

Red Action

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POACHERS AND GAME KEEPERS

By Pat McPhillips

The present crisis in the NHS in Britain and the occupied six counties was imposed by Thatcher as part of her ongoing war on socialism. To believe it is because funds are not available or that competition from the 'private sector' is necessary to improve the quality of the NHS is to show naivety.

The main theme of last year's Tory conference was to destroy socialism, denationalise key industries and services and to promote what can euphemistically be termed 'popular capitalism.' It is in this context the attack on the NHS must be seen.



Angry nurses demonstrating for better pay and conditions and a better NHS deserve the maximum support from employed and unemployed workers.

This is evidenced by the present position of the health unions, who are, more or less, left to fend for themselves.

MORAL DILEMMA

BUREAUCRACY

SOLIDARITY

There is, however, a way around the "moral dilemma" imposed on them by Thatcher and that is for the unions of other industries, services, etc., and indeed socialists in general to shake off their apparent apathy and lift this burden from the health workers by taking up the struggle on their behalf. After all, the destruction of the NHS will be most felt by the working class itself. Mere words of solidarity will not suffice; "Solidarity requires that one enters into the situation of those whom one is identifying." Other unions, etc. can do this by operating a work to rule; by staging lightning strikes; by joining demonstrations, even if only at lunch breaks or on days off.

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

Unemployed workers could also be mobilised to demonstrate. Because a worker is unemployed does not mean s/he must become detached from working class politics and developments within the working class. Quite the contrary. Only such a united, class-conscious approach can halt the evident decay of working class solidarity. It is the clear duty of the more revolutionary elements within the working class movement to expose the incompetence and opportunism of much of the present leadership. The worst kind of battle is the one not confronted. This battle is one that the working class ignores at its peril.

To "destroy socialism," Thatcher felt she must break the trade unions. Violent clashes such as the attacks on the miners in 1984-5 were largely counter-productive so a new strategy was needed whereby a strike by workers could be presented as reactionary or even immoral. Using this line of 'reasoning,' we can see why the NHS was singled out. The main weapon of a union is the ability to withdraw the labour of its members. However, this poses a "moral dilemma" for those dedicated to preserving life and caring for the sick, a fact not overlooked by Thatcher. Another weakness is the division of union membership in the NHS itself.

But Thatcher gains greatest encouragement from the biased attitude of the leadership of the trade union movement as a whole and the lack of any real solidarity among the unions. The trade union movement has been hijacked by an increasingly opportunist leadership and bureaucracy, given for example, to instituting 'no strike deals,' etc. A classic case of "poachers turned gamekeepers." Solidarity between unions is now virtually a myth with individual unions simply fighting for 'respectability' and looking after their own sectional interests instead of becoming the "ever expanding union of workers" that Karl Marx envisaged; thus inviting attack.



Striking NUPE nurses on the march, the TUC is nowhere to be seen.

KILL THE BILL

Red Action article

The Bill, introduced by Liberal MP David Alton, which seeks to reduce the time limit in which women may legally seek abortions from the present 28 weeks after the start of pregnancy to 18 weeks, having already successfully passed its first two readings in the House of Commons, is due to receive its third and final reading on 18 March. This means that there is a very real chance that the Bill will become law very soon. The great threats that this poses to the rights of women have been well documented in numerous socialist and progressive publications including recent issues of Red Action.

The Bill seeks to immediately outlaw many of the large numbers of abortions performed because of the discovery of an abnormality in the foetus as the tests for most kinds of abnormality cannot show a definite result until after the 18 week stage.

Supporters of the Bill argue that, by the 28 week stage, a foetus is so highly developed as to make abortion morally indefensible. Yet this argument ignores the fact that the number of abortions actually performed around that stage are a very tiny fraction of all abortions and represent, in most cases, the most unusual or extreme circumstances. For example, young girls, unaware they have become pregnant or who have tried to hide their pregnancy or the mentally ill in whom pregnancy was discovered late or older or infirm women who thought themselves incapable of conceiving.

