miners travelled up and down the country winning support. They were effective speakers. Many stopped by Fleet St. They were everywhere; in machine rooms, comps areas, the union office, pubs, in front of food markets, street corners,



1986 Wapping

1986 Wapping

THE MANAGEMENT AS SEEN BY THE F.O.C.



54

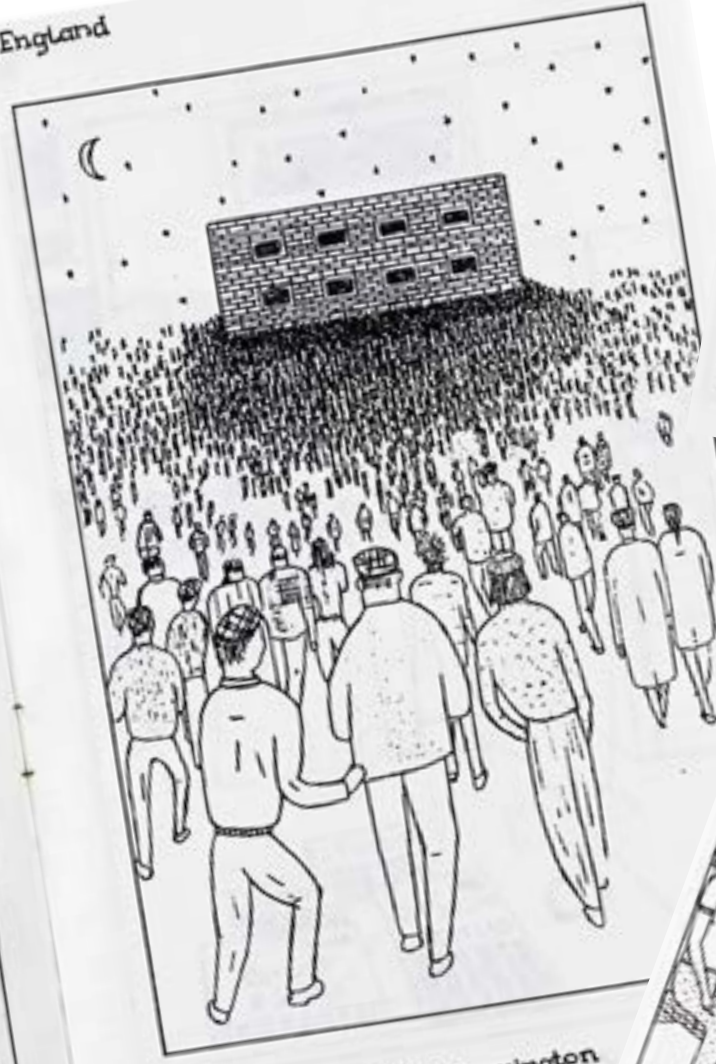
Legend

THE F.O.C. AS SEEN BY MANAGEMENT



30

England

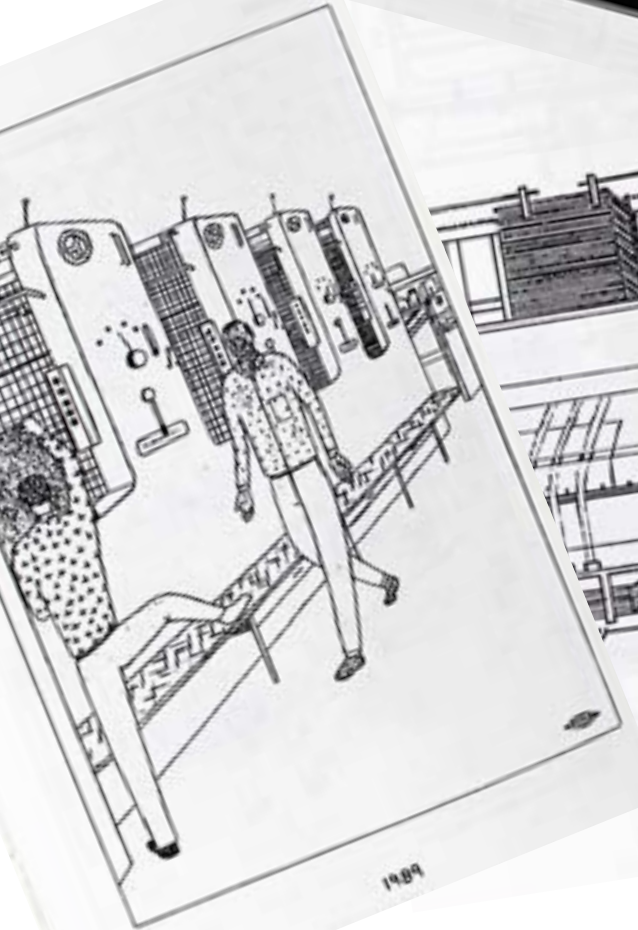


31

THE PROCESS DEPT.



"How slow, what's the delay?"

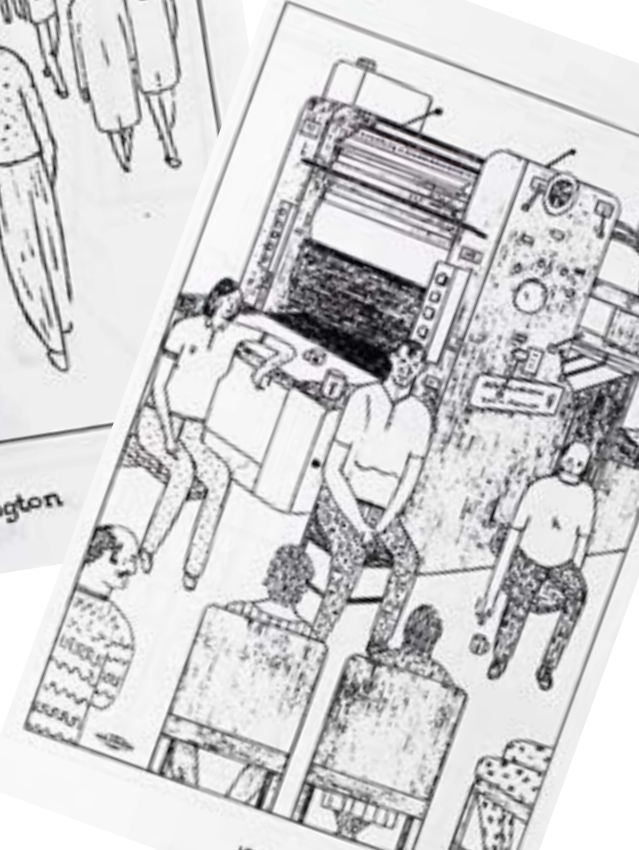


1989



1983 Running on

England



1983 Warrington



1986 Wapping

Radical Bookseller

In the next section we have reproduced documents showcasing the breadth and variety of radical booksellers, local political presses, newspapers, print workshops, and counter-cultural libraries in the 1970s. These include: The Public Library, a collection of 80,000 documents from radical movements set up in 1973; Islington Gutter Press, which was founded in 1972 and described itself as “the paper that fights on the people’s side and print what the other try to hide”; Moss Side Press in Manchester, which was set up in the late 1970s to provide cheap printing from local community groups, tenants association and political groups; See Red Women’s Workshop, a collective producing posters for the women’s movement; and finally Radical Bookseller, a magazine started by an ad hoc committee from Hebdon Bridge, which “burst on to a startled world” and was packed full of “essential information about left publications, news, reviews, previews, publicity launches, TV tie-ins, writer signing sessions, cartoons and gossip!”

GUTTER PRESS FACT SHEET

Since its foundation in 1972, the Gutter Press has undergone quite a few changes: technically, financially and politically. The paper is at present produced by a collective of twelve people: six women and six men. The collective has a policy of positive discrimination towards women when new collective members ask or are asked to join the paper in an effort to avoid male domination of the collective.

