

RED ACTION

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Coming Second
An anti-fascist
blue-print for
Europe
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the Millennium

and beyond...

WORKING CLASS
RULE IN
WORKING CLASS
AREAS

No Prizes for Coming Second

On May 1 1996 the Front National presented itself as the "trade union of the French." The link unfortunately is not entirely rhetorical. The NF is now the largest working class party in France. In the 1995 presidential elections 27% of blue collar workers voted for Le Pen. In Austria, October 1996, one in two industrial workers voted for the Freedom Party, giving them 27.6% of the vote overall in a national election.

The same trend is applicable throughout Europe. The long cherished belief that fascism's constituency was exclusively drawn from petit-bourgeois elements has been shattered. In fact the reverse has happened. It is not only primarily but exclusively from this strata that the conservative Left recruits.

AFA has long recognised these developments are not coincidental. The rise of the far-right in Europe is not the cause of the Left's failure, but the consequence of that failure.

By definition anti-fascism is a rearguard action. Even now many groups prefer to hide their head in the sand. Those that do take up the issue are most strident that the very values, strategies, and attitudes that caused the problem is an orientation to the labour movement, students and sectional interests etc need only be applied more vigorously to achieve a resolution to the threat. In reality such an approach invariably compounds the problem.

In Britain we had the situation in the early 90's where the strategy of the ANL was to invite people to vote Labour in order to electorally crush the BNP. The result was that people who sought change were being stampeded in the BNP's direction by the ANL's strategy. In the Isle of Dogs where the ANL carpet bombed the area with propaganda the BNP's vote rose by 30% in a couple of months as a direct result.

Stumbling Block

Despite the relative success of the BNP on the Isle of Dogs they have as yet been unable to repeat this success across the country. An objective assessment would (as the fascists themselves often do) point to AFA nationally as a major stumbling block. This is not simply because AFA has a cutting edge, denied to others by their own strategies, but because the problem of fascism is approached from a class perspective. That is to say that fascist influence in an area is approached not only from how the fascists politically threaten working class interests in the long term, but also in dealing with the fascists locally to be aware of working class sensibilities in the here and now.

Essentially, AFA regards the working class as its constituency and that determines who, and how the issue is politically addressed.

Anti-Fascist Action was set up in 1985. By 87-88 it was apparent that AFA needed to refocus a controversial internal policy

document made the following point:

"aiming propaganda at the victims of fascism - blacks, Asians, gays is mistaken and patronising. They do not need to be convinced they are the victims, they already know that".

At the time it led to a split in AFA with about ten mainly paper organisations withdrawing support while accusing the authors, among other things, of - racism. (Significantly leading figures later went on to set up the late and un-lamented Anti-Racist Alliance)

Fascism's Targets

Recently a French anti-fascist magazine ruefully admitted to the wide support for the FN among the French working class. Here is what it proposes as the basis for the resistance: *"The social basis for an anti-fascist movement can only (our emphasis) be found among*

social basis for anti-fascism is in reality passing the buck. A theoretical rat run invented to avoid the unseemly business of actual confrontation and resistance.

The only social basis for anti-fascism is the working class and for real anti-fascists the only categories that matter are pro-working class or anti-working class. For over a decade the French Left have sought to deny this, and in having convinced themselves now baldly acknowledge that the fascists "outrageous policies seem increasingly banal, even legitimised. They are present on school governors committees, they have proposals about the municipal budget...everywhere you turn you see them."

Everywhere You Turn...

Of course the analysis does not examine why you see them everywhere you turn, how, in a



those who are fascism's targets; mainly immigrants but also gays and lesbians, people with disabilities and others."

You don't have to be genius to recognise that it is precisely this formula, this recipe for paralysis, that got them into trouble in the first place. Similarly 'bringing it to the labour movement' is always the cry of those eager to shed themselves of responsibility. And when the TUC fail to arm anti-fascist militias then this is a sign that they must redouble their efforts in the lobbying department.

Rat Run

Naturally the anti-fascist navel gazer finds it convenient to ignore the fact that fascists firstly categorise, divide and sub divide in order to control. Fascism's victims, are selected not because they appear to be vulnerable but precisely because they are vulnerable. That is why they are picked on. To argue that a selection of scapegoats hand picked by the fascists themselves is the only

period of just over ten years they have been allowed to establish a mass base in France and a bridgehead for fascism in Europe. This is no mystery. History is known to be pitiless.

So on the face of it the contrast between Britain and France could not be greater. But this analysis would be superficial and dangerously premature. This is no time for self congratulation. Remember, that it was under the Socialist Party regime in the mid 80's that the FN began their steady climb to the top.

Undoubtedly a distinct advantage in establishing their radical credentials was that the primary anti-FN organisation, S.O.S Racisme, was directly linked to and sponsored by Mitterrand himself. The Anti-Nazi League not only campaigns for Labour, but is in turn sponsored by a possible future Cabinet Minister in Labour MP Peter Hain.

If there is one reason that the BNP and others are literally rubbing their hands in glee in anticipation of a Labour victory in

May, it is that the 'Anyone But Fascists' (ABF) strategy favoured by the likes of the ANL and Searchlight inevitably leads to such cross-class alliances. This results in the far-Right's radical credentials being established in the minds of the very elements seeking social or political change, not by a Goebbels-like spin doctor - but - by the propaganda of the opposition.

Euro-Nationalism

On top of that the BNP would appear to be making a decisive change of direction. Earlier in the year a hardline fascist spelled it out.

"The BNP won the Isle of Dogs for the very good reason that it employed Euro-nationalist methods on an experimental basis in Tower Hamlets - and the party must take this on board. All the successful nationalist parties in Europe are modern Euro nationalist. There is a new way of doing things a new politics. The new politics mean success the old failure."

The Isle of Dogs experiment of 1993, saw the BNP, in their own words "actively going into a working class community and talking to people, listening to what they had to say, articulating their problems and identifying solutions".

No longer a battle for control of the streets but a battle for hearts and minds.

Effectively the arena had switched from the streets to working class door-steps. And AFA was hamstrung. The strategy of confrontation that had been so devastating against the old BNP way of doing things proved impotent against the new. If indeed the new politics mean success and the old failure, then AFA too, must take this on board. Otherwise in ten years time, it is us who may also share in the experience of seeing them at every turn.

Meanwhile, as the fascists are importing lessons from Europe, AFA must begin the task of exporting the fundamentals of militant anti-fascism to Europe. Pound for pound, AFA is probably the most effective anti-fascist organisation in Europe. As many on the far-Right look to France and Italy and Austria for guidance and inspiration, increasingly other militants from Europe and beyond are looking to Britain for the fascist antidote.

Of course a blue print of sort does exist; 'No platform', physical and ideological confrontation, and the refusal to do Faustian deals with the state for short term gain etc. Few groups would have trouble adopting the militant's programme - implementing it is of course something else.

Clawing Back

The first step toward clawing back the situation, is to recognise that throughout Europe and beyond, our opponents, the opponents of militant anti-fascism are organised.

The far-right, the state, and the law abiding pacifists of the conservative Left, network, sepa-

ately, and sometimes together to defeat, criminalise and marginalise the militants. Though ostensibly in pursuit of different objectives it is undeniably the far-right that is setting the political agenda to which the other two respond. Ironically the only people not organised along European or International lines are the people who need this solidarity the most. The militants must also be organised.

It is not as if this idea has just dawned on us. In 1993 an agreement on the principles of militant anti-fascism between London AFA and a prominent organisation on the Continent appeared to need only the crossing of t's and the dotting of i's.

The function of the agreement was to co-host an international militant anti-fascist conference and to set up a militant anti-fascist network. Over night it collapsed. It appears that the militants were ambushed by conservative elements within their own organisation. (Though hard to even comprehend we would be naive to believe that something similar could not happen here.)

Hearts and Minds

The is because the next step presents AFA with a different type of challenge. We need to recognise that throughout Europe the old, conservative Left is in meltdown. And that following a Labour victory the British Left, already displaying the symptoms will prove equally vulnerable. They are not qualitatively different from their continental counterparts and their demise will have similar implications for all those left standing.

Now, this situation has arisen not because the conservative Left have proved to be bad anti-fascists but because they are bad - revolutionaries. In many European countries the far-right have already won the battle for the hearts and minds among whole swathes of the working class hands down. We can prevent the same thing happening here only by attempting to put the whole process into reverse.

Ultimately this means that the Left both here and in Europe must re-invent itself. Historically the anti-fascist movement was created from a coalition of the Left, increasingly it appears that an authentic working class initiative can only spring from the forces of militant anti-fascism.

In the late 80's AFA drew a line in the sand; here and no further. We have been true to our word. And as a result we stand on a firm foundation. Now we must build on it.

Tactically AFA has always been a step ahead, this would be a very bad time to start believing our own propaganda. Anti-fascism is the one game where there are definitely no prizes for coming second.

WELWYN & HATFIELD

After troubles in Hackney and Lambeth the cat is out of the bag for another bent Labour council - Welwyn Hatfield. Unlike the other boroughs, this time there was a price to pay. So far 13 councillors, 11 Labour and 2 Tories have been forced to resign from various posts, and as far as local IWCA activists are concerned, this is merely a down-payment.

The scandal began when news leaked of a recent high court judgement in a case for damages brought by a property development company, Slough Estates, found that it was lied to by top councillors and officials on Welwyn Hatfield District Council. In his wisdom, the judge awarded £50 million in damages against WHDC. To give a sense of perspective, the council's annual budget is £9 million. It looks as if some £10 million will have to be paid off each year for the next five years; plus the interest (£3 million a year). The final bill could easily top £60 million. Although in the context of the backroom deals and public lies the 'council' means no more than a dozen or so individuals, in the context of paying for the damages the 'council' means everyone who lives in Welwyn Hatfield, each of whom face a bill for up to £2,000. As Mr Macawber predicted, annual expenditure ten million pounds; annual income nine million pounds: result, misery!

Senior officers on the council and a group of six Labour councillors, including the Leader of the Council, Ray Little, were criticised in the judgement for operating a "policy of lies and deception" from 1987 onwards, designed to induce one set of property developers (Slough Estates) to build a shopping mall type project by lying about the intentions of another set of developers (the Carroll Group) building another one just up the road. The council even tried to bluff their way through a Judicial Review in 1990 by withholding key documents. Under legal pressure the Chief Executive produced the documents proving the fraud - claiming he had just found them in the back of a cupboard.

The only response of the Labour party was to gag the one or two councillors willing to speak out - just as they did over the Hackney and Lambeth scandals. Their 'strategy' was to retreat to the bunker and refuse to comment on what they termed a "misjudgment" and wait for the fallout to fade away. For three or four weeks the line held because although the local Labour group were in the shit up to their necks, the Tories were in up to their arse. Both reckoned that they could go right under if either made a sudden movement.

That would have been that until the intervention of a local residents group named the 'What Went Wrong Committee'.

Due entirely to the efforts of the residents' committee which circulated a petition calling for the resignation of the 'Slough Four', organised a public meeting, distributed leaflets, and lobbied council meetings, the affair began to make headlines week after week, including three appearances on the TV news.

Sensing the inevitable loss of a marginal seat next May, the hatchet men came down for a second weekend break and parked their tanks on the Labour Leader's lawn. This time eleven Labour Councillors were persuaded to fall on their swords and resign honourably - declaring a 'pecuniary interest' of which they had only just been made aware. Seeing which way the wind was blowing, the two Tories involved, including the leader of the Tory group, also gave themselves up. The future of the Chief Executive hangs by a thread. The council have now declared that it will not be setting up the 'independent' inquiry into councillors' behav-

Round-up with the Usual Suspects

our after all. This decision is not related to the fact, as noted by independent commentators, that the secret deal was worth millions to Slough's rivals, the Carroll group. The leading councillors who stitched up the secret deal and were found guilty of deception in the High Court, have strongly denied that cash changed hands. So you can see, there's no need of an inquiry.

Meanwhile the council is grinding to a halt. Already £10 million has been paid from the council's reserves. There are no more reserves and no one knows where the next £10 million to line the pockets of Slough Estates shareholders is to come from. A multi-million pound project for the homeless has been scrapped after residents on the first seven floors of a local high rise had been cleared out to house it at a cost of £100,000. Major maintenance and refurbishment projects on the council's housing stock have been cancelled. There will be no money for the next ten years. Imagine what your house would look like after ten years without a lick of paint. The council is haemorrhaging jobs as 'non-essential' services are cut. So if you're planning a visit to the district make sure you take a piss first because you will find the public toilets are being closed to save a few bob.

Residents face a bill of around £2,000 per household to pay the damages. The money can only come from higher council tax which will be accompanied by across the board cuts in services. People will pay annual council tax bills of £1,000 or more just to have their bins emptied. That money, plus interest, (three million pounds already) will go straight into the pockets of wealthy Slough Estates shareholders. All this as council services grind steadily to a halt and the council becomes a slum landlord.

The council currently have their case for a reduction of the damages to £10 million in the Court of Appeal. If the appeal fails, the campaign will continue with a new target, and, from an IWCA standpoint, a politically independent working class is both the means and the desired political end.

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EDINBURGH

Edinburgh doesn't often see open fascist activity although members of AFA and Red Action are aware of and dismayed by the fact that BNP types took it upon themselves to do a door to door leaflet session a couple of months ago. The area leaflet was Gorgie/Daly, an area the fash may choose to stand in come the next election. We'd like to let any Edinburgh fash know that if they intend to extend their political activities into broad daylight then they'd better get some good insurance against accidents, as two of their bone-headed supporters could tell them.

These skinhead individuals had been responsible for an incident in a pub in Edinburgh while a couple of punk bands were on. Members of the audience took exception to their 'seagull' antics and a pagger started. By all accounts this was pretty even-stevens and by the time a couple of AFA members had arrived the fash had been bundled out of the pub. At this point the police arrived so our AFA men decided to re-enter the pub, not fancying their chances against the

forces of law and order.

Not a very satisfactory result you might think but never fear, news filtered through to AFA over the next couple of days that two of these fash had found themselves in deep trouble when confronted by some very angry anti-fascist militants. Apparently they got kicked to fuck.

To add insult to injury one of the two was attacked again close to his home when an AFA activist punched him once and left him flat on his arse. The bonehead had to explain the situation to his friend and was over-heard saying, "That's one of the AFA bastards. It's just something I have to put up with".

DUBLIN

The anti-drugs campaign is our main area of work at the moment.

The campaign exploded after the Garda riot against anti-drugs people in the North Inner City in August. There are now upwards of 40 local area or street based anti-drugs committees and the Campaign itself is the biggest mobilisation of working class communities in years. The local groups are completely community led and focus on driving heroin pushers out of each area. Area meetings and marches or vigils on pushers' houses draw up to several thousand people. The pushers are given 24 hours to leave, most do. Community patrols have been set up in many areas to prevent street dealing. Pushers moving on to another area are quickly identified and moved on again.

The huge support in working class areas forced the government to pump £14 million into "anti-drugs programmes" and the announcement of a garda clampdown on drugs. This was aimed at defusing the anti-drugs campaign but has had no effect. Media hype about 'Provo infiltration' and vigilantes' is ignored, local people want the pushers out and don't care who is involved in achieving this.

The community campaigns were set up by locals with support from ICON (a state-funded inner city development network) and the Coalition of Communities Against Drugs (COCAD).

RA members are involved at committee level in the local anti-drugs groups in their areas; Cabra, Ballybough and East Wall, and RA provides stewards for local marches. As well as working to identify pushers, members also take part in the street patrols. An RA delegate attends COCAD meetings and RA speakers have helped set up groups in other areas.

The anti-drugs campaign is a genuinely community-based movement now established in almost every working class area of Dublin. We would see it as a good example of IWCA ideas as it is based on working class self organisation at community level, incorporating close co-operation with groups from other areas. The movement is leftie and ideology free, and united in one aim of removing pushers.

Ordinary people attending events engage in discussion on tactics and strategy and people who have not been politically involved before now organise committees/patrols etc. A broad sense of community strength and unity has been created by the campaign as areas of huge unemployment, poverty, powerlessness etc have realised their own power to defeat the drug pushers and bypass state agencies and the police. Self-organisation extends beyond driving the pushers out as plans are in operation in each area to set up treatment programmes for local addicts with a

minimum of state interference. The anti-police slant and the dismissal of state agencies for their failure to deal with the drug crisis is a positive development.

SHEFFIELD

In September a Belgian Oi! band did a one-off gig in Sheffield. The band 'The Pride' were bound to pull in a fair-sized crowd due to the fairly large skin scene in South Yorkshire.

It soon became obvious that all was not well when more than one bonehead was spotted wearing fascist badges, but it was decided that some of us would remain downstairs to enjoy our drinks and wait till later to see what's what.

Our peace was eventually shattered when three fash from Leicester (oh yes, we know who you are!) tried to throw a Sharp skin down the stairs leading up to the gig. Unknown to these goons, this skin is a member of AFA, their first mistake.

The sound of a bottle smashing was the cue for a small but effective squad of Red Action and AFA members and supporters and some local punks and skins to fly up the stairs into a familiar sight - lots of bones giving it the stiff right arm. The fascists definitely had numbers on their side and obviously thought that they were in for a result - mistake number two.

In a few short moments they were punched, kicked, bottled and glassed into submission, retreating up yet another flight of stairs. They thought they'd have another go, only to be offered more bottles, punches, kicks etc.

With the arrival of the Old Bill and the fact that the now severely bloodied and confused fash had completely lost the plot (especially one hysterical Dutchie) our heroes and heroines decided to vacate the premises.

We were amused to find Leicester fash huddled in the pool room leading with the bouncers to arrange safe passage past one member of RA who stood in their way.

We were not surprised that the boneheads who hang around Castle Market didn't show. We expect that you were too busy with your bottles of cider and bags of glue.

Sheffield has a long and proud history of militant anti-fascism, and we would like to serve notice to the 'man on the buses' (who we know has been travelling around and meeting people) and fash from areas surrounding Sheffield who are hoping to organise in the Steel City that you will be smashed with relish.

LEICESTER

Recently a number of RA members in Leicester attended a commemoration for the end of the Spanish Civil War. The commemoration was well-attended and attracted a number of interested individuals as well as the usual lefty hangers-on. Speakers on the day included assorted oddballs from the Trades Council and CPGB who did their best to bore the crowd by giving their own particular version of history in the droning monotone typical of these hacks.

But this was punctuated by the sharp, vibrant speech given by the AFA member who, using quotes from Charlie Goodman the International Brigade veteran, stated that what is still required is physical as well as ideological confrontation, and that AFA is the only organisation pursuing this method.

To the delight of the crowd, the speaker celebrated the militant meth-

ods employed by AFA and solidly claimed that AFA is the genuine successor to the militant tradition of those who had fought in Spain, raising the loudest applause of the day. Despite having his face partially obscured and his name curiously misspelt as "Steve Smith", the speaker was glad to appear in the half-page article run by the local paper.

NOTTINGHAM

There are some current campaigns by the trade unions to supposedly try and stop the JSA. The problem with these campaigns is that they are heavily restricted by union bureaucracy.

A meeting with members of the CPSA and TUC in Nottingham heard them say that it was hard enough for them to get their members to meet over wages - let alone the JSA - which shows how much empathy they must have with the claimants they deal with everyday.

Members of the CPSA claim that it is anti-working class to be too critical of the dole office workers, because after all "they are being forced to implement the JSA or face losing their jobs". There are a number of replies to that (not including the old line about 'Just following orders'). If some of these people had any balls they would show some worker solidarity by walking out if any of their number were sacked due to such circumstances. This would cause plenty of chaos within the system and would undoubtedly earn the respect of many claimants. Alternatively, they could give us information on the real super-efficient bastards!

The bottom line to all this is that claimants are going to have to organise amongst themselves, any attempt at forging links with hostile dole office workers, management or their representatives will mean standing in opposition to the interests of the claimants and the rest of the working class. It is obvious that the battle-lines have to be drawn. There are plans in the New Year to open an information centre for the unemployed and produce a free newsletter for claimants.

More information on the JSA can be received from: Notts Anti-JSA, PO Box 192, Nottingham, NG1 1JF

BIRMINGHAM

At the beginning of August, a Red Action delegation met representatives of the Villa Irish to discuss the public launch of "Villa Fans Against Fascism". A press release stated:

"This move is a direct response to far-right organisers who have recently sought to encourage anti-Irish and pro-fascist feelings at Villa Park. True Villa fans must let it be known that pro-loyalist/fascist sentiments are not welcome at the Villa.

"VFALF call on all working class Villa fans, from any race or creed, to join us in our offensive against all bigotry".

The Irish Post ran a complimentary piece on the initiative. 'Tiofaidh Ar La' and 'Red Attitude' have also sent messages of support. However, the most widely distributed fazine at Villa Park refused to endorse an anti-fascist organisation that also took an anti-loyalist stance. It's the task of VFALF to raise awareness of the increasing correlation between loyalist/fascist ideology and activity in and around Villa.

Villa Fans Against Loyalism and Fascism was formed by like-minded Villa fans and AFA members when it became apparent that ex-National Front personnel, notably Stechord's Tony Burke and co, were trying to muscle in at Villa Park under the guise of C18. It's significant that the latest demise of West Midlands Blood and Honour has left Villa with the dubious **CONTINUED OVER**

privilege of hosting the only vaguely credible fascist presence throughout Birmingham. Clearly their sights were set well beyond the realms of the Villa. Though caning the mighty SWP and swaggering round the city centre patronising one pub after another, albeit unsuccessfully, with a great deal of emphasis on "No Surrender...", yet on the occasions we've crossed them they've seemed less than keen to pursue the central theme of the song!

We bumped into them last season on their way home from an away game, and although we were outnumbered 5-1 the Villa C18 were sent packing, presumably in search of better odds. At a pre-season friendly away from home, three VFALF supporters were in a pub before the game. A few self-proclaimed fascists enquired as to who had been putting up VFALF stickers. One of our chaps admits to the deed. The reply? "Er...well, we've got to keep politics out of football, ain't we?"

Years ago down the Villa, fascist stickers used to proclaim "Villa shifts on black Zulus". These days the tack has changed, now they read "Villa Loyalists - Smash the Fenians". With key players like Dwight Yorke and Ian Taylor it's not hard to understand the reasoning behind their shifting of the goalposts. Anti-black racism has become politically futile. Thus fascist attentions have been turned to a pro-loyalist agenda. But there's a lot of Irish living in north Birmingham, and it follows that a lot of them go down the Villa, as do a lot of black fans, so with a natural opposition of AFA supporters, and other diverse cultures and creeds represented at Villa Park, C18 are always going to be lagging behind. In short, if Villa is anybody's constituency, it's that of the working class Left. Our experience has taught us how easily their efforts are thwarted. Between the anti-fascist and pro-Republican elements we could stamp over C18 and their fickle groupies. This time we won't settle for the odd skirmish. Under the banner of VFALF we would seek not only to remove them, but to replace them, following the examples set by Celtic and Man Utd. Thousands of stickers have been produced, featuring a new design and the VFALF newsletter is being distributed free of charge. Copies are available from the Birmingham PO Box. A public meeting is planned for next year.

LONDON

This year saw the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street and the Spanish Civil War both of which are landmark events in the history of militant anti-fascism in this country.

Anti Fascist Action organised three events in two days to mark these important anniversaries and to ensure that the militants of the present day laid claim to 'our heritage', while hammering-home a class-based message.

Although members of both Red Action and AFA have always been acutely aware that as militant anti-fascists we are the inheritors of a rich and proud tradition in this country, members of the pro-state, liberal or pacifist 'anti-fascist movement' have always gone to great trouble to claim that tradition as their own (you only have to look at the way the SWP lauded Maurice Beckman's 'Bible of squadism' *The 43 Group*, to see the hypocrisy).

This was clearly born out as a whole number of Labour, Leftie and liberal elements rushed to organise various events including, a march, rallies, lectures, etc.

This made the events organised by AFA of increased significance, as the souvenir programme, specially produced for the weekend, clearly pointed out: "We are commemorating the

bravery of people who literally fought the fascists. There are many on the Left of British politics today who lay claim to the traditions of 1936 while pursuing a pacifist or pro-state agenda. It is complete hypocrisy to praise the anti-fascist resistance of 60 years ago and yet condemn the often illegal or violent actions of militant anti-fascists today. Anti-Fascist Action represents the continuation of the militant anti-fascist tradition".

Rally - Oct 4th.

In a packed hall in the Camden Irish Centre the AFA rally took place 60 years to the day of the Battle of Cable St.

Amongst the speakers were a woman activist who chaired the rally on behalf of AFA, Tony Hall a veteran from the '62 Group', Tony Smith an ex-AFA prisoner who was launching the Cable St. Fund and Peter Carter who had been active in the original ANL squads of the '70s, had been a founding member of AFA in 1985 and was giving the main address on behalf of London AFA.

To the disappointment of all present, Cable St. and International Brigade veteran Charlie Goodman was too ill to speak at the event as had been planned and had even had to cancel a trip to Spain for a reunion with fellow Brigade veterans. However, with the aid of 'modern technology' AFA was able to show a video-taped message from Charlie and his wife, Joyce, on a large screen at the front of the stage.

Charlie was arrested and beaten by

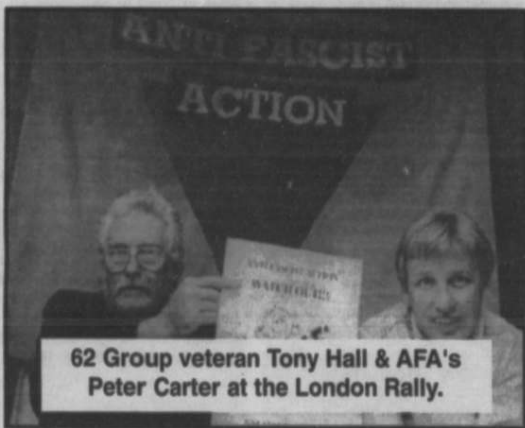
Branch/MIS, were able to virtually extinguish fascist activity during that period. Tony told the audience that the present political climate heralded an unprecedented situation, far surpassing most of what he had seen at the end of WW2:

"In conclusion, I give tribute to the good men and women in AFA who I believe are the natural successors of the 62 Group. You are the morality and muscle on the streets, all power to you in the coming struggles. Aim at headquarters!"

The next speaker was Tony Smith, who announced the launching of the 'Cable St. Fund'. Tony, who in 1990 was sentenced to 4 years after being convicted along with two others of being involved in an attack on a leading fascist bonehead, explained the idea behind the fund: "AFA believe there will be an increasingly reactionary period following the next General Election and the continuing harassment of AFA members by the Police and other state agencies; we have decided to put in place a permanent welfare fund that will collect money on an ongoing basis.

I am therefore using the opportunity afforded by this Rally to launch 'THE CABLE STREET FUND' for AFA prisoner and defendant welfare'. The fund will initially be just London-based, but we hope to expand it in the coming months to cover AFA nationally".

After a minute's silence for the late Mickey Fenn, Peter Carter gave the



police at Cable St. and was jailed for four months after being charged with incitement to riot, carrying dangerous weapons and acting as ringleader during the battle. A month after leaving prison at the age of 22, Charlie was one of about 60 East Enders who volunteered to fight Franco's fascists in Spain as part of the British Battalion of the International Brigade; Charlie was wounded twice - 22 of his comrades died in action. Charlie said that:

"My heart goes out to all of you who are carrying on the fight, and those of you who really are putting everything of your lives into this struggle against this creed of fascism. All the best to everybody and may the rally be a great success".

A message was also read-out from Bob Doyle, another International Brigade veteran who had also been a member of the Dublin Brigade of the IRA, before joining fellow Irish Republicans travelling to Spain. He told the audience:

"Obviously the war against fascism was finally won. Their ideology however, lives on to the present day and I'm glad to see so many of the younger generation are prepared to carry on the fight. I wish you well in your struggle and hope the rally is a great success".

Back in the 1960's Tony Hall was an active member of the 62 Group, and organised anti-fascists in East London who organised countless attacks on both fascist individuals and their street meetings, and despite the close attention of the Special

main address from London AFA which is reproduced in full as the RA editorial (page 2).

Film Show & Gig - 5th October.

The following day AFA hosted a film show that attracted nearly 200 people. In the evening, only weeks after C18 had smashed up a gig by top Oi! band 'The Business' in London, AFA hosted a publicly advertised Oi! Against Fascism gig featuring leading skinhead band 'The Oppressed' from Cardiff and 'The Stage Bottles' from Germany. By early evening the venue was packed to the rafters with the stewards eventually having to turn punters away because the management were complaining of the safety limit being breached! Both bands played cracking sets to a skinhead audience literally from all over the world, including France, Belgium, Malaya, Germany and the Basque country.

The gig was a fitting end to the weekend which had proven to be a complete success. The events look set to become an annual fixture, anchoring AFA's militant struggle firmly in its historical context. (Anyone wishing to make a donation to the Cable St. Fund should make cheques payable to 'AFA', and send them to:

**AFA (CSF),
BM 1734,
London,
WC1N 3XX**

OBITUARY

MICKEY FENN

1938-1996



Many nice things have been said about Mickey Fenn since his untimely death in June of this year. Praise from all political quarters has been lavish. The eulogies were eminently respectful. Clearly many would like to claim him as their own. There was of course fulsome praise for his work on the docks, trade union struggles, Pentonville 5, anti-racism etc. Every event dutifully logged. But read back to back you would hardly recognise him. The descriptions were drained of all energy. He came across as a worthy but slightly dull time server. Mickey was anything but. He liked confrontation. He enjoyed the class struggle. He took everything to its logical conclusion. Mickey was by nature an extremist.

If he embarked on a fitness regime he would end up running marathons. If he took on the employers it was all flying pickets and wild cat strikes. If involved in anti-fascism it was inevitably at the sharpest end. This led to a series of intimate encounters with the constabulary particularly during the late '70's and early '80's, including one celebrated trial at the Old Bailey. In the incident that led to his being charged with GBH with intent, affray, etc Mickey suffered a broken hand. (but as the saying goes, you should have seen the other fella!). Luckily the following Monday six of his very best friends were on hand so to speak to witness a frightful industrial accident. He still complained about the compensation, until it was pointed out that he had got more than Henry Cooper for his last defence of the British Title. He was also acquitted.

Following his acquittal, he received a series of threatening phone calls from, as it turned out, a genuinely notorious British Movement organiser, Albert Chalmers. Mickey was completely unfazed. On discovering who was behind it Mickey rang him up. His wife answered. Albert was in bed could she take a message. "Yes", came the reply "If you can get a pen and paper I've got a recipe for him. First, you need a bottle, any bottle will do but a milk bottle is best ..." Mickey inviting her to get a pen and paper calmly read out a very specific list of ingredients. Albert got the message all right. There were no more phone calls.

Throughout the years Mickey's enthusiasm remained undimmed. During the late 80's he was one of the prime movers behind the dock

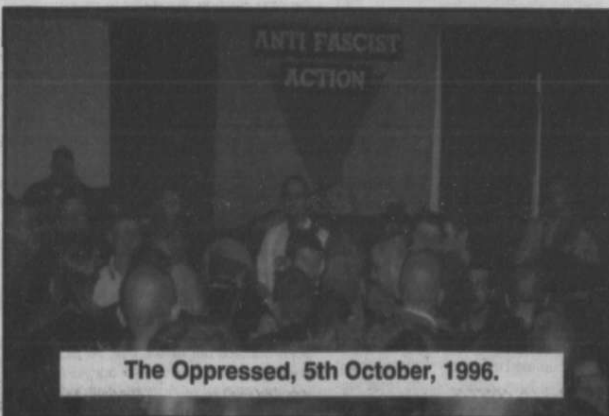
strike. Early one morning he was organising some secondary picketing when he was approached by a copper who explained that pickets should be limited to six, in line with government and TUC guidelines etc. Mickey, nodding his head in agreement, said he understood perfectly but would like to point out that these recommendations were for official strikes, and as both the strike itself and the picket were entirely unofficial the rules did not apply! Baffled but convinced by the logic, plod withdrew.

Mickey was 58 when he died, though he was always looked ten years younger. It is no exaggeration to say that he had the energy and general demeanour of somebody nearly 30 rather than someone nearly 60.

For example, during a BNP by election meeting in Newham in I think 1991, Mickey went along with his future son-in-law to the counter picket. As these things go, it kicked off and Mickey naturally was in the thick of it. Despite the general uproar, he gradually became aware of people shouting "Get the nutter! Get the nutter!" Momentarily disengaging for fear there was a madman on the loose and concerned for the safety of his son-in-law, he glanced round and realised the shout was actually coming from the police. This brief pause also allowed him the opportunity to judge that his side was actually doing quite nicely thank you, and he was just about to rejoin the fray when five large coppers jumped on him. It was only then he realised the probable identity of the nutter in question.

When it came to the editing of the AFA programme for the BBC's Open Space in 1992, the most difficult part was chopping it down to the required twenty nine minutes. In order to make it as comprehensive as possible meant Mickey's reminiscences being edited out one-by-one. Especially difficult because we were all aware that the easiest way of making the wholly entertaining and politically enlightening advertisement for militant anti-fascism that we actually wanted, was by cutting out everything - but - Mickey's contribution. Mickey had hundreds of stories and there are hundreds of stories about Mickey.

He was a diamond. A real communist. One in a million.



Beyond the Pale

Red Action • PO Box 3355, Dublin 7



COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE

Over two years ago Red Action reported on the growing drug crisis in Dublin. In the intervening period the situation has got immeasurably worse with the price of heroin at an all time low, dropping from £40 a bag to under £10. Added to the already growing number of heroin addicts is the fact that young people on the Rave scene are now regularly using heroin to come down off the increasing amount of Ecstasy needed to get a buzz.

Whole working class communities are being destroyed yet again. The death of one middle class teenager due to taking E will receive widespread coverage; the fact that one inner city heroin addict dies per fortnight is ignored. 7,000 drug abusers are now receiving treatment, but, in reality, the rate of addiction is much higher. Thousands of teenagers are addicted to smoking heroin, they can get no treatment because health board programmes are confined to IV users aged over 18. In one young offenders workshop alone 75% of the 15-17 year olds are heroin smokers.

Every type of drug is being sold openly on the street corners in areas such as Dublin's inner city, there is even a small trade in crack. In Dublin's working class areas, with their high unemployment, poverty, lack of resources and a government who couldn't care less, drug pushing is an lucrative way of making money. With widespread addiction and the fact that a large number of the small time pushers are addicts themselves, the fight against drugs is increasingly difficult in the 1990s.

In our last report we interviewed anti-drugs activists from Dublin's South Inner City. At that time the South Inner City was one of the only areas fighting back against drugs. Since then over 40 working class areas in Dublin have begun to seriously organise themselves to fight the drugs menace, particularly areas such as Tallaght, Clondalkin, Darnale and the North Inner City.

Tallaght is an area with a chronic heroin problem, it has 3 times the national average rate of addiction. Recently a nine year old child was reported to be addicted to heroin. In Killinarden, Fettercairn and other estates people have formed around the clock patrols to keep the pushers out.

This initiative has the backing of the community with the women, as usual, forming the backbone. They have erected huts which are manned 24 hours a day keeping a watch for any strangers or strange cars in the area. They have marched on a number of houses where pushers live making it clear that they are not wanted in the area.

They have also opened a community drug addiction clinic to treat any local addicts who want to come off heroin. The clinic is

based in the local parish centre and a doctor has been hired and methadone and needle exchange programmes introduced which cater for up to 200 local addicts.

Relations with the police were good at the beginning with the community police and drug squad promising help. But with the community demanding that known pushers be evicted and resources provided for the treatment of local addicts only to be told that pushers could not be evicted until each case had been through the courts, sometimes taking 18 months, and being told that there were no resources for drug addiction clinics it was only a matter of time before this relationship began to break down.

As usual, when a working class community makes demands which the State refuses to accept, the activists quickly find themselves attracting the attention of the police. A number of leading community activists have been arrested under Section 30 of the Offences Against the State Act, a political catch-all method.

As with the Concerned Parents Against Drugs movement in the 80s these activists have been questioned about alleged IRA involvement in the groups defending the communities against the bigger drug pushers. These activists were only released when the communities marched on the police stations where they were being held.

Lately the police have been involved in undercover operations, not against the pushers but against the anti-drugs activists.

In the South Inner City the situation with the police is much worse. The South Inner City community organisations are involved in government task forces with Dublin Corporation, the police and other State agencies where problems ranging from refuse collection, to flat allocation, to drugs are discussed. They are even assigned a community police officer to improve relations with the police.

So successful was this effort at improving relations with the communities that in one of the larger flat complexes, Dolphin House, the police were accepted in an area which had previously been a no go area for them. It was still noted however that the police spent more time investigating some of the anti drugs activists than they did the pushers.

Then in May of this year a drug addict died after being attacked by a crowd of people coming from an anti-drugs meeting. The addict, Josey Dwyer, was a pusher in the 80s and was one of the first to bring heroin into the area. Since then he had developed AIDS and was dying. It was an unfortunate accident, ironically brought about by the other

addict who was with Dwyer and who was abusing the crowd. The police used this incident to launch a witch-hunt against the whole community, targeting in particular those they felt responsible for organising evictions and actions against the pushers. The media helped create the conditions for the police actions by reporting the incident as 'Mob Rule', 'Lawless Vigilantes' etc.. and portraying Dwyer as an innocent 'six stone

workers. Public meetings called to do something about the drug problem were always chaired by these 'professionals' who used their position to dissipate people's anger by calling meeting after meeting to 'discuss' the problem.

Everything was done to ensure that no actual action took place. People were told to leave the pushers to the police, because that was their job. When the pressure for action

meeting the next night local people castigated the police for their actions the night before and resolved to drive the pushers out of the area themselves. A meeting has taken place every week since then which debates the current drug issues and finishes in a march to different areas in the North Inner City, stopping outside pushers' flats and naming them. This tactic has been very successful with pushers feeling the pres-

selves defensively. People marching on the well armed drug pushers must know that they have back-up too.

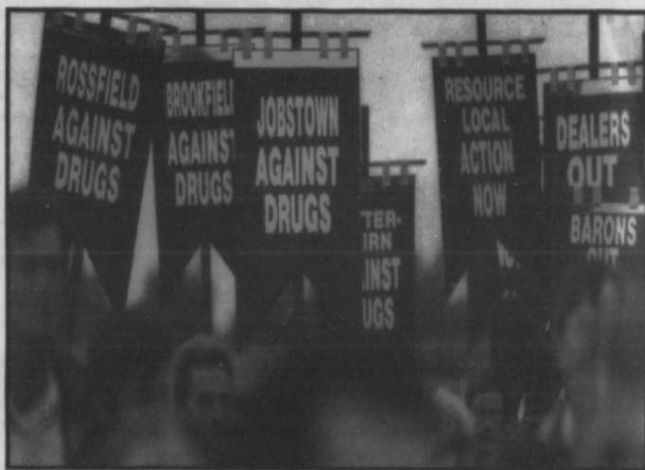
Tactically, the fight against drugs must be two-pronged. The pushers must be driven out of the areas and the supply of heroin must be minimised. Again, this will naturally be violent. Violence should not be frowned upon if it is considered the only possible option and achieves its aims. It is extremely important that the activists involved in the evictions etc. are fully answerable to the community and that as many people as possible are involved in all aspects of the campaign.