In a sense, the 28 week limit serves as a kind of safety net for such cases. No woman chooses abortion at any stage. She has an abortion because it is forced upon her by circumstance but, certainly, no woman would choose to wait until the 28 week stage unless the circumstances were such that she could do nothing else. It is this safety net for the most desperate and unhappy cases which Alton and his supporters are now trying to remove. Their plea about the "sanctity of life" in support of the Bill is exposed as hypocrisy when the majority of MPs who support Alton's Bill also voted for the return of capital punishment.

The real issue at stake is not whether there is a certain point at which abortion ceases to be morally justifiable. The attempt to push this Bill through is just



The anti-abortion SPUC seek a return to the 'good old days,' another battle in the ongoing war between those whose eventual aim is the complete abolition of the right to abortion (Alton and all his supporter readily admit that this is their position) and those who seek to defend that right.

COMPROMISE

If the anti-abortion lobby won this battle, then they will begin the next battle on stronger ground. Having established an 18 week limit, they can then demand a ten or twelve week one. Even if there is, as is being increasingly predicted, a compromise conclusion to the current debate with a 24 week limit, it would still be a victory for the anti-abortionists. Perhaps, next time they will demand 14 weeks and compromise on 18.

This present battle is now entering its final phase. Previous attacks on abortion rights have been defeated at the third reading stage. A similar Bill, introduced by MP John Corrie in 1979 is an example. One of the crucial factors in the defeat of Corrie's Bill was the success of the public campaign against it, which managed to unite all the political and social groups and movements who were opposed to the Bill. A highlight of that campaign was a massive demonstration in London, which attracted the support of an

estimated 100,000 people.

PRESSURISE

The role an event such as this can play in a campaign should not be underestimated. It may not have much effect on those MPs already committed to supporting the Bill but such a massive display of the extent of the opposition which exists, can certainly have an effect on those who are undecided and pressurise them into siding against the Bill, for the simple reason that they don't want to upset or alienate large numbers of constituents. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Corrie Bill.

On 19 March, the Fight Alton's Bill campaign is organising a march in London, which aims to provide a similar display of the extent of the opposition to the current Bill. A massive turn-out will only be achieved if every single group involved in the fight to defend a woman's right to choose on abortion works to build the massive possible support for the demonstration.

We urge all of our supporters and anyone reading this to make sure that they are there and to do their utmost to bring as many others as possible with them. DEFEAT THE ALTON BILL. DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Inside this issue.

REAGAN'S BACKYARD

plus SHOOTING TO KILL

REAGAN'S BACKYARD

FOCUS ON CENTRAL AMERICA

HAITI AFTER DUVALIER

From an overseas correspondent.

On 7 February, 1986, the Duvalier family and their entourage left Haiti and went into exile. The rule of the Duvaliers in Haiti had seen the death of some 30,000 political opponents at the hands of the Duvalier's private militia, the Ton-Ton Macoute. Popular protest had led to the demise of President "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who had become President on the death of his father, known as "Papa Doc." The streets of capital Port-Au-Prince echoed to songs of liberty and democracy but what of the new US-installed CNG government? Haiti is one of the world's poorest nations, with an illiteracy rate nationally of 85 per cent.

During a general strike a year after the Duvalier departure, the new government showed their true colours when it backed the Ton-Ton Macoute's killing of 30 peasants in a country ambush. The Ton-Ton Macoute had survived through their own strength and independence - no-one was strong enough to disarm or disband them - and the new government, which was supposed to bring democracy and liberty, were seen to be working hand-in-glove with them to preserve a Duvalier policy without a Duvalier.

NO CHANGE

The CNG government showed no intention of wanting to change things in Haiti. No improvement in the poverty and illiteracy levels took place. The people cried out for schools to educate the children but no schools were forthcoming. While children worked in conditions of slavery with one meal a day as their only wages, the great landowners, who had been the backbone of the Duvalier support, continued to live the same life of luxury as they always had.

Where the CNG particularly distinguished themselves was in arranging a general election. A few days before election day, polling stations were attacked and occupied by the Ton-Ton Macoute. The election was put back. Intimidation of candidates and election workers was the norm and political leaders, who had been in exile through the Duvalier years, were barred from standing on the grounds that, having lived abroad for so long, they were equivalent to foreign nationals.

