

# Red Action

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## MOMENT



## OF TRUTH

Dockers picketing at Neap House Wharf, 1972

After a 3 to 1 majority vote in favour of strike action the gloves are off for what promises to be a long and bitter struggle. The QC representing the employers in court opened his argument by saying, "Dockers enjoy working conditions that no other group of workers in the country have". A bit rich, you might think from a geezer on £1,000 a day.

The point he was making though, is important. The Boss Class seek to portray the dockers as lazy, 'rich' elitists. Firstly, any decent conditions the dockers have, they gained by fighting for them. If these are better than those of other workers it is because OURS are shit, not because theirs are great. Secondly, the dockers far from being elitist, have supported very other group of workers that have been on strike (Miners, Printers, Sea-

farers, Health workers etc. etc.), either financially or by sympathy (strike) action. Nothing, however, in this world is absolutely free. Now is the time for the dockers to call in their IOU's **Their struggle is Our struggle - if they win, Our class wins and if they lose we all lose.**

Of course the dockers are fighting for their own jobs but they are also fighting for the rights of ALL workers - the rest of us must not fail them now.

Nigel Lawson says that a National dock strike would no longer have a substantial effect on the economy. This seems a rather strange thing for the Chancellor of an Island state to say but it is in line with the low-key

strategy which the Tories have adopted since announcing the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme on April 15th.

A dock strike at any time would be important but coming, as this one does, in the after 10 years of defeat after defeat for the Unions - and in the face of growing rank and file militancy (Tubes busses, power workers etc - it has particular relevance. The Bosses have been preparing for this for a long time, but so have the Dockers and they are one of the most organised groups of workers in the country.

### TOP SECRET

As the 'Phoney-war' draws to a close and the real battle begins, the stakes, for both sides, are massive. This is an all or nothing confrontation - there is no middle ground. For the Dockers the alternatives are crystal clear - win and keep their jobs or lose and sign on the Dole.

John McNab, boss at Tilbury and an erstwhile 'supporter' of the scheme, now boasts to his friends "After the strike there will be no T&G, there will be NO union at Tilbury".

According to a 'Top Secret' management Report (you could tell it was top secret because Shop Stewards had copies almost as soon as the management) the bosses reckon they can win in 6 weeks. Rank and File Dockers



have laughed at this and the National Port Shop Stewards Committee calculate that after 10 weeks it will be the bosses who fold. The Dockers are prepared to strike for "as long as is necessary".

At present the Registered ports take 70% of all cargo and the Unregistered ones are working 'flat out' to take the other 30%. Even if the bosses can achieve a 60:40 or even a 50:50 ratio, the economy cannot stand that for too long.

The Tories hold up the Unregistered ports, particularly Dover and Felixstowe, as key weapons in their armoury. The reality is somewhat different. Dover is basically a huge Lorry-park; it does not have the facilities to handle bulk cargo - and you can't eat hi-fi's or cars. Felixstowe has its own local scheme and, by and large, dockers there take home more money than their Registered counterparts. However if the strike is lost then Felixstowe would be competing with huge non-unionised ports, and that can only mean the end of their own scheme. So there is a growing mood of militancy there too.

### ONLY ONE WINNER

Basically the Dockers are confident that they can win. This doesn't come from any romantic notion or from desperation. It comes as Kevin Hussey (Tilbury Steward said recently, on TV - "At the end of the day, our analysis is superior to theirs. There will only be one winner and that's us". There is only one thing that frightens Tories and Union bureaucrats alike, and that is Rank and File organisation. Ron Todd knows that if he baulks his responsibilities the NPSSC will step in and lead the strike. They will not be intimidated by sequestration or even jail sentences and they will not allow others to sell them out.

A perfect illustration of the difference in calibre between Rank and File Stewards and their 'Leaders' is this. Last year Sam McCluskie (National Union of Seafarers) said he would run his Unions affairs from "tent on Clapham Common" if the sequestrators were sent in, adding that he was also prepared to face prison if necessary. 5-DAYS later he was in court doing a "Gawd bless ya, yer Lordships, never meant a word". He disowned the strikers and has proceeded to shit on them from a great height ever since.

Last month, a Dock Shop Steward was served with a writ claiming £125,000 in damages arising from a local dispute. His response was "Ah well, I s'pose they'll take me pushbike away now, ha ha". Workers such as this cannot be bought, neither can they be intimidated. They believe they can win and they are prepared to fight - WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SUPPORT THEM IN ANY WAY WE CAN.

## WHO FRAMED WINSTON SILCOTT?

The recent election of Winston Silcott as honorary president of the L.S.E. student union has provoked predictable outrage in the press among Tory and Labour MPs and from the Police.

The election and subsequent controversy has of course already served its purpose, which was to rekindle support, and reinforce the campaign for Silcott's release. For Winston Silcott and his co-defendants, like the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Winchester Three and the appellants in the Carl Bridgewater trial, to name but a few, the word British Justice has proved to be a contradiction in terms. First of all, in contrast to the "yellow press" and in fairness to the accused, lets look at the facts.

