

RED ACTION

The bi-monthly bulletin of the organisation Red Action • Price: £1 • Vol. 4 Issue 7
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EDITORIAL

"If you look at the statistics and ignore the emotion this was not such a bad result"

Louis Van Gaal commented after losing in the Champions League semi-final to Valencia on May 10. For the London Socialist Alliance who had contested the Greater London Assembly elections a week earlier, it is the exact opposite. In the LSA case: 'if you ignore the emotion, and look at the statistics', calling it 'not such a good result' is to be frank, putting a gloss on it.

However to listen to the SWP one would have imagined the Left had won by a landslide. In the real world, of the one in three who bothered to vote, 98% of them did not vote LSA. "Their one-point-something percentage hailed as an 'extraordinary' breakthrough by SWP spin-doctors pretty much scotches the idea that the Left" in the opinion of *Guardian* pundit Charlotte Raven "will be the ultimate

150 years after the drawing up of the Communist Manifesto for unreconstructed socialists to regard 2.8% of their combined vote as a triumph, is tragic, bordering on the comic

beneficiaries of the current disillusionment with Blair". Evidently 'emotional', sports writer Mike Marquese testily insisted the LSA showing was "exceptional by any historic measure". Exceptional certainly. Socialism cannot hardly have had a worse result this century. 150 years after the drawing up of the Communist Manifesto for unreconstructed socialists to regard 2.8% of their combined vote as a triumph, is tragic, bordering on the comic. But then for some time now looking only on the bright side can be habit forming.

When for instance the SLP attracted 70,000 votes nationally in the general election in 1997, Arthur Scargill vaingloriously announced that the SLP were now the "fourth biggest party" in the country. And even when only two years later, the same SLP polled only 0.68% across Wales, though "exhausted

and shell shocked" a full three months later, an activist felt justified "in gloating just a little that our efforts had been worthwhile".

Thereafter "enquiries poured in" we were assured, leading to "new Constituency Parties being set up" and the SLP generally moving "forward steadily" and so on. Shortly prior to the GLA elections where the once 'fourth biggest party' received exactly half the LSA stipend on the Top Up List, the total membership in its London heartland was estimated at around - twenty - almost to a man incidentally hardline Uncle Joe devotees. For Scargill the general election of 1997, his first, proved to be the beginning of the end, rather than as he imagined, the end of the beginning.

There can be no doubt a similar fate awaits his triumphalist Trot counterparts, unless a serious reality check is enforced. And this time it will be no laughing matter. For if a united Left are not to prove the 'ultimate beneficiaries of the disillusionment' with New Labour is does not require a rocket scientist to figure out who will.

RA BULLETIN

• As readers may have noticed, the June/July issue is in fact July/August. This move has been deemed necessary because of production time lost due to the essential updating of equipment. This means that the next issue will be September/ October.

• In addition, in reflecting increased production costs it has been necessary to increase the price from 70p to £1. All present subscriptions will be honoured.

• For additional clarity it has been decided to dispense with the system of new volumes appearing per six issues, which has caused confusion when ordering back issue, etc. Henceforth all new issue will be listed Volume 4 followed by numerical order.

IT'S OFFICIAL: WE'RE ALL MIDDLE CLASS NOW

There are 59 million people in Britain. For the first time in over twenty years official government statistics examining the wealth differential between social classes, were published in *The Guardian* on May 11.

The report shows the distribution of wealth - as opposed to income - has altered little in the past 20 years. In 1996 over half the total wealth was owned by 10% of the population. In the same year the wealthiest 50% owned almost all the wealth - 93%. In 1997-98 about 30% of households said they had no savings, and over half had savings of less than £1,500.

Only 14% of households had savings of more than £20,000. In 1976 the death rate for babies born to families of "unskilled" workers was more than twice that for babies born to those with "professional jobs."

By 1997 the infant mortality rate for children of unskilled workers had fallen to just under twice that of the professional groups.

So half of the populations households have savings of less than £1,500 and the mortality rate for working class babies has advanced from just over, to just under, twice that of the offspring of those in professional jobs. Oh Yeah. 'We're all middle class now'.

www.redaction.org

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FRONT COVER: Despite gaining just over half the BNP vote in the GLA elections, the LSA are insisting that the Left actually got twice the BNP vote! SEE: Editorial page 2, Big Issue page 3 and Tipton report page 5; for RA analysis.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

RA NATIONAL MEETING 2000

SOME OF THE NEWCOMERS to this year's Red Action National Meeting confessed that the weekend had been a whole new experience for them. Yes, they'd been to party conferences before, but nothing quite compared to this. Back-room manoeuvrings and stitch-ups made way for genuine, passionate, debate. There was little in the way of speeches from those in leadership positions, instead they were expected to argue their positions from the floor like everyone else. The open discussion of differences replaced stage-managed shows of unity. And heated as these discussions became they were carried on into the evening in a spirit of comradeship that eschews the culture of character assassination or the fear of vilification that pervades the internal life of most left parties. This is the Red Action way.

The other thing that most impressed those I had spoken with was the air of reality that dominated proceedings. That doesn't mean to say that what was being discussed had no theoretical anchorage, far from it, it simply meant that everything debated was done so within the framework of practical application. Certainly in my experience this has the advantage of giving the debate a real edge, when most on the left debate in the abstract.

This year the three issues debated which provoked the most controversy was that of drugs and the status of anti-social elements within the working class, the left's perspective on asylum seekers and on what RA's orientation should be to the newly formed London Socialist Alliance. Other areas covered included our work within Anti-Fascist Action, our political and electoral involvement in community-based working class initiatives, the internet, fundraising and Ireland.

Certainly a number of members felt that due to certain key factors the LSA had to be discussed in at least a serious fashion. It was argued that the LSA represents an unprecedented realignment of much of the left in Britain (including the biggest sect - the SWP and the Socialist Party, formerly the 'big guns' of Militant), a formation that stands left of Labour, prepared to oppose them at the ballot box, while operating in a largely democratic fashion by giving equal status to even the smallest of organisations.

To say there was considerable unease amongst the membership with any suggestion of a 'turn to the LSA', would be an understatement. However, it was also recognised that RA members had nothing to fear from any political engagement with the left. Their jaded theory and practice would hold few revelations for our personell. Instead, as we have not been the first to recognise, the relative 'opening-up' of the SWP means that for the first time their cocooned, passive and largely apolitical membership will be exposed to new ideas and new ways of thinking. At the moment confusion reigns amongst the rank and file, characteristically their latest U-turn was completed, in true SWP style, without either consultation or even a New Labour-type focus group, let alone an actual vote (perish the thought). Subsequently it is taking them time to readjust to the idea of getting into bed with those formerly deemed the foe, with those whom only weeks ago the leadership were denying 'Roswell-style' actually existed.

Certainly the consensus amongst our membership was that while most harboured serious doubts about the sincerity and ability of those involved in the project to actually engage with the working class (that the left were merely intent on applying a bit of elbow grease, polishing-up the fittings and rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic) we should nonetheless take the opportunity to pitch RA's politics, to what is for us, a relatively new audience.