As a result, only pro-Duvalier and pro-Ton-Ton Macoute candidates were still in the race by election day. The electorate largely boycotted the elections but the Ton-Ton Macoute and the army forced many to cast a vote and caretaker President Henri Nemphy went on TV and radio to tell Haitians that it was their democratic duty to vote. It appears he did not regard it as his provisional government's democratic duty to ensure there were candidates they wanted to vote for.

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Leading oppositionist priests Father Quistide and Father Vincent were pressurised by the Catholic church to try to make them come out in support of the elections. This they refused to do. In the

event, the provisional government candidate, Leslie Maninga, a Duvalier supporter, was "elected" president.

UNCLE SAM

The orchestrator of these goings-on, you will not be surprised to learn, was good old Uncle Sam from the land of freedom and opportunity. The US helped force Duvalier out, installed the CNG provisional government and "advised" the CNG during the lead up to the election. Haiti's closeness to communist Cuba is the reason for this.

The US has a base in Cuba but must leave in the 1990s. They want to re-site the base on nearby Haiti. To ensure they can go ahead with this, the US upholds the dictatorship, violent oppression, underdevelopment and illiteracy in Haiti.

REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

The future looks ominously like the past and the government of Maninga is barely short of the totalitarianism of Duvalier. But the national boycott of the election by people under the most severe pressure to vote suggests a spirit amongst the Haitian people which gives hope for the rising star of the revolutionary left now re-organising in the wake of these events and promising to take on the government, Ton-Ton Macoute and all.



Above: The strength of the FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador means that these government troops are out in force to protect a military funeral.

Far right: FMLN guerrillas.

Right: President Fidel Castro of Cuba; ousting the US, who are now looking to re-locate in Haiti.

During an interview on Channel Four about the continued US support for the Contras, US political adviser Michael Devine illuminated the discussion with his comment "A lot of good things are going on down there (Central America) but Nicaragua is the one exception." Is that true? Do you believe him? Well, it's not true but you don't have to believe us either. The following is the most recent assessment of the political situation in Latin America by an internationally reputable magazine called Index On Censorship.

PERU

Following 75 days of hearings and deliberations, a 189 page report on the killing of 249 guerilla prisoners in the capital Lima last June has been produced by opposition members of the Peruvian Congress. Primary responsibility for turning the armed forces on the prisoners and permitting a bloodbath is assigned to President Alan Garcia and his cabinet. Most of those killed had already surrendered and all were unarmed.

COLOMBIA

From 1981-86, 3547 journalists, trade unionists, members of civic organisations and opposition parties have been murdered according to the Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights. Ninety-nine per cent were leftist or democratic opposition figures. "The facts that the bodies did not show signs of torture indicates that there was no involvement by the military forces," claimed the newspaper El Tiempo in August, 1987. In July, Don Johnson, political officer at the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa had said "These disappearances that are alleged to have taken place, stopped in 1982."

ECUADOR

During a general strike on 28 October, 1987, all privately-owned radio stations were ordered to broadcast only government network programmes. Three refused and were shut down within 24 hours. Newspapers were ordered to print the "official truth only" and television ordered to refrain from

broadcasting interviews with trade union leaders. Figures show that, for 1986, the US had given military supplies to Ecuador worth 79.4 million dollars.

GUATEMALA

Two Central American organisations, the Committee for Christian Solidarity and Guatemalan People and the Central American Association for the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared, have denounced the continuing criminal action of the army. They issued appeals to President Cereto to put a stop to violent human rights abuses. At the same time, the media reported a growing number of assassinations, kidnappings and disappearances. Approximately four such acts take place daily.

EL SALVADOR

On 19 November, 1987, President Duarte finally blamed Major Roberto d'Aubisson for assassinating Archbishop Romero as he was celebrating mass in 1980. D'Aubisson, who heads the right-wing Arena party, is known to have been involved in the "death-squads," responsible for tens of thousands of civilian deaths between 1979 and 1983.

The bodies of 13 people - bound, blindfolded and showing signs of torture - have been found during the latter half of January, 1988 according to the Salvadorean Human Rights Commission. "Amongst them were two women who had been hung from a tree by their hair. Their breasts had been cut off and their faces painted red," said the Commission. A

UNCLE SAM — DANCING WITH THE DICTATORS

By Gary Otterburn.