The second tactic must be to provide medical facilities for the treatment of drug addiction. The addicts left behind and willing to come off gear must be helped in any way possible. Clinics must be set up by the community to look after their own addicts but these clinics must be funded by the Eastern Health Board. If the Eastern Health Board claim no resources are available, or are not willing to fund these clinics, they must be forced into providing funding.

People must be clear that this is not just a problem of underfunding of the clinics. It is common knowledge that pushers give away free gear outside the clinics in an attempt to get people off the drug addiction courses. The pushers must be stopped. Its good to see that people recognise that direct action against the pushers is necessary, and, what's more, are willing to get involved.

The fear of the middle class and the media at the self-organisation of working class people must not be underestimated. In the 1980s establishment politicians and the press, allied to police actions, helped to destroy Concerned Parents Against Drugs. The media have already begun to write of 'mob rule' and 'IRA infiltrators' as well as giving free publicity to notorious pushers claiming their 'innocence'. The people now evicting pushers and organising their communities are local people, some are republicans, but the majority have not been involved in political activity before. The establishment and the media fear that a successful self-organised working class campaign against drugs could lead to radical action on other issues, hence the need to portray anti-drugs activists as 'lawless vigilantes' and 'outside agitators'.

It is essential that people realise the importance of this campaign in terms of working class politics. What we have is working class communities organising themselves with little or no reference to state or it's agencies, answerable only to themselves and willing to confront both the pushers and the police.



man already dying of AIDS'.

Large numbers of community activists were arrested and questioned about Dwyer's death. Included were 13 women activists. All the arrests came after the women had fully co-operated with the police in door-to-door enquiries and had given statements voluntarily.

Some of the women were strip-searched, some had blood samples taken and all were verbally abused by the police. Some of these women have been involved in community work, including working with the police, for over 12 years. One of the women has since had to get psychiatric treatment.

The police questions concentrated mainly on the IRA rather than on the death of Dwyer. The addict who had been with Dwyer when he was killed was given a bleeper and told to try and identify anybody involved in the attack. One of the detectives involved in the case offered a small time pusher £1,000 in cash to incriminate one of the leading anti-drug activists in the area.

There is now a situation where the successful actions of the communities has forced the pushers out of the flat complexes onto Cork Street, a main street in the area, yet the police neglect to tackle them, instead spending their time sitting in cars outside community meetings monitoring the people attending.

Another situation has arisen in the North Inner City. This, another area ravaged by heroin, has had little or no fightback up until now. Every time the community began to organise they were side-tracked by the state funded 'professional' communi-

ties became too much, futile demands were made for police action against the pushers and pointless marches were taken to the Dail but never to the actual pushers themselves.

The whole strategy of the 'professionals' was to concentrate on the rehabilitation of addicts issue at the expense of direct action against the supply of heroin into the areas. While the whole issue of rehabilitation and drug clinics for the addicts is extremely important, it must be done in conjunction with getting rid of the pushers. Tallaght is an area which has managed to combine the two.

Unfortunately for the 'professionals' the rising death toll from heroin and the increasing levels of addiction meant that it would only require a simple incident to spark off a major reaction. This incident occurred on Wednesday 21st of August. Three drug pushers were arrested in Summerhill in the North Inner City. In a spontaneous show of community anger a large crowd gathered and one of the pushers' cars was burnt out.

The police response was swift. Although the police claim not to have resources to tackle the drug pushers they managed to provide several dozen riot police in full gear with dogs to baton people off the streets. People were even attacked on their own balconies. A pregnant woman (who has since miscarried), a 12 year old girl and a man and his daughter were among those attacked as well as many others. Of the three pushers arrested, one was given bail while the other two didn't turn up in Court the next day.

This time peoples' anger could not be diverted. At a packed

sure and either moving out or stopping selling. Hardwicke Street flat residents evicted seven pushers in one night alone. Pushers on the street corners have been attacked and driven out of the immediate area. Marches of up to 2,000 people take place weekly and smaller local actions to evict pushers are a daily occurrence in many areas.

It will be interesting to see how the situation develops over the coming weeks and to see how the 'professionals' attempt to gain control of the movement again. It is obvious what police tactics will be, given their past record in targeting the anti-drugs activists rather than the pushers. In a positive development a new umbrella organisation has been formed linking all the anti-drug campaigns in the different areas all over Dublin. This organisation, the Coalition of Communities Against Drugs (COCAD), is highly critical of the police and state agencies. It is more direct action orientated and intends to depend on the communities themselves to sort out their own drug problems.

Red Action activists are involved in their respective local anti-drugs groups. We fully support the right of communities to rid their areas of drugs by any means necessary. We recognise that with the huge amounts of profits to be made out of heroin the anti-drugs campaign will be violent, an example was a recent march in the North Inner City having to be called off due to information received that the pushers had armed themselves with petrol bombs and were going to attack the march. At a minimum the community must arm them-

"He who forgets history is destined to repeat it" is a well-known truism that has particular resonance today with regard to the position of the Republican Movement in relation to the Labour Party. It seems that ever since this phase of the war broke out again back in 1969 the Labour Party, or sections of it, have been saying to those at the cutting edge of struggle in Ireland "Don't worry, as soon as we get power all will be resolved". All said with a nod and a wink. We have been hearing this for the past 27 years, indeed since the formation of the Labour Party in 1906, but never so loudly as since the cessation announcement of August 1994.

What do these promises mean? What will be sorted out? When will it be sorted out? To whose benefit? These are the pertinent questions but none are as pertinent as those suggested by the quote above. That is, what does history teach us of the attitude of the British Labour Movement and Party to the Irish people?

The contention of this article is that history tells us not only to expect little help but to anticipate that a Labour administration will continue to invigorate Brit intransigence and animosity towards the northern nationalist Irish in general and the Republican Movement in particular.

The strategy of the Labour Party has been to debase the Irish by continually operating the same con-trick. This essentially, and crudely states, "swing into line now, and in the future all things are possible..." All the time the demand has been that the Irish, whether Republicans or not, do their political work, lobbying and propaganda from within the Labour Movement. That the Labour Movement does not exist now, if it ever did, as anything more than a disparate group of organisations squabbling over the crumbs is of no matter. The notion of a Labour Movement is used as a tool to emasculate working class struggle, not invigorate it.

Initiatives set up by the Republican or/and the broader Irish community are brazenly entered by elements from this Labour Movement who apply a well tried and tested strategy of watering down any radical demands, driving a wedge between activists and the organisation, often taking over leadership and policy making roles.

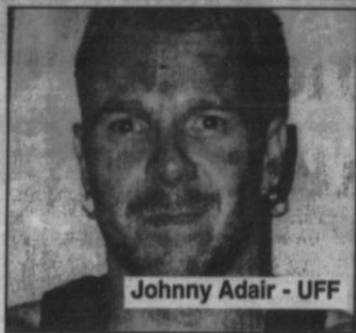
When this last is done those who were initially enthusiastic may as well stay at home - there is nothing more for them. The Troops Out Movement is a case in hand, set up with a clear purpose, one demand and enjoying large support as well as reflecting the view of a clear majority of the British public. So what's happened to it? It allegedly still exists, although its trademark Bloody Sunday march which became progressively smaller each year, due to a lack of commitment to building for it either in the Irish community or the class, allied to a confusion over its aims, has disappeared in all but name. Without that as a focus, it has no remit for other activities except to attend obscure pickets known to no-one but itself.

Never mind, its leadership has, as always, oriented to the Labour Movement, which can be evidenced by the support of trades union branches, trades councils and the normal rag-bag of 'lefty' Labour Party members and MPs. Stunning. That TOM is of no significance and can no longer produce its magazine regularly is never questioned by its leadership. Whether consciously or not, it has been smothered.

More recently, Saoirse committees were launched to press for the transfer/release of Republican POWs following the IRA cessation of hostilities. A sentiment that had immediate resonance with many in the Irish community and beyond, attracting large numbers of people not seen in recent years at political meetings. With some panache these 'new' activists managed to gain a great deal of credibility and confidence by highlighting the issue.

No sooner had that been noticed as effective then the hacks moved in with a demand to orientate to Labour, and to get them on board. They were to be

Mad Dog



Johnny Adair - UFF

and



Mo Mowlam - Labour.

English Woman

"The nature of the exchange exposed the quintessential relationship between Labour and Unionism - and - Labour and Republicanism".

the target of the recruitment and propaganda. Forget the working class Irish of Kilburn and Cricklewood and other poor areas and concentrate on the people who matter in Hampstead, Primrose Hill and Walworth Road.

The 'orientees' moved in, took over the leadership, made policy and killed the enthusiasm of the ordinary member. The high-profile street level activities gaining media attention were replaced by the talking heads sitting at press conferences at the House of Commons. Needless to say these conferences were not reported by the media but lauded as a success because they got a Shinner into the Palace of Westminster to address a handful of press hacks. Inevitably, Saoirse closed down in an orgy of recriminations and lies perpetrated by its new leaders, alienating the activist majority. Now Fuscailt has emerged to replace it, (possibly having the lowest political profile of any pressure group still orientating to the Labour Movement) but no Labour Movement activists doing anything practical.

To move back in time a little to the 1980 and 1981 Hunger Strikes. These were obviously very emotional times and again had enormous potential to attract high numbers of people to Irish solidarity work. The Labour Movement again covered itself in glory.

Whilst the situation in the H-Blocks was approaching crisis, the TUC and Labour Party were campaigning for

more employment in England. They organised a huge national march and rally in London. The National H-Block/Armagh Committee was not allowed to participate on this with a banner. Nevertheless, a small group stood with banners and placards on Marble Arch as the march went past Hyde Park. The TUC stewards pointed them out to the police and demanded that they be removed. The police were only too happy to do this and the stewards contained any support for them within the march itself. Vilifying them to the very people it supposedly demands they go to for support.

That, however, wasn't the lowest point reached by organised Labour. Whilst Bobby Sands lay on his death bed, Don Concannon (Then Labour Party Northern Ireland spokesman) went to visit him to let him know that he and his party supported the Thatcher administration in its denial of political status and its intention to let the Republican prisoners die. As if that wasn't enough, a subsequent march was organised through Concannon's Mansfield constituency. He informed the press that "the IRA were to march through his constituency" and appealed for Orange elements to travel from Liverpool and Scotland to oppose the march. Are we really to be told to support Labour?

If that was the reaction of both the Labour Party and the Labour Movement at a highly emotive time when it could be expected to throw

aside the mantle of disguise that it purported hid its real agenda on Ireland, what can we expect now?

There is a mistaken belief within elements of the Republican Movement that the Labour Party will adopt a progressive stance on Ireland. This it will not do. No more than it will on any of its own internal or domestic issues. Blair and newish Labour is no different to previous manifestations - it is a non-democratic party operating happily within the bounds of a non-democratic state. All policy of the major (and most of the minor) parties is designed to maintain and build support for its position in the '50% plus 1' horse race that masquerades as democracy in Britain. This is no model for democrats, this is not what we want for Ireland, we should not give it the credibility by dealing with it. The Republican Movement calls for a united socialist 32 county Ireland, free of its former colonial masters of any and all parties. We should not allow colonialists to use us to bolster their own position.

The war in Ireland is the longest lasting struggle against British imperialism, not only in the 20th century but in the past 800 years. The Labour Party has been conspicuous by its absence from the side of the oppressed since its inception. The cry that the war inhibits explicit support because of the taint of terrorism holds no water. Since the beginning of the century Britain's position in Ireland has been indefensible. But Labour defended it either overtly or by its silence.

In 1948 the man regarded as the great Labour Movement icon of socialism, Labour Prime Minister Clement Atlee rightly denounced the Soviet Union's new imperialism. Not a word from him on the imperial presence in Ireland, nor of the gerrymandered constituencies, nor of the franchises which gave unionists multiple votes whilst nationalists didn't even qualify for even the semblance of democracy. Not a word of the inequity of housing, education, employment, health provision in the North of Ireland, whereby Nationalists and Republicans were condemned to live in squalor and deprivation, subject to the routine sectarian pogroms instigated by the unionist hegemony. Atlee chose to ignore imperialism close to home despite a more than adequate parliamentary majority of 173. The Irish didn't even qualify for equality, let alone freedom.

Not only are they guilty by omission or by merely biding their time. It is Labour administrations which have distinguished themselves by over-seeing some of the most repressive and brutal events since 1969. Their attitude was not peculiar to Atlee amongst Labour leaders. It was Wilson, who sent the troops in 1969.

Labour was still in power later in 1974 when a state of emergency was declared. They oversaw the holding of political prisoners in Long Kesh in conditions which led to the camp being burned down by internees.

In September 1976 the European Commission on Human Rights found Britain guilty of torture following the mass internment of 1971. Not even this could rock Labour's desire to be seen as responsible caretakers of Britain's imperial and colonial interests.

The same government ended political status with a view to criminalising the struggle. A change of Prime Minister to 'Sunny Jim' Callaghan in April 1976 made no difference to policy. Just 5 months later on 15 September 1976 Kieran Nugent refused to wear the prison uniform. The policy of coercing the prisoners led swiftly to routine vicious beatings by the screws, which led to the no-wash protest, and, ultimately, to the 1981 Hunger Strike.

As the Callaghan administration staggered to its conclusion, it became steadily more repressive in Ireland. It abandoned any pretence of pandering to progressive forces either at home or abroad. Northern Ireland Secretary Roy Mason was directly responsible for the SAS 'Shoot to Kill' policy which resulted in the deaths of 11 people between 1977 and 1978.

Winter 1978 saw a desperate attempt to cling to power. Callaghan cobbled together a deal with the Unionists in which he created an additional 3 'Ulster' seats in exchange for support. It was no harm when they lost power in June 1979.

In the seventeen years of opposition the Labour Party has succeeded in redefining the meaning of parliamentary opposition. The Labour Movement supported all aspects of Tory policy from its refusal to support the Hunger Strikers 5 demands to its shirt-tailing Thatcher's refusal to talk to Sinn Fein. In 1988 the Tory government sponsored the SAS execution of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Danny McCann in Gibraltar. Despite world-wide shock at this cynical abuse of law and order, the Labour opposition congratulated the government on the operation.

And so it continued through the leadership of Kinnock, Smith and now Blair. No perceptible difference between Conservative and Labour policy on Ireland. Except that at least Major authorised government contact with the Republican Movement leading to the 1994 cessation. This engendered a spirit of optimism that at last the war could be ended.

Campaigners canvassed the Labour Shadow NI Secretary, Mo Mowlam for her views. In a letter to Navan, County Meath Saoirse she replied; "...it is with regard to the suffering of the victims and their families and to rule of law that Labour does not support the release of terrorist prisoners". In the same letter she goes on to say: "Labour has no plans in government to close any of the Special Secure Units". These sentiments, expressed in the middle of the ceasefire, should not inspire hope or confidence in any future Labour administration.

The difficulty with writing about the failures of Labour with relation to Ireland is not the paucity of information but rather sifting through the mountain of Labour duplicity with regard to the war in Ireland.

Recently Mo Mowlam had been into Long Kesh to visit Loyalist prisoners. She congratulated them on their restraint in not advocating a return to random killings of working class nationalists. She also sought their advice on what the British and Irish governments should do in furtherance of their policies! She duly reported, without criticism, the Loyalist demand that there should be a crackdown on Sinn Fein and the Republican Movement on both sides of the border. The nature of the exchange exposed the quintessential relationship between Labour and Unionism - and - Labour and Republicanism.

Only a few weeks previously (15 October) all sections of the Labour Party had denounced and condemned Jeremy Corbyn and Tony Benn for accommodating Adams at the House of Commons. Remember that Adams is an ex-MP and has never been convicted of any paramilitary connections. Not one person was embarrassed or publicly recognised their duplicity over creating a furore and moral panic over meeting a representative of the Republican Movement and the widespread approval and congratulation when meeting sectarian fascist murderers who included Johnny Adair and Michael Stone.

The suggestion, as made by labour apologists, that Mowlam is merely 'minding the job' whilst in opposition and that a more suitable person will take over after the election is patently nonsense. There is no-one more suitable. Kevin McNamara is often cited as the calibre required. It was McNamara who said in Parliament (7 March 1983) with regard to the Birmingham 6, "ordinary decent coppers using ordinary decent methods apprehending those responsible for the Birmingham outrages".

It is apparent that even under the most superficial scrutiny the Labour Party is not one to which either the Irish community and/or supporters of Irish Republicanism can give support. The promises given in the past have proven false and so will promises given now.

'A Declaration of Independence'

RA: How did the IWCA come into existence?

IWCA: In May 1995 a document was distributed amongst sections of the left entitled 'It's Make Your Mind Up Time'. It called for the setting up of an independent working class association in response to the total abandonment of the working class by Labour.

RA: Who was invited to the initial meetings and why?

IWCA: The groups invited were selected on the basis that they had through their publications etc publicly and consistently denounced the Labour Party as the class enemy prior to the Clause Four controversy and had either directly called for, or at least it was implicit from their line of thinking that such an initiative was set up they might support it. Given that the majority on the Left ie the Trotskyists, either support Labour or apologise for doing so, the initial meeting was dominated by a mixture of groups who would be termed Marxist, or Leninist, through to orthodox Anarchists.

RA: So given the diverse ideological backgrounds of the groups what was the flavour of the initial meeting?

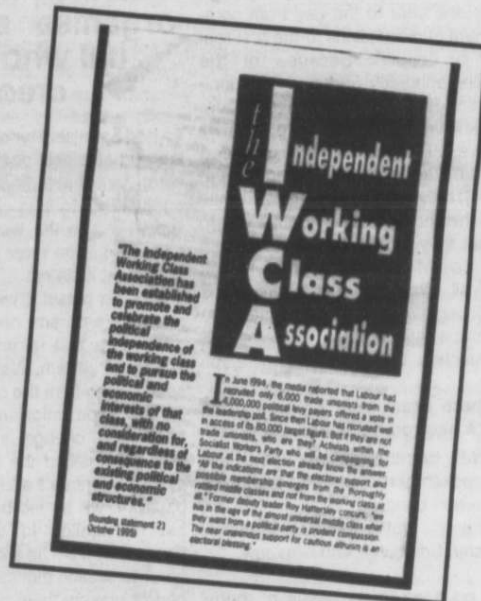
IWCA: Needless to say given the component parts and the nature of what was being proposed the meeting was fraught with difficulties. Even though the common language was English some of the participants in trying to defend their own records and search out the motives of others, struggled to take it all in. One group felt that if there was a basis for unity it lay only in "anti-fascism" and suggested we try and organise around that. This caused a few raised eyebrows from the AFA delegates in attendance. Another group that did not survive the first meeting, wound up their contribution by agreeing with the overall analysis that the vacuum needed to be filled and they were the boys to do it! Yet another group had after almost four hours discussion somehow gained the impression that the new organisation intended to limit its activity to a single estate somewhere in north London! Significantly it was these same elements who struggled to come to terms with the message inherent in the proposals that what was required was both a new approach, and a decisive change of direction. This was the first major hurdle.

RA: Can you explain?

IWCA: Well, for the initiative to take off the participants needed to be prepared in part to decommission their own ideologies and accept that the Left both inside and outside the Labour Party had failed. And that by working off the old formula could only continue to fail. Some were unwilling or incapable of taking in the big picture and continued to judge their own contributions by the standards of the Left rather than look at the situation and themselves objectively, that is to say, from the perspective of the working class as a whole.