At the beginning of the trial there were six people in the dock for the killing of PC Blakelock, two juveniles aged 15 and 16 (A and B for the purpose of identification), Mark Braithwaite, Engin Raghip and Winston Silcott.

The first juvenile we will call is A who had the case against him dismissed because his confession, the judge decided, was 'high fantasy' and 'incredible' - differing in crucial details from the account given by all other eye witnesses. He confessed to stabbing PC Blakelock in the leg and chest where the pathologist said there were no wounds. The boy, who was 13 at the time, made his confession after being held in custody for 3 days without access to his parents or a solicitor. He had been interrogated naked, except for underpants and a blanket. Chief Superintendent Gramham Melvin denied he had prevented access to solicitors to the boy and other defendants, to make it easier to obtain a confession, or because solicitors might advise clients of their right to silence. Melvin insisted that his chief fear was that the solicitors might engage in a "conspiracy to pervert the course of justice". At this explanation Mr Justice Hodgson clearly irritated replied "What was the scenario? Was he supposed to tell everyone what the suspect told him".

Mr. Melvin failed to produce a single specific example, merely repeated his general proposition. Two weeks later the Judge threw out the case against the 16 year old, said to have a mental age of seven and whose confession differed markedly from accounts of other witnesses, yet his interrogators had made "little effort" to check the details.

The case against the third juvenile was equally weak, though he was the only defendant confronted by an eye witness, however due to a determined father he had access to a solicitor and significantly the only one that did not make a confession or "incriminating statement".

The "eye witness" Jason Cobham, aged 18, who alleged he had seen the boy join the attack, collapsed under cross-examination, and admitted that his testimony had been "dotted with lies" and that he had falsely accused another youth who was later charged with affray. He received a number of inducements to testify from the police, including a job, flat and money. And although he admitted taking part in the riot he was only charged with threatening behaviour and fined £200, whilst others who played a comparable role were given 5 and 7 years.

A senior detective commenting on the collapse of the only prosecution witness said "the coloureds make notorious bad witnesses".

What then of the evidence against the accused who were found guilty. Engin Raghip was convicted of murder solely on the admission that he saw the attack and was armed with a broomstick.

In the case of Winston Silcott, who got a 30 year recommended, all the jury had to decide on his guilt or innocence.

CONTINUED OVER

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Red Action strongly believes that Revolutionary Socialists should approach a strike with the attitude "What can we do to help the strikers" - this is the opposite of many 'left' groups whose view is "How can this strike benefit our Party?" or "How many members can we gain from this?"

It is a sad fact that many workers see the 'left' as opportunists and the 'left' by its actions gives them no reason to think otherwise.

We have witnessed several 'left' groups collecting money supportively for strikers but when questioned admit that they keep some (or all) of it for their Party.

They actually have the cheek to argue that, as the best hope of the strikers (and workers in general) lies not in winning disputes but in 'building the Revolutionary Party', that they are stealing the strikers money is in the interests of the strikers!!! We believe that this practise is absolutely corrupt, both politically and morally and those who engage in it should be treated with the contempt they deserve.

The Solidarity Network was set up after the Wapping dispute. It is an organisation of rank and file militants dedicated to providing support, (political, financial and moral) for workers on strike. They also offer the benefit of their own experiences in previous struggles.

Red Action is firmly in favour of this. The Solidarity Network will be heavily involved in setting up support groups for the dockers. The East London one is already up and running in anticipation of the strike (a social was held on May 26th which raised £95.00 for the dockers and P&O strikers.)

Whilst so called left groups dismiss this as charity we call on everyone who believes the strikers are right to get involved locally. At the end of the day we believe our analysis is the correct one and after the strike we shall see whether we and people like us, or the 'opportunist' left emerges with the best reputation amongst the people that matter - the workers!

FOR THE CLASS - NOT THE PARTY. Details of your local groups can be obtained from the Solidarity Network - phone 01-241 6930 (John Laing).



once was the record of conversation between him and Melvin that was not signed. There was not other evidence, no forensic evidence, no murder weapon, no identification evidence and he was not even in any of the 1,000 photographs presented during the trial. Naturally there were no witnesses.

It was the role of the press and the media in general to fill in the considerable gap between the evidence and the verdict. According to the Mirror "Silcott led 200 screaming youths into the attack, brandishing a machete. As police fled PC Blakelock fell and Silcott, helped by Raghip and Braithwaite, went in for the kill. He hacked at the policeman's body with a huge blade, planning to sever the head and mount it on a pole as a "trophy". Similarly lurid graphic "eye-witness accounts" appeared in other papers, none of the allegations were supported in court by admissible evidence. So they invented it. But why?

In political "show trials" like this, not only are the defendants on trial, but in the event of an acquittal, the credibility of the police, judiciary, state etc., can be undermined. The role of the media in political trials is therefore critical. Convictions in themselves are useless or even counterproductive if the ultimate jury, the general public, are not convinced or satisfied that 'justice' has been served.