All decisions as to the content and style of the paper must be agreed by the collective, and responsibility for various tasks is shared.

None of the present collective are members of any of the left parties or groupings, although some are members of the Labour Party. This is not a result of any deliberate policy, and past members have included members of Big Flame and the IMG. Regular contributors to the Gutter Press include members of the SWP, CP, IMG, Big Flame and of course the Labour Party. We consider the promotion of unity among revolutionary socialists to be one of the more important aspects of the existence of the Gutter Press.

The paper has been reduced from 16 pages to 12, and the cover price went up from 10p to 20p in a matter of months. The only effect of these changes seems to have been to increase sales, which at one point had slumped to under 1200 per issue. Despite this, the paper still operates at a loss, and is now dependent on donations from readers for its survival.

The current print-run of 1700 is proving to be inadequate, with all copies sold out, and will probably be increased to around the 2000 mark. Newsagents take 5p of the cover price: the paper costs 13½p to print. When other expenses (layout, distribution, postage, etc.) are taken into account, the paper actually loses money on each copy sold. Advertising revenue goes some way to offset this, but at present brings in only around £50 to £60 per issue.

The Tenerife Project, since its inception last June, has brought in over £600. An unforeseen benefit has been the fact that a good many contributors have sent in cheques for £12 rather than spreading payment over a year, which has given us vital flow of ready cash to meet bills. We will also be organising a large-scale benefit concert in the Town Hall over the summer, with the aim of raising at least £500.

We intend to advertise the Gutter Press more efficiently this year, with a campaign of fly-posting, stickers, and ads in various local newspapers and bulletins. We have recently started a trial scheme placing copies in radical/alternative bookshops throughout London, and intend to embark on a campaign to sell the Gutter Press in Camden newsagents.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

*If you think your workplace/community bulletin would be willing to advertise the Gutter Press, post us a copy. We'll do the rest.

*Direct sales in workplaces are a great help to the paper. If you could sell to your workmates, we'll arrange to deliver.

*We need ads. Advertise your meetings/services/goods/ politics/whatever in the Gutter Press. You'll reach over 6000 readers. And suggest possible advertisers in and around the borough.

*Tell us your news. We don't have any full-time staff and depend on tips from readers for stories we can follow up.

*Tenerife: contribute and get your friends to.

Islington Gutter Press, 316 Upper Street,
London N1



The Public Library
197 Kings Cross Rd
London WC1
(01 837 0182)



The Public Library is a collection of radical leaflets, pamphlets papers and posters produced by groups and individuals all over the world. It was set up in 1973 with a lot of unsorted material amassed over several years by Agitprop; since then both groups and individuals have donated a lot more, and there are now about 80,000 items in the Library, mainly but not solely in English.

The Library is intended to be a tool for political activists, rather than a historical archive for academics. For example, someone involved in the women's movement, in organising immigrant workers, or in squatting should be able to use the Library to find out which other groups are currently active in the same field, their successes and failures, what tactics have been used both by activists and by the opposing establishment in this country and elsewhere in the world.

There is material on and by liberation movements all over the world; on children; education; health; housing; claimants' unions; alternative technology; workers' struggles; the military and spies; courts and prisons; Marxist, anarchist and libertarian thought. And much more. The collection of Left papers and magazines, community papers etc is being added to daily. All donations of material in English and other languages are very welcome.



At the moment we are in the process of cataloguing all the material, with a system of cross-indexes to make everything as easily accessible and useful as possible. This means that the Library cannot be open all the time. At the moment it can be used on Monday evenings from 7 - 10, and Tuesdays and Fridays from 10.30 - 6 pm. Because we have only one copy of most things, nothing is allowed out of the Library. But there is a photocopier, and copies can be made and sent at 2p a sheet.