RA: Not exactly an auspicious beginning. Was this not entirely predictable?

Recently both the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Class War Federation have slipped into voluntary liquidation. Rumours are also circulating that Militant are thinking of renaming themselves the Socialist Party. The discussions that led to the formation of the Independent Working Class Association not only preceded these events but appear to have anticipated them. In a wide ranging interview with its acting secretary, we explore the background to the IWCA and its plans for the future.



IWCA: Of course it was predictable, in many ways it was anticipated. The issues on which the participants were confronted on was quite a fundamental choice. Steady, as she goes or accept the reality that the blueprint for revolutionary change was fatally flawed. The facts that were laid out before them were as follows: Capitalism was changing society and changing the working class. Trade unionism as a political strategy is as dead as a dodo. Labour has ditched the working class. The existence of the 'labour movement' is a myth. The possibility of progressive reform non-existent. What was needed was a radical change of direction - primarily - an orientation to where the working class live rather than where they work. Recognise as well that the Left had like, the working class, split into pro and anti Labour camps. That this was a positive rather than negative development, an opportunity rather than a problem. But to take advantage of the opportunity it would be necessary not only to break with Labour politically but to confront them directly; in other words the situation demanded that we

organise without apology in working class areas against Labour. And as the title of the document indicated it was indeed a case of make your mind up time

RA: The make up of the first meeting in July 1995 was almost right across the ideological board. How representative is the IWCA one year on, and how many groups are still involved?

IWCA: There were delegates from nine different groups involved in the first meeting. Some had fallen away by only the second meeting this continued throughout the year with the ones falling away being replaced by others signing up. There are now about the same number formally associated with the IWCA. But perhaps more important than the groups is the support from politically experienced but largely unaligned individuals that are beginning to form branches of their own. This is particularly important because the IWCA is no longer actively seeking political support among the anti-Labour Left, but is now looking more to those

prepared to offer practical support.

RA: The IWCA stated that it was its intention to establish a demarcation line between those on the Left who supported Labour and those who stood with the working class. Are you then surprised that the public attacks have so far all come from your side of the demarcation line?

IWCA: The formation of the IWCA has established a political demarcation line within the Left. The choice is pro Labour or pro-working class. If having made the correct choice, the logical next step surely is to decide what you intend to do about it. The groups that are anti-Labour but also anti-IWCA are presumably resigned to doing nothing about it. Certainly they can expect to do nothing on their own

RA: So what do you think their problem is with the IWCA?

IWCA: These are the same elements that have been whining about the sectarianism on the Left for years, and now their bluff has been called. The published arguments against their being involved appear to be aimed at justifying to their own supporters the benefits of their continued isolation. They view the IWCA from the position of what it can do for them rather than what they might contribute to it.

'The formation of the IWCA has established a political demarcation line within the Left. The choice is pro Labour or pro-working class. Some, while in theoretical agreement, secretly hope it will fail'

For some this mirrors exactly their attitude to any working class struggle. Others recognise the danger in testing their ideas in practice. So while in formal theoretical agreement with the IWCA they find themselves secretly hoping it will fail. They realise that the success of the IWCA will spell the end of the era of the sect. Given the challenge facing the working class not only here but in Europe the position they have adopted can only be regarded as reactionary.

RA: Despite overcoming apparently insurmountable obstacles the IWCA was first out of the blocks only to find that the SLP has stolen all the anti-Labour headlines and limelight. Is the prospect of being continually overshadowed by the SLP not a cause for concern?

IWCA: Not really. Remember the IWCA is not out to impress the Left or the media though the latter will be used when the time comes. It was inevitable that the media would focus in on Scargill primarily to see what damage he could do to Blair. The debate gener-

ated amongst the Left was equally predictable. The majority on the Left still lament the direction Labour has taken. The SLP represented their regret in tangible form.

Inevitably, there was a certain amount of intrigue in pro-Labour circles, but I imagine that when the election comes round, the Trots will still recommend the original to the copy.

RA: What is the current attitude toward the SLP and has it changed?

IWCA: Initially there were discussions on how the SLP should be approached but everybody recognised that its principal orientation would be to the Labour Party so our paths would cross only occasionally. Basically the SLP is designed to appeal to people disillusioned by New Labour while the IWCA would expect to attract support from those alienated by Old Labour, alienated by labourism per se. It has been said elsewhere, but the paradox for the SLP, as an openly reformist party armed only with an electoral strategy, is what will they actually do between elections? Overall there is a distinct 70's feeling about the whole enterprise both in political analysis and its bureaucratic structures which has created the indelible impression that should the SLP ever adopt a crest for their official SLP tie it would probably be two whippets rampant over a cloth cap!

RA: Just to pick you up on a point there. If indeed the IWCA organises effectively against Labour is there not a danger that in some areas of the East End for instance this could have the effect of letting in the likes of the BNP?

IWCA: There are a number of points to be made on this issue. One, the BNP won a council seat in the Isle of Dogs without any help from the IWCA. It also secured over 30% of the vote in other wards. Canning Town etc and came within a whisker of Labour in a ward in Newham. This remember is working class people voting far-right with the most right wing party since the war in power. The support for the BNP was not of course directed against the Tories but in protest against Labour in local government.

'The IWCA has identified the basic contradiction. And is now acting on it. The only way the fundamental change that is required can be achieved is by disentangling the basic contradiction'

How much more resonant the BNP message when Labour is running the country as well as the local council can well be imagined

RA: Would you elaborate please?

IWCA: Well with the Tories discredited and 'socialists' in government mounting attacks on the working class, the BNP anticipate with some confidence that it is they who will be cast in the role of the natural opposition. In addition if the IWCA is effective against Labour, then it will be equally effective against the BNP. If it splits the Labour vote then it will have the same potential to split the BNP vote. At the end of the day we consider that the working class is our constituency.

In the battle for hearts and minds, inviting the working class, as the ANL have done, to vote for a visibly corrupt council to 'Keep out the Nazis' is to betray both the working class and the principle of anti-fascism. One consequence of the extensive ANL campaign on the Isle of Dogs that is largely ignored is that the BNP vote jumped by 30%. This was not despite the

ANL pro-Labour approach but because of it.

RA: Does this mean that the IWCA intends to stand in local elections?

IWCA: The case of elections is of course a tactical question and would be determined by conditions on the ground. Certainly an electoral strategy does not play a major part in IWCA thinking at the moment.

RA: Who would determine whether or not the IWCA would stand. What is the decision making structure. Is it simply a united front?

IWCA: As things stand, particularly in London, the sponsoring organisations are cast in a caretaker role until such time as their overall contribution is out-weighed by unaligned individuals joining the IWCA of their own accord. Though the organisation is just beginning to take shape around the rest of the country particularly in the Midlands and in Scotland, the ultimate decision would be a local decision determined by the activists on the ground. After all they would have to do the work and carry the can if things go 'pear-shaped'.

RA: You say it is not a united front but that that the sponsoring organisations still have a caretaker role. Can you explain?

IWCA: Well, a united front generally means a combination of existing forces combined against a common enemy for a limited duration; a temporary or emergency measure based on the lowest common denominator. The IWCA is designed for the long haul. It has taken twelve months of discussions to put together; precisely one year to the day from commencement of discussions to the first real activity in London. Because of the painstaking approach work and the principled participation of the original sponsors it has I believe an almost infinite capacity to evolve. The structure has been designed by the sponsors, but not for the sponsors, but for future recruits. While some of the sponsors would be the first to admit that they will be able to contribute little by way of practical support I think they are all aware that this is where the real work begins. And as in any enterprise you get out what you put in. There can be no free lunches.

RA: Where apart from London does the IWCA have contacts and support?

IWCA: Well, over the last year I personally have spoken at meetings up and down the country London, Oxford, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

RA: To go back to the issue of membership, how would you define your natural constituency?

IWCA: That is an interesting question precisely because the existence of the working class itself has been called into question. You notice that Labour and right wing sociologists no longer refer to the working class at all. Roy Hattersley is on record as saying that "we are all middle class now if only by aspiration". In other words if you live in a cardboard box and would like to get out of it he regards you as a social climber. The conservative Left on the other hand have concluded that practically everybody is working class. This is more to justify the strata they recruit from rather than any objective analysis. One of the larger organisations had just recently recruited a dole snoopier and were boasting of it!

As the IWCA will be orientating to working class communities our orientation, sympathies and support will be very much with the people on the other side of the dole snoopers counter so to speak

RA: Who then would you regard as your ideal recruit?

IWCA: Somebody with political experience of the Left and who is suitably jaundiced by its self-defeating nature. Somebody who already operates both politically and socially in a working class community, has the ambition to see things change and is prepared to take on the responsibility for making it happen. Of course the ideal recruit is by definition cynical. Only when the IWCA begins to prove that it is a 'clean break with the past' will this strata begin to take interest. Until then it will remain a chicken and egg situation.

RA: The phrase 'a clean break with the past' has a certain intrigue. What does it mean? Is it simply an advertising technique to convey the impression that the IWCA is something fresh; a new improved formula etc. Surely to break with the past would you not have to break with the Left?

IWCA: To a certain extent this is true. The IWCA has not yet broken from the Left so far but has caused a political division within it. There is now the conservative Left grouped around Labour, a slightly less conservative group around the SLP and the radical Left grouped around the IWCA.

'The Left's pre-occupation with the point of production is in any case something of a sham. One organisation has appointed as their industrial organiser an individual who runs a creche'

As had been said before it is a case of taking up battle field positions. The conservative Left have lined up with Labour against the working class. The IWCA has lined up with the working class against Labour. If I can refer you to the founding statement it states:

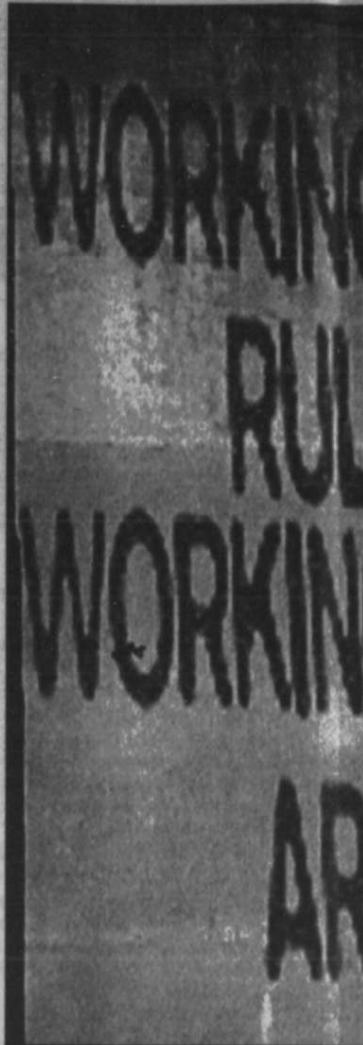
"From the outset it will be clear we have rejected entryism and the prospect of reform, be that reform of Labour or the economic system. We will not orientate or seek solace from the official 'labour movement', Trade unionism as a strategy for total social change is no longer vaguely credible. Instead the IWCA will be community orientated and in time community based. It will be led by the working class but not limited to the working class. Essentially it will be a can-do organisation; an organisation that can make things happen or prevent them happening." That statement can not be regarded as an attempt at improving the old formula. It is a clean break with that formula and the custom and practice that goes with it. The IWCA has identified the basic contradiction. And is now acting on it. The only way the fundamental change that is required can be achieved is by disentangling the basic contradiction.

RA: And the basic contradiction is?

IWCA: Continually calling for a working class alternative to Labour, while at the same time actively campaigning for a Labour vote and at each moment of crisis standing loyally four square behind them.

RA: The IWCA says it is against reform but the entire Trotskyist Left for instance reject reformism, while, as you have pointed out, consistently calling for a Labour vote. How is this rejection any different?

IWCA: Read carefully the statement does not say that the IWCA rejects reform in principle. Nor is the statement based on a belief that reform is in itself undesirable. Instead it is a recognition that progressive



reform, given that it requires underpinning by progressive taxation is no longer on the agenda of either of the mainstream parties. So the word that needs to be stressed here is *prospect*. In brief when developing a long term strategy campaigning for progressive reform is simply a distraction and needs to be automatically excluded as a realistic possibility.

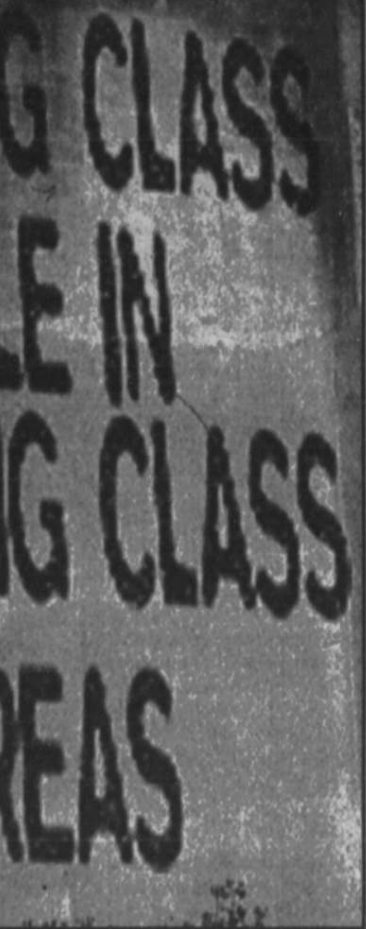
RA: The statement also says that trade unionism is not a strategy for total social change. Surely the emasculation of trade unionism is down to Tory legislation, and with a change of government is there not a possibility that this might be reversed?

IWCA: No. The massive decline in union organisation has not been as a result of Tory legislation as the conservative Left believe or because the working class have become more middle class as the Right pretends but is largely a result of the growth in smaller scale units, unskilled or part time jobs where industrial relations are not required and where union membership is an irrelevance. The Left's pre-occupation with the point of production is in any case something of a sham. One organisation has appointed as their industrial organiser an individual who runs a creche.

The refusal to look reality in the face has rendered the Left unable to form any contemporary analysis - even - in their own interests. Theirs is a dogmatism unsoftened by experience. If they prove unable to adapt they won't survive.

RA: Nevertheless, even from a selfish point of view is it not dangerous for the IWCA to ignore the unions entirely?

IWCA: The IWCA is not ignoring the unions as such, merely putting their value in regard to building links with the working class into perspective. It is in fact the unions who have ignored the working class entirely through concentrating on sectional interests exclusive to themselves. In operating as business unions it is they who have turned their backs on the social concerns and political interests of



I don't think the IWCA in Scotland would have any reservations about competing with them publicly when the time comes.

RA: Whatever the truth of the matter won't this belligerent approach be seen as just old fashioned sectarianism. Would it not be better to cooperate where possible. After all despite your criticisms your are fighting a common enemy for a common goal - community reform?

IWCA: In reality, there are neither common goals nor common enemies. Unlike Militant, the IWCA is not designed as a pressure group to walk the working class up the hill and down again. Primarily, Militant organise community campaigns with marches and lobbies of Labour Town Halls purely to enhance their own standing as reliable mediators between the working class and the state representatives. The success of the campaign is judged in those terms.

Their over riding concern is to adequately reflect/channel the anger and interests of the working class; the better to advise the establishment that there will be a price to be paid or kudos to be earned by adopting this or that course of action. Their sole motivation is to enhance their reputations as brokers to an enlightened middle class. For them an orientation toward the 'politically enlightened' is the only practical basis for real change. So they adapt themselves to reality rather than attempt to change it. The logic of this approach reduces any long term objective to mere sentiment.

In direct contrast the function of the IWCA is not to offer the establishments municipal functionaries protection from themselves by promoting this or that reform as a solution. Neither will it target the political establishment only. The IWCA remit is not about replacing this or that councillor but their flunkies as well as the system per se. The IWCA is determined to break politically with Labour and ultimately break Labour - particularly its influence in working class areas. At the heart of the IWCA lies the concept of working class self determination. Labour's historical antithesis. And Labour is still Labour, by any other name be it Socialist, Militant or New.

RA: Well, if that is your attitude to Militant Labour what about New Labour?

IWCA: Though our ultimate goal is total social change the intermediate objective is working class political independence from all middle class parties and institutions. This does not mean we adopt a nihilistic approach to the local municipalities like encouraging the burning of housing benefit cheques or something. On the contrary our approach will be entirely practical based on the understanding that the attacks planned in Parliament will be implemented locally. With Labour in government Labour functionaries will no longer be able to use the Judenrat alibi (Yes we are selecting people for the concentration camps but only because of the Nazis, its all their fault).

So to answer your question, the IWCA will approach any struggling Labour council with the same compassion and sympathy as we would offer any Tory council in similar difficulties. Ultimately, from our point of view it is not what the Left in Labour think they are doing, but what they are actually doing that matters

RA: How does the IWCA intend to set about the task of organising in working class communities. Where do you start?

IWCA: We are fully aware of the problems. The IWCA is forced to begin cold from a standing start. We have inherited nothing useful from the previous generations of the Left. The organic link with the working class has atrophied. There is nothing left to salvage. The relationship

will have to be rebuilt brick by brick. So when considering addressing the working class directly there are a number of points that jump out straightaway. 1, Any agenda must be dominated by what interests the working class rather than what preoccupies the Left. 2, What interests particular working class communities is not likely to bear any resemblance to the issues that occupy the Left, "Defend the Welfare State!, Minimum wage! General Strike Now! Rebuild the 4th International!" etc.

'At its heart lies the concept of working class self determination. So, the IWCA is determined to break politically with Labour and ultimately break Labour, be it Socialist, Militant or New'

RA: Are you saying the working class are not interested in the NHS etc?

IWCA: Of course not but while the working class generally are in favour of a first class health service what the Left neglect to do is suggest a way in which the working class as a class can possibly influence the outcome. The suggestions for action usually revolve around proposals like: lobby your MP, union branch, Trades council, picket, demonstrate, petition. Ultimately vote Labour. All avenues when not complete cul-de-sacs invariably lead back to them. Avenues littered with the still warm corpses of previous campaigns are not designed to instill confidence that anything can be changed. Worse than that, pointless campaigns inevitably emasculate working class confidence, not just in the Left but more importantly, in the working class itself as a political force.

RA: Once again, if you think you have identified the problem, what is the solution?

IWCA: The overall strategy is simple. Once the problem is identified either the solution can be implemented by the IWCA itself or within the working class locally. Through this method we can establish a one-on-one relationship. There will be no appeals to a reluctant or hostile third party: It is by directing its primary effort to establishing a menage a trois (Lobby the TUC General Strike Now!) that renders almost all such Left schemes instantly impotent.

The IWCA approach will be to identify situations to the working class in which the remedy lies in their own hands and which is self evidently in their own interests. With the issues apparent, initial door-to-door canvassing of opinion would be conducted in order to find out what people want and what they themselves are prepared to contribute toward getting it. Once having established the needs, the process would then be repeated, this time advertising and eliciting support for the methods through which the needs might be met.

This is the distinction between intensive organisation and the sterile stilted attempts to build rank and file unions or campaigns for left wing reforms either inside or outside the Labour Party.

RA: But if the IWCA genuinely gives the working class people what they want, is there not a danger it will fall prey to all sorts of racist and reactionary agendas?

IWCA: Funnily enough this question come up constantly. It emerges again and again in meetings about the IWCA. Often those asking the question would have been just as insistent a few years back that there wasn't a problem. Now the attitude is that the problem is insurmountable. Usually it follows the discovery that there is no ready made programme of

principles painstakingly prepared earlier.

Its almost as if the programme was expected to act like a typhoid shot to immunise potential IWCA activists from contact with the working class or alternatively that in dealing directly with the working class on their terms 'our' principles run the risk of being contaminated and bent out of shape. All such a question proves is that the size of the chasm between the working class and the Left that many would seek to deny has not been exaggerated. Bridging that gap is a primary function of the IWCA.

RA: Accepting that such a chasm exists how did it arise and how can it be bridged?

IWCA: Quite simply if the working class won't come to the Left then the Left will have to go to the working class. How did the chasm arise? In the first place the Left talk at the working class (or as they say 'the masses'), not to them. They all tend to do so from a distance both to protect their illusions and to avoid retribution when they get it badly wrong, so there is no dialogue or actual communication. Without dialogue there can be no communication and without communication there will always be an absence of either understanding or trust.

'In five years time much of the welfare state will have been dismantled. And as the establishment abandons responsibility for sections of the population socially, they will be forced as a consequence to abandon large sections of urban areas - paramilitary police apart - territorially'

RA: Can you expand on that point?

IWCA: Well, on the one hand they idealise the working class in their propaganda and if in reality they do not measure up, they are contemptuously dismissed as some lumpen aberration. This form of schizophrenia is home of the fundamental misunderstanding that to be working class is an honourific term; an honour that needs to be earned rather than a fact of life. So naturally according to their analysis to qualify as a member of the working class means having to meet some rather strict politically correct criteria. Criteria incidentally set down in tablets of stone by the middle class left.

So, in having failed dismally to convince the working class proper, this is an attempt to square the circle by creating a new working class. With themselves as the most advanced elements. As the most advanced elements it has fallen to them to draw up a programme of principles for the working class. And so it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy and a recipe for failure.

RA: And you regard this failure as inevitable?

IWCA: Yes because without the intimate involvement of the working class the programme drawn up will inevitably be an abstract formula. For it to work, reality and the working class will have to adapt themselves to the programme and the formula. And if they do not, the attitude will be, so much the worse for the working class and reality. Don't take my word for it Look around you. The Left have been doing this for 50 years See any revolutions?

the working class as a whole.

RA: But can't this relationship be rebuilt by principled rank and file work for instance?

IWCA: Not really. The thing is that society, capitalism is changing. When capitalism was expanding, industrialisation herded people from rural to urban areas and they began to organise themselves around the point of production. De-industrialisation is having the opposite effect by forcing working people out of the customary manufacturing centres back into their communities. This is the case now and this is the future.

The argument for attempting to organise the working class where they live as well as where they work would be a powerful one regardless. Particularly as working class communities are practically shunned by the parliamentary parties. As recent developments here and in Europe have shown a void the far-right is more than happy to exploit.

RA: It is not entirely accurate to say that the entire Left has ignored working class communities. Militant for instance retains a measure of support, councillors in a number of working class areas. Pollock in Glasgow is regarded as something of a stronghold?

IWCA: Certainly Militant have benefited from their work within communities but it is not so apparent that Militant's political occupation has benefited the working class.

The evidence suggests that the Militant operation is simply a mixture of 'Old' Labour municipal socialism spiced with pork barrel politics and jobs for the boys. In short rather than the party being there for the people, the people are regarded as being there for the party. The shortfall in actual support locally is made up by shipping in Militant cadres from elsewhere. So in an effort to ensure that Pollock remains a stronghold, Militant are being forced to literally colonise the area.

RA: But surely some programme even a minimum one is necessary as a guide to activity?

IWCA: In reality the programme of 'principles first' approach leads to precisely the opposite happening. The Left have been tinkering with its collective programme with different degrees of enthusiasm since the war and have achieved nothing. In fact everything has come full circle. The far-right are once again setting the agenda. From the end of the war to the 60's practically the entire Left operated as an internal or external faction of the Labour Party. Then in the late 60's, without breaking this bond and still proclaiming their fidelity to Labour, they saw the mass student movement of the time as the band wagon to an independent existence. They have been jumping on and off band wagons ever since and have achieved nothing.

RA: But surely campaigning for particular issues provides organisations with a focus and must be considered a legitimate form of activity?

IWCA: Fair enough, but for the most part these campaigns have nothing to do with the working class at all, nor do they (the Left) expect them to. And because of their loyalty to Labour would they want them to? Therefore they focus on liberal concerns, peripheral issues, or symptoms of a wider problem, which is given undue emphasis and then taken to extremes. This dilettantism is then presented to a bemused working class public as the epitome of revolutionary activity when it is simply liberal extremism. Not unnaturally the working class reject such a programme instinctively which causes its authors to return to the drawing board or seek out a more appreciative audience.

The authentic approach is surely to draw up a programme of action to first engage the working class and in time the programme of principle will follow. Design the shoe to fit the foot rather than the foot to fit the shoe so to speak.

RA: Nevertheless is it not the case that for whatever reasons the working class in much of Europe has given widespread electoral support to far-right and fascist parties? The problem appears deep seated and many areas of Britain display similar symptoms. How will the IWCA deal with that?

IWCA: In the first place 'for whatever reason' is hardly an analysis on which to base a strategy. We need to know precisely the reasons in order to remedy the situation.

Now it is true and hardly surprising that on many issues the working class appear to exhibit a right wing instinct for, in the absence of the Left, the working class has been bombarded with right wing propaganda through the media, on the terraces, on the estates, for at least half a century. So the consequence of the working class only ever hearing one side of the argument, is that inevitably the Right and the far-Right have set the political agenda

RA: So are you saying that the Left has had no contact with the working class at all in this period?

IWCA: No I'm not. What I'm saying is that the relative few from the working class who actually make a conscious effort to go out of their way to find out what the most advanced elements are thinking, are often dismayed to discover that the Left's revolutionary programme reduced to the essentials

means - Love your neighbour and vote Labour.

This combination of theoretical disdain and practical irrelevance has created the situation not just here but throughout Europe where the Left and the working class regard each other with a mixture of incomprehension and loathing. This is particularly true in the East End. That in the circumstances the Left are now suffering a collective loss of nerve is not surprising. The struggle frightens them. Nevertheless the nettle must be grasped. And areas like this must be contested. What is required now is probably 'more fighting and less philosophising'.

RA: Nevertheless given the balance of forces, the media and so on, how can the IWCA hope to reverse the tide. Might it not be better to sit it out and wait for more favourable circumstances, a Labour government perhaps?

IWCA: Sitting it out, is the principle cause of the problem and if anything a Labour government will certainly change things only by raising the stakes and expectations all round - then failing to deliver. In this scenario the far-Right will rightly expect to be in the ascendancy. The problem for them is that despite the crocodile tears for the condition of the working class in Labour boroughs, they don't even believe the working class should even have the vote, so rarely does the sympathy translate into anything more practical. At the moment in the absence of anything else it doesn't have to. However when confronted with a real class issue they tend to freeze in confusion. The poll tax was a case in point. Then they were totally exposed in working class areas as simply 'Tories in flight-jackets'.

RA: What makes it so easy for the far-Right and so difficult for the far-Left. What does the Left have to do to turn things around?

IWCA: What normally makes it so easy for the far-Right is that invariably the Left stands shoulder to shoulder with the local establishment in defence of the status quo. Generally this is sufficient to give the far-Right's agenda a veneer of radicalism, in that, at least they represent a promise of change - any change.

'The central purpose of the IWCA is the political re-conquest of working class areas by working class people. Without this specific goal, without this social foundation, radical change is probable but progressive change is inconceivable'

However, once the working class move in pursuit of their own interests two things happen. The scapegoating and bigotry doesn't disappear but is increasingly seen as an irrelevance or an obstacle. Then, it is not what this or that working class individual thinks on this or that issue that's important, but what the class is compelled to do to achieve even its limited aims. That is the key to social change. So in order to turn things around the Left must first set the agenda. And to do this we must

begin to at least match the conviction and ambition of the far-right.

RA: What then are the IWCA's political objectives, short term, medium and long term?

IWCA: 1, A working class organisation independent of all establishment parties and institutions. 2, Working class control in working class areas. 3, Total social change

RA: Is there an objective basis for your optimism that these can be achieved?

IWCA: Our optimism is largely based on the simple fact that there is a political gap in working class politics and so in a way we are just responding to market forces.

RA: What do you mean by political gap?

IWCA: The situation we have at the moment is that for the first time in 50 years all establishment parties are agreed that the basic human rights of working class people, the right to housing, the right to health, the right to work, the right to silence, must be sacrificed in the interests of the system, as all the parties are against the working class the working class must be against all parties.

If a local council administration has proved itself hostile to the interests of the local population then the population must seek to replace it with the type of administration that adequately reflects its interests.

RA: What type of administration do you believe would adequately reflect working class interests and how might it be achieved?

IWCA: If you have a situation as at present where in many areas the police do not offer effective protection from crime within the community then the community must protect itself both from the criminal elements - and - from the police. In housing - if a neighbourhood has 2000 homeless and 6000 empty properties, simple division would provide an instant solution.

If the system will not administer positively in allocating decent housing then neither should it be allowed to administer negatively - rent arrears, bailiffs, evictions, etc.

If because of decisions taken at national level, local government cannot be made to work in accordance with the wishes of the electorate then local democracy has no meaning. For democracy to be given meaning under these conditions the administration of the working class must become the act of the working class themselves. So the IWCA objective is straight forward, working class rule in working class areas. Translated this means only one thing - de facto self government.

RA: If this statement 'de facto self government' is to be taken literally, what are the conditions that make you believe that the ambition of working class rule in working class areas has any prospect of becoming a reality?

IWCA: As you point out this is an ambition or goal to be pursued. However circumstances are conspiring to create a situation where the working class will have no choice but to declare a unilateral declaration of independence: either working class administration and democracy or no services and no democracy.

Already almost 90% of local funding comes from central government. While the percentage may increase, the funds allocated may well be reduced. No proper funding, no proper services,

no proper services no need for accountable local government. Local government by quango is a very real possibility in the near future. A number of right wing journals are already flying this particular kite.

RA: Do you believe this is the likely scenario regardless of whether it is Labour or the Tories in government?

IWCA: Well for instance the average age of the Tory party is 65. If as it seems likely they lose the next election they can expect to be out of power for a generation. If you can't attract recruits when in power what hope is there when in opposition. The only way to attract youth is with a more radical agenda. As the Tories are already the most right wing government since the war such a development would herald a split either from the left or from the right. Either way, it can be anticipated that the New Tory would be more virulently nationalist more along the lines of the FN in France or the National Alliance rather than the old patrician Tory model. Labour is itself already following the American route. In place of progressive reform, they are committed to a programme of reactionary reform ie 'thinking the unthinkable'. They have come to believe that the working class no longer exist, so the emergence of a radical right party would drive them even further to the right. So I suppose the answer is yes.

RA: Clearly you believe that these and similar developments will harbour dramatic consequences for everybody?

IWCA: One way or the other, in five years time much of the welfare state will have been dismantled. And as the establishment abandons responsibility for sections of the population socially, they will be forced as a consequence to abandon large sections of urban areas politically as well. This ceding, first of social responsibility, then of political control, will mean areas being abandoned commercially and eventually paramilitary police apart - territorially. This means that the political organisations that still seek to influence events in those areas will be doing so for the first time this century free from competition from either of the two main establishment parties.

The Tories have no say in any working class areas now and Labour's manifesto means that they too are destined to a similar fate. The coming election will be the last in which Labour candidates will campaign in working class areas with any real confidence.

So in any area where the Labour establishment want to break the working class from reliance on the state socially, break the culture of dependency, etc, rather than plead for them to come back or pursue a demoralising futile and mouse like resistance, the IWCA will instead seek to compliment this development by bringing it a step further, by using their momentum to break the same section of the working class from any reliance or allegiance to the state politically. This is the central purpose of the IWCA; the political re-conquest of working class areas by working class people.

Consequently, as we approach the millennium, working class rule is not only possible, but without such an advance, without a politically independent working class, the democratisation of working class areas is impractical. And without this specific goal, without this social foundation, radical change is probable but progressive change is inconceivable.

The recently released Public Finance Trends analysis suggests the present government is, in effect, bankrupt - with net wealth declining from nearly £20bn in 1979 to minus £152bn at the end of 1995. Since 1979 the government has spent more than £320bn - financed by privatisation, North Sea oil and increased borrowing. Interest payment on government debt now represents the 4th largest area of government expenditure. The majority of public expenditure goes on social security - £770bn in the last 17 years. The bill for unemployment related benefit has risen from £3bn to £17bn.

According to The Independent, "the figures also make uncomfortable reading for Labour politicians." Bill Martin, chief economist at City investors UBS and adviser to the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee, predicted that the Conservatives' failure to control public spending would leave Labour with an inheritance of budget deficits in excess of 5% of national income by the end of the century. To cut the gap to 2.5% would require a rise of 7p in the basic rate of income tax. Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown, though, has always spelled out that Labour would be the party of "low taxation".

In a recent interview on Breakfast With Frost Tony Blair dismissed any calls for higher rate taxation for high earners "I don't believe that's the way we need to go now. I don't believe we're in a situation where you're going to say to people some people are doing very successfully, so we'll soak the rich to give a few more pounds in benefit to the badly off. The unemployed need jobs, not a little extra benefit."

Economist David Walton at Goldman Sachs has observed that if demands for front-line public services grows at least as fast as the economy. Blair's solution to public sector borrowing deficits is to seek to reverse this trend. The logic is inescapable - the £770bn spent on benefits is a drag anchor on capital. The solution is either to fund the public sector through increased taxes - which Labour has explicitly ruled out - or slash public expenditure.

In the US, Blair's political double, President Clinton, has just passed a Welfare Bill which cuts spending on welfare by £36bn. Clinton's 1992 campaign His pledge to "end welfare as we know it" echoes the statements of Labour in its run up to office. Labour's new Social Security spokesman Henry MacLeish launched a campaign recently for a crack-down on national insurance fraud by accusing government ministers of failing to take tough enough action to protect the public purse from criminals. Clinton's message to the unemployed was, in the words of a Daily Telegraph writer, "work or starve". Blair's policies are the same.

In July, Labour published its "New Labour, New Life for Britain" manifesto, which talked of setting a tough target for low inflation. "Money", according to Labour "is being wasted on the bills of failure, unemployment and social decay." The manifesto pledges to reduce taxes for ordinary families. Commenting on Clinton's Welfare Bill, The Telegraph noted "a growing mood of zero tolerance among middle class taxpayers towards those less fortunate than themselves". The Labour manifesto bases its policies on the propagation of such zero tolerance here.

The 2 main policies spelt out in the manifesto are 1) cutting youth and long term unemployment and 2) to be tough on crime and - yawn - tough on the causes of crime. The Manifesto states "Labour will offer a new deal to a lost generation. We will get 250,000 under-25 year olds off benefit and into work" In detail, the policies are as fol-

Zero Tolerance

For years the Left has perpetuated the myth that Labour is progressive and pro-working class. Now, like Clinton, Blair makes no secret of his policies - for an end to welfare and for the criminalisation of the poor. But what Labour represents maybe something more sinister than has yet been conceded.

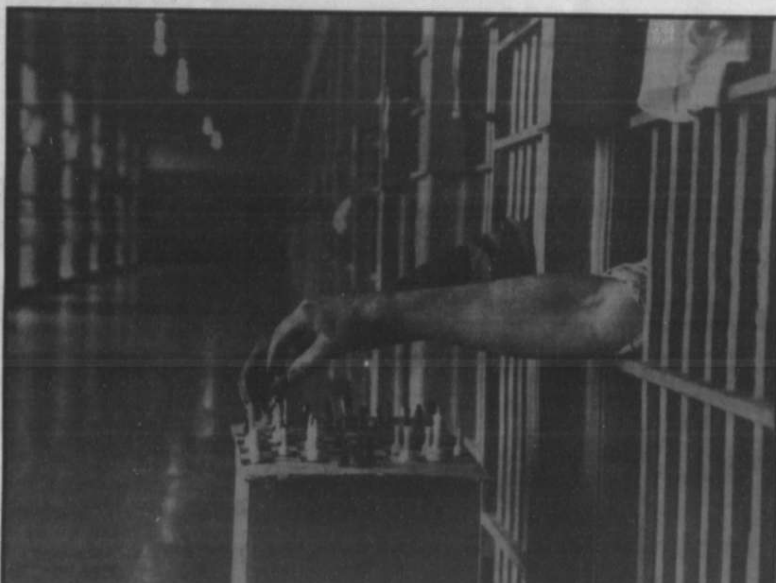
lows:

1. Every young person to continue in education after 16. As Gordon Brown has made clear, there are no plans to extend Income Support entitlement to 16 year olds, and plans in place to reduce entitlement to Child Benefit. Young people therefore would continue on at school because they had no choice.
2. Every young person to be in a job or training.
3. Young people to join environment task forces to 'improve neighbourhoods' to be paid a weekly wage (ben-

should be no absolute entitlement to continued receipt of full social security benefits...childless young people who are of sound body and mind cannot expect to continue to receive full benefit if they decide not to take up these new opportunities" (Just to remind ourselves-a chance to 'join an environmental taskforce and be paid a weekly wage-benefit plus a fixed sum - for 6 months').

"Such a tough discipline is necessary to demonstrate the seriousness of the governments efforts to break the culture of hopelessness, idleness and cyn-

icism". The US corrections business is a \$30bn industry, of which the private sector has a 30% share. The Federal Bureau of Prison Industries counted over \$404 m in sales of prison-made products in 1993 alone. As criminologist David Scicher, writing in The Los Angeles Times observed, "Since the size of the inmate population determines the income of the private operators, they (prison industry and the state) have a vested interest in keeping the facilities full" Profit is derived from the gaoling and warehousing of slave labour, human beings reduced to commodities



"Since the size of the inmate population determines the income of the private operators, they (prison industry and the state) have a vested interest in keeping the facilities full"

efit plus a fixed sum) for 6 months.

In their book "The Blair Revolution" Labour Party advisers Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle spell the logic of all this clearly: "We live in a world of mobile capital. Multinational companies have a vast array of choices as to where they locate new investment. As a result of the globalisation of financial markets they can raise money in New York, London and Paris for expansion in India, Singapore or Taiwan. But whereas capital is mobile, labour is much less so. Decisions about where new investment is made are primarily determined by the skills and attributes of the local population". The book's recipe for this is a combination of "investment in skill" and "pay restraint". Britain will attract investment capital under Blair through the creation of a high-skill low-wage workforce to compete with the expanding Asian economies. Welfare spending therefore is out. "It is not right that some people should collect the dole, live on the black economy, and then refuse to co-operate with society's efforts to re-integrate them into the labour market...In circumstances where new opportunity is being offered and refused, there

should be no absolute entitlement to continued receipt of full social security benefits...childless young people who are of sound body and mind cannot expect to continue to receive full benefit if they decide not to take up these new opportunities" (Just to remind ourselves-a chance to 'join an environmental taskforce and be paid a weekly wage-benefit plus a fixed sum - for 6 months').

"Such a tough discipline is necessary to demonstrate the seriousness of the governments efforts to break the culture of hopelessness, idleness and cynicism which a concentration of high unemployment has bred in many estates throughout Britain where a generation has been brought up on the dole" As in Clinton's US- Work or Starve.

In August 1995 The New York Times reported "The prison business has become one of the fastest growing industries in the nation. Prison costs are the fastest growing budgetary item for many government agencies as the number of inmates held by federal, state and local governments has tripled over the past 2 decades to 1.5

in the name of criminal justice.

The magazine Rap Pages wrote in June 1996 on the status of Black Americans today.

