

Red Action

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Wapping sell out. Another victory for the bosses. The only answer?

BUILD A FIGHTING SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

"I think that Mr. Murdoch is trying to smash our union" The words of Ms Brenda Dean, the general secretary of the print union SOGAT, speaking a year after the start of the dispute between her union and Murdoch, and a few weeks before the union executive's shabby betrayal of the strikers. A clearer example of the level of confusion and helplessness which afflicts the leadership of the trade union movement today is difficult to conceive of. "I think Mr. Murdoch is trying to smash our union" That's it. The sum total of her conclusions after twelve months of one of the most bitterly fought disputes in memory. Anyone with an ounce of insight into the nature of our society today could have told her that the day the strike started. Of course Murdoch was trying to smash the union. In exactly the same way as the Tory government set out to smash the NUM when they provoked the miner's strike, and in the same way as employers everywhere have in the last few years, been attacking the rights and the ability of the trade union movement to defend the living standards of the working class, an attack backed by blatantly anti trade union legislation in the courts, and the increasingly violent behaviour by the police against trade unions involved in industrial action. The concerted attack by all the forces of the establishment is there for anyone who opens their eyes to see. Unfortunately, so to is the total inability of the leadership of the trade unions to organise any effective resistance to it. Why are they so helpless? basically it stems from their whole political outlook.

REFORMISM

The dominant political force amongst the leadership of the trade union movement today, are the politics of reformism. Reformists believe that it is possible to achieve your political aims, and work towards the change of society by working within the institutions of the capitalist system and abiding by its rules.

This strategy was used with considerable success during the late forties, the fifties and sixties, when the Labour Party in Parliament, and the trade union movement negotiating in industry, were responsible for achieving many gains for the working class of this country, in terms of raised living standards, and better services and working conditions etc.

For many, this success was confirmation of the strength of reformism as a political movement. In actual fact however, it owed far more to the economic situation which prevailed then, than it did to the strength of reformist politics.



At that time, the capitalist system was booming economically, and there was within it great wealth. It suited the capitalist class to plough some of this back into society in the form of improved social standards and services partly because by doing so it further stimulated the economy, but mainly because they themselves needed a better educated more stable working class, in order for them to be able to operate the more sophisticated level of technology and industry emerging in the expanding economy. And so while the reformist movement was quick to claim the credit for the social improvements, it was in reality more a case of it being used as the disorganiser of reformism being used as the distributor of them rather than it being the innovator.

The proof of this can be seen quite clearly all around us today, in the attacks on working class living standards and working conditions, in the cut-backs in the Health Service etc. In fact in the gradual dismantlement of all of the improvements in working class life, which the reformist movement claimed the credit for implementing. If that was the case, then surely they would also be able to stop them being taken away. As we have seen, they are not.

RECESSION

The economic boom on which they were really based is long over, and in its place is a deep recession. In this situation, the only way in which the capitalist class can maintain its position and power, is to make sure that it is the working class which bears the brunt and not their own. And so they have to claw back the concessions given out in the boom years. To achieve this successfully, they have to break the power of the only force capable of resisting these changes, the organised working class. Thus the attack on living standards is backed up by attempts to restrict the rights and powers of the trade unions.



In the face of this attack the trade union leaders are helpless. They are stricken by the fatal weakness which will always ultimately undermine the efforts of reformism which is that they are committed to working within a system which is totally controlled and run by those who they are supposed to be opposing - the capitalist class.

Not suprisingly, the capitalists use their control to make the system biased in their favour, to outlaw effective union activities such as secondary picketing, to pass laws enabling them to seize union funds, to allow the police to make all sorts of encroachments on civil liberties, and use violence to render mass picketing ineffective.

PROTESTS

Such moves provoke loud protests from the trade union leaders but little else. Their commitment to staying inside the law means that they invariably end up conforming to them. They end up being able to do little more than appeal to the capitalist class's benevolence. Thus we saw Brenda Dean spend a whole year in dispute doing little more than call upon Rupert Murdoch to sit down and negotiate, when it was perfectly plain that he never had any intention of doing so. Why should he have? Certainly not because of any pressure from the union. On the couple of occasions when it took action against him which might have proved effective, they dropped it as soon as it was declared illegal. So being under no threat of any effective action being taken against him, it was perfectly easy for Murdoch to just sit the strike out until it reached its inevitable conclusion. We can see quite clearly there, the classic Catch 22 situation which reformist trade union leaders are more and more finding themselves in today in their attempts to deal with the capitalist class. Committed as they are to staying within the law, they find more and more as effective industrial action is outlawed, that the only option left open to them is negotiation. But here they come up against the fact that when their negotiations are not backed up by the

threat of effective industrial action, then the capitalist class has no need to take any notice of them. And so, unable to negotiate, unwilling to take action, they stand helpless while the capitalist class tramples over the working class.

The only way in which to effectively resist this, is to build a militant working class movement which will reject reformist leaders and their policies. A movement which recognises that the law is nothing more than a weapon in the hands of the capitalist class, and so is ready to defy it whenever necessary. A movement which can respond to the ever increasing social control and oppression in our society with new militant tactics in support of its aims

Such a movement does not exist today, but there have been signs in recent years that the basis of it may be beginning to emerge. The miners and printworkers who organised sabotage raids on scab vehicles during their respective strikes are good examples of this new militancy. It is the job of socialists to build a movement around it.

THE FIGHTERS!

It comes as not suprise when reformist figures condemn the sort of militant activity we talk about - reprisals against scab firms etc - but it would perhaps suprise some to know that there are those on the revolutionary left who are also quick to distance themselves from such action. They say that this is because such activities, which by their nature have to be organised secretly, detract from the real task for revolutionaries, which is to participate openly as a revolutionary socialist in the trade unions and other working class groupings, with the eventual aim of building a mass socialist movement.

