

Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH

18th day of February 1976

SUBJECT

Big Flame

1. The following information has been received from a reliable source:-

Reference to Papers

400/75/215

2. On Saturday 7 February 1976, Big Flame held a national day school at the Stanley House Community Centre, Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool 8. The need for the dayschool arose from the confusion within the organisation as to its true identity and the proceedings were aimed chiefly at dispelling this confusion. The meeting began at 12 noon and continued until 7 pm, with a short break, and was attended by some 40 - 50 persons. Though many made the long journey from London and other parts of the country it is possibly significant that the attendance was comparatively poor, representing at best only 50% of the total membership.

3. The meeting was structured in three parts, the first being based on the campaign around 'The Right to Work', the second on the position of vanguards and the Big Flame love of mass-based practices and, finally, on internal organisation.

4. The first section was introduced by a member of Liverpool Big Flame who centred his contribution upon the 'Right to Work' campaign. He soon became involved in what was to become a set theme for the whole meeting, that of maligning trotskysts and trotskyst groups. He constantly criticised the International Socialists in particular. He asserted that, to trotskysts, all that mattered were industrial workers in the industrially advanced countries. For this country it meant a total lack of interest in women, immigrants, school children and the unemployed. They became interested, and this was the case in the 'Right to Work' campaign, in these 'secondary' sectors only as a leverage to further their work amongst wage earners. Any success in this direction would result in an immediate abandonment of the unemployed and their problems. Other contributors to this general discussion, including Privacy and Privacy, asserted that it would be wrong to react to IS economism by dismissing wage earners as irrelevant to the class struggle; such a marginalist position would be political suicide. The aim of Big Flame must be to make it clear that the group had an understanding of the proletariat which included wage earners, but did not prioritize them to the exclusion of all other sectors of the class. This, however, would be a slow and difficult process especially in the sectors dominated by trade unionism, reformism and trotskysm.

HOWARD TIDERS

5. After a short break, [redacted] Privacy of West London Big Flame introduced the section on vanguards and mass practice. In the event time curtailed the second part of this section, that of mass practice, and it was not discussed sufficiently to report at any great length. Several varying theories about the existence of a vanguard were to emerge and the underlying common denominator was the rejection of the notion of the 'Party' as the only real vanguard, as this could only bring revolutionary ideas to the working class from the outside. Taking the majority of her theory from the Italian organisation, Lotta Continua, and the struggles of 1969, she asserted that the group was born in Italy from the mass struggles in Turin in 1969, which brought about the birth of workers' autonomy in Italy. Migrant workers from the south were involved in the most wide scale revolts against the conditions of work at the Fiat factories. At the same time, students were challenging the college and school authorities and revolting against discipline. It was when these two mass vanguards began to realise their common aims that a new phase of revolutionary struggle began. Big Flame, like Lotta Continua, must always define its origins as being based directly upon the class struggle. She was, however, at pains to point out that because of the very different political, cultural and economic conditions in Italy compared with this country, it would be wrong for Big Flame to follow the practice of Lotta Continua to the letter.

6. [redacted] Privacy was to emerge as one who questioned most the position of the mass vanguard and mass practice. He thought that the mass practice work of Big Flame was weak because the level of mass class was low. In addition, mass struggles in this country came and went and remained isolated. It would be wishful thinking to believe that they could be united by a programme. Finally, he suggested that as the level of mass struggle would remain low for some time, very few people would be recruited into Big Flame through them. It was fundamentally necessary for Big Flame to recruit because the developed structures within the organisation such as the various commissions (Irish Commission, Portugal Commission etc.), newspaper, journals, etc., could only work properly if Big Flame were much larger. Unless Big Flame grew, he thought that many members would leave out of despair and loneliness. This theory, however, is not borne out from the experiences of Merseyside where recruitment is at an unprecedented level through mass action at Fords, Halewood, the Women's movement and tenants struggles. In fact, Big Flame claims to be the largest revolutionary organisation in the area.