"In today's hysterical social climate, apathy to changing politics is a luxury Black Americans do not have. The 1994 Federal Crime Bill (which allocated \$10bn for prison construction), three-strikes legislation, unemployment stemming from systemic racism, all serve as evidence that today we are the undesirables that America considers a thorn in its side. It also stands to reason that the ongoing reduction and elimination of federally funded social benefits and welfare programs is being done to force or manoeuvre the dependent non-working elements of society into a criminal class...thereby ensuring a steady and reliable source of prison labour for the rapidly growing prisons for profit enterprises. In a chilling precedent, the stratagem of 'prisons for profit' and covert genocide was nearly perfected by Adolph Hitler in Nazi Germany".

In the UK, substitute Blair's fast track conviction policy for 3 strikes legislation, and for black youth in the US, read working class youth in general.

Like Clinton, Blair has made no

secret of his policies - for an end to welfare and for the criminalisation of the poor. For years the left has perpetuated the myth that Labour represents in some way a progressive pro-working class constituency. What Labour - particularly under Blair - represents is something more sinister than has yet been conceded. Consider the following quotes:

1. "As a test of an unemployed person's willingness to work, I am in favour of introducing a scheme similar to the 'workfare' system operated in certain states of the USA. The system is that all welfare benefits, except in the case of the old, sick or disabled, are given in return for work...The scheme has 2 benefits; one is that it is good for the self-respect of those involved; the other is that it discourages welfare spongers by demonstrating to everyone that there is no 'free ride' - no-one can get something for nothing."

2. "It is not right that some people should collect the dole, live on the black economy, and refuse to co-operate with society's efforts to re-integrate them into the labour market. In circumstances where new opportunity is being offered and refused, there should be no absolute entitlement to benefits"

3. "The response to inner city deterioration is yet more promises of open cheques, bearing the signature of the taxpayer...Pious speeches against mounting crime are a weekly ritual, while those making them know in their bones that, within the limits of what is 'acceptable' policy, nothing will be done or can be done to reverse the trend"

4. "New Labour should be clear that it stands on the side of justice, which has become a tattered concept in modern society at all social levels. New Labour needs to be tough and clear...in a comprehensive policy to 1) improve the effectiveness of the police, so they catch criminals. The issue is not just the need for more bobbies on the beat but how the police best organise themselves to exploit technological advance.2) to increase the likelihood of conviction in the courts and, through reform of our criminal justice procedures, reduce the number of technical acquittals..."

Quotes 1&3 are from John Tyndall, quotes 2&4 are from Peter Mandelson's 'Blair Revolution'.

In its attitude to the welfare state and its proposals for the criminalisation of poverty as a means of dismantling the welfare state, Labour stands shoulder to shoulder with the BNP. It has identified the same problems and hit upon the same solutions. The only difference is - Labour is likely to form the next government. Given that its policies are based on the need to dismantle the costs of social provision for the unemployed, the use of forced labour to bring down wages (tipping the balance in favour of the labour market outsiders against the insiders and thereby increasing the general pressure for responsibility in pay levels" as Mandelson puts it) in the cause of a cost effective, high-skill low-wage labour market, it is a fair bet that its remaining policies will be as far to the right.

Red Action's response to the BNP in our communities is well known - zero tolerance.

Labour now stands for the same aims in relation to the poorest and most disenfranchised of our class. Given Labour's greater cohesion as a political force, can it any longer remain the case that Labour and its activists should be treated differently from other right wing anti-working class organisations that try to win working class people to ideas and policies that are directly against their own class interests?

West Belfast:

'an inspiration'

I had been eager for a long time to see Belfast first hand, knowing how much the English media distorts and lies about the situation in the North of Ireland. I had heard stories from friends who had been, stories of friendly people and heavy drinking but nothing could have really prepared me for what I was about to experience.

The coach was boring and the ferry crossing and to my surprise the terminal in Belfast was very quiet with security low-key. We were soon travelling through West Belfast passing the landmarks along the way, Falls Road, Milltown Cemetery, and fortified RUC barracks until we reached our home for the week-end, the Poleglass estate.

The week-end we chose to go to Belfast was a significant one - the West Belfast Community Festival had been going all week long and this was to coincide with a march on the Sunday to the town centre to commemorate the 25th anniversary of internment. Supporters of the Irish struggle had converged from all over the world, amongst them representatives of ETA and NORAI.

The first thing that struck me as I walked down the Falls Road was the overwhelming friendliness of the people, taxi drivers wave hello to their mates in the street, shopkeepers share a joke with passers-by, even as a complete (English) stranger, people were happy to give a smile and say hello. It seemed remarkable that amidst all the poverty, neglect and oppression that people were able to treat neighbours and strangers alike in such a generous way.

Perhaps the most lasting impression I gained from the weekend was the huge sense of community. Working class people with a great sense of pride, common history and shared goals are bound together in the struggle for Irish freedom. I was amazed at the sheer generosity and kind-

ness of heart with which local people who have suffered so much for so long were able to drink, chat and share a joke with me.

For everyone in West Belfast the political struggle is part of their everyday lives, they can't walk out of their front doors without realising it - from the wall murals to the security force harassment, to the discrimination in housing and employment, the people of West Belfast lead highly politicised lives.

A prison visit was arranged for Saturday afternoon and I travelled towards Lisburn and the infamous Long Kesh. I have to admit to feeling slightly nervous about meeting someone who had spent a great part of his life detained by an occupying force, what could he possibly have to say to someone like me? Again I was taken aback by the openness, kindness and generosity of the Irish people. Here was a man serving 17 years for trying to rid his country of its invaders, a man who had seen his friends and family harassed, tortured and murdered by the British state, yet he was genuinely happy to speak to an interested young bloke from England on a one-to-one personal level.

He seemed special to me, his commitment and courage remarkable, but the more people I met in West Belfast, the more I realised that he was no different to the hundreds of other Volunteers involved in the armed struggle. I asked him if he had any plans for when he got out, maybe a holiday? His reply was "If the armed struggle is still going on, I'll get back involved with that".

This is from a man who has spent years of his life locked up. It made me wonder how the British state can hope to kill the will of these people by brutal force or political oppression. The indignities and violence suffered by these people, the beatings, house raids, harassment and intimidation do nothing to weaken their

IRELAND UNFREE SHALL NEVER BE AT PEACE



resolve for freedom they only strengthen it. It is this simple fact that the British state still fails to recognise.

It is not only committed individuals that keep up the fight, it is the whole community. This was made clear in no uncertain terms on the Sunday march and rally.

It has been some time now since I saw any good in marching through the streets waving placards, preferring to make the point in less obvious but more effective ways, so I was slightly uncomfortable, milling about at the starting point of a public march. However, it soon became clear that this was not your typical English lefty march. Instead of the usual gaggle of hippies, students, middle class liberals, there were normal, everyday people - mums with pushchairs, old men, young couples, toddlers, teenagers, just about every section of the West Belfast community was represented, and not a dog on a string in sight.

As the march progressed towards the town centre, feeder marches complete with flute bands joined the main march, swelling the numbers. People cheered and waved tricolours out of upstairs windows. All this convinced me even

further of how much behind the struggle the whole community is.

The English Troops Out movement delegates, made up of the usual middle class intellectuals, trade unionists and Labour Party gobshites stood in obvious contrast to the RA members from England and Scotland who chatted and mingled with their host community, not preaching their version of the revolution, but listening and learning from people who know what struggle is about.

As the speakers addressed the thousands of people assembled outside the town hall, I felt part of something great. The Union Jack waved atop the building, but below thousands upon thousands of people waved the flag of the Republic with defiance and pride, and I knew that the days of British rule were numbered.

At the end of the weekend, it was difficult to have to leave Belfast and return home, but I returned full of hope, hope for the future of Ireland, knowing that the commitment to and support for the armed struggle is as strong as it ever was and hopeful that some day the sense of community, determination, pride and generosity will unite people in some of our inner cities.

Most members of RA and/or regular readers of this particular publication would be circumspect (to say the least) about accepting an invitation to attend a conference organised by the SWP. But to cut a long story short, in the interests of socialist non-sectarianism and independent research I attended Marxism '96 in London.

However, I think it is important to be honest at this point. I did have certain pre-conceptions about the nature of the SWP, its organisational structure and membership. These impressions were derived principally from contact I had had with our Trotskyist "comrades" locally. Frankly, I was unimpressed. Nevertheless, on the other hand I had encountered individual members who were doubtless committed in their adherence to Marxist ideas, and who conducted themselves in a reasonably disciplined and principled fashion. So the impression was essentially negative, although accompanied by the belief that some members were perhaps misguided rather than malevolent.

My interest in attending the conference revolved around wishing to attend "debates" on a number of particular issues which are of central importance to those claiming to occupy "the left" in Britain. These are the issues of Ireland and Anti-Fascism. It is in relation to these two areas that one can discover most about the nature and purpose of a "revolutionary" Marxist organisation in the contemporary political climate.

It is, of course, beyond the scope of this brief report to enter into a full-scale theoretical evaluation of what took place at these meetings. Nevertheless, even from the most cursory appraisal of what was said, it is possible to identify and highlight the most fundamental contradiction which exists within the SWP - that is

SWP Conference '96: A contradiction

the contradiction between theory and practice.

We might begin with Ireland. The SWP naturally wants to see a socialist republic in Ireland (most speakers made the appropriate deferential noises about Connolly). All this is fine. However, the critical difficulty resides in how exactly we move the situation forward in the present circumstances.

According to Shaun Doherty, the Republican Movement have got it hopelessly wrong. He argued that "the Republican strategy is totally bankrupt", a "disaster", and went on, "I believe that the Provisionals are totally and utterly bankrupt, politically and militarily". And according to Chris Bamberg, "bombing Britain is not carrying the struggle forward one iota", moreover "the idea that there is a war in Ireland is just moralistic nonsense. This isn't Algeria, this isn't Zimbabwe".

Well, full marks for geography. But what precisely is the alternative to armed resistance in the face of British intransigence and Unionist bigotry? Of course for the SWP the answer is to win over the Protestant working class for socialism. Once again a laudable objective, but a tad difficult to achieve in practice! Certainly, respective speakers and contributors could supply precious little evidence of progress on the ground - most contented themselves with ritualistic references to cross community collaboration in the 1930s, accompanied by an almost messianic belief in the

growth of Protestant working class consciousness. Perhaps, like Militant, some members of the SWP have been seduced by the facile ("radical") rhetoric of the fringe loyalist parties.

The problem is not just one of analysis i.e. whether and to what extent support should be offered the Republican Movement. Of course the Republican Movement is not immune from principled criticism from the left. Bernadette McAlisley's critique is evidence of that, and points made about the inadequacy of the so-called "pan-Nationalist Front" and the various diplomatic initiatives are legitimate.

The difficulty is more basic than that as far as the SWP is concerned. Put very simply, the SWP's criticisms would have far more resonance if they themselves possessed some degree of credibility as an organisation.

The SWP's "involvement", as far as Ireland is concerned, has been marginal and inconsequential to say the least. To put it bluntly, nobody takes them seriously. And if we ask ourselves why this is the case we immediately return to the contradiction between theory and practice. And we can illustrate this very point with reference to a specific example which arose during one of the "sessions".

During the course of his monologue on the "Crisis of Republicanism" Shaun Doherty criticised Sinn Fein's Mitchell McLaughlin with particular venom. McLaughlin apparently sug-

gested that Orange marches through Catholic areas should be banned. But this was not enough for Doherty, as he put it: "every single one of the Orange marches is an affront to the Nationalist community because they are a parade of Protestant ascendancy. They are saying to the Catholic community 'we have shat on you for 50, 60, 70 years and we want to continue to do it'".

Fair point you might say. But what precisely has the SWP ever done to halt an Orange parade? The SWP (ANL) was given a perfect opportunity to display its fervent hostility to such marches when the Apprentice Boys of Derry marched in central London a couple of months ago. The response, however, was a few sad and sorry lollipops - hardly enough to deter the assembled Orangemen. The real business of confronting the bigots took place elsewhere on that day.

The same tensions become still more apparent with regard to Anti Fascist activities. The SWP wants to see the eradication of Fascism in Britain and vehemently opposes all Fascist organisations.

So far, so good. But how, exactly, does a militant anti-Fascist set about "smashing" Fascism in practice? Letters, petitions, demonstrations are all very well but the fact is that, given the dynamics of Fascist ideology, they have to be confronted physically. And to their credit the SWP/ANL acknowledge this. The problem again resides in the practical application of theoretical perspectives. The SWP cannot deliver.

Nothing exemplifies the vacuity of SWP practice better than the response

of their organisers/stewards during the march on BNP HQ at Welling. After weeks of talking about tearing down the BNP office "brick by brick" they were forced into turning back the crowds (especially black youths) away from the police who had, predictably, barricaded the road.

Without the means of practical application revolutionary ideas become, at best, pious aspirations. At worst it invites ridicule. Quite clearly the attitude of ordinary people to the SWP (and similar groups) ranges from indifference to derision. Primarily this stems from a failure of praxis.

However, having said this much it also has to be pointed out that if a group is genuinely seeking to attract working class members it should (as far as possible) be an indigenous part of that community.

Here also the SWP evidently fails (more Social Workers' Party, rather than Socialist Workers'!). I got the distinct impression that for many of the (albeit well-intentioned) activists at the meetings a trip to a council estate would be something of a novel experience, almost an anthropological research exercise. This is not to subscribe to some kind of simplistic workerism. But rather than engaging in lofty debates about the abolition of wage slavery, conducted in an atmosphere something akin to Woodstock, it might be more productive to be involved in an organisation which is able to achieve its (perhaps more limited) objectives.

In the struggle to create the conditions for socialist transcendence it is clearly far better to have a much smaller organisation rooted in, and orientated toward, local working class communities, and which can earn the respect of the people it is attempting to attract. After all, talk is cheap.

After 'extended leave' Red Action welcomes back our reporter from West Belfast, M. Collins. In this issue he examines the latest INLA feud, and looks at the truth behind 'maverick' loyalist leader Billy Wright.

DEADLY DIVISIONS

When the INLA shot dead their former Chief of Staff in Lurgan on September 3rd, the latest 'feud' died with him.

Hugh 'Cue-Ball' Torney alienated himself from the INLA when he and three others, Desi McCleery, Sean Braniff and 'Fanta' Gorman, were caught with a consignment of weapons outside Dublin in April 1994. In what was seen by many as an attempt to save their own skins the four men had a solicitor read out a statement saying that an unreported ceasefire had been in existence for a number of months. This rule worked in as much as all four were given bail.

Torney, McCleery and Braniff returned to the six counties where they would have been informed in no uncertain terms that their services would no longer be required (by trying to save themselves, and bringing their organisation into disrepute in the attempt, expulsion would have been automatic). Torney, however, believed that he and not Gino Gallagher (who had taken over as Chief of Staff) was the legitimate Chief of Staff and set about forming his own 'faction' of the INLA, the 'GHQ Staff'.

His first task was to remove Gino Gallagher from the scene and this was implemented when Gallagher was shot dead in the Falls Road dole office in January. Perhaps with Gallagher's murder Torney believed he could coerce and bully his way back into the leadership of the INLA but the death of one of his associates, John Fennell, in Bundoran showed him it was not to be.

John Fennell was alleged to have told his INLA interrogators that Torney had entered into an alliance with a North Belfast drugs dealer to get rid of Gino Gallagher. This is quite possible as Gallagher's name had been openly linked with Direct Action Against Drugs since his death. D.A.A.D. have claimed responsibility for the execution of seven alleged drug dealers starting in April 1995 with the shooting of Micky Mooney in a Belfast bar and ending in January 1996 with the shooting of Ian Lyons in Lurgan.

Fennell was further alleged to have admitted that it was he who passed money to the North Belfast drugs dealer before the shooting of Gallagher, before being beaten to death with breeze blocks.

The next attack by the INLA did in fact take place in North Belfast but went tragically wrong when nine-year-old Barbara McAlorum was shot dead in her parents house. It would appear that the target of the attack was Barbara's older brother, Kevin, who was later caught by the RUC travelling in a car with a loaded handgun.

Since that time there had been quite a number of attacks on IRSP members by Torney, McCleery or both (Sean Braniff, who jumped bail with Torney and McCleery, took no part in these attacks as he and two other men had been arrested and jailed on a charge of stealing shotguns from a house outside Belfast. This charge was later dropped by the RUC and Braniff waived his right to appeal against an extradition order to the 26 Counties; he was returned the next day).

Although no members of the IRSP were killed in the attacks launched by Torney and McCleery it wasn't for the want of trying by both men. Time and again they were reported as being the actual gunmen after the attack and

leader Billy Wright.

on at least one occasion Desi McCleery actually called the victim by name before opening fire on him. After each attack these two would disappear for a while before emerging to carry out another attack, but time was running out for one of them.

Desi McCleery decided to take his German Girlfriend into Belfast City Centre for a meal in May 1996. It was to be his last meal. As he and his Girlfriend were sitting in the 'Chicago Pizza Pie Factory' restaurant they had no idea they had been tailed through town by an INLA unit. A lone gunman walked into the

waiting car. In a statement released later, Torney admitted that although McEvoy was not his intended victim he made no apology for shooting him. Sean McEvoy is a member of the IRSP.

Cueball Torney was shot by the British Army at the age of 17 in 1971. Sixteen years later he was again shot and wounded by the IPLO in an ambush on unarmed men which claimed the lives of two of those men, Ta Power and John O'Reilly. In September 1994 he escaped a loyalist murder bid when gunmen sledgehammered his front door down only to

Fein. Now, not only are they defending Billy Wright, who is known to be responsible for some of the most brutal and hideous sectarian murders ever perpetrated in the six counties but who is also believed by the RUC to be responsible for the sectarian murder of Michael McGoldrick, the Catholic taxi driver murdered by loyalists during the Drumcree stand-off.

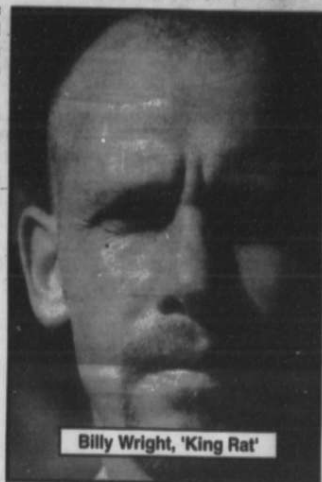
This sectarian murder, which was as much a breaking of the loyalist ceasefire as Canary Wharf was of the republican ceasefire (imagine the hue and cry if the IRA had shot a British soldier or RUC man in the six counties), was neatly swept under the carpet when the Combined Loyalist Military Command denied any involvement.

Now we are greeted with the spectacle of 'King Rat' sharing a public platform with none other than the DUP's singing Reverend Willie McCrea. Willie says he was there to defend Wright's freedom of speech. Nice-one Willie. What will you be defending next, his freedom to shoot Catholic women in Mobile shops? The crass hypocrisy of Trimble, who met with King Rat during the Drumcree siege, and Paisley, who allows Party Ministers to share a platform with him, shows that their reluctance to sit down with Sinn Fein has a blatant sectarian motive rather than any political motive

Billy Wright's Mid-Ulster Brigade of the UVF has been responsible for the murders of forty-two people since 1989...