This argument is in fact arrogant nonsense. What gives anyone the right to assume that just because someone may be involved in "underground" type activities, then they are not also capable of being involved in the more orthodox areas of socialist activity? What gives anyone the right to hold up the two different areas of activity against each other and say that it has to be one or the other. It's a cheap attempt to discredit "underground" activity, by unjustifiably claiming that those involved in it, have rejected other areas of activity. Those who perpetrate this smear do so in order to find theoretical justification for their own reluctance to involve themselves in risky activities.

As for the argument that such activity doesn't win strikes we would be quite justified in arguing back that the more traditional methods don't seem to be enjoying to much success at present either. In any case, as revolutionary socialists we do not judge strikes merely in terms of whether they win or lose in the immediate sense. We know that as long as the capitalist system exists, anything won today may be lost back tomorrow. Therefore we also judge strikes in terms of the role which they play in raising the political consciousness of those involved. And who's consciousness can have been raised more during a strike, than those who in support of it, are willing to become involved in activities which they know may cost them their freedom. Such people represent the vanguard of any future working class movement. Unless the revolutionary movement can begin to relate to them, it will never go anywhere.



A barricade in a mining village during the miner's strike. In such people and on such tactics the militant working class movement will be built

TELECOM WORKERS STRIKE THROUGH THE POST

OUT BY A COMMUNICATIONS UNION MEMBER

The recent all out strike by British Telecom engineers was their first ever. Unlike many disputes, this one was not about money, but about working conditions and general mistreatment of the workforce by management.

With privatisation in 1985, B.T. ceased to be a public company and became a profit making concern. In this period, profits rose by 12% in the first financial year, and by 13.7% in the first six months of the next. For this mammoth growth, B.T. Chairman Sir George Jefferson's salary has risen by 105% to £176,206 a year. Not to be outdone, the board's average salary has increased by 80% over the same period.

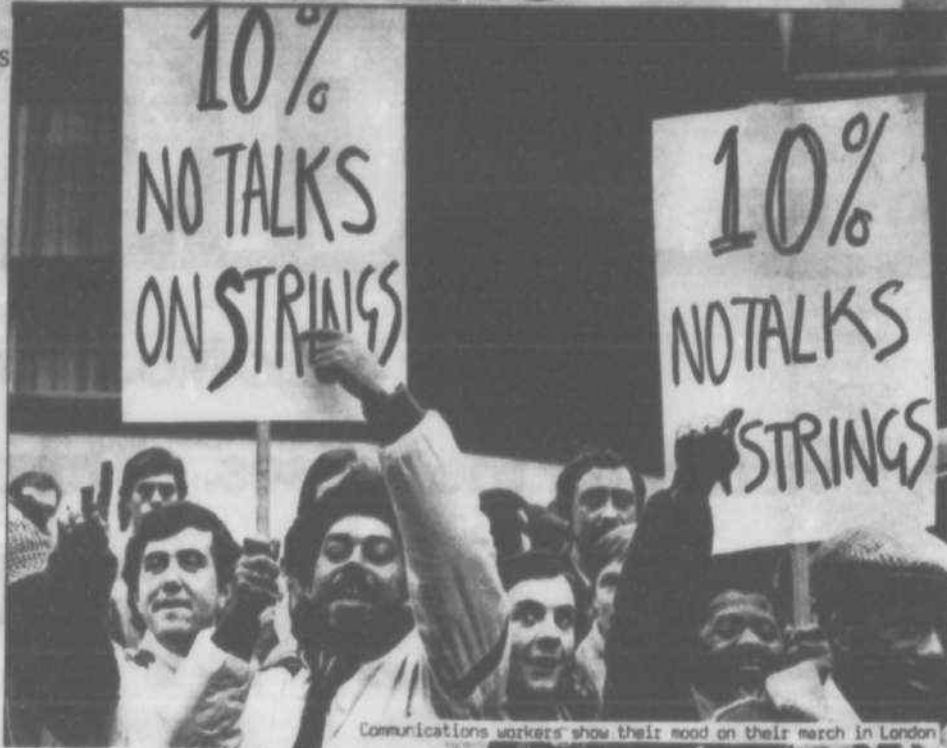
However B.T. has not been so kind to its engineers in this time. In the region of 20,000 have been lost, with the promise of more to come, and there has been no pay rise since July 1985 (and this wasn't paid until Christmas of that year)

MODERATE

With the election of "moderate" John Golding to the position of Chairman of the National Communications Union, supported by a strong moderate to right wing bias on the Union's National Executive (21 to 2) B.T. management obviously thought that the membership were ready to lay down and be trampled on. No doubt with this in mind, they came up with a very poor pay offer, which was also linked to productivity and proposed changes in working practices.

In October, this offer was put to the members in an individual ballot and rejected by 53,010 votes, to 16,497 with a 65% turn out. In December the union returned to the membership to ask permission to take industrial action. The vote, again by individual ballot was in favour by 60,288 votes to 15,034 with a 72% turn out.

This massive yes to action came as a surprise to B.T. and many say, to Golding and the Executive Council. It showed the level of the membership's feelings, not so much to the



Communications workers show their mood on their march in London.

pay offer, but to the strings attached to it. Of these, those which caused most offence were

- 1) Working day cover to run 7am to 6.45pm.
- 2) Restructuring of grades.
- 3) More engineers at high grades to be employed from outside the industry thus lowering already poor chances for promotion.
- 4) Less rigid definition of jobs.

The message sent back from the branches was give us our pay rise, and then we'll talk about changes. The engineers were willing to accept some changes but wanted pay kept as a separate issue. Management refused to listen, and made a final offer of 5.2% plus a further £215 in bonuses paid over two years, subject to the workforce accepting all of the proposed changes in working practices. This offer was obviously rejected by the union.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Industrial action began on Monday 12th of January with an overtime ban. The following Friday, B.T. sought to force the issue by insisting on overtime and threatened to suspend seven engineers in West London who refused. In protest at this, much of the workforce in West London walked out. On the Monday many areas held a 24 hour stoppage. When these areas returned to work on the Tuesday, they found that they were suspended from duty. Everywhere that is except for London, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It was obvious that management were happy to force the rest out, but wanted to keep London in for the massive revenue from the City, Scotland for the money from the oil industry, and Northern Ireland because of the political situation there.