Commission member was shot dead by an unknown gunman in San Miguel in December, 1987.

US military aid to El Salvador was worth 122 million dollars in 1986 and the total amount of US aid is estimated, by a US congressional group, to be the equivalent of 81 per cent of the 1987 Salvadorean budget. The US money is, to cut a long story short, buying off the generals from staging a military coup. The FMLN guerrillas are a strong threat to the Christian Democratic government and the generals would like to strengthen the military's hand by taking power.

NICARAGUA

On 22 November, 1987, the government released 985 political prisoners. Amongst them were over 200 of former President Somoza's National Guard. Many of the rest had been in prison accused of collaborating with the Contras.

ELSEWHERE

Lack of up-to-date information, and lack of space, prevents publication of reports on the political situations in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia and so on. US diplomatic and financial support for these countries is designed to meet and counter any political challenge to the status quo that might endanger US interests.

US support for the dictatorial dynasties of Chile's Pinochet and the like. While the US acknowledge, as they also did in their support for Marcos in the Philippines Duvalier in Haiti, that these dictators are vainglorious opportunists, thieves and butchers, they are first and foremost staunchly anti-communist. Might is right is the US attitude. In some diplomatic circles, this is known as the "Sonofabitch Scenario" after former US President Lyndon Johnson's famous remark that the then Nicaraguan dictator, Somoza, might be a sonofabitch "but he is our sonofabitch."



Top: US-backed government troops in El Salvador. Above: Sandinista trains Nicaraguan woman factory worker to use weaponry.

Clearly Panamanian strongman, General Manuel Noriega (known as Pineapple Face by his devoted subjects as he suffers from an unfortunate skin condition) is still a "sonofabitch" but, as he has just been indicted by a Grand Jury in Florida, USA on drug charges, he is no longer regarded by the people that matter as "Uncle Sam's Sonofabitch." Changes are therefore to be expected.

PRISONERS

We make no excuse for again bringing to the attention of our readers the Republican Socialist Prisoners' Support Groups which Red Action has been instrumental in setting up following discussions with Irish Republican Socialist Party representatives. Each support group sponsors an IRSP/INLA prisoner, of which there are more than 40, mainly in jails in Britain and Ireland.

Each group sends £8 (married prisoner) or £7 (single) to assist with paying for relatives to journey to visit or to look after dependants. A particularly interesting aspect of the sponsorship is contact by post with a prisoner. If you wish to help, please contact the RA box number. We still have some way to go before all IRSP/INLA prisoners are sponsored. These people have put their necks on the line to fight for socialism. Surely a small amount each week and the odd letter to one of them is not beyond any committed socialist.

SHOOTING TO KILL

COVER UP IN IRELAND

By Frank Gerard

John Stalker, former Assistant Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, was appointed to head an inquiry into allegations that RUC and British army policy in Ulster, when they came across people they suspected to be Republicans, was to shoot-to-kill. The authorities have always said there is no such policy but Stalker was taken off the inquiry, apparently because he was about to expose, not only a shoot-to-kill policy but a policy of covering up such incidents as well.

Stalker recently published a book about the affair and, on its publication, RUC chief Sir John Hermon went on TV to cast all kinds of doubts about the integrity, ability and competence of Stalker. Another senior police officer, this time from Cheshire, is now head of an inquiry into the inquiry.

in error and therefore at random, actually hitting the only other person in sight and causing a death? How many million to one?

MCANESPIE MURDER

The same week that Hermon was libelling Stalker to the world at large, Aidan McAnespie (23) from Aughnacloy, Tyrone was shot in the back and killed as he crossed the Irish border near his home. He was on his way to play football for a Gaelic club just over the border in Monaghan. The British army admit it was one of their men who killed him but claim it was an accident.

The army say that a gun went off by accident as one soldier was passing it to a colleague and a bullet hit McAnespie. First reports in the media said McAnespie was a Sinn Fein activist but this claim was dropped from later reports. Local people say that McAnespie crossed the checkpoint each day to go to work and was subjected to constant harassment from the troops manning the post.

CARELESS

The army are trying to make out that two soldiers, highly trained in the use of weapons, were so careless as to allow the gun, not only to go off in error, but to do so when being held at a level and pointing in a direction where someone walking or driving along a public road would be in the line of fire. Even if we accept this unlikely account on the grounds that a mistake was made, what are the chances of a bullet, allegedly fired



British troops shooting to kill in occupied Ireland and the politicians stay silent, yet they condemn Israeli troops in occupied Palestine.

Again, in the very same week, it came to light that squaddy Ian Thain, who had been jailed for life for murdering Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly in Turf Lodge, Belfast in 1985, was now out of prison after serving only two years and was back with his regiment in Germany. Reilly had been shot in the back while walking away from an argument between an army patrol and some local youths. His father said, at the time, that he always walked away from potential trouble. The trial judge told Thain that he was disgusted by his attempts to justify the murder by lying about the incident in court.

With the army making out that the McAnespie murder was an accident, with the state releasing a murderer of a young Nationalist after only two years of a life sentence and with the army welcoming him back with open arms, I think I can save the government a lot of money. Who needs expensive inquiries to uncover shoot-to-kill policies and conspiracies to cover-up. I've just done it for next to nothing.

Dear Red Action,

I was pleased to read in the February Red Action DAM council workers' letter explaining their intention to set up a rank-and-file organisation for local authority workers. I was, however, dismayed by their prejudices when, in inviting people to a meeting to set the ball rolling, they state "no managers" as though, by some divine decree, only manual staff may be described as 'true workers.'

I am an office supervisor in an industrial plant and spent some time last summer on a CPUSA picket line that I, and others in my grade had refused to cross despite being told by my union branch to do so. The 'true workers', mainly NGA and SOGAT members, including branch and national officials, all crossed the line. A number of them should know better as they had been sacked by Murdoch and had manned the picket line at Wapping.

In Solidarity,
Billy Scott, South London.



The pages of Red Action are open for anyone to write about anything they wish. Please keep letters as short as possible and send them to the box number at the end of this page.

A Chara,
London IRSP support group thanks Red Action for organising the successful benefit for IRSP prisoners on January 15. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Signed on behalf of London support group.

HYPOCRISY OVER ISRAEL

By Kevin Pullen

The recent cries of anger by leading British politicians over the Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank of the Jordan and Gaza Strip areas is nothing short of hypocrisy. We have seen Tory minister David Mellor, on a visit to the occupied territories, waving his finger accusingly at an Israeli colonel and telling him that his country's treatment of Palestinians is "just not good enough." More recently, Labour leader Neil Kinnock, also on a visit to the areas, has condemned the "injustice" of thousands of Palestinians being forced "to live in hell" by the Israelis. It is true that the treatment of the Palestinians is horrific and they deserve support in their fight against Israeli occupation but, for the likes of Mellor and Kinnock to come out with their comments is like a macabre joke.

at people in Belfast, yet when did you see British politicians visiting Belfast's Falls Rd to tell the British army or the RUC that their treatment of civilians is "just not good enough."

The media also make a great deal of noise about Palestinians but, when it comes to the atrocities committed against Irish people, we are deafened by their silence. If a soldier or RUC man is shot, we hear the "no braver band of men and women than the police officers of Ulster" quote. If the murderers of Carol Ann Kelly (12), Francis Rowntree (11), Stephen Geddis (10), Brian Stewart (13), Julie Livingstone (14), Paul Whitters (15) and countless others are so brave, it must be a cowardly world.

CASTLEREAGH

The British government have been found guilty of torture by the European Court of Human Rights for the treatment of Irish people in "interrogation centres" like the one at Castlereagh, just outside Belfast. An example of these tortures is the placing of a prisoner in a helicopter, telling the person they are hundreds of feet in the air and kicking them out on to the ground, which is in fact only a few feet below.

The British authorities tried to justify this treatment. The same authorities are now trying to cry crocodile tears for the Palestinians. Mellor and Kinnock's parties both have a horrific record of atrocities committed in Ireland. Victory to the liberation struggles of the Irish and Palestinian peoples.



In the six north-eastern counties of Ireland, Britain, with the active encouragement of Mellor, Kinnock and the rest of the nation's politicians, are carrying out atrocities identical to those of the Israelis. The British army and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) have been responsible for the deaths of countless civilians, including children in Ireland.

PLASTIC BULLET

We have read recently of Aidan McAnespie, shot in the back by a British soldier in Aughnacloy, Tyrone when he was walking to his local football pitch to take part in a game. This sort of thing has gone on in Ireland for centuries and examples are endless. Peter Doherty (40) was killed by a plastic bullet as he was in his kitchen in Divis, Belfast. British soldiers clearing a nearby barricade had fired it. Eleven year-old Dermot Gallagher suffered a fractured skull after he was hit by a plastic bullet fired by a soldier. He was on his way home in Belfast after running an errand to a local shop. These examples are not even a drop in the ocean in the story of British atrocities in Ireland but you don't hear a peep from the Kinnocks and Mellors where Ireland is concerned.

Next time you see Israeli soldiers on the news firing at civilians, they could just as well be British soldiers firing

Dear Editor,

Re: Dossier produced by the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. Since the result of Viraj Mendis' Judicial Review hearing and the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement, the Home Office have indicated that they are re-considering their promise not to remove Viraj from the Sanctuary. Additionally, there have been suggestions in the press that it might now be safe for Viraj to return to Sri Lanka, or that he could, perhaps, go to live in a third country.

The dossier discusses the current situation in Sri Lanka, which is far from "safe." The dossier also explains why there are no grounds for the Home Office to retract its previous pledge, and why it is unreasonable to expect Viraj to live in a third country.

Yours Faithfully,
Pauline Harris, Press Officer, VMDC, North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester. M15 5AL.

Editor's Note: Would readers interested in obtaining a copy of the dossier, please write direct to the VMDC at the address given above and not to Red Action. We have only one copy for our own reference. Thanks.

CLAUSE 28

BIGOTRY AND THE BARONESS

By Gary Otterburn

In 1981, researchers at the Kinsey Institute (a US academic concern which studies sexual patterns) studied replies from the largest sample of homosexuals, black and white, male and female, ever questioned in a study. A total of 979 homosexuals and 477 heterosexuals were interviewed and the researchers' conclusion was "Homosexuality is deep-rooted in childhood, may be biological in origin and simply shows in more and more important ways as a child grows older. It is not a condition that therapy can reverse. Homosexual feelings begin as much as three years before any sort of homosexual act, undermining theories that homosexuality is earned through experience." There goes the teacher as seducer and perverter myth.

The above would seem to be a statement of the obvious but, equally, those who support Clause 28 of the current Local Government Bill, which seeks to ban the "promotion of homosexuality," would, even with no research to back up their view, still violently disagree with its conclusions.

One supporter of the Bill, Baroness Cox is quoted as saying "There are recent reports which indicate that children are being exposed to it (homosexuality). For example, the Evening Standard in November last reported that children as young as two years old would have access to gay and lesbian books in Lambeth play centres."

Not only does Baroness Cox assume that people make a choice about whether to be heterosexual or homosexual but she apparently believes that, if given access to sufficient material, they can, regardless of any ability to read, be influenced by propaganda as early as the age of two. Not only that but, in the words of the Earl of Caithness, even "one week's exposure to propaganda of this kind could have an insidious and unhappy lasting effect on some impressionable young people."

If he actually believes that, after one week of homosexual propaganda, anybody could be so greatly influenced, the only conclusion to draw is that heterosexuality is not, in fact, a natural condition at all but only appears to be so, mainly due to the life-long exposure to propaganda put out by the heterosexual lobby.

The main reasonings of these "intellectual queer-bashers" is that homosexuality is evil, it should be outlawed and appropriate legislation to suppress it should immediately be implemented. If the legal deterrents are sufficiently unattractive and punitive, if society decides that, for instance, imprisonment or death are the appropriate penalties for homosexual activity, then homosexuals will reduce in number until they finally became extinct, just like dinosaurs.

It follows then that, if any sane person, fully aware of the risks involved, still chooses to become or remain homosexual, they would be judged to have made an irrational, unreasonable and perverse decision and so, by a self-fulfilling prophecy, all homosexuals become perverse.

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SUPPORT RED ACTION



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

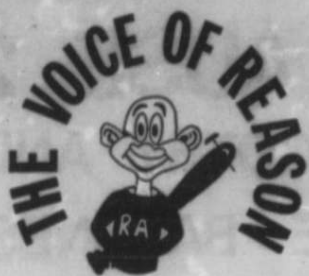
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1. A free subscription to the newspaper.
2. A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of what is going on in the organisation.
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The cost for this is £10 for one year.