The Library is a strictly non-commercial operation, run by a small working collective of people who give some time each week to the work of filing, cataloguing, etc. No charge is made for the use of the Library, but donations and banker's orders are both welcome and necessary. We badly need more banker's orders to cover the cost of cataloguing, building up the stock of material, rent of premises, light, heating, etc. If you'd like to have a look at what's being done before contributing, you're welcome to call in any Monday, Tuesday or Friday (times above). Large amounts are amazing, small amounts are very nice. £1 a month makes a big difference to our capability to continue, and costs nothing in bank charges at most banks.

If you produce anything, regularly, occasionally or just once, please put us on your free mailing list. Help keep the Library up to date with what is produced.

.....
This banker's order form authorizes your bank to make a regular monthly/quarterly/annual payment to the Public Library until further notice. Please return the completed form to the Public Library, 197 Kings Cross Road, London W C 1, from where it will be forwarded to your bank.

.....
Please pay to the account of the Public Library, Co-operative Bank 110 Leman St., E 1 (account no. 50071377) the sum of
(in words)
on the (date) and then monthly/quarterly/annually until further notice.
Amount in figures £.... . . .p
Signature Date
Name of Bank
Address of Bank
Name
Address

THE RADICAL BOOKSELLER

We are going to launch a radical bookseller.

The 'we' is the ad hoc committee to establish a Radical Bookseller. The Committee consists of individuals and representatives from York Community Books, Mushroom, Other Branch, Fourth Idea, Grassroots and Scottish & Northern Books, who met on Sunday, 16th September.

The Radical Bookseller will burst upon a startled world at the Socialist Bookfair in November. It will be packed with essential information about left publications, news, reviews, previews, publicity launches, TV tie-ins, writers signing sessions (!), pictures, cartoons, gossip, ads and a SUBSCRIPTION form. This new magazine will provide all the essential information that every radical bookseller and publisher has been waiting for, for years! It will cover the services the established Bookseller provides, but will be geared to the needs and interests of the radical trade. It will also be funnier.

IT WILL COST MONEY. The pilot issue for the Socialist Book Fair will be put together by the ad hoc committee as it stands, and we need to raise £500. We will raise this through selling ads to publishers and from subscriptions - so we will need £10 from every radical shop and publisher, to produce the first issue. This £10 will be your first years subscription. We need the money fast as we are going to the printers on October 22nd. We will have to raise more money for future funding. We want discussions on the structure and organization of a Radical Bookseller Group; the ad hoc Committee has been set up to produce the first issue only, to get the idea going, to hustle support and to find out what sort of radical trade journal publishers and shops really want.

So there will be time set aside on the SUNDAY MEETING AT SOCIALIST BOOK FAIR ie: on 4th November, to discuss the Radical Bookseller. Details of this meeting will be available from Book marks or at the Bookfair. We are in consultation with News from Seaden to see how the two journals can work together.

Ad Hoc Committee for establishing the
RADICAL BOOKSELLER September, 1979.

SUBSCRIBE NOW! Support the first issue of the RADICAL BOOKSELLER. We need all the help we can get, so please make your cheques payable to 'Radical Bookseller', c/o SAN Books, Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks EX7 8DG.

Name of subscriber: _____

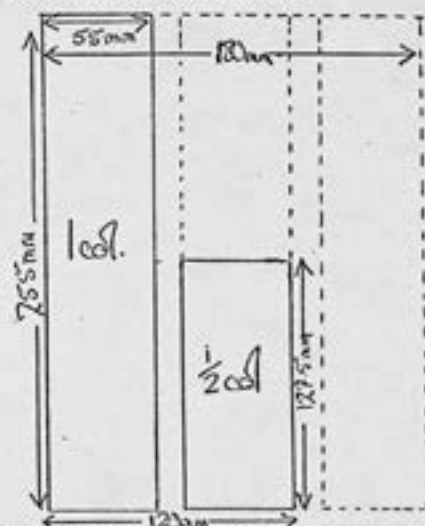
Address _____

Cheque enclosed value £ _____

PS: If you can only think in hundreds of £££'s - that will do! or a little less, if that is all you can afford.