By this time the workforce in London was practically screaming at the union exec. "take us out, let's hit the city" On the Wednesday they got their wish, with London region striking in support of suspended colleagues.

On Thursday 22nd of January, engineers returning to work were required to sign a letter stating that they would work whenever, wherever and however management desired. Those who refused to sign were suspended. This process was repeated on the Friday. On Monday 26th of January B.T.'s first national strike began. Membership support was almost total. The union executive had at last realised it's members wishes and the National Communications Union had become an industrial union.

BITTERNESS

A visit to any of the picket lines showed the level of bitterness felt. Those on them represented a complete cross section of opinion, from hard-line left wingers, to out and out Thatcherites. All were outraged by management mistreatment. Those on the picket lines also had the pleasure of seeing management begging them to come back in, a sight which caused much amusement. A march organised on the 4th of February for which the organisers had hoped to attract about 10,000 had a turn-out estimated at twice that number. This figure represents two thirds of the London membership who made up most of the march, and shows the level of support that existed.

RETURN TO WORK

After 3 weeks, B.T. came back with an offer which upped the money and supposedly dropped the worst of the strings. This was accepted by the men on 11th of Feb, but on the first day back, management in some areas attempted to implement changes, which led to the men there immediately walking out again.

At the moment everyone is back at work, but what's going to happen next is not fully clear. However we have proved firstly to Golding and the rest of the leadership that they must listen to us in future, and to B.T. management, that we will not be treated like dirt, because we are the real power behind the button.

HOLD UP

Regular readers of Red Action will have noticed that the February edition did not appear. This was due to a number of difficulties the main one of which, was the need to purchase a vast number of "pre-prints". These are blank newspapers with only the red banner printed on them, which are then used as many as are needed at a time for each issue. In this way, the cost of having the colour banner, which is very high is considerably reduced. We now have enough papers to last us for about three years, which will certainly make budgeting in the future easier, but of course also means that we have a considerable bill to pay now. We do not make a habit of appealing for money in this paper. When we look at some of the other political papers, with their permanent funds for this and funds for that in every issue, it seems to us that it loses any meaning after a while. However we would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that just because we are not always asking for money, we are no more immune to the realities of finance than anyone else, and at the present time in particular, we need all the help we can get. If you support what we stand for, then we ask you to help us out now when we need it most. As the article on the opposite page says, it's tax deductible and you will be blessed.

In the last edition of Red Action, there was a letter from a socialist skinhead, criticising the fact that he and other skinheads often face prejudice from people on the left. As he rightly pointed out, for people to assume that because someone is a skinhead, that they are then automatically a racist, or fascist, is no better than the sort of crass prejudiced generalisations which white racists make about blacks and other ethnic groups, and such attitudes should have no place in the socialist movement.

PRUJUDICE

However he then I believe fell into the very sort of prejudiced attitude which he had been correctly attacking by saying

"Just because we like a drink are a bit boisterous and like a good crack, doesn't make us any the less dedicated an anti-fascist than some L.L.E.A. teacher from Islington. If the anti-fascist struggle had been left to them we'd have all been in the cattle trucks off to the death camps years ago."

Why single out teachers in this way. If the anti-fascist struggle was left to any one section of the working class it would obviously fail, and this applies no more to teachers than anyone else. The whole history of the anti-fascist struggle teaches us that it's success is only possible through the greatest possible unity between anti-fascists from all sections of the working class.

Throughout the history of the anti-fascist and socialist movements, teaching just like any other trade, has played it's part and provided us with some great figures. For example there was John Mc Clean, the revolutionary Marxist and leader of the workers movement on the Clyde in the early part of this century. He was sentenced to five years hard labour for his activities, which provoked a campaign of strikes and industrial action on the Clyde, which eventually secured his

The pages of Red Action are open for anyone to write on any subject they wish. Please keep letters as short as possible and send them to P.O. Box 156, Hatfield, Herts.

early release. Over 100,000 turned out to greet him on his return to Glasgow. They obviously weren't concerned about the fact that he was a teacher.

Then there was Alexandra Kollontai, the only woman on the Military Revolutionary Committee which led the Russian revolution, and on a more contemporary note, and one which is perhaps more relevant to the point under discussion, I recall how in the late seventies, a stewards group which was organised in the London area, to physically defend left wing meetings from attack by fascists was for a time organised by a London schoolteacher.

UNITY

As revolutionary socialists our ultimate aim is nothing less than the total overthrow of the entire capitalist system. That is a very big task indeed, and the only way in which we will ever be in a position to enjoy the remotest chance of success, will be when we have built a movement which unites the revolutionary figures from every section of the working class. Such a movement will include skinheads and schoolteachers. Anyone on the left who is prejudiced toward or dismissive of the value of any section of the class, whichever one it may be, is working against the building of that united movement, and should be rightly criticised. However we have to be careful not to fall into that same trap ourselves.

Mick O'Farrell
Hatfield

THE PARASITES

We are often being told what a great job the Royal Family does for this country. We are constantly reminded of all the money that the Royals bring in, and about all the jobs they create. Many of those who make these sort of statements, are working class people, many of whom may be unemployed. So where are the jobs supposedly created by the Monarchy?

It is quite true that tourism does bring in a lot of money to this country, but people would still come to see the sights of London whether the Monarchy existed or not, just as they do in countries like Italy and France and many other countries which have no Monarchy but which are still great tourist attractions.



Another mouth for us to feed, The latest recruit to the Royal Gravy Train

line of course, being Prince Edward deciding to give the Marines the elbow.