Descriptions of Silcott as a "Godfather" who ruled with a *mano* like grip of fear serve the purpose of creating violent, racist images in the minds of the public once established as truth they later prove very difficult to deny or refute. (Similar campaigns were mounted more recently by the 'yellow press'. Both incidentally led by the Sun after the ITV programme 'Death on the Rock', where Carmen Proetta and other witnesses were denounced as prostitutes, drug-dealers etc. And of course after the Hillsborough disaster, in an attempt to cover for incompetent administration and policing they tried to lay the blame at the feet of the working class people of Liverpool.) A secondary purpose is to dispel or squash any lingering doubts or sympathy people might have felt for the victims, or the accused.

Similarly it became clear during the trial that there was no evidence for the widely reported claim by the then Met Police Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman that "Anarchists and Trotskyites" had planned the riot. Two of the defendants in the trial were white, as were a third of those charged, but police admitted they followed or were led by blacks. Nor, it transpired, was there any substance to the allegations that the garages had been flooded to make "lethal lakes of petrol" as suggested by Assistant Commissioner Mike Richards.

The only evidence of a conspiracy, to plan or set up the riot, ironically enough left the finger pointing firmly at the police themselves, rather than the residents of Broadwater Farm. During the trial it was disclosed that police units were on alert to expect disturbances in the Tottenham area on Saturday the day before Cynthia Jarrett was killed, and admitted they had 400 men in riot gear on standby in Wood Green some hours before the trouble started on the Sunday.

A week before the trial ended the press led by the Daily Express alleged that another riot was being planned because thousands of milk bottles had gone missing, a lot of petrol was being sold, crossbows being bought etc., to remind the jury of the "conspiracy theory" in an attempt as the Guardian pointed out "to influence the result of the trial". (The blatant use of this type of black propaganda is not new. The Thursday and Friday after Bloody Sunday 30 January 1972, when paras shot dead 13 unarmed civilians in Derry, the Mirror carried a headline "Fake Troops Peril in Ulster". The report claimed that "Army chiefs were warned yesterday of a plot to start fresh bloodshed in Ulster. They were told the terrorists, disguised in stolen uniforms will be in Newry for tomorrow's illegal Civil Rights March. They fear the IRA may start a new bloody battle by firing on crowds of marchers". As in the Broadwater case it was to clear the Army/Police of responsibility).

After three days the jury returned, three of the five women on the jury were in tears while another fainted before leaving the jury box, and yet they still returned a unanimous verdict of guilt; beyond reasonable doubt? As a result Winston Silcott, who got a sentence of 30 years, is not due for parole until 2017.

Appeals of the Guildford Four are coming up for a second time later this year when they have been in prison for 15 years. Despite their undoubted innocence there is absolutely no chance of their release. Because clearing their names would mean discrediting police evidence and in the process seriously undermining its credibility, something the system is not likely to entertain.

If there is one single factor that has accelerated the erosion of civil liberties (and there isn't) it is the role played and the experience gained by the State in Ireland. Their involvement in the war over there has given them renewed confidence to coerce in the event they fail to persuade any section of the population with whom they are in conflict, in the knowledge that they will be quickly isolated with the full cooperation of the media. This in turn promotes the arrogant decisions that in response provoke the violent reactions. The army and the paramilitary police are on hand simply to restore law and order. They are well aware that the best way of keeping people acquiescent is to keep them ignorant. At the moment the only time people ever suspect what is being done in their name is when they themselves become the victims.

Therein lies the fatal flaw in the strategy. While the mass media can smear and successfully isolate different sections of the working class, Irish republicans, blacks, miners etc., they also radicalise them by demanding that they accept as truth a version of events in complete conflict with their own direct experiences. The effect is to destroy many illusions about the nature of the State, the impartiality of the police, a free press or the integrity of reformist Labour politicians. As a consequence they learn more in six months than through reading socialist propaganda for ten years.

The task for genuine revolutionaries today is to build bridges between the working class communities in conflict, to eventually unite them in a single movement that is of the class and for the class that will one day sweep the whole rotten system into the gutter and replace it with one that is designed by the immense majority, run by the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority.

Incidentally, Winston Silcott is not due up for parole until 2017, the earliest possible date of release, by then he will be 57.

# HERE WE GO... AGAIN?

Thursday 20th April marked the 100th anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birthday. The recent surge of electoral support for neo-nazi platforms in America, Germany, France, Austria, Israel, and S. Africa has demonstrated to many that fascism as a political phenomenon is neither solely German nor dead, given the right social economic conditions its influence can never be underestimated.

In an attempt to set the agenda. Anti-fascists marked the occasion by organising rallies and demonstrations throughout Europe. On Sunday April 23rd, 5,000 marched in Southall in commemoration of Blair Peach murdered by police during an anti-nazi demonstration in 1979. On Monday 24th an international anti-fascist meeting was held at Friends House Euston organised by Anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight'. There were speakers from Europe and America and among the representatives from British Anti-fascist groups was a speaker from Red Action.