/struggle

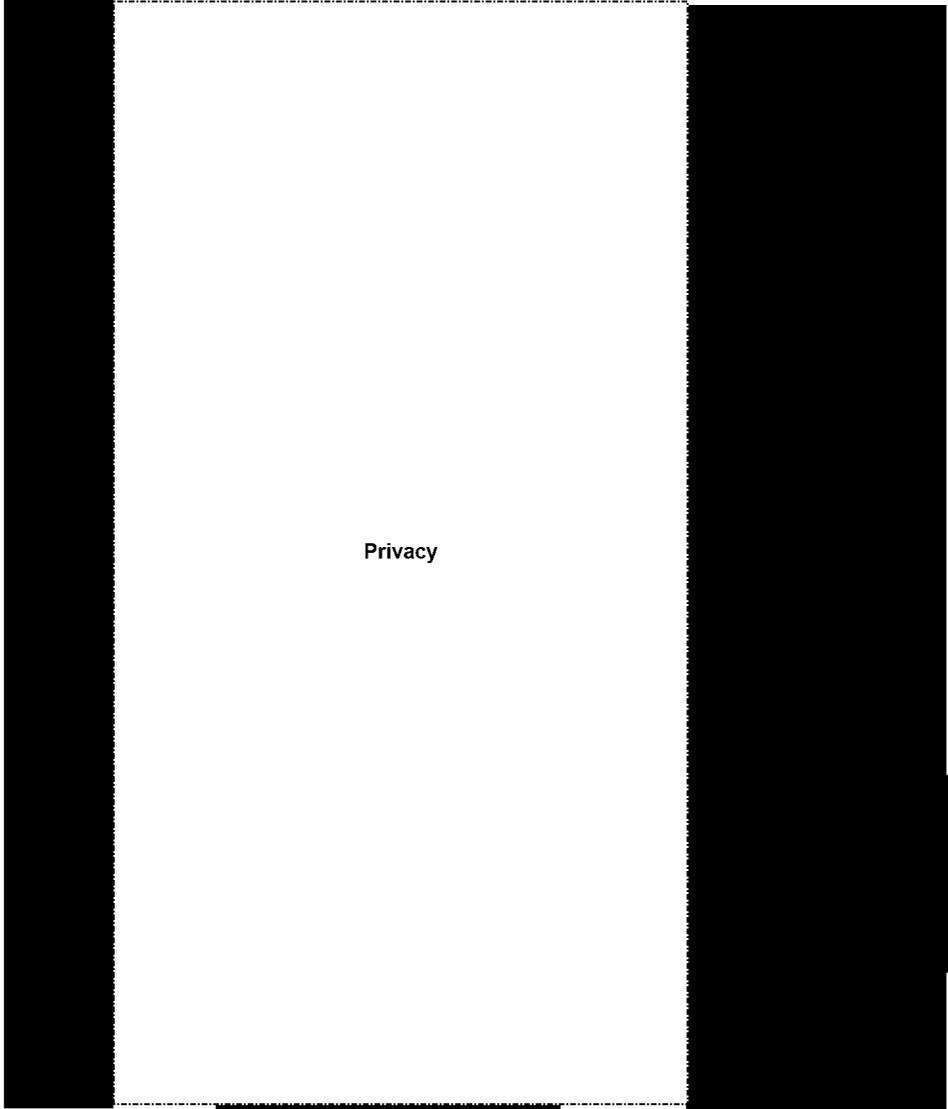
7. This discussion led immediately to the last section of the meeting, that of organisation within the group and internal democracy. [redacted] Privacy (from Liverpool) put forward the notion that because the various groups throughout the country were developing politically at a very uneven rate,



five or six of the most experienced Big Flame members from Merseyside should be 'transferred' to other parts of the country where possible base groups could be set up. The National Committee, which at present elects representatives from each group, should be a permanent elected secretariat. In effect, he was advocating both strong direction from the centre of Big Flame and an autonomous periphery. This immediately brought into question the whole nature of Big Flame as an organisation, whether it was to become a democratic centralist or federalist organisation. While most spoke against the suggestion, no concrete alternative was forthcoming which suggests that for the time being Big Flame will, organisationally, remain unchanged." Privacy

Privacy

8. The following persons were identified as having attended:- Privacy



Privacy



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Privacy

Privacy

[REDACTED]

G.T.M CRAFT

Chief Inspector

Privacy

[REDACTED]

Privacy

[REDACTED]

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT