

# RED ACTION

The bi-monthly bulletin of the organisation Red Action • Price: £1 • Vol. 4 Issue 11 • May/June 2001



**One might be unlucky...  
two is a trend**

**INSIDE: The rise and rise of Euro-Nationalism • Racial sepratism: Accidnet or design? • Anti-social crime: a blueprint? • Communities of Resistance • Red Action and the LSA - Should we stay or should we go?**

# EDITORIAL

**Sometime earlier in the year, a Dr Les May from Rochdale in a letter to *The Observer*, wrote: "Forty years ago the British Left was concerned with economic and social justice for the mass of ordinary people.**

Finding this too difficult a task, the Left fell under the spell of the politics of 'gender', 'sexuality' and 'ethnicity'. The payoff for the Left was that it gained the endorsement of the so-called liberal elite. This paved the way first, to having a hearing in the media, and then to power. The great triumph of this alliance has been to convince so many people that making sure a few more women, homosexuals and non-whites get cosy, well paid jobs 'at the top', is a major contribution to producing a more equitable society. It isn't."

When precisely the Left lost the plot is a matter of conjecture. What is undeniable, is that for all the brouhaha about minority rights since, a more equitable society it ain't.

While it is true there have been concessions to the gender/sexual/ethnic lobbies, these advances have been allowed only when any perception of threat to the status quo has been extinguished.

So while there may be gays in the military and in the US a black Secretary of State, (who proved a safe pair of hands, by covering up Mai Lai) anything approaching social or political much less economic equity is long past. Mainstream gains by 'minorities' have not been in addition to a general working class advance on all fronts but - but instead of them.

Accordingly what we are witnessing today are the governing classes bustling about, recovering what was conceded to the spectre of communism in economic reforms in the previous hundred and fifty years. What in stark economic terms this redistribution amounts to is staggering. In America, the land of the free, statistics reveal that "Between 1979 and 2000... the wealthiest one per cent of Americans saw their share of the country's assets double, from a fifth to approaching half." (*The Guardian*, 13.1.01)

So as their share of the loot is increasing, it is not rocket science to figure out who is losing out.

Now, many on the Left would have you believe that the American working class, as a labour aristocracy par excellence, have been largely immune to the corroding power of capital. "Yet it is a fact that between 1973 and 1998, in spite of a period of economic nirvana for many, the hourly wage of the average worker fell by nine per cent. Adjusted for inflation it remained roughly the same as in 1967." Needless to say, as with the share of the country's general assets, the rise in the hourly rate the American worker might normally have expected, went of course to someone else.

As Jeremy Campbell reported in the *London Evening Standard*: "While wages went nowhere, economic inequality increased. In 1974 the richest five per cent of American families earned about 15 per cent of the total US income. By the end of the century, that share had risen to 21 per cent." (21.2.01)

But far from being sated, the new President Bush appears determined to increase the yawning disparity even further. 'It's conservative to cut taxes' says Bush, 'it's compassionate to let people keep more of their money.' But who is to 'keep more of their money?'

For a clue, contrast the federal tax system with that of former Governor Bush's Texas. At a federal level, an American family in the bottom fifth income level, pays less than nine per cent in tax; the top one per cent give 37 per cent of their income to the government. In Texas the tax burden actually drops as income rises:

the poorest pay 13 per cent tax while the top one per cent pay 5 per cent. Now Bush has declared that he intends to bring the Texas tax model to Washington as, wait for it, a 'priority'.

And again, of the '\$1.8 trillion tax cut planned, the top one per cent have been promised a 43 per cent share'. As might be expected, 'reforms to social security' the most drastic since the New Deal in the Thirties, will pay for the windfall.

In Britain too, the gap between the richest and the poorest, already 'the largest since records began' when New Labour came to power, is actually increasing. In 1999 the wealthiest 5 per cent owned 44 per cent of the UK's wealth, compared with 36 per cent in 1981. Between 1979 and 1998 the number of pensioners with less than half the average

income doubled, while the total of all kinds of people in the same kind of poverty trebled. "Our child poverty", *Observer* columnist Neal Ascherson writes, "is the third highest of 25 nations. It is far higher than in Hungary and Spain, outstripped only by Russia and by our free-market paradigm, the United States." The only possible conclusion to be drawn from the new *Breadline Europe* study of the free-market economy is that "neo-liberalism is now creating poverty which is not only shallow and widespread but deepening into permanence. It [*Breadline Europe*] warns that the new prosperity of the few goes with the degradation of the many. It shows that a nation's economy can be glorified as successful when the living standards of its people are falling... A century ago, nice, caring people talked anxiously about the 'the problem of poverty'. How was it possible that the massive increase of wealth was accom-