14.2.89-John Davey, shot in the laneway of his home in Maghera, Co. Derry; 29.11.89-Liam Ryan (39) and Michael Devlin (33), gunned down in a bar near Coagh, Co. Tyrone; 7.1.90-Martin Byrne, taxi driver shot in his car near Lurgan, Co. Armagh; 7.3.90-Sam Marshall (31), shot from a passing car in Lurgan, Co. Armagh; 4.6.90-Patrick Boyle (60), shot at his home near Loughall, Co. Armagh; 6.10.90-Denis Carville (19), shot beside his girlfriend in a car at Lough Neagh, outside Lurgan; 24.10.90-Francis Hughes (61), taxi driver found shot dead in his burnt-out car near Moy, Co. Tyrone; 26.10.90-Thomas Casey (57), Sinn Fein member shot near Cookstown, Co. Tyrone; 8.11.90-Malach McIvor (43), shot near North St., Stewartstown, Co. Tyrone; 5.1.91-Gervase Lynch (26), shot at his parents home at Magheralin, Co. Down; 3.3.91-John Quinn (23), Dwayne O'Donnell (17), Malcolm Nugent (20) and Thomas Armstrong (50), murdered at a pub at Cappagh, Co. Tyrone; 28.3.91-Eileen Duffy (19), Katrina Rennie (16) and Brian Frizzell (29), shot in a mobile shop in Craigavon; 25.10.91-Sean Anderson, former Republican prisoner shot while driving his car in Pomeroy, Co. Tyrone; 19.11.91-Desmond Rogers (54), Fergus Magee (28) and John Laverty (27), shot while leaving Hyster factory in a car near Lurgan, Co. Armagh; 3.1.92-Kevin McKearney (32) and John McKearney (69), shot at their butchers shop in Moy, Co. Tyrone; 4.3.92-James Gray (39), shot by a sniper while driving his lorry near Portadown, Co. Armagh; 29.3.92-Terence McConville (43), shot at his home in Portadown, Co. Armagh; 1.4.92-Peter McClements (43), alleged informer shot in his Lurgan home; 7.9.92-Charles Fox (63) and Theresa

Fox (53), shot at their home near Moy, Co. Tyrone; 19.11.92-Peter McCormack (42), shot during a gun attack near Castlewellaun, Co. Down; 3.1.93-Patrick Shields (51) and his son Diarmuid Shields (20), murdered in



Billy Wright, 'King Rat'

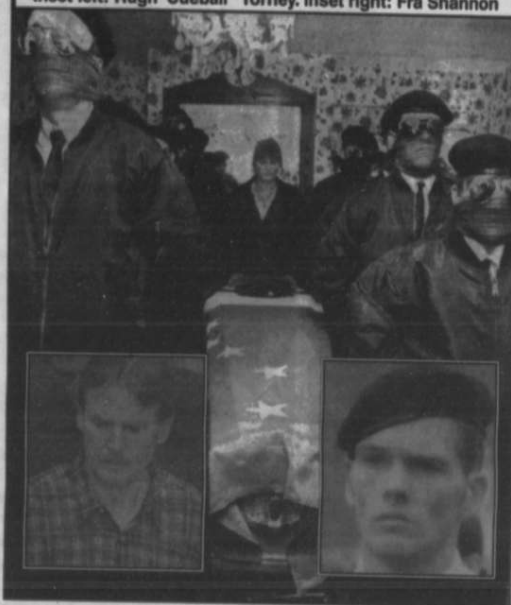
their shop near Dungannon, Co. Tyrone; 28.1.93-Martin McNamee (25), killed by a booby-trap near Cookstown, Co. Tyrone; 2.2.93-Eugene Martin (28), shot at his Ballyroan home, Co. Tyrone; 11.2.93-Thomas Molloy (32), shot at his home near Loughall, Co. Armagh; 28.10.93-Brothers Gerard Cairns (22), and Rory Cairns (18), shot dead at their home in Bleary, Co. Armagh; 11.3.94-Francis Brown (37), killed in an explosion in Portadown; 8.3.94-Rose Ann Mallon (72), shot dead at her sister-in-law's house outside Dungannon; 18.3.94-Gavin McShane (17), from Keady, murdered in an Armagh taxi depot; 19.3.94-Shane McArdle (17), from Markethill, died from his wounds from the Armagh taxi depot attack; 7.8.94-Kathleen O'Hagan (38), pregnant mother of five, shot dead at her home near Omagh.

This catalogue of murder stands as a testament to Billy Wright's freedom of speech. The RUC arrested Wright suspecting that he in his role of 'King Rat' was personally responsible for many of these murders, including the attack in Craigavon where two teenage girls and a male customer were murdered in a mobile shop. Wright and his Henchmen murdered regardless of age, gender and even creed, John Laverty who was one of three people shot dead leaving the Hyster Factory in Lurgan on Nov. 19th 1991, was a Protestant. King Rat's answer to this would have been "served him right for being with the Fenian Bastards".

Billy Wright has shown that he does have some support in his home town, but for the CLMC to back-down from their death threat would open the floodgates to other renegades and lead to a total collapse of discipline and control within the three loyalist organisations forming the CLMC.

Wright is still strutting around Portadown wearing his 'Mid-Ulster Brigade UVF, simply the best' t-shirt and accompanied by his tattooed minders. To his supporters he is a local hero but the latest graffiti on a Shankhill Road gable "You won't go down a martyr, Billy Wright, you murdering Portadown bastard" shows that many more loyalists see him as a cancer that has to be cut out.

Main pic: INLA guard of honour over Gino Gallagher's coffin. Inset left: Hugh 'Cueball' Torney. Inset right: Fra Shannon



packed restaurant and shot McCleery dead. Witnesses reported that the gunman had acted calmly, even returning briefly to wipe his prints from a door handle. In its statement claiming responsibility for the shooting, the INLA claimed that McCleery was an MI5 agent who had gone into Belfast City Centre that day for a meeting with his MI5 handlers. They also ordered that McCleery's Girlfriend leave Ireland or face the same form of retribution.

At McCleery's funeral a few days later, in an act of open defiance, his girlfriend led the mourners. Torney also showed-up disguised in a grey wig and glasses to carry the coffin of his associate along with Desi's brother who had been released from prison where he is being held on a gun charge, the same gun charge, incidentally, as that of Barbara McAlorum's older brother.

On June 9th the INLA shot dead Fra Shannon in Turf Lodge. When shot, Shannon was wearing a bullet-proof vest, a grey wig and glasses. Rumours abounded all night and into the following day that the INLA had finally caught up with Torney; the RUC even got in touch with a relative of Torney's to have him identify the body. Fra Shannon had been a member of the guard of honour at both John Fennell's and Desi McCleery's funerals.

Torney emerged from the shadows again on another murder mission in the Newbarnsley area of West Belfast. Sean McEvoy was leaving a friend's house when Torney stepped from a nearby alleyway holding an automatic rifle. He fired on McEvoy hitting him in the legs, when he fell Torney ran towards him, hitting him in the chest and neck. After firing over a dozen rounds he escaped in a

find no-one was in. The rounds that were to finally kill Torney eventually had to come from the weapons of former comrades. His unwillingness to relinquish the power he once held within the INLA, and the belief that he could wrest that power back at the point of a gun was his final downfall.

Was Torney working for MI5? Was Desi McCleery working for MI5? Some of their former comrades believe they were, others deny it vehemently. One thing is for sure, those who take up weapons against comrades for personal gain are, without a doubt, working for the enemy. It has long been known that the British seize on such 'feuds' to gain political mileage while the 'security forces' sit back and allow 'figureheads' to be removed from both sides.

The INLA have said their problems are now sorted and many people believe that the death of 'Cueball' Torney has ended this 'feud'; I only hope they are right. At a time when there is much work to be done in our country no-one wants to see Irishmen die at the hands of Irishmen.

BILLY'S BOYS.

In Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party and David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party have demanded that the fringe loyalist parties of the Progressive Unionist Party (who represent the UVF) and the Ulster Democratic Party (who represent the UDA/UFF) should be barred from the 'All Party Peace Talks' unless the death threat against Portadown loyalist Billy Wright, also known as King Rat, is lifted.

Paisley and Trimble have declared they will never sit down with the representatives of 'terrorists' i.e. Sinn



Wright & DUP's Rev. McCrea

Tommy Sheridan for Prime Minister?

The Rise of Militant
Peter Taffe

The story of Militant as outlined in Peter Taffe's *The Rise of Militant* demonstrates, against its own intentions, the complete failure of its brand of Trotskyism.

The main thesis of this tediously written book is the ever onward march of Militant. From reading this book, the reader could get the unfortunate, and completely wrong, idea that Militant has been totally correct about every political event of the last 30 years. This is all part of the familiar religious-style Militant mixture of triumphalism and sectarianism with which they greet any event.

Unintentionally, however, Taffe is amusing as his 'analysis' of the political events of the last 3 decades descends into passages that would not be out of place in Alice in Wonderland. The removal of Ted Grant from Militant's history being one of the funniest. The only mentions that the erstwhile leader gets, apart from when he is being listed as a speaker at one of Militant's interminable meetings, is when Taffe slaps him off near the end of the book. Compare and contrast these two statements about Grant and guess which is from 1988 and which from 1996. "Ted Grant, who at the time was - and still remains - the theoretician and principal leader of Trotskyism in Britain." "Despite his past achievements, Ted Grant was sometimes found wanting, particularly in the rapidly changing circumstances of the 1980s...it had been evident for some time that his best days, particularly on the public platform, were behind him." Surely some mistake! The first quote is from the fantasising book 'Liverpool: A city that dared to fight.'

The most noticeable aspect of the book is Taffe's total inability to face up to reality or tell the truth about anything. The main tenet of Militant's politics since its inception, until 1992, has been the necessity for "socialists" to be in the Labour Party. Continually, throughout the book, Taffe is obsessed about resolutions passed at Labour Party meetings and the 'victories' of the left. For instance, a Militant sponsored resolution passed by the 1972 Labour conference calling on the Labour Party executive "to formulate a socialist plan of production based on public ownership, with minimum compensation, of the commanding heights of the economy," is described by Taffe as a huge shift towards the left.

This bizarre self-delusion in the Labour leadership, resulting in demands for them to do this or that and then being surprised when they predictably did the opposite, carried on until the end of Militant's time in the organisation. Writing about the end of the Miners' strike and the defeat of the printers at Wapping, Taffe says "It was working people who were to pay dearly for the dereliction of their elementary duties by the Labour leadership."

Anyone who knows the slightest bit of British history would know that the Labour leadership's loyalties have always been to themselves first and to capitalism second. All this is despite the first editorial of Militant containing the following: "The most important thing is that we wish to tell the truth to the working class against the lies and the exaggerations of the capitalist class and the half-truths of Labour's officialdom."

Unfortunately, for the last 30 years or so, Militant as an organisation has been in the forefront of those sowing illusions in those very half truths of the Labour Party and the trade unions and extolling them as the only way of changing society. For this reason alone, you would expect at least a touch of shame or remorse to be present, instead, Taffe presents Militant's every move as part of the inexorable rise of the working class towards socialism. Quite bizarrely, but unsurprisingly, Militant is presented as leading every major political movement over the last 25 years while defeats or failures are presented as having been due to the right wing of the Labour Party and trade unions. At the same Taffe continually makes a point of emphasising how unsectarian they were, but as anyone who has ever come across Militant knows, they have always been the sectarian's sectarians. They argued for decades that to be outside the Labour Party was to be outside the working class movement, even while that very party was in government doing its best to destroy working class living standards. They paid little or no attention to anything that happened in Britain unless it happened under the auspices of the Labour Party.

Taffe tries to present Militant as being a revolutionary group that just happened to be within the Labour Party, however they spent their whole time denying to be anything other than loyal members who were more left wing than the leadership. Militant continually asserted that socialism could be brought about in Britain via a bill in parliament that would nationalise the top 250 monopolies. In reply to the threatened expulsion of their editorial board in 1982, Militant stated: "We support the basic socialist

aims of the Labour Party embodied in Clause IV, part 4 of the constitution...We are committed to the return of a Labour Government on the basis of a socialist programme." Either they believed this, and therefore were reformists rather than revolutionaries, or they didn't mean it and as such lied to everyone including the working class. Whichever one it was, it makes their open talk now of being revolutionaries ludicrous, especially with statements such as this from their founding press conference in 1993: "We will forcefully argue the case for socialist planning, for democratic nationalisation of the 150 monopolies which control 80-85% of the British economy with compensation



Taffe and Grant: the men responsible

on the basis of proven need...We also support those Labour party members who strive to transform the party into a fighting organisation for the working class." So even now whilst they are a separate organisation, they are still willing to sow illusions in the Labour Party.

Militant's record on the Labour Party as outlined in the book is more than enough to cast them beyond the pale but they have an even sorer record on Ireland which has always been the litmus test for revolutionaries in Britain. A test which just about all of them, especially Militant, have failed. Right from the beginning, Militant placed all its hopes behind the Labour Party in the six counties and vague calls for unity in action of Protestants and Catholics. Taffe quotes with approval a bulletin from

Derry Labour Party that said, "Working class unity in a Labour party programme will provide the only real and lasting solution to the rule of sectarian terror and the terrorist rule of rent, profit and interest."

While ignoring the fact that it was the Loyalist population and state that was terrorising Nationalists, Militant could call, with a straight face, for "Common action through a joint defence committee." Continually, Militant has blamed the IRA for the situation in the six counties while ignoring the role of the British state and calling for unity between Catholics and Protestants. For instance, Militant writing about the H-Block Hunger Strikes, could say: "H-Block, like all aspects of repression, is really a class question. But if the labour movement does not take it up it will be championed by bigots who will turn it into a sectarian issue." No prizes for guessing who the bigots were. Militant's 'solution' to the crisis, was "a review conducted by the labour movement of the cases of all those convicted on offences arising out of the Troubles. On the basis of such a review, the movement should itself decide who should be designated as a political prisoner, so as to campaign for that person's release." Not only is this statement deeply offensive in that it denigrates those who died fighting for Ireland's freedom but it is also ludicrous and pathetic. Just to make sure we get the point, Taffe writes that the hunger strikers' deaths "...in turn led to an intensification of sectarian divisions."

There really is no hope for anyone who can believe rubbish like this and yet it should be no surprise in the light of an organisation that was wedded to the state's second eleven for so long. Equally grotesque is its championing of Billy Hutchinson (PUP/UVF) as a socialist. But then given the nature of Militant's own 'socialism', it is at least consistent. In Militant's vocabulary, similar to that of the state and the Labour Party, 'Sectarianism' only seems to apply to Republicans.

Despite their election successes, Militant are no longer a major force in 'left' politics. Neither are they a break with the past, as they claim. In fact, they have only gained the council seats they have, precisely because they are seen as a continuation of 'old Labour'. At the end of the day, their politics are the same as when Grant and Taffe set up the organisation in 1964. They still want to be part of the 'movement', they still want to get elected, and they still believe that Militant's ideas, according to Taffe, "will be embraced by tens of thousands, then by hundreds of thousands and millions."

And You Think We're Paranoid?

"Big Brother: Britain's web of Surveillance and the New Technological Order"

Simon Davies

Since the late 1970s there has been a continual growth in police and state powers of arrest, telephone tapping and detainment etc. Much of this was first pioneered in the Six Counties in the early 1970s and then perfected during the 1984/85 Miners' Strike but this is all fairly mild compared to how things have developed since. The Criminal Justice Act, amongst other acts allows the police to do much as they please in questioning people and cordoning off areas.

In parallel to the role of the police, the privatisation of security has become endemic. A growing number of city centres, roads and urban estates are now covered with surveillance cameras with instant video playback. Add to this the massive amount of private security guards who are around, the imminent introduction of "voluntary" Identity Cards and the spiralling number of ways to shop your neighbours for crime, social security fraud and playing loud music, and you've got a recipe for a

nascent authoritarian culture and state.

What should be most surprising is the lack of any dissent from what is happening. The press reports CCTV as a positive force in the fight against crime and in the recent coverage of ID cards is only concerned with whether the Union Jack will be on it or the EEC symbol rather than is it a good thing or not.

All the major political parties are in general agreement and in fact we're continually being treated to the spectacle of Labour and Tories leapfrogging each other in their proposed measures over who's toughest on crime and unruly pupils.

The Left, as usual has nothing to say on this issue and no one would listen to them if they did. Even groups such as Liberty don't appear to have much to say on the subject. This is partly due to their inability to see things in political overview and partly because many of the measures won't impact on their middle class sensibilities. So for instance they tend to concentrate on ID cards, CCTV cameras, computer technology and the ending of telephone privacy, rather than on the extra powers the friendly local bobby now has (or his new toy, CS spray).

A good example of this type of thinking is reflected in a recent book by Simon Davies, a member of something called Privacy International and recently seen on television attacking

the Government's new ID card, "Big Brother: Britain's web of Surveillance and the New Technological Order". The book itself is actually quite good in that it details the myriad of ways the state has, or will have, of keeping tabs on us. Davies' thesis is that the growth of computer technology allows, or will do in the near future, the state to centralise information from a wide variety of previously unconnected sources. This includes information from DNA tests, our various social security and health numbers, police records, driving licence numbers, etc. The aim of the government is to match information from different sources about the same individual and spot discrepancies such as someone claiming benefit in more than one area or getting a grant from one council while claiming benefit from another.

The professed purpose of this is to cut down on fraud but a longer term agenda can also be seen behind it; that of building up profiles of individuals and keeping tabs on them.

If ID cards are what is in store for us in the future then Close Circuit Television (CCTV) is already an everyday reality. The connecting link between such diverse places as Liverpool, Glasgow, Kings Lynn, Bromley and Bournemouth is that they all have extensive CCTV networks in their city centres and inner city areas.

According to the Home Office, 95% of all councils are also considering introducing CCTV. This is hardly surprising as surveillance cameras are being touted by the Home Office as a relatively cheap way of cutting crime in shopping and related areas and so drawing people back into town and city centres. They are also big business with the total spent on CCTV in Britain so far being an estimated £300 million, representing another big payout for private security firms and no doubt numerous local council officials.

Despite the big incentive for introducing CCTV being its apparent success in cutting crime, most of the independent (ie. not Home Office or police) evidence is that crime is not cut but only displaced to another area. In a report for the Home Office, Jason Ditton of the Scottish Centre for Criminology, quoted in Davies' book, says that the claims of crime reduction for CCTV are complete fantasy and "all [evaluations and statistics] we have seen so far are wholly unreliable." However this doesn't concern those involved in promoting the cameras as a crime reduction method.

The modern generation of CCTV cameras are no longer static; their angle can be altered by the operator from the control room in any direction they want. Moreover, as Davies puts it, "the system can routinely 'track' individuals as they walk through the city, switching cameras

as the subject moves out of range. The fields of the cameras intersect, so that no one can escape their gaze. System operators and police often follow 'persons of interest' (Do you feel your ears burning?) for miles, creating a comprehensive profile of all activities and contacts." Thus the real agenda behind the facade of crime prevention is the ability to identify and then follow the movements of potential troublemakers and it takes no imagination to work out who these people are: anyone who is outside of official society for whatever reason.

A recent piece by Bruce Anderson in *The Spectator*, reported in an *Observer* article of the 11th August hammers the point home if you're still not quite sure: "We are in the grip of the post-modern vagabond...We have expensively constructed slums full of layabouts and sluts whose progeny are two-legged beasts. We cannot cure this by family, religion and self-help. So we will have to rely on repression".

AFA members leaving a recent entirely legal and trouble-free event were stopped by the police under the Criminal Justice Act and videoed. Then their names and addresses were taken, as well as details of clothes, tattoos and bank details. One activist was told by a police officer "If you ever come after me, you'll have to kill me". At least we're not the only ones who are paranoid.

YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP

"For now the FNP is keeping a low profile. It just campaigns on two issues: restoring the death penalty and attempting to win the right for police to open fire even when not threatened."

Alain Brillet president of the Federation Nationale Autonome de Police on the Front National Police union which won the support of one in seven police in workers councils elections last December giving it fourth position among 18 police unions. *Observer* (3 11.96)

"We have expansively constructed slums full of layabouts and sluts whose progeny are two legged beasts..We cannot cure this by family religion and self help. So we will have to rely on repression".