All of this trivia is totally unimportant. The purpose of it is to blind people, and divert their attention away from the real issues in the world. The problems of poverty, unemployment, nuclear missiles and countless other things which should never happen, and which wouldn't if we didn't live under the imbecile system that we do. The Royal Family, are just one more imbecile product of this system.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE

Imagine if all the money spent on the upkeep of our Royal parasites, was put to some use which benefits society as a whole, like hospitals or housing or some other public service. Think how much more comfortable life could start to be for the working class. It's a pity that those people who stand out in the pouring rain hoping for a glimpse of one or other of the Royals don't ask themselves such questions.

WHAT BENEFIT?

So are the Royal Family necessary to the working class? Do they produce anything the benefits society? The answer to this question has got to be no. They are not engaged in producing anything. Do they then help to cure the sick or something like that? The answer again is no. In fact if you examine the subject closely, you will see that the nearest thing that they seem to do resembling work, is to go to foreign parts of hotter climate when it gets a bit chilly over here, play polo as guests of the Sultan of Oman, or go to China and insult the locals.

So why do so many working class people look on the Royal family like some kind of second Christ? Could it be because of lingering doubts about the existence of the first one, or could it be because so many of them live such useless lives of bed and work or bed and dole, that they feel they must have something to worship, and the Monarchy fits the bill.

People are constantly being told that the Royals are their saviours, and where would we all be without them. We are given this bullshit by the idle loafers of the ruling class, who after all are the people who really benefit from the Monarchy. Newspaper owners, all of them millionaires, are forever printing stories of such earth shattering importance as what colour flowers Princess Di received while visiting a hospital, or how Prince Charles made a cock-up while playing polo, the latest one in this

HIDING THE BLAME

One of the most common complaints that you hear voiced by racialsists is that unemployment is caused by immigrants "taking all the jobs". Those who come out with or believe such claims, should bear in mind the following facts. Between 1971 and 1983 - during which time unemployment rose from well under one million to over three million - 45,000 more people left Britain than came in as immigrants to live.

In fact the number of people leaving this country has exceeded the number entering it for almost every one of the last 40 years. Lack of jobs isn't caused by immigration or by there being too many people. It is caused by a faulty economic system, which has making private individuals rich as it's goal. Business men aren't in business to share out money by giving people jobs, but to make profits for themselves. When times are hard, they sack workers to cover their losses. And or course, if they can trick people into blaming immigration for these job losses, then all the better for them.

EDITORIAL

For instance take Rupert Murdoch the owner of the Sun (take him, we don't want him) Last January he sacked 6,000 people. Then in June, the Sun carried an editorial attacking the Labour Party leadership for supporting calls to allow about 1,000 people from India, to come and join their families who live in this country.

What with unemployment and shortage of housing etc

the piece went on (not often you see the Sun worrying itself about such issues) "we" couldn't afford any more immigration. Just six days later in another article, the same paper was supporting the right of 800,000 white South Africans to settle in this country. A perfect example of both the racist double standards of the upper class, and of the way in which they raise and drop the lies about immigration to suit their political interests.

They know that if they can fool the white working class into believing that the social problems which they face are caused by immigration (black immigration of course not white) then this will keep the working class divided on the grounds of race and at each other's throats, and will deflect their anger away from where the blame really lays. With the upper classes and the capitalist system.

The next time you hear someone blaming unemployment onto immigration, the one thing that you can be sure of is that they are certainly doing nothing to try and end unemployment.

THE PROFITS OF THE PROPHETS

The most famous person to have claimed divine intervention in recent years was Diego Maradona, who after having punched the ball past the England goalie in the World Cup quarter finals, defended the action by simply stating that it must have been the "Hand of God"

In Britain, apart from the Chief Constable of Manchester's claim that he may be a prophet and the re-incarnation of Oliver Cromwell, the previous most publicised claimant to a direct line to the Almighty, was one Peter Sutcliffe, otherwise known as the Yorkshire Ripper.

Along with sporting biblical beards, they also shared something else in common. A contempt for prostitutes and others who they consider to be morally degenerate. Whilst Anderton employs the blunt instrument of the Manchester Police to right moral wrongs, and has so far restricted himself to violent rhetoric and the odd Sado-Masochist fantasy "I would have people flogged until they begged for mercy" he once said, Sutcliffe took more direct action, using an engineers hammer to eradicate those he considered to be God's and society's problem.



James Anderton, Chief Constable of Manchester, reincarnation of Oliver Cromwell and out and out head case

been responsible for over 500 deaths, almost all of them Catholic civilians, and in the same year the "good doctor" as he is sometimes referred to by his supporters, had realised a tangible political return on a 20 year political investment, by securing 230,000 first preference votes in the elections to the European Parliament. You may scoff, but at your peril.

HISTORY

History gives us the Inquisition and the Crusades, as examples of God's name being used to justify dubious political causes, although supernatural sponsorship did not die out with the middle ages. In 1935 Cardinal Hinsley of Westminster told Catholics that "If Fascism goes under, God's cause goes with it" In more recent times, we have seen the emergence of Ian Paisley, who has managed to turn religious bigotry into a political art form.

"You people in the Shankhill Road. What's wrong with you. Number 425 Shankhill Road. Do you know who lives there? Popes men that's who Fortes Ice Cream Parlour. Italian Papists in the Shankhill Road."

That was in 1959. By 1979 Protestant para-militaries had

While new recruits to the God squad in this country are hardly legion, it does appear to be making a bit of a resurgence in some quarters. The Royal Marines, who have never shown any particular regard for the 5th Commandment in the past are recent converts, according to an officer who was recently quoted as saying "God wears a green beret"

Some of the more recent civilian recruits to the cause, have been exhibiting certain factors which distinguish them from the ordinary religious nutter, most of whom tend to be quite harmless if left

alone. One of these is a tendency to interpret the Bible literally, and another which appears to be quite fundamental to their faith, is an all consuming hatred of Communism; which in their eyes tends to cover just about anything radical or progressive (Communists and fellow travellers may in fact find this quite heartening. After all, what would be the point in having a revolution, if that lot hadn't already placed themselves firmly on the other side of the barricades)

For example, there is the Tory M.P. for Cardiff Central, who wrote in a reply to a constituent recently "Many of us hold that the creed of Socialism is a Godless cruel and devastating creed" Then there is the recent appearance of the New Patriotic Movement, who believe that "Atheistic Communism is the greatest threat to world peace" They have been making themselves busy in Haringey North London, harassing public and councillors alike, in support of the Rev. David Rushworth who has supposedly been on hunger strike since Jan 1st, after prayer failed to change the council's policy of discussing homosexuality in sex education classes in schools. The Reverend, who appears remarkably fit after a full month without food, claims that "God is very angry with Haringey" and that "It is a very serious business" As we have seen with the Rev. Ian Paisley, it may prove to be not a idle boast.