A century ago nice caring people talked anxiously about the 'the problem of poverty'. How was it possible that the massive increase of wealth was accompanied by an equally massive increase in destitution? Could it be - frightful thought - that the growth of wealth actually depended on that growth of poverty?

panied by an equally massive increase in destitution? Could it be - frightful thought - that the growth of wealth actually depended on that growth of poverty". (11.3.01)

But what does that matter so long as the liberal Left have 'frontline women troops', 'racial equality in prisons' (the emphasis on minorities in the context, a surely threadbare tactic to camouflage and minimise the depth and scale of the deplorable conditions which exist for prisoners of all colours) and that final barrier to the sexual revolution, the 'age of consent scrapped' as a pay-off? •

# One might be unlucky... two is a trend

After Haider the cry was 'Never Again!' With Mussolini's heirs set to return to government - 'Not Again!' - may prove the more durable slogan.

Analysis by Joe Reilly.

**With a 15 point lead in the run up, Silvio Berlusconi should now be forming his government following the victory of the Forza Italia coalition in the general election on May 13.**

Silvio Berlusconi is one of the richest men in Europe, comparable to Rupert Murdoch over here, in his dominance of the media in Italy. Berlusconi was also Prime Minister once before in 1994.

However, the coalition of which he was leader collapsed in ignominy. His political resurrection, and return to power would be of no particular interest to anyone outside Italy, were it not for the men who he will bring to power with him. Or put more accurately, the political forces that will deliver Berlusconi victory. For without the support of the Far-Right Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and the almost as dodgy Lega Nord, he would never be prime minister. Because of their role, some expect Gianfranco Fini of the AN, a party with a lineage direct to Mussolini, and Umberto Bossi leader of the Lega Nord, to be rewarded with ministerial posts, up to, and possibly even including deputy Prime Minister.

A second Far-Right party at the centre of government, in the heart of Europe, makes liberal pretence that Haider's victory last year could be explained away by reference to 'special conditions in Austria' look more than a little silly. One fascist party in government might be unlucky, but two in a year looks more like a trend. *Searchlight* are surely right when they say that "such an outcome would redouble the alarm raised by last year's Austrian elections, which brought Jörg Haider's party to power. Apart from tilting the political balance in Europe considerably further to the right, this double dose of 'Le-Penism' could pave the way for an advance of extreme right wing views and progressively lend political legitimacy to racist and neo-fascist ideologies throughout Europe".

It is probably inevitable that there will be those, who in an effort to reassure, will stress that the AN was briefly in government with Berlusconi back in 1994, and the sky did not fall in. So there is no need to for undue concern now. But if memory serves, supposedly 'special conditions existing in Italy' was the palliative employed by them then. And while in 1994, Forza Italia did not survive long enough for the effectiveness of their political strategy, including Italy's biggest ever post-war demonstration, to be assessed objectively, this is no longer the case. The strategy of appropriation to be employed against Berlusconi, has been put in use in Austria against the Freedom Party these twelve months past. Demonstrations have taken place on an almost daily basis, to no discernible effect. True, the Freedom Party's support among the working class in the local elections in Vienna this year, was down. But this was not because of the almost nightly protest by 'anti-fascists', but was instead the price paid by Haider's party, for the cuts in public spending implemented by it's coalition partner in government.

In reality, and not at all surprisingly, the resistance initiated and shaped by Austria's liberal elite is 'crumbling'. Less and less people are turning up for demonstrations at the same time as Haider is consolidating his grip on power. The Freedom Party are in government to stay. More than that, it will soon have an ideological and strategical ally in government, in nearby Italy. So can we expect the strategy employed in Italy be any different from the one shown to have failed so dismally in Austria? Will, say *Searchlight* or the SWP be urging 'new thinking'? Well, in the case of *Searchlight*, yes (of which more later), but a firm *nein* from the SWP. After all, considering the same cross-class appeal

underpins the strategy domestically, such a volte face would be unthinkable.

During March and April we were all reminded of the danger in indulging SWP delusions. First there was the scandal of the SWP forcing through the decision to back Labour in Beckton. Confronted for the first time by the BNP in a by-election in the borough of Newham, the SWP-dominated east London Socialist Alliance branch took fright, and immediately rushed behind New Labour skirts. This logic of a united front against the BNP was followed through to the point of insisting the LSA actively campaign for New Labour. Followed by, on two successive Saturdays the toe-curling embarrassment of the anti-Nazi demos in Bermondsey. Beckton taken together with the ANL counter demonstration fronted by local political big-wigs, a couple of vicars and notorious opportunists such as Trevor Phillips visibly failing against even a minuscule NF twice over, was rightly felt, to have diminished not just the LSA and the ANL, but anti-fascism itself.

But such antics from an organisation that believes, probably genuinely, that "the memory of the Holocaust" and not an organised working class, "is the biggest barrier to the re-birth of a modern Nazi movement", should raise few eyebrows. And maybe it is just coincidence, and not baleful SWP dominance, that come the general election in June, the LSA will not be contesting the Bermondsey seat either. "A fascist candidacy in Bermondsey is not something Southwark Socialist Alliance can deal with on its own" wails *Weekly Worker* (12.4.01).

If seemingly a borough-wide organisation like the Southwark Socialist Alliance cannot even contemplate dealing with a lone NF candidate now, what of the LSA when the BNP throw down the gauntlet, as it is threatening across the capital in local elections in 2002?

If not prepared to present itself as a 'radical alternative' where it counts, what is the LSA actually for? It is a point that found an echo in some quarters, with RA and AFA earning bouquets for drawing out the implications. But at the same time there was a sense RA was making a little too much of it. After all, for all the embarrassment, Beckton was due to 'special conditions' and therefore a one off, was it not? Well, as Southwark have since shown, not entirely. And what's more this instinct to 'unite' against the BNP, seemingly regardless of the LSA, is still entirely consistent with SWP leadership perspectives. Certainly Chris Bambery, during a public debate with the CPGB last August, responded to questions relating to the BNP 'success' in Bexley by admitting as much. Despite the LSA, 'the Isle of Dogs paradigm' ('love your neighbour vote Labour') remained the preferred option of the SWP leadership if faced with any substantial electoral threat from the Far-Right he declared.

Unlike the Socialist Alliance who are pouring all their hopes into the general election

**continued  
page 4**



# One might be unlucky... two is a trend

continued from page 3

campaign the BNP are focused, correctly, on the local elections in 2002. Once again *Searchlight*; it, to be fair, see the danger. This prompts them, rather desperately, to suggest that 'the lessons learned' on the Isle of Dogs in 1993 can again be applied, but this time - on a national basis! Logistics apart, what first are the lessons? "Anti-fascists must learn from the BNP and like the Nazis engage with the local people on local issues." (There is a distant echo, but we'll pass.) So where should anti-fascists do this? Why, in the target wards chosen by the BNP of course, "the South East region of the BNP is prioritising North End ward in Bexley; North West Hollingwood in Oldham; the South West: Plymouth; the West Midlands: Tipton Green, in Sandwell; East London: Barking & Dagenham and Dewsbury in Yorkshire." *Searchlight's* advice to anti-fascists is 'to target the same areas' and - physically go there.

Quite apart from entirely overlooking that in the three actual council wards they list, the BNP have already established a considerable base of support ranging from 19% to 27% there. Of the other BNP target 'areas' one, Barking and Dagenham is, you may have noticed, a parliamentary constituency, while Plymouth and Dewsbury are complete towns! If that isn't sufficiently mind-boggling, "with over twelve months to go" we are instructed "there is enough time to build up anti-nazi support in each of these areas".

Even supposing 'the lessons of Millwall' were appropriate, (and there not, as a result of the ANL campaign, the BNP vote actually increased by 30%) where are the necessary forces to come from? Who would they campaign for? And on what issues? 'Anti-nazi' ones?

The fact is, liberalism was lucky on the Isle of Dogs and has dined out on it ever since. In reality, what did the BNP then, was not anti-nazi parables but an Asian occupancy of approximately half the 'island' and a general election style turn-out of 70%. In truth, the real lessons of Millwall were that 'anti-nazism' so-called, is not enough. Secondly, you need to be in a community to properly organise it, and thirdly, that there are no quick fixes. All the real lessons, needless to say, are swept aside in the *Searchlight* design.

The Socialist Alliance, on the other hand, have taken the 'anti-nazi lesson' and simply inverted it. Previously, the Left were perfectly happy to present their counter arguments in a careful, considered and negative fashion: 'anti-repatriation', 'anti-deportation' and 'anti-nazi'. Back in the 70's the principle arguments were wholly defensive; immigration numbers were being 'exaggerated to whip up fears'; 'the policies of repatriation are the politics of Dachau', etc. For reasons best known to themselves (for there has been little or no real discussion) the decision has been taken, at this of all times, to place all the emphasis on a counter-attack of careless abandon. One might have imagined it was the far-Left rather than the far-Right who were on the march in Europe. Or that unlike the 1970's, the tactical switch could be justified on the grounds that any political or social cost could now be effortlessly and painlessly absorbed. As we all know the exact reverse is true. Collectively the bargaining power and confidence of the British working class can rarely have been at so low an ebb. In three key areas, housing, education and health, funding has sunk below even maintenance level. New figures out show that New Labour is prioritising social housing even less than Major's government did. In attempting to rubbish such political concerns *The Guardian* quotes the Home Office approvingly: "Council taxpayers money is not being used to house asylum seekers and therefore local people are not being disadvantaged. We are

Left to Right:  
Silvio  
Berlusconi (as  
seen on front  
cover) leader  
of the Forza  
Italia party and  
widely tipped  
as Italy's next



Prime Minister. Amongst his partners in the right-wing coalition is the neo-fascist party, *Alleanza Nazionale*, headed by Gianfranco Fini; set to join Haider's Freedom Party as the second far-right party at the centre of government, in the heart of Europe

using properties that do not have a waiting list". A slippery argument. Particularly as a recent audit commission has shown London councils have been forced to meet the cost of housing refugees out of council taxes to the tune of £27 million. Along with that, while classified as refugees they may well be 'housed in areas that do not have a waiting list' but that is only prior to being granted citizenship. After that they often appear to go to the head of the council housing queue. Which is when the genuine resentments kick in.

But despite all the warnings and it must be said, their own experience, the Socialist Alliance is set on a course of head-on confrontation with the working class on the very issue there can be no prospect of winning on. Race. Where the Right see only bad in immigration, the SA see only good. Where the BNP call for an end to immigration the SA demand an acceleration in immigration. Curiously, of the unthinking mediocrity that otherwise permeates the SA general election manifesto, a call for 'open borders' is the one truly radical departure. What in real terms the LSA stance on immigration amounts to, is a preemptive electoral strike against itself, eleven months prior to what may prove watershed council elections in London in 2002. Whatever the wisdom of standing by the communist principle of 'open borders' (if 'communist principle' it is, and that is certainly arguable), no effort whatsoever will be made to explain the tactical value of the working class supporting a stance of 'infinite and unconditional' immigration, as if for the all the world, the character building properties of further dividing already pitiful resources were transparent.

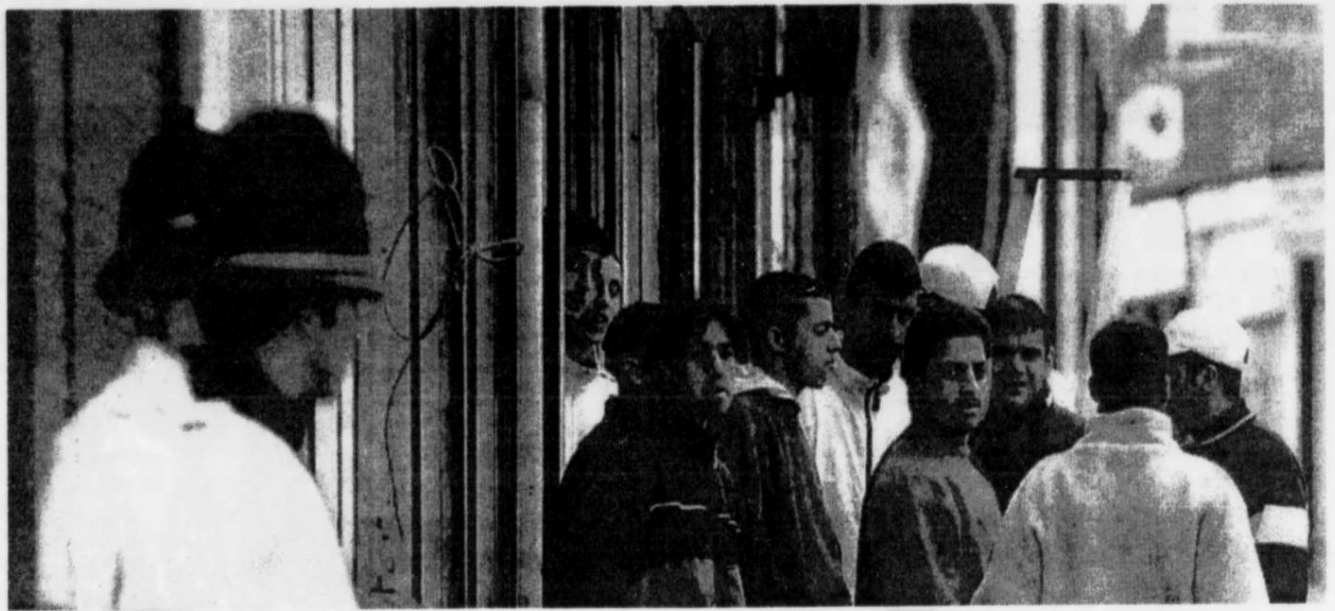
With repeated surveys showing as many as 80% hostile to existing immigration policy, to then proceed in the face of the facts is on one level infantile. On another level it is a calculated insult, which in hard-pressed communities will be regarded as such. You can already envisage our partners in the LSA rolling their eyes: 'On the one hand we are castigated for not standing against Labour and the BNP - thus handing to the fascists the mantle of 'radical alternative' - and now we are being attacked on the grounds of being too radical!' For the simple minded, such a defence may have an appeal. But when in 1995 AFA stated that the Left must 'out-radicalise the BNP', it had in mind out-radicalising the far-Right on the basis of what *the class itself considered important*. 'Artificial insemination for lesbians' is, rightly or wrongly, not regarded as an arch priority in places like Bexley, Beckton or Bermondsey. It follows therefore, that to challenge the BNP on the basis of a programme relevant to the Left, will do nothing to convince the working class communities, who haven't, let's remember, seen the Left in any shape or form for at least quarter of a century, that 'here are people on our side, here are people that understand us, here are people worth fighting for'.

On the contrary, for the Left to 'show its hand' in such a fashion will hand 'the mantle of radical alternative' to the BNP on a veritable plate. An electoral intervention so crass must, if only by default, accelerate rather than retard nationalist influence and ambition. And as we have seen repeatedly in Europe since 1985, an electoral bridgehead established locally, can have terminal implications nationally. Meaning, that once euro-nationalism gets its nose in front, it has proven invulnerable to demonisation by the liberal Left.

Italy is now at the stage Austria was a year ago. In light of the failure of 'protest' in Austria, what lessons have been learnt? What, to put it in a nutshell, is plan B? In assessing 'the danger to Italian democracy by Berlusconi', the SWP's John Foot warns 'anti-fascists to prepare' for the doomsday scenario: "After Haider's victory in Austria, the world expressed outrage. In Italy things are much worse, potentially, and anti-fascists and socialists everywhere should", no sniggering, "be preparing their placards and their slogans for serious agitation after May 13." (*Socialist Review*, April 2001)

Don't be surprised if the same call for a 'commitment to serious agitation' is top of the London Socialist Alliance agenda, by mid-morning on May 6 2002 •





# Separatism accident or design?

Ghettoisation is widely blamed for the simmering racial unrest in Oldham and Bradford. Yet, astonishingly some 'anti-racists' argue racial separatism is the solution. A Shaw investigates.

To anyone who has grown up in Britain in the last 30 years the word 'discrimination' is a familiar one. In the '70's it was commonly associated with the Special Patrol Group, the rise of the NF, and eccentrics like Robert Relf who went to jail, and then on hunger strike, rather than be faced with having to sell his house to a black family.

While today large parts of the urban landscape are racially integrated it is still not to everyone's liking. And because the nature of racism has mutated; less 'in your face', with even the BNP employing more select language, to therefore read of a call for a return to 'racially segregated housing' comes as something of a shock. All the more so, when it is discovered that the author is not some obscure, academic, right-wing crack pot, but the chair of a Lottery-funded tenant advisory housing body called the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

In a speech to an Amsterdam conference at the beginning of February, Parmjit Uppal insisted that as well developing strong bonds of "mutual aid and self help, segregation also means sustainable communities, family, cultural and friendship ties [which] should all be valued in the housing allocation policies." In elaborating on the persistent 'discrimination' against Asian families which justified such a scenario, she drew particular attention to the fact that "Asian applicants were being denied the opportunity for Council housing on similar terms to other applicants". This, it turned out, proved necessary because local authorities imposed a 'general rule' whereby owner occupiers are refused access to social rented housing. And even when applied to everyone, black and white, it proved "particularly discriminatory against Asians who are more likely to be owner occupiers than other ethnic groups". Mainly because as Parmjit Uppal explains: "discrimination in housing has led Asian people to buy their own properties as they do not want to live on council estates, which are hostile environments, too white and too rough."