ADVERTISING

Take out an advert in the pilot issue of the Radical Bookseller and you will reach all the radical bookshops, publishers and people at the Socialist Bookfair. Here are the specifications and special cut rates for the first issue:



| | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----|
| 1 pg - A4 | 255x180mm | £90 |
| 2 cols | 255x120mm | £60 |
| 1 col | 255x55mm | £30 |
| or | 127 x 120mm | £30 |
| 1/2 col | 127 x 55mm | £15 |
| 1/2 pg | 127 x 120mm | £45 |
| Small ads | 25mm x 55mm | £5 |

BOOK YOUR SPACE NOW! Time is short. We need all the camera ready artwork to Hebden Bridge by 18th October at the latest, so get your ad in the post to us right away please! Please enclose cheques to cover your ad as well.

NEW TITLES

What are your plans for new publications this winter? Shops need to know well in advance what books and pamphlets you will be producing. The more information you can provide BEFORE you go to press the better. Send as much information as you have on your publications planned between now and the Spring, authors, price, format, some blurb....etc. What publicity will your titles be getting? Have any of your publications been recommended on courses? Is Mary Whitehouse bringing a law suite against you? Any information about your titles helps bookshops sell them. The Radical Bookseller will let them know. Copy date for all news is 11th October. Send it now!

PLANS FOR FUTURE

This is going to be a well produced monthly magazine, with a 10,000 circulation. It will be for the trade and reach librarians, all straight bookshops, academics, publishers as well as the radical bookshops and the left. It will be promoted overseas as the source for left publications from Britain. Come to the meeting at the Socialist Book Fair to discuss these ideas.

RADICAL BOOKSELLER c/o SAN Books, Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks.

SEE RED WOMEN'S WORKSHOP

South London Women's centre, 14 Radnor Terrace SW8
contact address: 5 Larkhall Rise, SW4 / 720-4746

Sort and specifications of print:screenprinting.

We use indirect photo-stencils, autotype blue filler, and paper stencils;

Equipment: 4 screens from 12 x 12" to 20 x 30"

Organisation: We work as a collective producing posters for the women's movement. We are entirely non-profit making as we only charge to cover costs of materials. Other women are encouraged to come and use our equipment, so it is not just us mysteriously providing posters for them. Rather we teach them how easy it is to print themselves. As the screens are hand-operated and portable we can be mobile (for example we took screens to print T-shirts at the Women's Liberation Workshop before the Abortion march).

Number of workers: 9 workers. We meet on Thursday evenings, but arrange printing times to fit in with whoever wants to come along.

Sources of materials: paper—through Rye Express

Inks—we were given a load found in a skip outside a printing works. Otherwise we buy them from Sericol.

Average charges: variable!

for the posters we produce ourselves we charge 10p for a large 1-colour poster, 15p for 2 colours, etc.

When women come to make their own posters we arrange a suitable price.

Sometimes we don't charge (e.g. abortion demonstration poster)

Equipment others can use: any of our screens, and hopefully soon a lightbox

Advice: advice about making screens and different stencil techniques.

Top tips: Look in all skip, especially outside printing works.

collective

We are a ~~community-based group~~ of women interested in visual aspects of the Womens Struggle. We want to combat images of the 'model women' which are used by capitalist ideology to keep women from disputing their secondary status or questioning their role in a male dominated society. We hope to do this by putting forward a positive image of women by:

- producing posters, illustrations, cartoons and photographs ourselves;
- providing visual material for womens publications and groups;
- providing poster making facilities for other women who are fighting for their rights;
- collecting images past+present ~~which~~ which indicate the position of women in our society today eg. the everyday assaults of advertising, etc. We want to build up a collection of examples of the positive and negative aspects of the image of women for the use of any group, periodical or individual presenting a constructive statement on matters concerning Womens Liberation. We would like to receive any relevant images in order to operate an expanding and ongoing collection concerned with Womens Struggle.