CRUSADE

While the phenomenon of religious stroke political crusade is relatively new in this country, in America it is firmly entrenched. Progressive elements there watched in horror, as the "Moral Majority" burst onto the scene in the 70s, and quickly developed into a potent force that infected the mainstream political life. They promoted their crusade on an apparently magic formula of religious zealotry, right wing rhetoric and the ability to make a fast buck. The sort of tactics they employed - eg intimidation of political opponents, accusing them of being Communist or homosexual etc - helped to foster a political climate which spawned a

HYPOCRISY

The most noticeable thing of all about the religious brigade, is the way in which they are exposed as the most blatant hypocrites, even by their own supposed standards. "It is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to get into heaven" says the bible, the teachings of which they claim to place such importance on. Yet how many of these supposed followers of the bible are rich people. The Catholic church is one of the biggest financial institutions in the world. Inside the Vatican there are computers linked up to the major financial markets of the world.

Then we have those self proclaimed Christians who are among the foremost and most frenzied of those who are always calling for harsher and tougher laws, such as Tory M.P. Peter Bruniwells who backed up his call for the return of hanging with an offer to "pull the lever myself" Whatever happened to turning the other cheek to someone who struck you. No doubt the Christian hangers would quote back "an eye for an eye" All that that really proves is what a mass of self contradictory nonsense the bible really is.

In the final analysis, a claim to have the support of some unseen and unknown moral authority, as a defence for your actions, is the act of someone is attempting to deny their own responsibility for them. Like the spiteful teacher at a religious school (the religious ones are always the worst) mercilessly beating a young child, like the Nazis who defended their massacre of the Jews on the basis that they were carrying out God's work, they know that their actions cannot be justified by any intelligent or reasonable moral standards, and so they invent a shield of divine authority to hide behind. Just like those two unbelievable characters in the cult film "The Blues Brothers" they justify anything they do, no matter what the consequences, on the grounds that they are "Doing God's work".

number of right wing "commando units" who made their contribution to the cause, by bombing targets such as abortion clinics, and assassinating their most outspoken political opponents.

The combination of idealism and self interest, is best demonstrated by this quote from an octogenarian millionaire Mrs Ellen Garwood who at a fund raising dinner for the Contra rebels, who's activities in the rural areas of Nicaragua include the torture and murder of hundreds of civilian farmers, introduced her guest like this.

"General Singlaub gets no salary. His only salary is God's blessing. All of us must help keep liberty alive in Central America. Give to General Singlaub's U.S. Council on World Freedom, whatever he asks. It's tax deductible, you'll sleep better and you'll be blessed" (She herself contributed a helicopter)

HARMFUL

The less harmful side of this sort of Evangelism, is seen in the activities of someone like preacher Oral Roberts, who appeared appeared on National Television and wanted to sponsor nothing more than his own retirement. He claimed that a "900 foot high God" was putting the squeeze on him for 4.6 million dollars, and that if it wasn't raised by the end of March, the good Lord would be calling him home. So far he is well on target, having received well over 1 1/2 million in donations.

Crazy maybe, but like aids which was first brought to our attention by America, this virus may yet prove to have deadly consequences. Consider the following two quotes.

"I have read the book of revelations, and yes I believe the world is going to end, by an act of God I hope, but every day I think that time is running out."

"You know I think back to the ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if we're the generation that's going to see that come about."

It would be neither here nor there if such remarks came from an obvious huckster and charlatan like the afore-mentioned Oral Roberts, and so could be easily ridiculed and dismissed. In fact their first speaker is U.S. secretary for Defence Casper Weinberger, and the second is Ronald Reagan.

A QUESTION OF CLASS



GEORGE ORWELL. SOCIALIST, SNOB OR BOTH ?

Most socialists will have read and admired some of the work of George Orwell. It is well known that his background made him an unlikely figure on the political left. He was born in India in 1903, the son of an official in the Indian Civil Service with distant aristocratic connections. Early on he moved to England, attending a private boarding school and then Eton. He wrote of himself "I was both a snob and a revolutionary. I loosely described myself as a socialist" even though he had "no notion that the working classes were hum an beings"

Leaving Eton he went back to India and joined the Imperial Police, working in Burma until resigning in 1923. He then began the curious pattern of life from which his two famous books on the living conditions of working class people in the 30s came from. He took menial jobs in hotels and periodically dressed up as a tramp wandering the streets and staying in doss houses. He several times tried to get arrested on petty charges in order to experience a spell in jail, but these efforts seem to have always been tumbled and he was let off with fines. "Down and Out in Paris and London" is a record of this period. Then in 1936, with the misery of the depression still at it's height, he spent two months in the north of England staying with working class families and experiencing their conditions. He went down a mine a couple of times, but had to be hauled back to the surface on each occasion. As "The Road to Wigan Pier" relates, he was obsessed with the dirt and the smell he considered to belong to working class people.

He had by now aligned himself with the left wing "Tribune" group in the Labour Party, and in 1936 began the most celebrated period of his life when he fought as a volunteer on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.

CORRESPONDANT

Originally, he had gone to Spain just to write as a correspondent, but once there, carried away by the enthusiasm of the working class people in pro Republican Barcelona, he decided to join the militia. By chance he landed up in a part of it run by a Marxist organisation which - very rare in that era was critical of the regime in Soviet Russia, and which was a genuine working class organisation. The Partido Obrero di Unificacion Marxista (POUM) "Homage to Catalonia" recalls how impressed he was with this group and it's members.