As if that wasn't sufficiently discriminatory, the speech also drew attention to the fact that the "size of housing [on offer] disenfranchises black communities because it is based on the need of white families." What are needed, it is urged, are more racially segregated housing associations to "provide culturally sensitive services and culturally appropriate housing in terms of number of bedrooms, two living rooms to allow, say, separation of sexes where appropriate and shower facilities." Put another way, the discrimination complained of is not that ethnic minorities were being offered different housing conditions, rather the objection is that they were subject to the *same* conditions as everyone else.

It is also impossible not to detect within this 'special pleading' the inference that sometimes squalid overcrowding in many estates adequately 'meets the needs' or are, in any case, good enough for 'rough white families'.

Previously in this publication we have flagged the glaring contradiction between the acceptance of basic anti-racism, which demands everyone be treated the same and the hidden dangers of a multicultural ethos, which as the logic of the TPAS chair graphically illustrates, demands that everyone be treated differently. While the former tends toward the socialising of racial issues, multiculturalism sets its face against such an objective by racialising social issues like housing as determinedly as the Far-Right. Anti-racism is designed to take race out of the equation, racial separatism designed to put it in. You can choose either one or the other. While it could be possible to still see merit in either strategy, as the TPAS speech illustrates, it is not possible any longer, to sincerely see merit in both •

# Simple Easy Steps

to developing long-term solutions to anti-social behaviour



Sinn Fein  
councillor  
Michael  
Ferguson

**The Islington Independent, announcing a fresh look at anti-social crime had hardly hit the mat before the local Lib Dem mouthpiece was confronting a community activist demanding to know why he had so far "refused to attend any Police Liaison Committee meetings". "The people of the Playdell" (a local estate) he pompously demanded "want to know".**

What lay behind the bombast is that this particular community activist who is a thorn in the Lib Dem's side, is apparently believed by them to be a leading player within the IWCA in Islington. And the IWCA, which has been operating on the ground locally for only about two years, has for various reasons, become an obsession with the Lib's Dems generally and this councillor in particular.

Apart from vainly attempting to convince disbelieving tenants on one estate that the whole strategy was a front for the SWP, the Lib Dems who have seen their support in the area steadily wane, have been frustrated by their inability to lay a political glove on the IWCA, whom they hold responsible. Here then was what this Lib Dem councillor must have thought was a golden opportunity. A chance to expose the IWCA as utopian, extremist - and - anti-police. 'I do not attend police liaison meetings because as you and I well know...All coppers are bastards!'... was evidently the hoped for retort.

In light of his Machievlean motivation, "because no one ever asked me" was, by some distance, the worst of replies. For not only had the trap not been sprung, but as the red-faced Lib Dem'er turned on his heel 'the appalling vista' to quote Lord Denning, of the possible consequences to him personally having invited the 'IWCA' on to such a committee, would almost certainly have prompted a fresh bout of hand-wringing.

It stands to reason that had the IWCA on the issue of anti-social crime, approached the issue in the manner of the orthodox Left, such a response would be easy pickings for establishment parties. One is reminded of the occasion a few years ago when the SLP (when it still believed it had a future) was canvassing on a crime ridden estate in Wythenshawe on the outskirts of Manchester. Repeatedly confronted with people asking the SLP canvassers 'what were the SLP going to do about crime, the joy-riders, etc?', SLP canvassers delivered the uniform response straightfaced. 'With a SLP government of course...' Which was correctly read as another way of saying 'nothing for now'. Not at all surprisingly, come the elections, nothing, or next to it, was what the SLP got in return.

Equally it can be anticipated that the Socialist Alliance will not even address the question of anti-social crime in their manifesto, even though on many working class estates at any given time, it will be regarded as a top-two priority. Such introspection is akin to socialism expecting to influence trade-unionists at the beginning of the last century, by omitting to bring up, for fear of being thought vulgar, the subject of say, wages.

Obviously, if a solution to anti-social crime is to be identified, the core problem must first be understood. Unquestionably key to the rise of the

criminal class is the systematic draining of resources from working class communities, and its re-direction in the form of tax concessions into the pockets of the middle classes.