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Hatfield
Herts



As I sit here typing this page, I hear on the radio that some MPs are objecting to the "offensive use of the Union flag on the flag of South Africa." I wonder if it ever occurs to them that there are plenty of people who find the use of the Cross of St. Patrick in the Union flag even more offensive.

One of the chief planks of Tory party policy in the 1979 general election was that the trade unions were undemocratic, that the officials were all militants while the membership were all moderates. Common sense would indicate that, as the officials often have more in common in the way of work, salary level and lifestyle with management personnel than with their own members, then, in absolute terms, the exact opposite was more likely to be the case. During the recent Ford dispute, Mick Murphy, chief TGWU union negotiator, claimed he had negotiated an "historic deal" - historic, it seems, only for the negotiators for, when the deal was presented to the membership, they told him unequivocally to fuck off.

He had this to say to the Press after his members rejected the deal in a secret ballot "As Mrs. Thatcher has said, the trade union movement must give the unions back to the members. She has and this is the result." As the ideologues in the Tory party are just beginning to find out, politics is a complicated business.

"The Israelis seem rather readier to find and punish soldiers guilty of atrocities than the British are to find policemen involved in death-squad murders in Northern Ireland. Neither can I recall the British pouring spontaneously into the streets to protest against some episode in Ireland as Israelis did after the massacres in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila. And plenty of families in Catholic Derry, watching television reports from Gaza grin sourly as they recognise scenes from their own experience." - Neal Acheson in the Observer.

"I would like to see this becoming a lasting obstacle between the British and Irish governments. Whenever and wherever a representative of Her Majesty's government is posturing about human rights violations, I'd like to see someone say 'What about the Birmingham Six?' - Labour MP Chris Mullin, who, after Lord Denning said on TV that it was better that a few innocent people remain in prison than for the British legal system to be undermined, described the former Master of the Rolls as "a nice old man but he shouldn't be let out on his own."

"I sleep well, I sleep very well." - RUC Chief Constable Jack Hermon.

"What do you expect us to do, scatter flowers among demonstrators? Do you in Britain scatter flowers among demonstrators in Northern Ireland?" - Israeli Defence Minister Yitzak Rabin defending Israel's response to the Palestinian uprising which, judging by the TV coverage, is based on the old adage "If you can't beat 'em, beat 'em."

"We will be collecting three-quarters of what we are due. We reckon that ten per cent of people won't register for the tax and ten per cent of the people who do register won't pay. Add in the six per cent collection costs and we're left with 75 per cent of what we should have, compared to 96 per cent under the rates system. The government are introducing a tax which will cost three times more to collect 21 per cent less. There's only one word for them.....HEAD-BANGERS." - a quote from a member of the influential Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants.

What a lot of fuss over nothing - the recent furore over whether or not to permit TV cameras in the House of Commons to cover the "proceedings." We will soon be able to watch the Right Honourable Members with their quaint phraseology shout at each other across the floor of the House about things they have little or no control over. The British people - that is those who can stay awake - will no doubt watch under the impression that they are watching the great decision-makers in action.

The problem is that Parliament have little or no power over the decisions that really affect people's lives. If their employer makes them redundant, they won't find it discussed in the House. Their employer decides that, not Parliament. Imagine if a giant investor, such as Barclay's International decides to withdraw investment from Britain. The direct and knock-on effects on unemployment would be colossal, unthinkable, many would say. Yet, all Parliament could discuss would be how to fiddle the figures so it doesn't look quite as bad as it really is.

And what if there is a war? Don't watch the broadcasts from the House looking for a debate about that. Parliament are only told about declarations of war after it has been declared. Now, how about allowing the cameras into the Privy Council or top boardroom meetings. That's where decisions that matter are made. We can't trust elected representatives of ordinary people to run the country. They couldn't be relied upon to protect profits, could they?