Since its formation in 1985 AFA has been continually faced with two fundamental problems, whether it was, or should become a pressure group chiefly concerned with State racism, or a confrontational anti-fascist organisation. The second problem which proved equally difficult to surmount was to create a structure to accommodate in both a democratic and a representative way both political organisations and the unaligned individuals.

On the one hand there was the fear that an unscrupulous group (such as the SWP) might affiliate with the intention of using AFA as a vehicle for recruitment, on the other, was the resentment that delegate of organisations felt due to the fact that proposals from them could be out voted or ignored by individuals or cliques of individuals who at the end of the day represented nobody but themselves. The tensions and suspicions bred antagonisms that within a relatively short time brought AFA to its knees.

At the conference in Manchester in 1986, the suspension of "Anarchist" group Class War led to a walkout of a number of groups, including Red Action (we returned they did not). The Bradford conference in 1987 was a fiasco and near total disaster with the establishment of a split away group Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Action, and then later moves by sympathisers to suspend Red Action for racism.

A low ebb indeed. Since then, in recognition of reality AFA had become a federal organisation, which has eased a lot of the problems, bureaucratic and otherwise, and of course allows for the implementation of policies, tactics etc in response to regional requirements.

So despite AFA existing only in a skeletal form, it has enjoyed unprecedented success, publicity and prestige, simply because the issue of Blood and Honour and football to a lesser extent, have been confronted and tackled, though not crudely head on. This is a very valuable lesson. Through



out AFA's existence (despite the problems) there have been other registered successes, the smashing up of an NF march in Bury St. Edmunds in 1986 that deepened the split in the NF, the tactics adopted around Remembrance Day though sometimes contradictory have actually caused Harringtons lot to abandon the event complaining bitterly about "violent communists". The Albert Mariner March no longer takes place. Blood and Honour have been successfully harassed, losing pubs (Prince Albert, Wellington Store, Green Man), also having their gigs cancelled or disrupted, plus, of course, losing the shops in Carnaby St. (AFA has also been organised in other areas, notably Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Exeter, often with considerable success).

While congratulations are due, organised fascist gangs represent only a symptom of the problem, what is now required is that AFA in London addresses itself to the source of the problem, racism, reflected in the huge increase in race attacks, possibly in the region of 20,000 in the Metropolitan area alone. This is an area of work that Red Action believes AFA must tackle as it can no longer be ignored. Indeed it should be our priority. First of all a strategy must be worked out and organisations and individuals must once again be recruited to implement AFA policy so a structure must be developed to accommodate them. With race attacks at an estimated 20,000 annually and apart from the £400,000 allocated by the police in recognition of the problem, in relation to both the mass media and the left the issue is swept under the carpet, under-reported or ignored. London AFA's first job which at the moment it is uniquely qualified to do is to highlight this epidemic.

Cable Street Beat could also play a particularly important role in bringing attention to bear on the campaign by attracting larger bands (than at present) to play or indeed sponsor the campaign.

In recognition that it is the white working class youth, who provide the fascists "natural" recruits, it is with them in mind that AFA must aim its propaganda. Appealing to good reason or conscience will never defeat racist attitudes especially in areas of grinding poverty, it is only by demonstrating through activity and propaganda that blacks and Asians are being made scapegoats for the problems of the system and that racism/fascism is not in the short



Anti-Fascist Action counter demonstration Remembrance Day 1987.

or long term interest of the working class, will significant progress be made.

It is essential therefore that when appropriate, AFA propaganda "must" contain a class message. One to provide an answer to common prejudices, two to avoid presenting all white people as the enemy, to neutralise the white community and so isolate the active racists/fascists, and most importantly, to negate the efforts by fascists to present AFA as a bunch of middle class outsiders, part and parcel of the establishment, working in the long term interests of the status quo.

The neo-nazi, music based group Blood and Honour have attracted the attention of the media recently. It is obvious that on their own they do not represent a genuine threat. The real significance of their emergence is that they would not have existed at all in '58, '68, '78, their emergence today is not a coincidence but an indication of a real shift to the right throughout society.

It is reported to us that a gig they have organized for the 27th May at a secret venue, with a capacity of 1200 has sold out weeks ago. Despite this, as I said, on their own they do not represent, at the moment, a real threat, but of course they are not on their own.

B+H represents only the outer tentacles of a beast, and unless they are crushed will naturally grow stronger and bolder, strengthening in the process all other component parts of the same animal. Some people on the left accuse us of making a fetish of fascism when the truth is they make a fetish of ignoring it.

The re-birth of the far-right in Europe is directly related to the abysmal failure of the far-left.

Our first job now is not to unite people but to divide people, not between left and right but between pro-fascist and anti-fascist, racist and anti-racist, between the active and the passive.

We must through highlighting the issue of race attacks force people to take sides, for history has demonstrated that on the issue of fascism there can be no neutrality. Equally important it must be declared that there can be no place in the anti-fascist movement for careerists, the phoney, the self seekers or self promoters.

Since 1985 AFA has faced the sectarianism inherent in the left, the hostility of the media and by and large the indifference of the Labour and Trade Union movement.

Unlike Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Austria we in Britain have no direct knowledge of fascism, and so we are led to believe that it could never happen here.

The complacency is misplaced for it is in this very climate of indifference to the plight of others that actually creates a tolerance towards fascism/racism that allows it to develop.

The Ulster Defence Association are regarded by some misguided left wing English groups benignly as a sort of "workers militia", are now actively operating and recruiting in Britain. They have established close links with the NF, BNP B&H. The recent disclosure that they are being armed by the South African regime comes to us at least as no surprise. They are fascists and their direct involvement over here adds a whole new and dangerous dimension to the problem.

It may come as a shock to many on the left that not all fascists have cropped-hair and flight-jackets; if Fascism reappears on the door-step again, it almost certainly will not be identified by a swastika and a tooth-brush moustache it will be a sophisticated package and may creep up insidiously.

It must be remembered that national socialism in Germany did not begin with concentration camps, that was just how it ended.

Apply the people in this meeting have a choice, and the choice is simple and straightforward: we can decide to hang together now or face the possibility that we may hang separately later.

## RED ACTION

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LONDON E.8.

**RED ACTION ON MERSEYSIDE**

If interested in finding out more / getting active in the North West or Merseyside. There is a grouping of members and supporting members on Merseyside who can be contacted by writing to:

RED ACTION MERSEYSIDE  
P.O. BOX 80  
SOUTHPORT  
PR8 6BH

# BETRAYED

Dear Red Action, I enjoyed RA49, February 1989. However, I remain mystified after reading the page 7 article on your trip to Ireland when you describe the events surrounding the current Sinn Fein ban on the IRSP.

Several left papers have also noted their dissatisfaction with this state of affairs but like RA they haven't really gone into the "reasons" for this ban leaving myself, and many others I'm sure, in the dark.

Could you please do an article detailing the whys and wherefores of this.

Yours in red,  
CASTLEMILK REPUBLICAN

PS Next time you come across NF scum please give them a kick for me, thankfully they aren't a problem up here.

## RED ACTION SAYS:

At last years Ard Fheis '88 Sinn Fein adopted a resolution of "no platform for the IRSP", though in effect it was merely rubber stamping a tactic which they first employed inconsistently previously, its formal adoption has brought it into sharper focus, which sooner or later will certainly force all genuine anti-imperialists to take sides on this issue.

As with the arbitrary exclusion of INLA prisoners for Green Cross SF offers no explanation, and so it can only be assumed that it is to secure party political advantage and that as SF drifts back to the political right they feel particularly vulnerable to an attack from the left and so seek to deny the IRSP the "oxygen of publicity".

Quite simply this is naked sectarianism and as it cannot be condoned it must be condemned, not least because in actual practice its effect on solidarity work both in Britain and Ireland may well prove disastrous.

Recently Sinn Fein called for an "all Ireland, anti-imperialist movement" to include according to Martin McGuinness the "Broadest possible range of political forces throughout Ireland".

This has meant SF holding discussions with, among other dubious elements, the Communist Party of Ireland who supported a workers party candidate standing against Bobby Sands in the Fermanagh/South Tyrone bye-election in 1981, and whose trade union members voted against supporting the Hunger Strikers five demands; while the IRSP's "natural allies" on the national question are the only ones to find themselves deliberately excluded from this Broad Front.

In Britain things are, if anything, even worse, with Sinn Fein's "Foreign Policy" being embraced by committees and campaigns that only

exist and rely for any credibility they have on the patronage of the Republican movement.

The Birmingham Hunger Strike Committee which withdrew speaking rights to the IRSP in 1988 actually voted not to reply to a letter demanding an explanation! Given that the march is meant to commemorate all 10 Hunger Strikers do they need reminding that Patsy O'Hara, Kevin Lynch and Micky Devine were members of the Republican Socialist Movement.

Red Action took the decision not to mobilise for the march on the basis that to support such an event without protest would be to endorse the repellent behaviour of the Committee. Due to the fact that the march, which was inadequately stewarded last year was repeatedly attacked by bands of loyalists/fascists, we were invited by the Republican Flute Band 'THE H-BLOCK MARTYRS', TO provide stewards for their section of the march this year. In view of our past relationship with them we agreed but felt forced for the first time to lay down a condition, that being that in return they would play at and indeed support the Manchester Martyrs March in November. They argued that their participation would mean their expulsion from the Bands Alliance and so they refused. So did we, neither side feeling too happy about it (incidentally the march passed peacefully, but possibly due to the prospect of fascist violence only a couple of hundred attended, significantly down on last year).



That apart, it is the current controversy surrounding the fate of the Manchester Martyrs Committee which brings into sharpest relief the divisive impact of Sinn Fein policy in regard to solidarity work in Britain. The march having been abandoned in 1974 due to fascist violence was defiantly revived in 1981 with the support of the IRSP. From the beginning groups like Red Action and the Bands Alliance supported it, and slowly, largely through the hard work of the Committee it emerged in 1986 as the most colourful, confident and indeed noisy pro-republican march south of the border, attracting 7 bands

and 1500 supporters.

It was banned on a pretext by James Anderton in 1987, though a rally still attracted about 500 people. Sinn Fein refused to send a speaker in 1988, SF again boycotted the event coupled with rumours of another ban, reduced the attendance to about a quarter of the 1986 estimate. Since then, there has been an orchestrated propaganda attack, on the committee by various political fringe groups, accusing the committee of being "too left", "extreme", etc. Like the boycott of Sinn Fein this is a further attempt to blackmail the committee into compliance with SF policy, or resign. Regrettably the Bands Alliance have been directed to apply the final coup de grace by announcing their intention to hold their own commemorative march a week before the Manchester event - but in Glasgow. Worse than sabotage this amounts to a shabby betrayal.

It is in recognition that the war in Ireland represents the sharpest point of the struggle of the working class in Europe that we try to provide as much practical support or assistance as we possibly can to help the Irish working class achieve their stated goal of national liberation and socialism. It is for the same reason we offer our unequivocal support to the volunteers of the IRA and the INLA. We do not say either or. Naturally as Revolutionary Socialists we enjoy a greater political empathy with those groups like the IRSP whose first loyalty, indeed whose only loyalty is to the working class. And who resolve any question on nationalism by first posing the question of socialism.

## National Liberation

British Imperialism is the enemy of the Irish working class, Irish capitalism its greatest ally. It is the capitalist class in the Free State, who have the greatest investment in the maintenance of the status quo, including of course the partition of the country and of course the very people the ultimate enemy who must be crushed if "national liberation" is to be anything more than a dictionary definition. The history of Ireland has proved that no matter how great the sacrifices no matter how heroic or noble the movement, the movement itself means nothing, if the objective of the struggle is not secured. The objective, the successful conclusion of the movement means everything, for what is the value of a "country's freedom" if its people are still in chains. It is for that reason that if push comes to shove and we are forced to nail our colours to the mast then THE FLAG STAYS RED.

# THROUGH THE POST

## HANDS OFF IRELAND

Dear Red Action, On 3rd May local Red Action members and supporters organised a meeting in Colchester as part of the Hands Off Ireland sponsored John Mitchell speaking tour. John had been secretary of the union involved in the anti-apartheid dispute at Dunnes stores in Dublin. He was sacked because of his uncompromising support for the struggle for Irish Liberation.

David Rees from H.O.I spoke first and outlined the need to build a strong anti-imperialist withdrawal movement in Britain. David rightly argued that the 'Time to Go' campaign which calls for British withdrawal from Ireland sometime is a politically useless platform and diverts attention from the priority of building a real solidarity movement here. However Hands Off Ireland were to organise an anti-imperialist contingent in the August 'Time-To-Go' march as it was important to put our politics across to the thousands of socialists and trade unionists expected to attend.

John Mitchell gave a brief history of the struggle to force Britain out of Ireland and argued why socialists should give unequivocal support for the armed struggle. John made comparisons with other liberation struggles throughout the world and stated what we all know is true - that the further away from these shores a liberation struggle is taking

place the more like the British left is to support it. He also spoke about the treacherous support for the six-counties state by the trade union bureaucracy both here and in Ireland. He finished off by arguing that Sinn Fein was not a revolutionary socialist organisation and that it should be a priority for socialists in Ireland to build such an organisation.

There followed a lively debate on issues raised by John and David. Although there was general agreement on most points it was argued from the floor that a revolutionary socialist organisation already existed in Ireland - the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

The individual who chaired the meeting - who happened to be a local Red Action member - took the liberty of abusing his authority by ending the discussion by talking about the need for Colchester to adopt a republican socialist prisoner. Those at the meeting who added their names to the list of people already willing to give money to this end on a regular basis has meant that a prisoner will be adopted in the near future. The meeting attended by 21 people was undoubtedly a success and a boost for the local solidarity 'network'. We thank John and Dave for coming to speak in Colchester

D.Milne



The pages of Red Action are open to all of our readers to write about anything they wish. So if you want to make a point about any political matter, or perhaps just comment on something which you have read in Red Action, write to the box number. Please keep all letters as short as possible.

## SOLIDARITY

Dear Comrades,

The I.R.S.P. wish to send you revolutionary greetings on the eve of your conference. We hope that this conference will be a very successful one and will strengthen the resolve and determination of your movement to continue the struggle for socialism.

We would also like to thank your membership for the way they have contributed to the prisoners sponsorship scheme. Your contribution in this field has been magnificent, an example of true internationalism.

We again wish you every success and look forward to strengthening the bond between our two organisations

Saoirse Go Deo.

on behalf of the C.C.  
Yours in comradeship  
Jim Marron

## DIVISIVE & SECTARIAN

Dear Red Action, In march of this year two members of Merseyside Red Action attended a meeting at the Liverpool Eight Law Centre in which two women from Northern Ireland were on the start of a speaking tour of England to mark International Womens Week. The two women involved were Terry Moore, a Sinn Fein councillor and candidate in the forthcoming Euro election, and Moira McCotter who spoke for the Relatives Action Committee, which campaigns for the right of Irish Republican prisoners in British jails to be allowed to serve out their sentences in prisons in Ireland.

Moira McCotter spoke first and gave an excellent resume on the hardships caused to relatives of prisoners, harassment from police and Special Branch when coming over for a visit. Travelling costs, parents of prisoners who through old age could not visit etc. She ended by asking people to send letters and cards to the prisoners and asked for support for the Relatives Action Committee. Terry Moore spoke next. She outlined the major events in Ireland which have led directly on to today's situation. She then went on to highlight the oppression that Irish Women have to suffer covering subjects like contraception, divorce, union rights etc. She summed up by urging all present to step up the campaign for British withdrawal saying that as things worsened in Britain, the repressive measures used against the Irish would increasingly be used against us.

After polite applause the meeting resumed on to a question and answer basis. A representative from Merseyside RA took the floor and made a statement aimed

not only at the Sinn Fein representatives but also at the people present at the meeting:



Many people here will not be aware that at the moment Sinn Fein is operating open sectarianism and censorship against the IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY in Ireland and in Britain. They have banned IRSP members and supporters from the 'Republican Association' clubs, they have withdrawn Green Cross payments to IRSP POW's, at last years Manchester Martyrs march they withdrew support (as in the previous year) stating that they would not share a platform with a speaker from the IRSP, these are but a few examples. We think this is divisive and sectarian and find these moves particularly distasteful considering three of the 1981 Hunger Strikers were members from the Irish Republican Socialist Movement. Would any of the Sinn Fein representatives care to comment

upon this? Terry Moore addressed the question with one line 'I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO COMMENT' the RA representative asked her to repeat her reply, again she answered 'I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO COMMENT'. Firstly we found it incredible that a SF councillor could not or would not make any comment on these damaging, divisive and sectarian issues. Secondly during Terry Moores talk and again during a question she answered, she called for solidarity between British leftwing and progressive groups and support for the 'Time to Go' charter. So on the one hand calling for solidarity between groups in Britain, yet, on the other hand, Sinn Fein obviously do not practice what they preach in their own backyard. Seemingly dialogue with the SDLP seems preferable to any association with the IRSP.

Footnote: An excellent article appeared in 'THE STARRY PLOUGH' No.4 (the newspaper of the IRSP) entitled 'The Voice of Principled Hypocrisy' I would suggest people buy this, send 60p inc postage to IRSP, 392 Falls Road, Belfast 12, Ireland.



REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PRISONERS AID  
c/o JAMES O'BRIEN  
265 SEVEN SISTERS RD  
LONDON N4

LETTERS CONTD/PTO



LONDON '87  
THE FIRST AND VERY PROMISING MARCH ORGANISED BY THE LONDON-BASED BOBBY SANDS COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE WHICH COLLAPSED IN '88 AFTER SINN FEIN'S WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT IN LINE WITH ITS POLICY OF 'NO PLATFORM FOR THE I.R.S.P.

# THE VOICE OF REASON



"Three people were arrested following scuffles between Red Action supporters and a vocal gaggle of anti-Sandinista protesters at Central Hall Westminster, where Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega addressed a public meeting last week. Later ITN News at Ten reported that the National Front had been involved. ITN apologised for its error the following night after protest from demonstrators."

## CITY LIMITS. 25TH MAY.

ITN's confusion arose from an incident when one of our number who could be loosely described as a Red Action supporter, selected, and mischievously accused a 'chinless wonder' of being a member of the NF. In swift recognition of what was likely to occur if his denial was not both loud and sufficiently emphatic to satiate his rather brutish looking accuser, he responded with furious and terrified denials, constantly repeating that "I am not violent".

What was clearly evident was that the young Blue Blood of Conservative Collegiate Forum were appalled at this unexpected face to face confrontation with representatives so obviously from the 'rougher' end of the political market. Throughout the evening there was much shredding of placards and resulting shrieks of indignation. There was nothing as exciting or energetic as 'a scuffle' and we suffered no arrests. In any case three arrests would have left the 'survivor' with no one to 'talk' to.

Though it was throughout a vaguely titillating affair with the fifty odd Young Tories often projecting the collective demeanour of a nervous herd of wildebeest, it was not the highlight of the evening. This was reserved for the appearance of 'Detective' Constable Rawlins or 'Rawlins of The Yard' as I imagine he'd like to be known.

# DELUSION OR DECEIT

letters cont.

Dear Red Action,

In your article about the ruthless deportation of Viraj Mendis to Sri Lanka entitled "Headless Chickens" (issue 50 March 89), you spend 5 out of six paragraphs attacking the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign and give no coverage whatsoever to the role played by the Home Office, or their spies in the Media, with only a glib reference to the role of the police and Special Branch. You begin by criticising the VMDC for holding an open meeting "with anyone who happened to be there allowed to take part in the decision-making". You then proceed to call the demonstrations following the police raid, which you admit were well attended, "pointless" on the grounds that there was no physical attack on the Moss Side police, even though Viraj was being held in Pentonville Prison in London. You conclude that the campaign had no strategy but was relying on "the benevolence" of the state. Surely to assume that the Home Office would release Viraj after people fought with police on such a scale is to assume the state is benevolent.