He fought bravely - once being wounded - but without conviction, and recalled how he failed to pull the trigger on the only fascist he got in his sights. Strangely, on his arrival back in England in 1937, he campaigned for pacifist groups up until the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939. He lived through the war as a journalist, and died of tuberculosis in 1950. In these last years, he published his most famous books the novel "Animal Farm" and "1984" both protests against the nature of totalitarian regimes.

Orwell's life is interesting on it's own account, but par-

ticularly as an illustration of the argument within socialist ideology, as to the central and unique role of the working class in revolutionary movements. Marxist theory asserts that a socialist revolution can only be achieved by the working class itself, since it possesses the only objective viewpoint within capitalist society.

BACKGROUND

Yet historically, many leading socialists have had middle and upper class backgrounds. Orwell's life is obviously relevant. An Eton toff who almost died fighting fascism in Spain, and who left a legacy of work of enduring interest to people on the left. However consider this. Writing a review of Hitler's "Mein Kampf" in 1940, Orwell wrote

"I should like to put it on record that I have never been able to dislike Hitler. The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him. He is the martyr, the victim, the self sacrificing hero who fights single handed against impossible odds. One feels that he is fighting against destiny, that he can't win and yet somehow he deserves to."

There is something repellent about even the honesty of this piece. Soft and self indulgent, Orwell can't rid himself of the sense of being top of a social hierarchy. It forbids him to take Hitler seriously because of his class contempt for Hitler as a vulgar low born fellow. He feels able to patronise Hitler. His remarks after attending a meeting in 1936, addressed by Oswald Mosely the leader of the British Union of Fascists gives us further evidence of this, and compared to the attitude of some miners who accompanied him provide a notable contrast. The miners heckled Mosley and fought with the black-shirts stewarding the meeting. Afterwards, Orwell argued with them that they should have allowed Mosley to speak without interruption. As one of them Tommy Degan later recalled, Orwell argued that

"Mosley was no danger and you ought to be British, fair play and all that sort of thing. He didn't understand what Mosley was doing - and he mustn't have understood what Hitler was doing at the time either"

CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE

Bang on. These two viewpoints seem to underline perfectly, a crucial difference in the perception of social and political reality based on class position. Any socialist will still want to read Orwell but with a sense as much of his limitations as of his strengths.

SUPPORT RED ACTION



Red Action is an organisation founded by working class people to work for the furthering of the cause of Socialism. Membership is open to all who accept our political principles and pay a weekly subscription. Every member has an equal vote on all Red Action policy and decisions.

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2. A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of what is going on in the organisation.
3. Notification of any Red Action activities in your area.

The cost for this is £10 for one year.

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Like the Mafia, the Catholic Church has it's roots in Italy, and also like it, it is one of the largest financial concerns in the world.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE

George Gale of the Mirror, Roger Scruton of the Times, Peregrine Worsthorne of the Telegraph and John Vincent of the Sun, are all influential columnists who are well paid to express their views on issues such as the closed shop, race relations and gay rights etc. They also all belong to the Salisbury Group, who believe that Britain's decline began when sheep stealing was no longer regarded as a capital offence. A couple of weeks ago, Dr. Worrall the South African Ambassador, was invited to speak at one of their meetings. Not uncharacteristically, he expected a sympathetic hearing when he spoke of the need for gradual reforms blah blah blah. He was puzzled as there were no nods of agreement or murmurs of approval from the audience, who instead sat in stony silence. All became clear at question time. The first question began "Dr. Worrall none of us here believes in democracy."

With all the row over press censorship in South Africa, you may think that the lifting of a 40 year ban on a film described as "A brilliant example of movie making" is at least a bit progressive. Not really. The film which was made in 1941 and documents British atrocities against the Boers, and is expected to attract large audiences in right wing areas was commissioned by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. Something for all the family.

"The campaigns against the police, against property owners, against the middle classes, against whites, against heterosexuals are well known. Ratepayers money is channelled to fuel the fires of revolution and line the pockets of those who promote it."

A spokesman for the National Front perhaps? No. The Tory Party's very own skinhead Mr. Norman Tebbit, in a recent speech to the Institute of Directors.

During the debate at the European Commission of Human Rights, over the Governments banning of Trade Unions at the Government Central Headquarters in Cheltenham, Mr Robert Alexander Q.C. for the government, cited Greece and Turkey as countries where the restrictions now imposed in Britain already operated. He omitted to mention that Turkey is run by a right wing military dictatorship in which trades unions are effectively banned.

The government's opposition to the abolishing of TV licences for pensioners is well known. But how many television sets are there at No. 10, home of that well known lady of pensionable age Mrs Thatcher, and who pays the fees? The answer to the first question is 13 sets, and to the second nobody. They reside on Crown property and so, you will be delighted to hear, are exempt.

Tory M.P. Neil Hamilton recently won £20,000 in a celebrated libel case against the BBC, who had inferred in a Panorama programme that he had fascist sympathies. The week after the case, he admitted perjuring himself in court in an article in the Observer, for which he was paid another £10,000. Earlier this month in a Commons debate, Labour Health Spokesman Frank Dobson was talking about the misery caused to intensely disabled people, by the lock out at the artificial limb makers J.E. Hangers of Roehampton. "The honourable gentleman has not got a leg to stand on" was Mr. Hamilton's contribution to the debate, who then sat down to prolonged Tory laughter. What wouldn't you like to do to him with the appropriate blunt instrument.

King Reagan and Queen Nancy. They're just a couple of TV stars and I suppose the options going to be picked up on their second series.....Reagan doesn't really rule America. People we don't know about do that. The Reagans are just fantasy figures. Well I'm one of them myself."

A prophetic and perceptive statement by Ms Raquel Welch in November 1984.