Along with this daylight robbery is the subtly changing response of the police to the crime wave stimulated by it.

One feature of the political landscape that has not changed, is the incessant call from the media and opposition parties 'for more police.' But few stop to ask what is the existing police now do? The Met has for instance 25,000 officers. Yet according to the calculations of former *Times* editor, Simon Jenkins recently, maybe as little "as 6 per cent of the force was on frontline duty at any one time."

Widespread evidence indicates the role of the police is now more about social and political control rather than any mundane matters relating to apprehending 'ordinary decent criminals'. Certainly there are no shortage of police when it comes to demonstrations, sporting events and the like, yet response times to pleas for assistance in working class areas are so slow as to be insulting.

So 'what', as Lenin might have said, 'is to be done?' First off, while the police high command are complacent to the point of complicity in allowing working class communities to be governed by 'ordinary decent lumpen', they are far from indifferent, and understand perfectly the political implications when communities take the law into their own hands. One example was Paulsgrove, where local women protested against what they said was the council/police policy of using their estate as a dumping ground for convicted paedophiles. In the media and the Left there was general uproar, not in solidarity with the protest, but at the effrontery of working class women daring to question the word and authority of the municipal establishment, who throughout, insisted no such policy existed. From all quarters scorn was poured on the claim by the women to have 'a list' of convicted sex-offenders. Hysteria, homophobia, and plain stupidity were the real reasons for the demonstrations, liberal opinion insisted. In the unrest that followed there was, along with the criminalisation of the protests, 34 actual arrests. Many of them faced both prison and eviction as a result. But as things turned out, when the furore had abated, it was quietly admitted in *The Guardian* some months later that "the majority of the names on the Portsmouth mental list were indeed convicted paedophiles, a disproportionate number of whom had been re-housed on the Paulsgrove estate, many within yards of the local school." So the Paulsgrove women had been vindicated. They had been right all along. They had been right about the dumping policy, they had been right to protest, and the suspicions that motivated them, that they were regarded as

second class citizens without rights, was wholly justified by the response of the political establishment, police and the liberal media's intense irritation with their highlighting of the issue.

The similarity, of reaction from municipal authorities, police and the Left to Paulsgrove, and to an IWCA initiative to stem a mugging epidemic in the vast crime ridden neighbourhood of Newtown in Birmingham in 1997, is marked. There too, startling evidence of the authorities indifference to a blight on the local community stood out. For instance, of the 200-odd people who packed the first IWCA organised meeting, 106 had personally been mugged. A feature of the early debate was of police failure to respond even when a crime was in progress. Such lethargy was not as it emerged, down to a matter of numbers. As the meeting heard when 'one dazed elderly mugging victim was spotted and the police called, it took two days before the police came to interview the woman, but when one of their own was hit by a mugger, 20 coppers were on the scene in minutes'. Neither was it even a matter of police/council disinterest. For, within an hour of the meeting being advertised, police arrived at the door of the IWCA organiser. After a little humming and hawing the reason for their presence was plain: if his wife promised to give evidence against the individuals who mugged her, the family could expect to be rewarded with 'a much sought after move to an area of their choice'. They wanted him, and with him they hoped the IWCA (rather than the mugging gangs) out of the area. Tellingly, the same ploy/inducement was later offered to practically all members of the committee, (half of them women) who were elected from the floor at the first meeting.

After the next public meeting when a march to 'Reclaim the Streets' was announced, the police responded with a demand be on the committee. Failure to comply would, it was made plain, mean the loss of the community centre at which the meetings were held on 'security grounds'. When the planned march took place regardless of the harassment, the police, with an eye to national media PR, made sure they were seen to be both marcher-friendly and prominent. But literally within minutes of the march dispersing the IWCA organiser was arrested and charged with organising 'an illegal demonstration'. Next, in an attempt to regain the initiative, the police announced a 'shop a robber' campaign. Thirty more police were promised with the further promise of as many again shortly. Tellingly this manoeuvre was made, not when the mugging was its height, nor in response to the public meetings, but was instigated when the strategy implemented through the Newtown Independent Residents Association was at its most most effective. This strategy, which in addition to the march had seen rat-runs bricked up, 'not wanted' posters flying off lampposts, and discussions held with regard to how the suspension of perpetrators rights to community amenities might be implemented. Such was the alarm in the 'mugging community', many felt compelled to desist entirely, while others opted to leave the immediate Newtown area in the hunt for easier pickings. As one wag wryly put it 'they are now commuting to work'.