Bruce Anderson, *Spectator* (August '96). Continuing the fine British media tradition of the *Daily Mail* headline "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!"

"Searchlight believe that the media need to take more responsibility in their reporting. For some it is simply a matter of of confusing fascist activity by a minority around hooliganism with general xenophobic nationalism...for others it has become easier to blame an identifiable group such as C18 for any trouble..."

Searchlight Editorial (June '96). In an eighteen month period between 1993 and 1995 Searchlight 'responsibly' promoted the existence of C18 in three prime-time documentaries. In the two weeks prior to and the week after the riot at Landsdowne Rd, they also, in cooperation with the News of the World, Britains biggest selling Sunday newspaper, provided C18 with prime coverage. Lead stories and front page headlines followed up with double page spreads on three successive Sundays. Searchlight also claimed on C18's behalf that it had "orchestrated" the events at Landsdowne Rd, was a threat to national security and had the "arms with which to carry it out". All in all given the national and international publicity generated for a group that has never actually done anything, this is an advertising campaign par excellence. In commercial terms what would it have cost? A two-minute prime time TV ad costs upwards of £60,000. How much for an hour and a half? Plus the NoW spreads? You try and add it up. Little wonder in the circumstances then, that C18 are an identifiable group.

"...too many anti-fascist groups are motivated by their own sectarian political agendas and have no time or respect for the gallantry and sacrifice of others. We at Searchlight believe we are following the true traditions of the anti-fascist movement when we offer our respect to those who stood and fought against the massive forces of German, Italian and Spanish fascism in Spain in the thirties..."

Searchlight (May '96). Would it be churlish to point out that the true tradition of the anti-fascist movement is actually fighting against the state.

Any member of a political organisation other than the SLP who has been treated as a member of the SLP is entitled to the return of any subscription paid by them because their ineligibility for SLP membership means that they have never been an SLP member."

Some are more equal than others? SLP rule book. *Weekly Worker* (June '96)

"Naturally, I say, we know the British record was terrible, but why did he exaggerate the massacre at the Croke Park sports ground in 1920 by having a tank roll onto the football pitch in the middle of the game? The Black and Tans actually stood on a bridge at the end of the ground from where they fired at random, killing 12 people and wounding 70."

Observer (8.9.96) journalist, Andrew Billen, interviewing Neil Jordan about his new film *Michael Collins*. So there you have it, another piece of cunning IRA propaganda is exposed!

"The Ballad of Joe Hill by Paul Robeson-it's one of the most wonderful songs about ordinary people in struggle against oppression. Well, I'm hardly going to be remembered for licking the arse of the ruling class, am I?"

'Red' Ken Livingstone, interviewed in *The Guardian's* (23.8.96) *What I'd like to hear at my funeral...*

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Supporting membership for a year is £5. Make cheque/p.o. out to Red Action. You will receive a subscription to the paper, a regular newsletter and notification of RA activities. Subscription to the paper are still available at £3 for 5 issues

..Security Alert..Security Alert..

Within a period of less than one month, there has been a concerted attempt by the state security agencies (SB or MI5) to recruit an informer from people in and around Red Action. A number of people have been approached directly. Fortunately all have followed the established procedure and immediately contacted Red Action organisers to alert them of the situation and are now in the process of having their solicitors deal with the incidents.

Although far from being alien to Red Action these types of approaches have been most common in the North of Ireland. Throughout the struggle there, informants have been a vital component of the British war machine. The facts clearly show that those succumbing to the threats or bribes of MI5/SB have been used entirely unscrupulously by their handlers, who pay no regard to their welfare and who never think twice about dumping them once they've outlived their usefulness.

Once entwined in this web of treachery and deceit it can be very difficult to extricate yourself and knowing this, handlers make more and more demands, increasing the misery in what will already be by then a squalid existence.

We would like to reiterate to all readers of RA that the only defence or way-out open to a person who has either been approached, or is already ensnared, is to come forward and outline their situation to members of RA who will help to advise them as well as immediately contacting their solicitor.

CASH APPEAL!

As an organisation Red Action might be considered unique on the British Left for a variety of reasons. However, what instantly distinguishes us from the competition is the social strata our members and supporters are overwhelmingly drawn from. Of all classes in society it is the working class, and unskilled manual working class in particular, that is most heavily represented within our ranks. As a direct consequence we tend to suffer unduly from low pay and no pay. The result is that while the political commitment of the membership may be second to none, the financial commitment can never hope to be better than second best.

This lack of cash has proved a serious handicap in the past. However, with the probable election of a Labour government in the autumn, the radical Left and, we believe, the radical Right, will face new challenges and opportunities. This will be the moment of truth for many on the Left. Some will be found wanting. We will not.

To enable us to match our ambition to the opportunity, we are asking for the first time that our subscribers and regular readers help financially with the deficit. Your contribution will help determine what our influence in the political arena will be.

Make cheques and postal orders payable to 'Red Action' and send them to the London address.

WE ARE RED ACTION

The collapse of Soviet communism has signalled the end of an era.

Capitalism's golden age, defined by the economic and political certainties of the Cold War, has turned to crisis. As a discipline on the entire working class, mass unemployment is restored as a permanent condition. As capitalism expanded, many reforms such as nationalisation, implemented to serve the needs of capital, also served the needs of society. As capitalism contracts, deindustrialisation and the return to the principal of privatisation in health, public transport, housing and education sustains the profits of the wealthy directly at society's expense.

In the short term, open conflict within and between classes is certain. Ultimately, the choice faced will be government without consent or social revolution.

Leninism, which decrees the interests of the working class are subordinate to the will of one revolutionary party, is the decisive influence on the far left. An apologist for the authoritarian state, it advertises the lie that dictatorship (ie minority rule) can be progressive. This betrayal mocks the theory and practice of Marx and Engels and any notion of independent working class initiative. The surrender of the political high ground to the opponents of total social change has paralysed the working class internationally.

Sectarian division on the left continues to be a comfort to a system which socialism promised to replace. Factions, whose immaculate programmes for party dictatorship result in the pursuit of goals exclusive to themselves, contribute nothing to the real movement of the working class, except to

help delay its political renaissance. In all essentials reactionary, they are the socialists of the previous generation.

Anarchism, which claims to be a libertarian alternative to Leninism, could never work. Anarchism means the principled opposition to the exercise of any authority. Accordingly, even the most perfect democracy would be regarded by anarchism as authoritarian as it means the imposition of a social decision by a majority on a minority. The answer to bureaucratic authority is democratic authority, not the abolition of authority.

We must start afresh.

In every country the working class possesses one striking advantage over the capitalists - numbers. However, numbers without unity and unity without organisation is free of political advantage. The purpose of a revolutionary working class organisation is to raise the working class to the position of the ruling class. To transfer political power from the minority to the majority.

Unconditional democracy is the sole political form through which the aspirations of the majority can then be exercised and made secure. A revolutionary organisation must always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole. It must be working class in instinct, composition and orientation. It must be built in a democratic manner from the bottom up, rather than by decree from the top down. Direct democratic control by working people over their own organisations is the necessary preparation for the future rule of working people over their own countries.

IS IT SOMETHING WE SAID?

Even in conservative, deferential Britain, the Communist Party had a sufficient mass following to be able to win two seats in Parliament in 1945. By 1975 the CP was reduced to a couple of seats on the Isle of Dogs.....The collapse on the streets and in the universities is no less dramatic. Apart from a few dozen misguided Red Irishmen, a few hundred Leftist Asians and a couple of thousand sociology lecturers and bulldozers, organised Marxism has ceased to exist in Britain. The same trend may be seen all over Europe.
Nick Griffin, *Spearhead*, Oct 96

"The IRA are a fascist organisation driven by bigoted sectarianism" this amazing statement was made by Sean O'Callaghan a member of an Irish Republican family who first joined the IRA at 15. Perhaps certain "anti-fascist groups will now advocate a "no platform" policy for the IRA and their fellow travellers. We look forward to comments from the "Bhoys" of Red Action and the Troops Out Movement!

Issue no 31 of the League of St George's *League Sentinel* which carries adverts for *Epic*, the true story of the Waffen SS. Also, the Loyalist Prisoners Association. Small world.

On a regular basis members of C18 organise counter demonstrations against pro-PIRA groups such as Troops Out Movement, Red Action and so on...Many of these young men, members of C18 and various right wing groups, risk their liberty and lives for Ulster and regardless what you may think of their beliefs, their sacrifices on our behalf make them worthy of our gratitude, indeed they can be easily classed as better Loyalists than some of our so-called representatives here in Ulster! Editorial from *Warrior* loyalist paramilitary publication distributed by the Loyalist Prisoners Association; reprinted in Searchlight July 96.

If you remember, 3 or 4 years ago the Reds in England were attacking redirection points, gigs, BNP meetings, etc, but after 3 years of action by C18, the Reds are on the run, this was shown recently when C18 went in mob-handed to Manchester, after phoning the Reds up to arrange a showdown, the reds bottled it and were scared to show their faces and this in their so-called stronghold of Manchester where they said we would never go. Well we did and two weeks later it was C18 who chased the Reds off when they tried to attack a nationalist march in London.

No Remorse, Issue 1. Charlie 'Bluff and Bluster' Sergeant's only reference to date to the disastrous consequences of the Derry Apprentice Boys seeking C18 protection this year for their annual London parade.

The only casualties at this year's Loyalist parade in London, which was held behind a huge police operation, were some Loyalist bandsmen from Scotland who were drinking with their families in a different pub from the one the nazis were using." *Searchlight* (June 1996). Their comments on the same march bear a curious resemblance to the verdict of piod, who corralled 80+ AFA militants for 4 hours in order to allow the Loyalists a free run. Funny, that?

A Loyalist Apprentice Boys march in London was attacked by the Anti-Nazi League.

Troops Out magazine Summer 1996. Given that AFA claimed responsibility for events on the day, and the ANL mustered a total of 36 on the day, which gives the Me/UJVF/C18 odds of 15-1, this means: a) AFA are lying bastards; b) the ANL are mad bastards; or c) TOM are sectarian bastards. You decide.

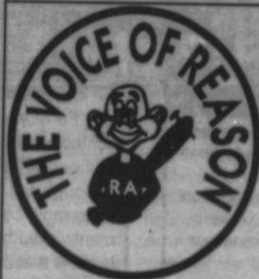
The Spring 1996 issue of the Red Action newspaper contains over two full pages devoted to violent personal attacks on Adam Busby, a Dublin based member of the Scottish Separatist Group (SSG) and Red Action also accuses Busby of involvement in recent letter bombings in Dublin. What Red Action fails to tell its readers is that Adam Busby is currently being held on remand in the Republican Socialist Wing of Portlaoise Prison, Eire and that they choose to attack him at a time when he is awaiting two trials in the non-jury "Criminal" Court in Dublin, on serious charges arising from alleged SNLA activities. But what type of organisation is this self-styled Red Action which allies itself with the British State, to accuse a political prisoner of additional offences with which he has not even been charged? *SSG communique* (July 1996) in response to RA (Issue 73, which came out weeks prior to his arrest) pointing the finger at Busby's curious CV. What kind of self-styled political activist sends letter bombs to militant anti-fascists? Answers on a post card.

The main purpose of the files is to monitor the actions of people with a history of violence. Five prominent groups in this category are Anti-Fascist Action, Direct Action Movement, Workers Power and the largest of all, the Socialist Workers Party. "The most violent of them all" said Potter "are Direct Action Movement. They are the ones with headcases in their ranks who will, for no reason, just go and kick someone who they feel is a right-winger."

Scotland Yard by R. Fleming and H.Miller. A relatively recent Special Branch assessment of the Left. Kick a fascist for no reason? Credit where credit's due.

Now that we have seen that New Labour has abandoned even any pretence of being for socialism a vacuum has opened up on the left of it. There is no automatic guarantee that the vacuum will be filled by progressive or left forces. The fact that the National Front gained 119,000 votes in European elections in London in the 1970's is an illustration of the right being able to fill the space. And it is possible after the resurgence to the right from within the Tory party led by Portillo, Lilley, Redwood and that lot. However there is a big vacuum to the left and there is an opportunity to build a new independent class-struggle based party of the working class.

Dave Nellist former Labour MP *Weekly Worker* November 14 1996
Something we said. Dave.



JESUS FOUND ON WIGAN PIER

ANOTHER SPORTS WORLD EXCLUSIVE

The fate of weeping Christ peers from canal bridge

It is always with great amusement and satisfaction when activity that you have personally taken part in receives the attention of the national press. Over nine months ago members of Wigan AFA and Red Action were busy removing fascist graffiti that had appeared in the town. This is usually nothing to talk about but the eventual consequences of this minor activity were destined to have higher and indeed heavenly consequences that we just had to commit to paper.

On the night in question it was decided to do something about two prominent pieces of graffiti that basically had to go, one reading 'White Power', the other 'UDA' on one of the large bridges on Wigan pier. The 'White Power' slogan miraculously changed into 'shit power' and the UDA slogan was sprayed over with 'AFA'. One might have thought that that would be the end of it, but soon an article appeared in the local press with a picture of the handiwork, but, to our great surprise, instead of the obligatory condemnation we have come to expect from our 'beloved' Labour council over the evils of graffiti, we were surprised to hear that local born-again Christians and the local 'paranormal experts' were claiming that the image of Christ had appeared on a local bridge, and were comparing this to the Shroud of Turin!

After we sprayed over the UDA slogan, which had incidentally been there for months, the local council tried to remove our efforts almost immediately. This appears to be the norm in Wigan, our positive graffiti gets removed overnight, whereas fascist graffiti tends to either remain for months or get ignored altogether by the council.

If one looks at the image in question there does indeed seem to be a face, but the responsibility for it belongs to us, not God. The image in question is roughly 'D' shaped from the original 'UDA', but the eyes, nose and mouth are in fact the 'F' out of AFA. The rest was supplied by the efforts of the council to try to remove our graffiti.

No more was thought about this until similar stories started to appear in the national press, namely *The Sport* (which is not read by Wigan members) on the 23rd of August, and also *The Star* on the same date. It was amusing to see that the religious nutters were claiming that a sticker had also been found over the image with the words "Choose now heaven or hell". Well, the author can state that the only stickers on that bridge were the remains of AFA and Red Action stickers that had been partially removed by local fascists (at one time this bridge was an area that we kept an eye on as fascist stickers were appearing regularly).

It would appear from the newspaper reports that the local authorities are

trying to cash in on our handiwork, as they are considering adding it to their guided tour of the Wigan Pier complex. It has also been suggested that this image is to become the focus of pilgrimages and people have already seen religious nutters holding candles in front of the image! Well Wigan Pier which has for years been the subject of many a joke has again become a joke to which we will own up to. Well if nothing else it would appear that

In some left wing circles the use of the phrase "It was like fucking Monty Python" usually refers to the undercurrent of sectarianism in the film *The Life of Brian* between the Judean People's Front and the People's Front of Judea. However in other circles different analogies are drawn from the same source. Some months ago a representative of the Independent Working Class Association was inveigled into a discussion with a group called the Workers Internationalist League. Now the WIL as good Trotskyites are fervently pro-Labour. So while the rep from the IWCA was lambasting Labour's record past, present and future, the comrades sat silent until one who could take it no longer interrupted. "This" he said "reminds me of a scene from the *Life of Brian*. You know the scene where somebody asks "What did the Romans ever do for us? And someone answers "Well, they built the roads...". "Alright, apart from the roads" "Well, there is the wine" etc I kid you not. Wonderful people, the Romans.

A Glasgow Red Action Branch meeting recently a number of individuals were discussing strategies downstairs in the bar. Attendance at the meeting had not been impressive and some were questioning the political commitment of certain elements. The conversation went to and fro until a relatively new member remarked "If a tree is to grow it needs to be pruned". Everybody nodded in silent agreement as they pondered the implications of this judicious comment. The new found sage basked in the glow until someone piped up "Is that not you started in the parks department last week!"

Southampton BNP psycho Darren Stickland has been jailed for life recently for the murder of local man Sean Muse.

Stickland, a 6'3" tall fitness fanatic repeatedly stamped on Muses' (5'4") head until staff at the local hospital thought he was a car crash victim.

Stickland has been an active fascist in Southampton for many years, and up until the time of his arrest had been organising local boneheads to harass and abuse all sorts of people in the community.

One of his cronies Ray Crooks was told with his pals to harass and intimidate a local couple whose only crime was to have a Polish surname, obviously Jews according to the fascists.

Well, after six months of constant abuse, the couple tried to get help from various groups including ARA, YRE and ANL and failed. Eventually Red Action were contacted and after carrying out surveillance on Crooks, appropriate action was taken. Crooks last words were "Leave me alone, leave me alone, or I'll call the police!" The young couple had no more grief.

As a footnote Crooks went to Sticklands to inform him of his bad luck and Stickland tried all his contacts to find out who RA were, but alas he was out of luck. The closest he came was before a West Ham match a couple of years ago, when he stood on a bar-stool in a pub in London and asked a full pub if anyone had heard of Red Action. Well, Daz, VOR was there and would like to take this opportunity to tell you all about RA. Sorry its taken so long. To make up for it, we'll give you a free subscription till the end of your sentence. Can't be fairer than that?

Finally, VOR found this in the Chicago paper *Revolutionary News*. "The second session's "Current Experiences: Positive/Negative Lessons" began with Dianna Sitar-Sanders noting that Red Action of Great Britain, Ireland and Scotland had apparently never received repeated invitations to participate. Draw your own conclusions"

If anyone anywhere has a fucking clue what this means, would you please contact VOR, as there's a lot of money riding on it.



there is heavenly intervention on our side at least.

At the Socialist Workers Party Annual rally last July a solitary Red Action member was rather gloomily offering a publication of the same name for sale. It wouldn't be accurate to say that business was brisk. While doily going through the motions, he was suddenly confronted by an individual who began shouting in his face. Slightly startled he focused on this individual who appeared to be demanding something. It wasn't until he had repeated the question for a second or third time that he heard the full sentence "Is there anybody from Edinburgh here?". Puzzled, but believing himself to be a victim of mistaken identity he replied in the negative. The questioner, responded with a derisive snarl "Well if there was I was going to do them!" and stomped off.

Cursing the Tories "Back to the Community" project he resumed the sale and thought no more about it. About a week later the subject cropped up in conversation and the mystery was explained. It appears that some months previously Edinburgh Red Action were holding a paper sale in the town centre. By coincidence this happened to be where the SWP normally sell. When they had been there about twenty minutes half a dozen Socialist Workers appeared. While some stood beside the RA sellers others proceeded to stand in front of them. Surrounded. Then they began hawking their wares "S-o-i-a-l-i-s-t-Wo-r-k-e-r-s-i-x-t-e-e-n-p-a-g-e-s-o-f-i-n-s-p-i-r-a-t-i-o-n etc.

Initially amused the RA sellers still felt obliged to remedy the situation. And so with a hefty push in the back that sent one of the Swerpers sprawling the RA contingent opened the negotiations. The SWP attempted to respond in kind and landed on the floor. Undaunted he tried again; same result. Then Danny Gluckstien son and heir to SWP supremo Tony Cliff made a dramatic intervention. Instantly recognising that (a) it was possible to keep a good man down and (b) that from a prone position it was impossible to stand up to bullies and (c) there was no safety in numbers he decided to up the ante. "Stop it! Stop it! or I call the police" he shrieked gesturing towards a phonebox. Warned of the likely consequences of attempting to do so he whined: "But you're bigger than me". Incidentally in case you view of events is coloured by your own memories of that familiar schoolyard lament I should point out that wee Danny is - forty seven.