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In that kind of climate, the decision to remain homosexual would be a defiant act, a kind of political statement. It would, in fact, be adjudged to be an act of subversion. According to the likes of Baroness Cox, homosexuality would then be an attempt to undermine the fabric of society and so, any right-thinking person must agree, it must be stopped. And so the pogroms begin. In Hitler's concentration camps, six hundred thousand homosexuals wore the pink triangle while six million Jews wore the yellow star. There was, however, no discrimination. They were all murdered.

WE ARE RED ACTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On page 176 of the bestseller Spycatcher, Peter Wright describes his obsessive search for the supposed spy at the top of MI5 like this "And it always came down to the same five names; Hollis, Mitchell, Cummings, Winterborn at a stretch, and possibly I myself. I knew it wasn't me." Yeah, but do we know that? That is one of the major conclusions in a rambling book written in revenge by a disgruntled semi-literate ex-employee because, as he reminds the reader many times, the government took away half his pension when he retired.

So, what, then, do we make of Thatcher's equally obsessive attempts to ban publication of the book. Is it because she merely wishes to inhibit disclosure of the "dirty tricks" by MI5 and MI6 in the distant past, for which, in any case, she could not be held responsible? Or is the motive simply to set a precedent by banning a book of little consequence to prevent any possible future public disclosure of her own role in the "dirty war" in Ireland in the much more recent past?

In 1979, an INLA unit breached security at the House of Commons and placed a mercury-tilt bomb beneath the car of MI6 operative Airey Neave, who was also a close friend and confidant of Thatcher. As Prime Minister, she is also head of the security services and she responded by authorising the setting up of SAS-trained RUC units, equipped to respond with "speed, power and aggression," which she hoped would counter the effectiveness of IRA and INLA units and, in doing so, avenge the death of her friend.

These RUC units, who were later responsible for the deaths of six unarmed Nationalists, were only doing what they had been trained to do. As Kevin McNamara, Labour spokesman on northern Ireland, said recently in reference to the deaths and subsequent cover-up "It is a nasty story and a grubby tale with the fingerprints of the Prime Minister all over it." Revenge, murder, suspense, intrigue and corruption in high places - the perfect ingredients, as Thatcher knows, for the making of a bestseller.

"The plain truth is that families should not have to lobby governments to be re-united." - British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe lecturing the Soviet Union on human rights.

"The rule of one people over another can be neither enduring nor endurable." - Labour leader Neil Kinnock lecturing the Israelis on their occupation of the Gaza Strip.

"This government is against the seizing power by violent means." - South Africa's Prime Minister P.W. Botha after invading the 'independent' state of Bophuthatswana to restore order following a military coup.

When you consider that, under Britain's immigration laws, families have been divided and mothers of young children deported, when you consider that the 'Welsh Windbag' endorses the murderous activities of 30,000 armed troops in the North-East corner of Ireland and when you consider that South Africa is currently engaged in sponsoring two guerilla wars against the governments of neighbouring Angola and Mozambique, you might find this little display of hypocrisy nauseating rather than amusing, unless of course, like me, you have developed a highly sophisticated sense of humour.

"The government is axing jobs in Unemployment Benefit Offices - because the jobless figures are falling." - Mirror, January 29.

"Jesus Christ is gonna come back again, playtime is over. The world is gonna be ours." - US Presidential candidate Pat Robertson. Sounds like one of the loony left to me.

A commendable new housing scheme has just been launched in Bow, East London, by the local council and the Halifax Building Society. It is offering grants to do up run-down Victorian houses and those eligible to apply are council tenants and the homeless. The only other qualification is that applicants must have salaries of £25,000 per year. - Evening Standard, February 24.

"It is a matter of dragging the ACTT (TV Technicians union) into the 21st century - sorry, I mean the 20th century." - Bruce Gynell, managing director of TV-AM, who first locked out and then sacked 200 technicians.

"The police were awful. We always thought they were on our side but, today, many of us saw them in a different light. They were just intent on pushing and kicking us out of the way. There were fists flying everywhere." - Student Nurse Jo Burnett, Mirror, February 4.

"I am not absolutely certain what the (NHS) dispute is about." - Health Secretary John Moore, Guardian, February 4.

"We must free families from the petty tyranny of town halls by giving council tenants a greater say in the running of their estates - including the right to choose another landlord." - Conservative News Line, January.

Articles in R.A.

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