Steve Potts



THE BIG ISSUE

"THE NAZIS ARE SMALL. They only managed to get around 60 to 100 votes in many areas", was perhaps the principle reassurance in the election supplement rushed out by *Socialist Worker* (SW) following both the Greater London Assembly and local election results on May 4th. Not only are the BNP pitifully small now, but are moreover "trying to claw back from their all time low after they were smashed in the mid-90's by Anti-Nazi League mobilisations" we are told. A mere half-dozen sentences from announcing how 'small' they are, SW spin doctors ruefully admit "across London they [BNP] polled 47,670 votes". "Half the number" they hurriedly add "for socialist candidates".

Hardly the entire story. Not even close. But then outright lying, dissembling the facts and withholding evidence are pivotal in spin-doctoring's black arts.

In the 'first past the post' Constituencies list, where the BNP did not stand, thus allowing the LSA a free run in the 'radical alternative slot', the LSA managed 46,530 in total.

Only when the LSA is stitched together with the vote of bitter rivals, Socialist Labour, plus the Communist Party of Britain, and adding on the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation and even more dubiously Gay Rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, is SW able to 'legitimately' say, the BNP took only "half" the socialist vote.

In the mayoral election however where the LSA did not stand, the BNP candidate Michael Newland received 78,906 votes, just short of 10% of the 846,686 first and second preference votes that put Red Ken in charge of London, and almost exactly 90% of the total 'socialist' support. And again in the Top-up lists; the only real 'head to head', the BNP spanked the LSA with a resounding 46,670 to 27,073.

in the general election in 1997 the BNP managed a mere half of the 70,000 strong socialist vote. But just two years later in the Euro elections, their 35,000 then almost tripled to 102,000. Significantly bettering in the process, for the first time ever, socialist representatives in national elections. In London the BNP received 18,000 votes in 1999. On May 4th, there was, as we have seen, a quadrupling in the number of voters, prepared to put an X next to BNP.

Ignoring for a moment Hague's shameless stealing of BNP policies on Clause 28, law'n'order and asylum, the BNP result in the GLA election extrapolated, puts the BNP on a staggering 400,000 votes nationally - a ten fold increase in three years. So much then for the 'small Nazi vote'.

Instead we have, for those who can bring themselves to look, the first real sighting of the 'reactionary reservoir' many have sought to deny, and militant anti-fascism has long claimed existed. And thankfully, planned for accordingly.

Why the 400,000 figure appears so startling is because like the ANL, all too many, particularly in the liberal media and the Left, have, for different reasons and to different degrees, long sought comfort in denial.

Denier-in-chief is of course *Searchlight*. When in 1999 the BNP almost tripled it's vote *Searchlight* insisted quite bizarrely, that the BNP 'vote share' had nonetheless depreciated by over a third. 'Failure', 'fiasco'.

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THE BIG ISSUE - continued

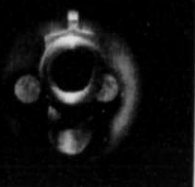
'disastrous', were the soubriquets attached to the BNP campaign then. In *Searchlight*, April 2000, "any comparison" between the 119,000 the NF took in London in 1977, and the electoral pull of their contemporaries was described as "both alarmist and inaccurate". But based on the larger 43% turnout in 1977, the BNP would have easily crashed the 100,000 target - not nationally this time, but in London! Or put more precisely, on current standing electorally, the BNP (4.6%) polling are only about 15,000 less across London, than the NF (5.6%) achieved - at its peak!

Shortly before the election, in an interview with BNP supremo Nick Griffin in the *Independent on Sunday*, the 100,000 votes for the BNP in Euro elections of just eleven months ago was entirely ignored. Instead, in calculating the possibility of an 'electoral breakthrough', the distinctly less impressive 1997 general election returns were used as the reference point. Even then, *Searchlight* toady Nick Ryan, evidently felt compelled to trim even that meagre amount by a third to bring it down to "25,000". Only then did he have a reading that would tally with a typically toffee-nosed, self-satisfied, summing up. Similarly in another extensive interview with Griffin two weeks after the election, Kevin Toolis, only after reassuring the 'Guardian reader' that all the National Front can "muster" these days is "three van loads of skinheads", does he bring himself to mention, and then only in passing, the biggest vote for the British far-right in a quarter of a century. *Searchlight* would no doubt approve: for them too "everything" as openly admitted during Stalin's show trials "is true except the facts".

But then state sponsored 'anti-extremism' rather than simply anti-fascism, is the *Searchlight* raison d'etre. From such a perspective it is as important to hoodwink the far-right as it is the far-left. Not that they generally need much encouragement. Yet another canard raised in the SW supplement and further afield, is the idea that "Hague's rants over asylum are feeding the Nazis", and that race attacks are climbing as a direct result. Race attacks, as has repeatedly been pointed out, have been rising unabated since the electoral demise of the NF in 1979. Thus the Tory playing of the 'race card', even while authenticating BNP 'concerns' long term, self-evidently takes votes from them, in the short term at least. Much as the ANL/*Searchlight* self serving propaganda machine demurs, the 'European pattern' is as predicted, just beginning to repeat itself over here. This is reality. All concerned parties will need to substantially adjust rhetoric on related matters accordingly, 'Less race in anti-racism' would be a positive start.

Big Issue Prediction: Don't hold your breath.

POINT BLANK



West Midlands. Driving them out - or packing them in?

On June 6, AFA stewards attended a meeting called by the SWP/ANL in Dudley, just a mile or two from Tipton (see page 5). The public meeting entitled 'Driving the Fascists out of the West Midlands' inspired AFA to produce a counter leaflet: 'Driving them out or packing them in...' AFA, as the only vocal participants to repeatedly throw a question mark over the continual lies and empty rhetoric of ANL organiser Julie Waterson, were well received by those in attendance from outside of the SWP. Amazing really how Waterson could conduct a two hour 'smash 'em and crush 'em' type meeting and yet only mention Tipton once, two minutes from the end, and in the context of being a 'National Front stronghold'. Finger on the pulse, eh?

Glasgow - Dangerous and self-defeating.

AFA activists in Glasgow addressed a number of meetings recently organised by the SWP/ANL under the banner 'Refugees Welcome Here'. In Govan Hill Scottish Socialist Party as well as the Lib Dems were also prominent. AFA made its point to those assembled, that counterpoising the interests of the refugees directly against the impoverished of the host communities, was dangerous and self-defeating. Only the SSP speaker recognised where AFA were coming from whilst the rest attacked that rationale for the rest of the meeting. One prominent speaker did his credibility no good by referring to the BNP leader as Nick Griffiths!

BNP in Tipton: NURTURING LEGITIMACY

The West Midlands is a key growth area for the BNP. In May they got their highest ever vote - a 50% increase on the previous year - and now look poised to take a council seat in the near future. Bob Martin explains how they're doing it.

One area that both Red Action and the BNP identified early on as a clear and definitively localised template of the BNP's new strategy is Tipton, in the heart of the heavily populated, once industrial Black Country.

The BNP picked up a comfortable 17.2% of the vote here at the 1999 council elections, their biggest percentage ever outside of London. This result, as with other similarly respectable percentages gained elsewhere in the Black Country, owed much to the efforts of husband and wife team Steve and Sharon Edwards, since elected as BNP elections officer and national deputy chairman, respectively.

This year's local elections saw the BNP vote in Tipton Green rise another 50% to 23.7%, in addition to a sizeable 16% share of the vote in the neighbouring Priory ward. All going to prove that the previous years vote was not a 'fluke' or a 'glitch', as some had suggested, but part of an engineered strategy designed to suit a very specific set of political circumstances.

In Tipton the biggest blot on the political landscape is, without doubt, the Labour party, who operate with the cushion of having between 70% to 80% of the Asian registered electorate on-side at the polls. This has prompted the leader of the Tory group on Sandwell Borough council, of which Tipton Green is a part, to successfully call for a criminal investigation into vote rigging at this year's election. Unsurprisingly the BNP weren't far behind in lodging a complaint of their own.

The result of the enquiry is still pending, but Labour's perceived lack of concern for the white working class doesn't end there. The 'racialisation' of the political divide is further augmented by the fact that the Labour party hold their council surgeries in a local mosque, which clearly adds fuel to the BNP argument. Hence, since the 1999 election more white voters support the BNP than Labour. This clarifies, to anyone in doubt, Labour's tactic of courting the Asian population over all others, rather than addressing the essential needs of the community as a whole - something they cannot do without revealing their culpability, and without the will to tackle intense economic and social problems.

BNP work in Tipton is largely centred on core community issues. One early but telling example is the case of a young girl who was raped. The perpetrators were not charged, and the police and council



(top): BNP Conference 2000; (left): the BNP's husband and wife team, Steve and Sharon Edwards; (bottom): AFA members leafletting Tipton Green

failed to take decisive action to move the victim and her family out of the area. It was the BNP that finally brought enough pressure on the council to get the family moved. Such a simple yet resonant deed will obviously not be forgotten quickly by the wider community.

Other efforts made by the BNP's 'Lend a Hand Team', as they call themselves, have been as diverse as increasing police patrols in troublespots, right the way through to helping combat ant infestation. There is a great emphasis on housing issues, as with the work of the IWCA. However, the BNP role is largely arbitral - a simple but effective liaison mechanism for people with practical problems to tap into. Thus enabling the BNP to operate with impunity, temporarily guarded from the menace that was militant anti-fascism, at least until they have established enough of a mandate to resume overt street activity. The BNP know full well that this tactic of steadily nurturing legitimacy will further criminalise and isolate the physical force tradition within militant anti-fascism, as it was prior to the BNP's retreat from the street battles of pre-1994.

The BNP nationally are in no doubt about the strategic validity of such an approach, with even *Searchlight* magazine privately admitting the logistical possibility of the BNP winning a Tipton seat by next May.

As for the left, their political ineptitude is unabated. The icing on the cake though, was the SWP delegate who, when asked who they would be encouraging people to vote for, if not the BNP, replied: "Labour... er... Lib Dem... anyone really!"

The last quote from the void should go to the Tipton Green Socialist Party candidate though, who nervously met a number of burly AFA stewards less than two weeks prior to the election. When asked what issues the SP were covering, aside from 'Don't vote Nazi' came back with, "I dunno really, probably Longbridge... I'm gonna' knock something up when I get home later". The Socialist Party pre-election rally failed to attract a single member of the public and their candidate, Ian Barton, 'swept home' with a suitably uninspired 68 votes.

Generally speaking it's little wonder that the majority of the white working class of Tipton cast their vote for fascism when the alternatives range from nonchalance and corruption, to downright absurdity.

"Tiptons exist across Britain... provide a left wing focus for people's anger!", whined *Socialist Worker* on 13th May. The substitution of genuine representation with empty rhetoric fools no one.



'EDUCATED - TO KNOW OUR PLACE'

Private education is not just a consequence of class privilege but is a condition for it. J. Reilly illustrates how discrimination is built into the system and why, under New Labour, it is becoming even more pronounced.

According to a recent report by the Sutton Trust, working class children have less than 'one in a hundred chance of reaching the top universities'. On top of that though a mere 7% of all children go to private schools they gobble up 50% of places at Oxford and Cambridge.

At the last count this 'magnificent 7%' accounted for seven out of nine senior generals; 33 out of 39 most senior judges; more than 120 of the 180 officers graduating from Sandhurst; half of the 18 permanent secretaries running Whitehall; and just under half of the 94 grade three civil servants then aged under 50. Taken together it is such staggering proof of institutionalised class discrimination that it absolutely dwarfs any known statistics of discrimination based solely on race.

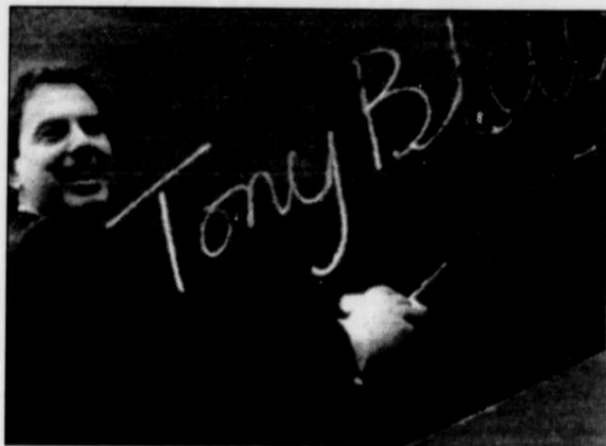
"People tell you there is no class system. Let me tell you there fucking well is!" (Ray Winstone, *The Guardian*, 14.4.00)

Together with existing discrimination, which has remained more or less constant since the General strike in 1926, there is further evidence to suggest, even the meagre gains made in the interim are being rolled back under New Labour.

Martin Johnson, incoming president of National Association of School Masters/Union of Women Teachers, not normally a bastion of radicalism, puts the charge bluntly: "We are back to selection, a more subtle form of selection which brings in the marvels and mysteries of the middle-class housing market". This, he went on, "is the policy of a bourgeois prime minister with absolutely no understanding of how ordinary schools work". (*The Guardian*, 25.4.00)

What does selection mean in practice? It is built first of all on a simple foundation: the in-take of children. Every pupil who want to enter top girls school Rodean sits an exam. So the private schools are selecting talent from the outset. But they are also developing it. It is no secret why private schools do more for their pupils than state schools. Money. "If the government want state schools to offer what we offer they are going to have to spend on each child something much closer to the fees that our parents pay" says Head Mrs Metham. Roedean is paid £10,260 a year for a day girl, roughly five times the amount an average comprehensive is given for each pupil. Be in no doubt such institutions do, and are designed to reinforce class privilege and thus power. But if they are so bloody clever to begin with, why all the extras?

"Pupils at a school like Westminster" for instance "enjoy all the lavish benefits, tiny class, sizes personal tuition, nightly prep, awesome library facili-



ties and sometimes staff who are cosy with the ways of examining boards" according to *Guardian* columnist Decca Aikenhead. "The resources are" she reports "literally limitless - and yet a third of Westminster A-level results last year were not Grades A's". Given their vulgar advantages - "if already so gifted to begin with" it should, she continues, require "a miracle to end with less than straight A's but most of them do." In 1996 for example, "Eton sent 60 boys to Oxbridge which sounds impressive. On the other hand 167 boys didn't get in. If they need all that help just to squeeze a place at Bristol, they are plainly not that clever." (*The Guardian*, 26 3.99)

(Bristol, is ironically one of the universities cited by the Sutton Trust, where the chance "if you are from the less affluent half of the population is only one in 100" - *London Evening Standard*, 10.4.00)

Though accurate, the observation that the offspring of the rich are not always naturally clever, is also ever so slightly to miss the point. It is not the function of the hothouse atmosphere she describes to "actually help individuals to realise their full potential". Even within these narrow confines egalitarianism is not at all the goal. Of course private education is a consequence of class privilege, but as the earlier statistics show, it is also an essential condition for its preservation. In addition to the veneer of being born to rule; the notional sense of inherent and effortless superiority which is equally carefully fostered, is believed invaluable in sustaining the social and political status quo, particularly in times of crisis. What, in political terms this amounts to is nothing less than a form, though perfectly legal, of - minority rule - in perpetuity.

But how with democratic government is it allowed to continue to happen?

Apart from the usual smoke and mirrors, it is done by creating, as in housing, the national health service and so on, a complete alternative to the comprehensive system. Once established, money and resources are then systematically

they piss around
with half baked
schemes and attack
teachers for not
raising standards
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ally falling down
around them

siphoned off to feather nest the alternative. In the case of education, resources that would otherwise go to the other 93% are ruthlessly plundered to exclusively benefit the children of the rich and influential. There is in Europe at present, no other country where private schools represent a fully fledged alternative to the schools system. There are now in Britain, no less than 2,300 private schools with an income from fees of £3.2 billion. On top of that many enjoy charitable status and pay no tax on income at all. Which in effect means that the rest of us are - subsidising them. Clearly private education is bought, and paid for by the rest of us, in more ways than one.

All of which allows a school such as Eton to spend £20,000 per annum on a single pupil. Almost nine times the £2,372 allowed for a pupil in a state school.

But this money doesn't come from nowhere. Simon Szreter an economic historian at St John's College Cambridge found that in the last 20 years Britain has fallen behind just about every other developed country in its investment in teachers for the state sector. "No other democratically elected government in the modern world" he comments has dreamed up this master stroke of actually disinvesting in the educational resources of the nation". (*The Guardian*, 8.3.00)

What's more during the same 20 years, because the Conservatives were cutting taxes and putting more money into middle class pockets enabling more of them to buy their way into private schools, private schools saw that it was financially and politically advantageous to invest probably for the first time, in actively courting a wider range of pupils. Government policy openly concurred with this. Of course the more under funded, the worse the state sector got, the greater the clamour among the middle classes to be let in to the 'safe haven'.

That was the Tories right enough, So what has Labour done about it?

Just over 18 months ago, on July 14 1998 David Blunkett, Minister for Education, announced a spending bonanza for schools. "The government is providing an additional £19bn for education over three years from 1999 to 2002". As the budget for the entire educational establishment in the whole of the UK in 1998 was only £38.3bn this was a huge increase. This he went on, would, in contrast to Tory policy, "give everyone in our society the opportunity to realise their full potential". In reality for the first two years in power Mr Blunkett actually invested less in education than the Tories had.

So what happened to the £19bn? In reality it never existed. Like New Labour spending on the NHS etc it is all largely a conjuring trick. It works like this.

In year one he had a rise of £3bn. In year two, he had a rise of £3.5bn but he added in the original £3bn which he would still be paying from year one, and called it a rise of £6.5bn. Then he came to year three when he had a rise of £3.3bn. but he added in the £6.5bn which he had already committed to the budget in the first two years and called it a rise of £9.7bn. Then he stood back and added-up the total - £3bn plus £6.5bn plus £9.7bn. Hey presto! a - £19.2bn bonanza. But this is not the end of the conjuring. Not even nearly. Not content with the conversion of £9.7bn into £19bn, Blunkett and his ministers have indulged repeatedly in a second kind of scam. This time the money is recycled through a sequence of different announcements by different spokespeople, each time pretending that the unveiling is a fresh investment when in fact its the same old money.

Panorama exposed not too long ago precisely the same trick being pulled on the NHS. But that's not all. One of Blunkett's

proudest achievements, the highly successful scheme to cut the size of classes for infants aged five to seven, is also exposed as fraud. In 1999 the prime minister was pointing to impressive results, with 100,000 more infants in classes under 30. What Tony did not say was that children in every other bracket - nursery, junior, and secondary - were all being taught in classes that were even more overcrowded than when Labour came to power.

Even supposing Labour had the money, would they invest in schooling the many rather than the few?

You have to seriously doubt it. At bottom New Labour are middle class nationalists. Blair himself, genuinely believes in, and actively identifies with the struggles and aspirations of Middle England. With that empathy, comes of course a contempt for all who don't share those vanities. Bigotry apart, the simple fact is that the money is not there. Rather than face up to it, they choose to pretend that it can be found without the painful business of taking off the middle classes, what Thatcher stole for them, from the working classes. Instead they piss around with half baked schemes, mouth egalitarian principles, insist 'poverty is not an excuse' and attack teachers for not raising standards when the school in many cases is literally falling down around them.

In 1991 for instance, as many as 2,000 state schools contacted the BBC's 'Children in Need' project for money to repair buildings and hire more teachers. Almost a decade later and a full three years in power New Labour have not reversed these cuts. Why?

Simply because estimates of the cost of repairing and replacing buildings which were neglected during the Tory years are estimated to run as high as £20bn. The same estimate coincidentally being quoted for the repairs to council housing after two decades of deliberate neglect. Rather than stump up, Labour have decided to offload council housing instead. Off loading the cost of educating the children of the occupants of the flats is something Labour would also love to do. Again as there can be no talk of restitution in regard to resources, the only question that remains to be answered is how?

What in political terms this amounts to nothing less than a form, though perfectly legal, of - minority rule - in perpetuity.

One of the principle battering rams used to attack the very IDEA of state schooling, has not been the systematic withdrawal of funding. That was merely the outcome from the posing of the wider philosophical question on whether or not the children of the working class, needed beyond a rudimentary level, to be educated at all. Unless prepared to take on board the reality of existing society, being at a fairly basic level fundamentally unjust, then broadly speaking, everybody is already, with some minor adjustments, in their rightful place. Any attempts to fundamentally alter the status quo, was to fulfil the political ambitions of, in the contemptuous words of Kenneth Baker, those who would "seek to use education for social engineering".

On the eve of the Second World War working class children were still entitled only to elementary education to the age of 14, with 10% managing to graduate into county grammar schools and the like. And that was it. Now the post war impetus to encourage the working class toward higher education has stalled. Simply because if you deny the role social justice played in education, you remove any logical justification for universal schooling. Politics apart, it makes no economic sense at all.

Back in 1985 some bureaucrats in Whitehall publicly flew that very kite. Might it not be a good idea they ventured tentatively, if the school leaving age was dropped from 16 to 14. After all, as they explained: "There has to be selection, because we are beginning to create aspirations which society cannot match... if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious social conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place." (*Red Action*, issue 20)

American academic Charles Murray author of the *Bell Curve* would certainly recognise the logic. His highly controversial book published in 1994, is based precisely on the premise that "our place in social pecking order depends on our IQ, which is genetically and racially pre-determined and cannot be much affected by schooling environment or class". Another who not only agrees in 'nature over nurture' but is happy to admit it is "the fundamental roots of my beliefs" (*The Guardian*, 20.5.00) is BNP leader Nick Griffin. On May 9 under the title *The Growing Threat of the Underclass* Murray spoke at the Church House in London in a debate sponsored by the *Sunday Times*. Sharing the platform with him was Home Secretary Jack Straw. Hundred to one against and counting..?

Community Resistance

N LONDON Islington

first major victory

THE IWCA is slowly gaining a solid reputation for setting the political agenda in the areas where it is most active. No moreso is this in evidence than in Islington, North London, where earlier this year the local branch chalked-up its first major victory. The following is a report of recent activity in the area:

Just before xmas the Lib Dems won what had been a safe Labour seat in a council by-election, giving them control of the council. This was the first time Labour had lost Islington since 1968.

Immediately Labour settled into opposition mode, condemning the Lib Dems' proposals to sell-off council housing. The IWCA was happy to point out their hypocrisy. In a letter to the *Highbury & Islington Express* an IWCA spokesperson challenged four leading Labour Party members, who had been the most vociferous on the issue, to state where they stood in relation to their party's national policy, described by *The Guardian* as planning to "hive-off all council housing within 10 years". They were also asked "whether they can continue to stay in a party which is, as former Tory housing minister David Curry put it, ensuring 'the triumph of Tory policies'". The subsequent silence was deafening.

This coincided with the distribution of 8,000

copies of the Spring edition of the *Islington Independent* for the Finsbury and Clerkenwell area. The response to the newsletter was almost instant. Two weeks to the day of the first newsletter going out, the leader of the council, Lib Dem councillor Steve Hitchens, announced a new policy of allocating up to 100 flats a year to the sons and daughters of council tenants. This was obviously in direct response to the IWCA's highlighting of the housing crisis and its call for "a comprehensive building programme of affordable housing, with special provision for the borough's young people, to hold our communities together". Soon after the chief reporter on the *Gazette* telephoned the IWCA for information on a follow-up article he was doing.

The best was yet to come. The IWCA had been active on the issue of mobile phone masts, distributing leaflets on the estates affected, sending-out information packs and raising the issue in the press. On April 13th the front page headline of the *Gazette* announced a "Ban on Phone Masts" with the council caving into pressure. The following week a delighted IWCA spokesperson told the *Gazette* that "While the Lib Dems will no doubt claim that this decision reflects their willingness, unlike the previous administration, to listen to the concerns of tenants, we believe it shows that even politicians and town hall mandarins are susceptible to pressure when confronted by effective campaigning by ordinary people".

Recently the IWCA has been to the forefront of the battle with the council and the private company ITNet, who have taken over the housing benefits service with disastrous consequences. ITNet, who are being paid £24 million by Islington council, are responsible for thousands receiving eviction notices, with many tenants being dragged before the courts and at least one person evicted, all because ITNet had not paid them the benefits they are entitled to. A full-page article in the *Islington Gazette* featured IWCA members leafletting a benefit office with a newsletter designed to act as a



photograph from the *Islington Gazette* showing IWCA members leafletting a benefit office in Islington, in response to the borough's housing benefit scandal

campaigning tool, while also providing practical information on how to claim compensation. Both the *Gazette* and *Express* carried the IWCA phone number which has led to the IWCA taking on a number of individual items of casework as well as sending out numerous newsletters. The newsletter has also been distributed to over 170 tenant groups across the borough and won particular praise from the chair of the Pensioners Forum.

Speaking in the *Express* an IWCA spokesperson announced the setting up of a campaigning and support group called *Whose Benefit?* "The group is to concentrate on three main areas; providing legal advice, counselling and assistance for those seeking compensation; campaigning and lobbying to ensure that the issue is kept in the public eye and to being about independent public enquiries in both boroughs [ITNet has also caused chaos in neighbouring Hackney Borough] with the aim of holding those directly responsible accountable for their actions and ensuring that justice is seen to be done for the countless victims".

The profile of the IWCA continues to grow in Islington as it develops a sharp campaigning edge.

GLASGOW The Gorbals

desire for community action

IWCA MEMBERS in Glasgow are fighting to ensure that New Labour's plans to 'socially cleanse' the traditional working class community of the Gorbals are defeated:

The IWCA was recently involved, as part of GAS (Gorbals Against the Sell-offs) in the collection of a questionnaire on privatisation carried out in conjunction with GWCAHST (Glasgow Wide Campaign Against Housing Stock Transfer). As usual the SWP were conspicuous by their absence on this kind of activity.

The IWCA attended the GWCAHST conference which had a poor turnout of 20-25 people, due mainly to the publicity being restricted to 'lefty circles'. Of particular interest though, was a big shift towards grass-

roots community campaigning with the Gorbals flagged-up as a successful model and the attendance of MSP, Tommy Sheridan.

Following the conference the IWCA distributed 3,000 leaflets in the Gorbals area regarding not just the proposed sell-offs but also wider community issues. The leaflet pointed-out that "the Labour government have talked, but not listened to, what the working class has been saying. They expect a successful yes vote which goes against all public polls currently carried out. Their advertising for jobs within the proposed Housing Association is a sure indication of how they perceive the vote will go. With this position, they are shown to be both removed and against the working class who they misrepresent".

A number of calls were received on the back of this activity from local people, including one from an activist already involved in work who wanted to discuss the 'bigger picture'. There was also calls from those active within GWCAHST who were worried about the left's

desire to overrun the campaign and encouraged the IWCA to become more directly involved.

IWCA representatives attended the next steering group meeting of GWCAHST, where the IWCA's proposal to initiate days of action in various housing estates was accepted, with those present urging a plan of action to be put together within the next two weeks. The SWP, who were thin on the ground, had their proposal for a demonstration unanimously voted down.

The desire for community action seems to be becoming firmly established amongst the serious activists. Now talk is of organising a number of social events, especially for the kids, to further encourage the involvement of the local community. A sure sign of GAS's successful impact on the community has been the attack on the Chair of the campaign in the media by Labour MSP Frank McAveety.

HEGEMONY OVER HISTORY

Falsifying history for ideological ends was the damning verdict in the recent Irving trial. But the truth is, many of Irving's opponents

The Hollywood movie U-571 which tells how the US Navy, rather than the British, captured the Enigma code opened in June to a chorus of boos and catcalls from outraged politicians.

More than "a little galling" was how one Cabinet minister put it. Clearly David Irving, is not the only one prepared to re-write history for political or financial gain. Actually far from being the 'biggest revisionist' as claimed, Irving is in fact pretty small fry if placed against the backdrop of the larger canvass. A far more expansive and routine revisionism is printed in the same publications who responded with such relish, to the judges damning verdict of him in the libel trial in April. Unlike Irving, their 'big lie' does not centre, on the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz, or if the totemic figure of 6 million is accurate up to the last cadaver, or whether Jews were done-in directly on Hitler's instruction or not. It is instead a lie mainly of omission. A deceit skillfully created, by the simple but inspired misplacing of the attempted annihilation of the Jews in the chronology of events.

The over arching ambition of the Nazis, it is generally understood, was the total elimination of Jews in Europe. The Anti-Nazi watchword 'Never Again!' is most closely associated with this near genocide. That the Jews were first into the camps, and last out is axiomatic. It has become so, because this is what has for some time been taught as history in schools.

That the Irving verdict was greeted world wide, with jubilant banner headlines: 'Irving consigned to history as a liar'; 'Relief greets victory for truth'; 'History's verdict on Holocaust up held' is understandable considering the level of investment.

Nevertheless the establishment's sense of relief, while palpable, bore no relation to, as Irving portrayed it, the 'David and Goliath' nature of the challenge. Irving though internationally notorious - now - (and liking it so much, he is planning both an appeal and second case against *The Observer*) was before the trial, little known outside academic and anti-fascist circles. And though the 'Holofoax' has been a feature of far-right propaganda for some time neither it, nor Irving, have (until the pre and post trial publicity) had any discernible impact on popular consciousness. Why then the sense of victory? It is hard to imagine similar vindication had

some crank contested the existence of World War 2.

At least part of the reasoning for the near euphoria was explained by the trial judge himself. "I have to confess that in common I suspect with most other people, I had supposed that the evidence of mass extermination of Jews in gas chambers at Auschwitz was compelling". (*Daily Telegraph*, 12.4.00) but found as the trial progressed, to his astonishment that it was not. Much of the evidence, relies on witness statements and is therefore subjective, and so open to challenge. In consequence, such was the tension generated during the trial, that a spokesman for The Simon Wisenthal Centre went as far as to "thank God" that 'Britain's libel laws' had not presented Irving with "a moral victory." (*The Guardian*, 12.4.00)

Fact is, had Irving in his efforts to 'rehabilitate fascism' chosen his ground more carefully: denied for instance Belsen was 'a death camp'; or that while there were gas chambers in Dachau 'they were never used'; or that the notion of soap manufactured from melted human fat was 'a fabrication', it is he and not Penguin and Professor Lipsthadt who would be celebrating the verdict.

According to Irving, key in disproving the use of gas chambers at Auschwitz, was his theory of the alleged 'bottle-neck'. This 'bottle-neck' he insisted was created by the existence of only a single lift shaft connecting the gas chamber in question with crematorium ovens above. 'How could 500,000 bodies - the number estimated to have died in that one crematorium - be transported up a single lift shaft only about 9 ft square? 'How much would the lift carry? How many bodies would that be at say 60 kilos a body?' Irving demanded.

Because by the end of the day, (not unsurprisingly) "nobody had come up with a pat figure that would make such a logistics exercise possible or impossible" *Independent* journalist James Dalrymple confessed that "on the way home in the train that night to my shame, I took out a pocket calculator and began to do some sums...When I realised what I was doing I almost threw the little machine across the carriage in rage." (*The Independent*, 29.1.00).

He didn't though, and when the figures proved "it could have been done" he admitted to a "sense of relief". Something similar had happened previously when out of "compulsive curiosity" following another smear, he conducted his own inquiry and found that "every word of the most famous book of the 20th century" - *The Diary of Anne Frank* - "was indeed true".

Earlier in the year on March 30, Greenwich Council's 'Anne Frank: a history for today' which explicitly links the Nazi genocide with the murder of Stephen Lawrence finished its month long showing. The exhibition was apparently packed with four daily tours of school children every day. Visiting school parties were first shown a 20 minute video of the life of Anne Frank based on her diaries. Along with the video, the children are shown the photos, documents, and other material on display, with sections devoted to the oppression and mass murder not only of Jews but also homosexuals and Gypsies. "There is of course no overt reference to Hitler's bloody oppression and slaughter of commu-

continued
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HEGEMONY OVER HISTORY

continued from page 9

nists, trade unionists and workers, though some photographs of Nazi rallies display banners which bear witness to the anti-Bolshevik and anti-Marxist crusade". (*Weekly Worker*, 30.3.00)

A critical omission to understanding Nazi motivation you would have thought? But this is no accident, nor indeed is it the only example. It is instead part of a widescale, and deliberate falsification of history that puts Irvings' efforts on a par with U-571.

Put simply, the notion of ethnic slaughter for its own sake, precisely because it appears inexplicable, is constantly played up not out any sense of guilt, or out of a loyalty to Israel, but because its serves to conceal the culpability of liberal democracy in the chain of events.

For instance in the USA scores of cities have Holocaust museums, the Holocaust is on the curriculum of thousands of schools, Holocaust films and books, TV series and articles are a staple of American culture. And what are they taught? Of all the "lessons" of the Holocaust, Pastor Martin Niemoller's litany of indifference, and of his own complicity in the escalating brutality of life in Nazi Germany is most used. "First they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew..." is one of the things everybody 'knows' about the Holocaust. Except its not true.

Oh, its not that the good pastor is guilty of telling a porky; no, the original version begins "First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I said nothing. Then they came for the Social Democrats but I was not a Social Democrat - so I did nothing. Then came the trade unionists but I was not a trade unionist. And then they came for the Jews but I was not a Jew - so I did little. Then when they came for me there was no one who could stand up for me."

As author Peter Novick explains in his widely acclaimed new book *The Holocaust in American Life*, the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC is one of many, who in Novick's phrase, "prudently omits" Communists from Niemoller's homily. When *Time* magazine quoted Niemoller, they moved the Jews into first place, and dropped the Communists and Social Democrats entirely.

President elect Al Gore dropped the trade unionists for good measure, and substituted, along with *Time* magazine, and a speaker at the 1992 Republican convention, 'Catholics' who hadn't featured in Niemoller's account at all. Other versions have added homosexuals, while the US Holocaust Museum, while deleting Communists, retains Social Democrats.

Generally the marketing of the 'Jews first/only' version of events is so relentless (in Buchenwald there is for instance a huge commemoration to Jewish victims even though the inmates were overwhelmingly political) it has seen even AFA succumb on occasion. Another more recent 'victim' is Andrew Marr, newly appointed political editor for the BBC no less. While prepared to acknowledge the existence of misunderstandings, half truths, and complete falsehoods in it's telling, he nonetheless feels "his children dangerously ill-educated if they didn't have some emotional awareness of the Holocaust". Not dangerously ill-educated (like himself) though being systematically lied to curiously. Evidently no need for political awareness when some surface emotion will suffice. Safer. Oddly, even more PC somehow. Certainly to question any aspect of the orthodoxy is regarded as verboten for fear of the entire tapestry; the compound of falsifications unravelling.

Yet it is precisely this orthodoxy that *Searchlight* recently committed itself to defending, "with more drive than ever before". Correctly estimating that nothing less than "hegemony over history is at stake". For similar ideological ends the ANL can be even more censorious, even placing pickets on the Russell Crowe film *Romper Stomper*. Others had fits of the vapours over *American History X*, while even more recently, according to reports, the SWP were demanding only 'properly accredited students' be allowed to read *Mein Kampf*.

However even when successful, such efforts at censorship are self-defeating. For once anti-fascism is not anchored by objective reality it ceases to occupy the high moral ground. Thereafter, if historians are prevented from seeking corroboration, "either by Jewish groups who feel that the Holocaust belongs to them, or by Zionists seeking to preserve Israel's 'moral capital'", as DD Guttenplan (*The Guardian* 15.4.00) puts it "the result is blurring between memory and propaganda that serves only the interests of the Nazi perpetrators and the political legates."

Fascist interests certainly, but not only, or even principally.

Falsifying history for 'ideological ends' was let's remember, what the Irving trial was all about. And without any doubt tampering with the chronology renders, as intended, any understanding of the run up and subsequent events entirely to chance. But then the victors write history and a smearing of the lens which doubly damns fascism and exonerates liberal democracy is understandably congenial.

Fact is, the most savage oppression and persecution of the Jews did not begin - until - as recently opened Gestapo files reveal, the Nazis were fully satisfied they had first 'broken the back' of left-wing, mainly working class communist opposition. Not only were communists first in the camps, interned in their tens of thousands literally within days of Hitler taking power in 1933, but were beaten, tortured, seriously wounded, or killed with, as historian Ian Kershaw records, "total impunity". Total impunity was guaranteed because, "faced with a stark choice between National Socialism and Communism, - most middle class, well-to-do Germans preferred the Nazis. "The Communist were revolutionaries, they would take away private property, impose a class dictatorship... the National Socialists were vulgar and distasteful but they stood for German interests and would uphold German values and they would NOT take away private property" was how in his book *Hitler 1889-1936*, historian Ian Kershaw summed attitudes up. (Consider for a moment the prospect of 'working class rule' and then consider on what side democrats such as Blair and Hague would have reacted and you have a snapshot of how events in the Weimar Republic actually unfolded).

Generally it was felt the 'Reds' had it coming. What 'had it coming' meant in practice was described by Gestapo chief Rudolph Diels. Describing the custom and practice inside of one of Berlin's prisons within a few months of Hitler coming to power he recorded: "The 'interrogation' had begun and ended with a beating. A dozen fellows laid into their victims at intervals of some hours with iron bars, rubber coshes and whips. Smashed teeth, and broken bones bore witness to the tortures. As we entered, these living skeletons with festering wounds lay in rows on the rotting straw."

Atrocities such as this were in full swing a full five years before 'Kristallnacht' officially signalled Jews an enemy of the state in 1938. So when Pastor Niemoller recalls that 'communists came first' he was hardly exaggerating. That there was widespread 'indifference' cannot be denied either. That he 'did nothing' was also true for the many rather than the few. That this litany of indifference included middle class Jews is not contested either.

Recently a new and permanent exhibit to the Holocaust situated within the Imperial War Museum was opened. Needless to say the victims who by and large regarded the crushing of the working class opposition with approval, indifference or at best hand-wringing are revered, while those who formed the resistance, who physically fought against the coming dictatorship are scorned.

'A little galling' doesn't quite cover it somehow.



NOT WAVING...



Neither London Nor Chicago?

This dispute was, ostensibly, about what the SWP perceived as the failure of the ISO to take account of the new "anti-capitalist mood" (?) sweeping the globe. This 'failure' was compounded by the ISO's inadequate intervention in the "Battle of Seattle" during demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation.

Initially, the SWP's perception of the American organisation's inadequacies centred on a numbers game. Not enough importance had been attached to the demo by the ISO and therefore the numbers eventually mobilised by them were insufficient to making a proper political intervention. The arguments between both organisations take on 'Life Of Brian' exchanges - but, obviously, without the humour. Together they number crunch until the ISO point out some of the distances involved in mobilising almost their entire membership as the SWP advocated to the Seattle event. "To make the distances clear to comrades, the distance between Seattle and Chicago is greater than the distance between London and Moscow. The Bay Area, referred to in the letter as the 'closest district' is almost as far from Seattle as London is from Vienna..." This is treated as a mere detail and proof of the ISO's lack of revolutionary commitment. Unlike the battle-hardened revolutionary shock troops of the SWP.

More important and even more comical are the SWP's complete misreading and overestimation of the events in Seattle. This is not just a problem that affects the SWP. It is something that runs right through left wing groups internationally. From Stalinists to Trotskyists to Anarchists - they believe that Seattle represents a "turning point" and that the world is now in a "pre-revolutionary situation." Turning reality on its head - of the working class being in retreat and having no representation internationally; of the rise of the far right throughout Europe; not to mention the crumbling organisations of the revolutionary left - the SWP and others argue that, rather than staring at defeat, we are actually on the point of victory!

To further emphasise the ISO's misinterpretation of events in Seattle (the ISO are no angels here because there is a cigarette paper-thin 'gulf' between them and SWP

The recent fallout between the SWP and their fraternal organisation in the USA, the International Socialist Organisation, speaks volumes for the method of analysis employed at a leadership level. S. Harper outlines the implications for the rest of us.

theoretically) the SWP roll out all of the theoretical big guns like Cliff, Callinicos, Trotsky and 'Old Baldy' himself, Lenin, in order to drive home their point that the "anti-capitalist mood" of Seattle represents the first wave of a revolutionary tide. Bizarrely, because they can't find a quote from the ISO to fit their next devastating use of Leninist theory, Cliff and Alex Callinicos quote the attitude of the French Trotskyist organisation Lutte Ouvrier - who are not affiliated to the SWP's version of the Fourth International - to Seattle. Having neatly fitted the ISO into the Lutte Ouvrier camp, they end with this revolutionary flourish:

"Lenin attacked precisely this kind of abstract sectarian 'Marxism' when he rounded on those revolutionaries who dismissed the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin as a 'petty bourgeois putsch'"

So, there you have it. Seattle represented to the SWP leadership, not just proof of "a growing anti-capitalist mood" to be followed by revolutionary ferment; Seattle was our Easter 1916 as well!

As the ISO point out in their reply to this nonsense, the SWP are not exactly on sound theoretical ground when it comes to their estimation of the new "anti-capitalist mood": "If we followed the same method, we might ask you why you've decided the Green slogan 'Think globally, act locally' - which incidentally, you can find plastered as a bumper sticker on thousands of yuppies' Volvos in places like California and Vermont - is 'almost Leninist'" ?

The main driving force here appears to be the SWP's obsession with piggy-backing whatever the revolutionary flavour of the month is in order to build their own forces. And recruitment to "the party" is the object of the 'new turn', both in Britain and internationally. "The anti-capitalist mood offers our party the prospect of real growth." And they go on to reveal the true intent of the exercise by stating: "To aid this process, we must use the united front tactic."

In order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by this worldwide clamour for revolutionary politics the SWP offer their own unique interpretation of the Trotskyist 'united front' theory. That is; present your 'front' organisation publicly as a 'united front' - even an "Alliance" in the case of the LSA - and then attempt to Hoover up all of those elements of the left who are attracted by the rhetoric by inviting them to Marxism 2000. Cynical? Not nearly as cynical as these chancers cynical as these chancers.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Steve Potts reviews the first edition of *Fourthwrite*, the new journal of the Irish Republican Writers Group

THE IRWG DESCRIBES itself as "small in number, an amalgamation of people inclined towards radical politics, including both those who oppose the Belfast Agreement and those who support it" defining its aims as facilitating the "discussion and analysis of republican ideas. Of primary interest are those ideas which deal with strategic matters and which address the question 'what is to be done?'"

Edited by ex-republican prisoner Anthony McIntyre, the contributors to issue one include two of the 1980 hunger-strikers, Brendan Hughes and Tommy McKearney, who was also one of the founders of the League of Communist Republicans in Long Kesh during the mid-eighties. And in emphasising an open approach to debate, what it calls "Wolfone's philosophy of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter", *Fourthwrite* also contains an article by Unionist and David Trimble advisor, Steven King.

What sets it apart from other publications critical of the Provisional movement's strategy, is that it avoids the crude analysis of sell-out parroted by those on the left or the simplistic doctrine of 'back to war' that often appears the sum total of strategic thinking amongst the various republican splinter groups. As Tommy McKearney states in the opening article 'Republicanism in the 21st Century', "others think that supporting armed struggle is of itself somehow the essence of republican fidelity", whereas correctly, McKearney makes the point that "[republicanism] must be a living, vibrant philosophy or it becomes a stagnant mantra".

So what does *Fourthwrite* offer us instead? The central thrust coming from the main contributors runs something like this: 'that the peace process has enabled the British and Free State governments to successfully integrate republican revolutionaries into establishment politics. That far from Sinn Fein changing the system, the system will actually change Sinn Fein, with pragmatic accommodation replacing cherished principles. That Sinn Fein is now treading the same, well-worn path taken by the Workers Party during the '70s when what was being offered from the Brits then was no worse than what is on offer now, and certainly wasn't worth a further 20 years of war. That SF has become little more than an electoral machine, which has begun attracting the nationalist middle classes and is creating a class of professional, republican, politicians, from the Brits' funding of numerous community projects, even to the point where some stand to gain personally from these. That the traditional loyalty to the republican movement, crucial during the war years, is now being exploited by the leadership to stifle genuine debate'.

Undoubtedly the rapid growth of SF will attract ambitious members of the nationalist middle classes who, while conspicuous by their absence during the war years, will be quick to recognise that SF is fast becoming a force to be reckoned with, north and south. Already the speculation in the media is more about when rather than if, SF will enter into coalition government in the south. Certainly SF is not, nor would it claim to be, a communist party, the republican movement is a broad church, incorporating elements of both radical and conservative Irish nationalism. The road ahead is full of dangers and there are no divine guarantees they won't be sucked-in by the old order, forced to compromise their principles, until their principles become meaningless in the same way many argue has already happened to the ANC.

At least for the moment though, this remains purely conjecture. SF are probably the only progressive political party in the whole of Western Europe that can boast a leadership, membership and support base made-up overwhelmingly from the working class. It has taken up and campaigned on social issues with vigour, winning it support not just in what the media like to call, 'the ghettos' of the Bogside and Ballymurphy, but across whole areas of Ireland. It is also at the cutting edge of new thinking amongst working class communities, the Community Restorative Justice initiatives, are clear evidence of that.

What really stands out from the first edition of *Fourthwrite*, however, is not the strengths or weaknesses of the analysis offered (that will depend on your own viewpoint, and Red Action's own thinking on the Peace Process will be familiar to any of our regular readers), but the stark fact that not once amongst the eleven main contributions does anyone seriously attempt to answer the question, 'what is to be done instead?' Only when this matter is properly addressed might *Fourthwrite* become part of the 'must have' set.



Former republican POW and blanketman, Cathal Crumley, pictured shortly after being elected mayor of Derry, the first Sinn Fein mayor of an Irish city since 1920. Subverting the establishment, or becoming its newest member?

To obtain a copy of *Fourthwrite*, to contact the IRWG or submit an article, write to : *Fourthwrite* @ PO Box 31, Belfast, BT12 7EE or e. mail: Mackers1@cableol.co.uk website: <http://homepage.eircom.net/~repwrite>



Something We Said!?

The renewed presence of Sinn Fein ministers in a northern executive will make it all the easier for Sinn Fein ministers to be accepted in the South... republicans will thus be able to progressively integrate the two jurisdictions from both sides of the border. Once embedded in the structures of the southern state, Sinn Fein will further be able to radicalise the Republic - a process which is already well under way.

Daily Telegraph Leader, 8.5.00

It was once thought that in the course of the peace process, republicanism would become constitutionalised. It now seems more likely that constitutional nationalism is becoming republicanised. Arthur Aughey, Senior Lecturer in Politics University of Ulster, *The Observer*, 7.5.00

A memorial, a statue, a McDonalds, and a ticket office, what big men they must be? *Daily Mirror*, 2.5.00

None of the mayoral candidates has departed in any serious way from the government's horrible asylum agenda... By contrast all the LSA candidates have used their platforms to say that refugees are welcome here, and they have met with loud applause at dozens of meetings all over London. 'Comedian', Jeremy Hardy, *The Guardian*, 29.4.00

In early Nineties, the Australian Labour Party started to suffer from the attrition of their core supporters. Where did they go? They stayed at home, A conversation last week with Australian politician Wayne Swan indicated that 'things have moved on'. 'Many-stay-at homes' now do turn out to vote - for the xenophobic extremism of Pauline Hanson. Former Labour Minister Peter Kilfoyle, *The Observer*, 16.4.00

The phrase 'socialist movement' is now, itself, a sign of defeat in it's quaintness: even 'Labour movement' has gone out of fashion as the trade unions and the party seek their salvation separately. John Loyd, *Scotland on Sunday*, 5.3.00

We have decommissioned the boot. BNP leader Nick Griffin, *Independent on Sunday Magazine*.