When the police raided the Sanctuary on Jan 18th they defeated the Campaign. Viraj had had no intention of "going underground". The campaign's strategy was to organise and call mass demonstrations which would allow all those supporters who wanted to protest against the police/Home Office raid to participate. To have launched an attack on the police at this point would have achieved little more than mass arrests and heavy prison sentences.

The implication of your article was that the VMDC was no challenge to the state. This is a lie. The VMDC's confrontation with

the state took many forms, including marching, picketing, street work, stone throwing, questions in Parliament and letters from Bishops. Each form representing the different forces involved in the campaign, but no form was allowed to dominate for its own sake, as anyone regularly and actively involved in the work of the campaign would know.



Mendis: Deported

You "accuse" VMDC of not resorting to "illegal" means, and yet over 30 members have appeared in the courts over the past months and many have won victories in court assisted by the different trends involved in the campaign. The VMDC never limited itself to legal action, but neither was legal action excluded.

The demonstrations following Viraj's deportation were possibly the largest demonstrations against British Immigration Laws ever seen. Viraj deserves a salute. The defeat of the VMDC cannot be explained away with simplistic references to aspects of the campaign's strategy. The ability of the Home Office to raid the sanctuary raises profound questions as well as to the weakness of the British socialist and anti-racist movement as a whole. So let's have more paragraphs about racism and the achievements of the VMDC. Let's have some decent debate comrades.

Yours in struggle,  
Ed Jones,  
Press Officer, VMDC.



DC Rawlins first came to our attention during a picket organised by Anti-Fascist Action around the neo-Nazi shops in Riding House St. He made a thorough nuisance of himself throughout, taking great delight in his ability to address various individuals by their first names. And later having slithered into a pub which we had retired to, was spotted actually taking notes and felt forced to call on a dozen or so uniformed woodentops to get him out.

We renewed our acquaintance on the evening in question. Having been spotted on the edges of the crowd we casually informed some Kent miners to whom we had been chatting of his identity. Shortly afterwards as they passed him on their way to the meeting they turned and greeted him as one 'Evening D C Rawlins' they bawled. His head snapped round like a marionette as if he had been shot, loud guffaws at his reaction greating him from either end of the street.

After suffering in mortified silence for five minutes of so he slunk off, to the visible relief of his colleagues who had been keeping a discreet distance since his exposure. Oh well, worse things happen at sea. Live and learn...

## RED ACTION SAYS.

The article "Headless Chickens" did not criticize VMDC for having 'open' meetings but because VMDC seemed to have no contingency plans at all in the event of a raid on the church. Instead decisions were taken on the spur of the moment, with anyone who happened to be at the meeting allowed to take part in decisionmaking. It was later disclosed that nine plainclothes police were present at this emergency meeting. In the resulting confusion the sting was taken out of many positive ideas. Equally it was never suggested that there should be gratuitous attacks on the police, but that invariably the effectiveness of marches and protests were often negated by adopting a tactic of avoiding confrontation. At all costs. In your defence you point out "that over 30 members appeared in the courts and have won many victories", the fact that individuals were arrested does not, of course, mean that they were doing anything illegal, and as you claim that many were acquitted, it suggests that they were not in fact guilty.

You also claim that "the raid raises profound questions as to the weakness of the British Socialist and anti-racist movement as a whole. What profound questions does it raise? And where is the evidence that a British anti-racist movement exists. You claim that Viraj had no intention of "going underground", if as repeatedly stated by you that on his forcible return to Sri Lanka death was imminent then why was this possibility discounted. It also stated that "once the police raided the sanctuary on Jan 18th they defeated the campaign." Was it expected that the Home Office would not raid

the church? Or that letters from Bishops would be sufficient to drive a coach and horses through the governments immigration policy. Did VMDC mobilise people under the illusion that the British State would be convinced by humanitarian arguments that the whole immigration policy was a mistake, was indeed morally unjustifiable when everybody must know that the State has neither morals nor humanity. The fact that the campaign ended as soon as he was arrested indicates that all the time you believed in the force of argument and were completely defenceless when the State eventually responded with the argument of force. Are we all expected to forget that these are the very same caretakers of the system that refused with the eyes of the world on them, political status to the Irish Hunger-Strikers in 1981. Are we to learn nothing from that. To continue to foster illusions about the 'Benevolence' of the State is so incomprehensible as to border on the criminal. Finally to wind up, to confront State is essentially to deny or thwart the State in this case to prevent a deportation. Not to have a contingency plan in the event that they "call your bluff" means one, you actually believe it was not necessary, or two, it was not possible. Whatever way you look at it, the campaign was built on delusion or deceit, in short, you were either lying to yourselves or misleading others.

For all your bluster about being a "challenge to the state", VMDC showed that when it came to the crunch it was in effect nothing more than a protracted publicity stunt, with no visible benefit to anybody except perhaps the organisation that sponsored it.

# 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 or 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 oppose 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.