Detective Constable Rex Sargent who had given evidence in six previous trials in connection with the Broadwater Farm riots, was due to be cross examined in another one, were it was alleged that he had stood by whilst a youth was beaten up to extract a confession. Just before he was due to be cross examined, police sources reported that he had suffered a nervous breakdown, and would not be able to give evidence in "the foreseeable future" The case resulted in the police being ordered by Shoreditch County Court to pay £3,500 compensation including £1,000 exemplary damages. Sargent had been due to give evidence in nine more cases.

In another case a police constable who had seen duty in the Broadwater Farm riots and the miner's strike, was given three months imprisonment for smashing the nose of a forty four year old mentally retarded vagrant. In court, he was described by his superior as a "police officer I could rely on" He had originally been charged with wounding with intent, malicious wounding and robbery, but these charges were dropped. I think our police are wonderful.

In a recent opinion poll published in the Daily Express, two thirds of people questioned said that they believed that Britain should withdraw from Ireland. When shown photographs and asked to identify those that they considered to be figures of hate, 79% picked out Ian Paisley, 55% recognised Gerry Adams of Sinn Fien, 14% Enoch Powell and 5% Margaret Thatcher.

The Tories are often fond of making a song and dance about themselves being the party of patriotism. Presumably you would imagine that this would make them treat their old war heroes with great respect. Not apparently in the case of Freddie Wilson, who has fourteen disabilities from the four years he spent in a Japanese prisoner of war camp, including renal failure, diabetes, arterio sclerosis, epilepsy, and he has to stay in a harness to stop his spine bending. From April he qualifies for benefit increases worth £1. 40p. However when he receives this, his housing benefit is to be cut by £1 39p a week, leaving with an increase of 1p

An article in the Guardian provided some insight into what inspires all the double dealing in the financial world of the city "It's like a drug" said one Euro-Bond dealer "Each fix has to be bigger than the last, each deal sharper than the next man's. There comes a point when money is almost irrelevant. After all, you can only own so many Porches. The money simply becomes an indicator of how much more successful you are than everybody else." And I bet that you thought they were all just a load of greedy bastards.

1,100 hundred families applied to the housing executive in Northern Ireland last year, for a transfer to a different area. Nearly all of these, were Catholic families, who had been subjected to serious intimidation by loyalist mobs, during the loyalist uproar following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If you thought that this intimidation was the act of a few un-organised gangs you would be mistaken, as explained by one John McMichael, a pub owner in Lisburn, and variously described as leader of the Ulster Defence Association, it's political organiser, and it's public spokesman.

"Every day is a struggle for territory. Every house, every street, every farm which is taken over by an Irish Nationalist is a little bit less of Northern Ireland, and a bit more of Ireland." Taken from an interview with McMichael in the New York Times. In Britain however, McMichael denies any knowledge of his organisation being behind attacks and intimidation in Lisburn, even though 180 of his members have been arrested.

"At one stage the sky was completely darkened. It was as if the lights had gone out and the sun had gone down, because of the horrendous missiles thrown at us."

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Wyn Jones, giving his version of the what happened when demonstrators and police clashed outside Rupert Murdoch's plant at Wapping. His powerful, colourful and widely quoted description, would have perhaps been even more impressive, if it wasn't for the fact that the events which he was describing were supposed to have occurred between 8 and 9 o'clock at night.

You may have read in Red Action a couple of issues ago, or in other publications, of the growing links between fascist groups in England and Loyalist groups in Northern Ireland. In loyalist East Belfast for instance, the National Front claim to sell several thousand copies of each issue of their newspaper.

Recently however, these links have begun to take on a distinctly continental flavour, with the Ulster Unionist Mr. John Taylor receiving the dubious honour of becoming the first English speaking member of the Euro Parliament, to join a far right group headed by French National Front leader Jean Marie Le Pen. This move by Taylor (who supported Ian Paisley when he protested against the Anglo-Irish Agreement in Strasbourg) has angered Labour M.P.s, who have revealed that it will put tens of thousands of pounds into the funds of the group, which includes as well as Mr. Taylor 1 Greek, 5 Italian and 10 French Euro M.P.s. The Le Pen group was formed after the 1984 elections, and has aroused controversy with it's calls for repatriation of immigrants, and it's raucous opposition to a Parliamentary inquiry into racism and fascism in Europe. Mr Taylor said of them "They are not extremist in any way."

"During the miner's strike, my husband came home and said that they were going to have a levy. I went mad. I thought that they were all anarchists and militants. I know different now. I wish I could go back a couple of years."

The wife of a sacked printworker, involved in the "Women Against Murdoch" movement, speaking on Channel Four's Diverse Reports recently.

Who in 1935, described Mussolini as "A really great man" and later suggested that Adolf Hitler might become "One of those great figures who's lives have enriched mankind"? No, it wasn't Hitler or Mussolini, but a man who could tell a real patriot when he saw one. Winston Churchill.

A little item for those of you who like to keep abreast of developments on the right wing of politics. The New Patriotic Movement, who believe among other things that "Godless Communism" is the greatest threat to World Peace" and claim 400 members, have received money and encouragement from within the Nottingham based scab union the U.D.M. Cosy Eh.

"We are building a Britain in which we can all take pride, and creating success for all to share" proclaimed the Prime Minister recently. By 1986, her governments reductions in income tax were worth an annual total of £8,100 million. By the same date, cuts in public expenditure totalled £8,800 million a year, which means that much less for the unemployed the sick, pensioners, school kids etc. Over 45% of the tax cuts went to the richest 10% of the population. You must admit it seems a funny way to go about it.