Any women interested are welcome to come round to meet us and to use our facilities and learn printing methods.

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| SARAH 223 2419 | Dru 247-2309 |
| SHARON 674 8768 | Suzie 720-4746 |
| ANNA 794 7493 | Julia 720-4746 |
| BERNA - JIA SCENGLI #3 | Christine 272-3252 |
| NN6 | Michael Ann 607-4723 |



MOSS SIDE PRESS

21a Princess Road Moss Side Manchester 16
(061) 226 7115

HARDWARE - REPEATMASTER CAMERA (4 or + 400% enlarge or reduce), ROTAPRINT 30/30 (8yr sold!),
Maximum image 13" x 17 1/4", UV Fixer-maker - A3. (This equipment was bought with a loan from the SCDF)

The Press was set up several years ago to provide a cheap printing service for local community groups, tenants associations and political groups. At that time the people at the press were involved in the production of a local community paper. Gradually groups from outside M.C. and the North West began to use the press and two of the workers were occupied full-time, although only one person received a wage according to his needs.

Although the fortunes of community/alternative papers has been fairly mixed over the years there has always been plenty of work to keep the press functioning. The charges for work done are related primarily to costs - and then a variable labour charge is made - a tenants group or a particularly poorly-funded and worthwhile project may be charged cost price or less, whereas groups with access to funds (political parties, student unions, social work agencies or semi-commercial jobs - e.g. music magazines like Liqueurice or Hot Flash) pay a labour rate according to what we (and they) consider reasonable. Most organisations are slow to pay and our accounts with our suppliers are always heavily in the red.

Over the last 150 years, the work has moved away from tenant or community based jobs to larger jobs for national organisations such as Troops Out, Womens Aid, Claimants Union etc., which is a reflection of the type of political activity being undertaken, together with a large selection of alternative papers for other towns rather than small localities - e.g. Mother Grumble (dec'd) Mole Express (circulation up) Bolton Alternative Press, Blackburn, Stoke, Hebdon Bridge etc.

Since Moss Side Press started in late 1970 many other political presses have been established - Rochdale, Leeds, Aberdeen, Newcastle, Birmingham (2). We see this as a good thing, as these presses generate more work in their own areas, rather than take work from us. The present members of the Press intend to generate more material rather than act merely as technicians.

At the moment 2 workers at the Press receive a wage of £22 for what can be a variable working week, depending on the work load. A 40+ hr week is usual, but 60-70hrs + are not uncommon. Another worker comes in on a nominally part-time basis, but in practise he puts in the same hours as Lucia and Bob. We have managed to move away from specialised job-roles like the men on the printing machine whilst the woman makes plates, to a general policy of anybody doing what appears to be necessary at the time. The press is registered as a limited company, and as such has to produce certified accounts, which causes some problems, but as we are non-profit, we pay no corporation tax and we can claim VAT refunds.

We all believe that the use and growth of political/community presses is an important part of the general struggle of working people to control their own lives; not only through producing local papers and related media, but by coming together to organise hardened social relationships can be broken. Community presses can also act as centres for the exchange of information between groups on the alternative/left network. It is important that people learn to analyse and articulate their situations - either in the form of personal statements (see M.P.U. News or COP's Heavy Daze) or through the written histories of local lives and struggles (see Hackney W.E.A.'s publications). We do not do work for the parliamentary parties - partly because they use their own presses, but mainly because we believe that we must control our own lives - appointing a councillor or an M.P. to look after our interests, or trusting one of the established vanguard parties creates divisions which the ruling class can use against us. Much of the work we do - University Arts magazines and Social Services note-paper we regard as counter-productive, but our financial position means that this sort of work has to be done in order that we can still be here to do the more valuable work when this arises.