RED ACTION IN ACTION

The annual Bloody Sunday Commemoration was held this year in Sheffield. There was a turnout of between two and three thousand marchers, including two Republican flute bands from Scotland. The failure of the march organisers to take appropriate precautions against the predictable fascist presence and their subsequent reliance on the police to protect the demonstration, encouraged a group of fascists to attempt to attack the front of the march, presumably in an attempt to snatch the lead banner. However, "auxiliary stewards" from the London and Manchester Anti Fascist Action contingents quickly organised to counter the fascist initiative, forcing them to flee leaving behind a number of horizontal supporters, who we can only assume collapsed from all the noise and excitement. The fascists had learned a lesson. The police who had shown no urgency in preventing attack from the fascists, then set about zealously snatching "trouble makers" from the section that had defended it. Finally enough was enough, and the march was brought to a halt in protest at the police intimidation. This had the desired effect, and there were no further arrests. Two van loads of heavies (drinkers that is) remained behind to provide transport for those detained, and to deter the lurking fascists.

WE ARE RED ACTION

RED ACTION IS AN ORGANISATION FOUNDED TO WORK TOWARDS THE ENDING OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOCIALIST ONE

CAPITALISM The need of capital and labour cannot ever be reconciled. In other words the quest by the employing classes for greater profit, is in eternal conflict with the demands of the working class for higher wages, shorter hours etc. It is in the obvious interest of the employer to keep wages down as low as possible while it is equally obvious that this does not serve the interests of the majority. The two systems capitalism and socialism cannot co-exist, as they are in constant struggle pulling in opposite directions, each in pursuit of its own goals. A victory for one is necessarily a defeat for the other. This is the major source of conflict in the world today. Capitalism is a system which is based on the private ownership of the means of production. This means that the factories, workplaces, natural resources etc, on which we all depend to produce the necessities of life are the private property of a few individuals, who use them to produce not what is most socially necessary, but whatever will make them the most profit. When it suits them, they are able to close down those productive resources, even though there may be great social need for what could be produced on them. Regardless of how rich a country may be in natural resources, capitalism can never provide equality of wealth due to its own inherent limitations. It is obviously impossible for everybody to become a capitalist (employer) and so to function, the system demands the creation and maintenance of an employing class and a working class, or if you like an upper class and lower class. Propping up this system, are the forces of social control—army, police force, civil service etc—all controlled by totally unelected and un-accountable representatives of the capitalist class.

SOCIALISM It is impossible for us today to say exactly what a socialist system will be like, as when it happens there will be millions of others involved in shaping it. However there are some features that would have to be present in any society, before we would be willing to consider it as socialist.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP Only when all of the major productive resources and industry are taken into public ownership, will it be possible for the democratic will of the majority to ensure that they are at all times employed in the most socially useful manner. This will result in a massive increase in production and wealth.

CONTROL OF SOCIETY All those who occupy positions of power and authority will be elected by those they represent and subject to recall.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY All will be expected to contribute to production and all will receive equal reward and have equal rights, irrespective of sex, race or creed. The state will provide adequate facilities to cater for the needs of the elderly, sick, handicapped, nursing mothers etc, who will all receive a full wage. All questions or personal morality will be free from state interference. Abortion and contraception will be legal and provided by the state. There will be freedom of worship for all religion, but no church will be allowed to interfere in state matters.

INTERNATIONALISM The capitalist economic system is linked up internationally, therefore the struggle to overthrow it is a worldwide one. All workers everywhere have the same interests. It is impossible for socialism to exist in isolation in one country, as the power of international capitalism would crush it.

NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM Socialism cannot be achieved through the parliamentary system, because the real power in society lays not with elected MPs but with rich industrialists and the leaders of the armed forces, police judiciary etc. The present structures cannot be reformed they must be overthrown. The Labour Party does not try to end capitalism, but merely give the workers a better deal within it.

UNION STRENGTH. WE SUPPORT ANY PICKET LINE IN DEFENCE OF WORKERS LIVING STANDARDS. We support a strong organised rank and file movement within the unions. Union officials should be supported as long as they represent their members correctly. But rank and file unionists must reserve the right to take action independent of the officials when necessary.

TOTAL OPPOSITION TO RACISM AND FASCISM We opposed any movement or ideology which attempts to divide the working class on grounds of race, sex, or creed. We recognise the need to oppose fascist organisations, both ideologically and physically on the streets.

THE IRISH NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE AGAINST OUR OWN RULING CLASS We support the right of oppressed people the world over to fight back. We unconditionally support the right of the revolutionary armies The Irish Republican Army, and the Irish National Liberation Army, to engage in armed struggle to free their country from British rule. We draw great inspiration from the principled and courageous manner in which they conduct their struggle, and from the way in which they have integrated cultural and class expression into their political movement.

THE "COMMUNIST" STATES The regimes in countries such as Russia, China Cuba etc, are used as examples to try and prove socialism undesirable. In our view, although these countries have planned economies, they cannot be described as socialist. We contend that socialism cannot be implemented from above by an unaccountable ruling elite. Public ownership, freedom and democracy are all essential features of socialism and in their absence it cannot exist. We support the right of the people in these states to overthrow the leadership and implement socialist policies. At the same time however, we recognise the difficulties that states such as Nicaragua—and others past and present—face, from capitalist backed mercenary armies, military intervention, and economic sabotage, which make immediate transition to a socialist system impossible. While these states remain progressive, we will continue to support them.

THE ORGANISATION Traditionally, the structure of revolutionary socialist groups in this country, has been one where the leadership is made up of a small group of self selected academics and intellectual, who wield absolute authority over the membership. Such a structure fails, firstly because there can be no true democracy in such a set up, and corruption soon sets in, and secondly because those leading the organisation are so far removed from the realities of working class life, it cannot relate properly to that class. A revolutionary socialist organisation must be composed of and led by working class people. It must recognise that no leadership is immune from corruption and be truly democratic in its internal structures. It must be ready to work in a non sectarian manner with other socialist and progressive groups. It must present socialist politics in a manner in which working class people can identify with in their life and their work and their leisure. It must be consistent, principled and above all honest in its politics. Only then will it begin to be able to relate to the working class, most of whom today are cynical if not hostile towards the revolutionary left. We recognise that a revolutionary working class party is necessary if capitalism is to be overthrown. We are not that party, neither are those groups which claim to be it. We will work to keep alive a tradition of working class militancy, until such time as enough militants can be brought together to form that party.