Our 18 year old Rotaprint is in a bad way and during a particularly bad spell when it was out of action for 2 months we set up a fund for another second-hand machine - A2 size. The idea behind that was an awareness of the necessity for an independent political press capable of printing large quantities of tabloid

Newspapers. We have so far raised about £250. Our bills total £900 and we are owed £1000 - with several of these of some months standing. Under these circumstances it seems unrealistic to attempt to be an unfettered SW Litho, so we've set our sights on an A3 creater, which would enable us to take the donkey-work out of finishing a 2,500 run 5 sheet newspaper for our hand-pressed (sorry!) customers. We also intend to replace our knackered typewriter, so that groups could set their work here instead of hunting around for electric typewriters. This would also enable us to advise on the layout process, which often is in such a bad state that it is difficult for us to produce a decent result.

Hopefully there will be more local papers starting in our area - there are current plans for 3 new ones in and around Manchester - in Salford, Bury and where we started out, in Moss Side. We welcome the current discussion among political presses about closer co-operation and the exchange of information and resources. We also welcome anyone who wishes to learn the techniques of offset printing with us. Groups who wish to produce their own work can do so by arranging to do so a couple of weeks in advance. Love and Solidarity - Lucia Fitzgerald, Bob Jones, Jim W.

Most recent customers:-

Hebdon Bridge Community Press 500 x 12pp, National Efrida Rathbone Society (varies leaflets), Rochdale Alternative Press (negatives only), Manchester Hospital Worker, 1000 x 12pp, Z Revue, Leicester 1000 x 32pp, M.C. Free University, Tameside College (bad debt), Grass Root Books M.C., Liqueurice Music paper 1000 x 28pp, Workers Revolutionary Party (2500 tickets), Direct Action 500 x 8pp, Women Against Rape Posters, Womens Aid Booklet 2,500 x 52pp, Manchester Crisis Centre, Mole Express 2,500 x 24pp, Rochdale Womens Liberation, M.C. University Students Union, Manchester Youth and Community Service, Manchester and Salford Housing Action Group, Chartist Movement, Troops Out Movement, Sheffield University Arts Faculty Magazine, Iron poetry magazine, Oferton Community Courier, Stockport Anti-EEC campaign, Stockport College S.U., Calfersville Roadrunner, Big Flame, Claimants Movement, Lancaster National Abortion Campaign, M.C. NAC, Sparrow Hill Community Council (L'pool) A.U.E.W. Mayday leaflets, Population Countdown (dec'd), Bolton Alternative Press, M.G. NICL, British Soviet Friendship Society, 15 CLAP Northern Handbook, National Womens Liberation Conference, Frame-Up Posters, Radio Cavell (Hospital Radio) Liberation Education, United Nations Association, Hartington Peoples Rights Office, + Adventure playground.

We regularly print for free the Manchester Area Womens Liberation Newsletter and material for the Moss Side Neighbourhood Council, and take a critical interest in the formation of the Home Office funded, YUF administered Manchester Area Resource Centre



"HEY, CAN SOMEBODY GIVE ME A HAND?"

Lithographic Printers

CONTRIBUTORS

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Esther McManus makes books & comics that explore personal & collective relationships to history, often informed by archival research. She is interested in print's historical role in the production and distribution of knowledge, informed by a background in silkscreen and risograph printing.

Guglielmo Rossi is a graphic designer and educator based in London. He runs a small design studio called Bandiera (bandiera.co.uk), teaches at the University of Greenwich, and is part of the Print! Research Group based at MayDay Rooms. His research explores the interplay between radical politics and the printed medium, looking at the social and technological context surrounding the production of journal, pamphlets and other printed material directed towards social emancipation and change.

COLOPHON

The MayDay Rooms Pamphlet Series presents documents from radical histories, offering a space for extended engagement and critical reflections on their contemporary relevance. Each pamphlet contains newly created content – including essays, poems, and illustrations – set alongside reproductions of materials to which they are responding.

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