Thus when the police flooded the area it coincided with the first week when no muggings of any description were reported. In the absence of real crime their primary motivation seemed to be the gratuitous harassment of locals, checking for out of date tax discs and the like. This, as the IWCA correctly analysed it, was part of the police's attempt to 'collectively punish the community for having the temerity to organise ourselves.'

Now Sinn Fein is certainly no stranger to the concept of collective community punishment either. It is afterall, the

widely acknowledged strategy employed against working class nationalists by both the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries for thirty years. The consequence being that many nationalists have never regarded the RUC as a civic force. In their experience, the operational remit was always a political/paramilitary one of containment. During the war, having both a common enemy and higher goal united the community. With the ceasefire in 1994 and the IRA as final sanction no longer a viable option, the apparent license this allowed the hoods, threatened, as one SF councillor put it, "to do what the Brits have failed to do in thirty years - the destruction of the structure, the fabric, the integrity of our community - and we weren't going to let it happen". Even if it were palatable as a police force, the RUC were simply not willing to function as such. Plus as Sinn Fein, are only too aware to realise their own political aspirations, the corrosive nature of anti-social elements in their community cannot go unchecked.

Intriguingly, when it came down to implementing plans on the ground, SF and the IWCA appear to share an identical floor plan. One example, in July last year, was Belfast Sinn Fein's launch of a campaign against joy-riding. As in Newtown, it began with a 'Reclaim the Streets' protest. In another area, Poleglass, on the outskirts of Belfast, a comprehensive strategy to turn the tide was foregrounded. Lisburn SF councillor Michael Ferguson explained how in the absence of an accountable police service the problem was

The irreconcilables were ostracised by the community, People combined to make life intolerable for those who had made life intolerable for the community. The working class in Poleglass were once again taking control of their community.

tackled. On closer examination what he outlines is, it is evident, a blueprint for community activists everywhere. First SF, like the IWCA, recognises that as a political party it alone does not have the power to institute change, but collectively the community does. Engaging with, energising and ultimately empowering a working class community is described by Michael Ferguson in a recent article as the 'simple easy steps' toward a long-term solution to anti-social behaviour.

"The first step was to bring every sector of the community together, including the church, the local businesses, education and youth services, health, welfare, elderly people, disabled people and so on and asked them to brain-storm in group meetings and asked them to come back with what they were going to do. Next came the Pride of Poleglass campaign: wiping off graffiti, planting trees, getting the burnt stolen cars removed, helping each other as we had done in the [RUC/Army] raids to repair damaged property.

"Then a 'care package' was put around the around the kids who were in anti-social activity which involved family youth education and training and social welfare agencies.

"In some few cases where cooperation within the care package could not be achieved and 'anti-social behaviour persisted, In such situations, the community itself, confident and positive ostracised them. The irreconcilables were ostracised by the community, by 6' by 4' posters went up. There were marches to their doors. No would serve them; the shops, the pubs, the people ostracised them. People combined to make life intolerable for those who had made life intolerable for the community". Such "simple easy steps" created the basis, Ferguson concludes, whereby "the working class in Poleglass were once again taking control of the their community."

All told whether it is Newtown, Poleglass or Finsbury; the police, 'all bastards' or otherwise, are not it is evident, part of the equation in working class areas. However where there is a difference between Poleglass and many working class communities in Britain, is where as SF fought to prevent the 'destruction of the structure, the fabric, the integrity of our community' in too many cases here, the remedy will be applied after the fact. Happily this is not the case in south Islington where due in no small measure to the work of the IWCA, the self-confidence is gradually beginning to return. This is as a result of what SF describe as 'empowering the community'. Palpably empowering working class people is what the IWCA strategy is designed to achieve.

A perennial question IWCA supporters are confronted with on the Left is what precisely 'working class rule in working class areas' means? Albeit at the beginning rather than the end of the process, we can now point to Poleglass and say: 'Look at Poleglass, there is an example working class rule in a working class areas' •

G O'Halloran



# Communities of Resistance

## ELECTION CHALLENGE Blackbird Leys - Oxford

Understandably, morale in the Oxford East New Labour camp is not what it once was. Results of the recent IWCA survey confirm that support amongst voters is drying up in Blackbird Leys - a ward in which Labour election victories are traditionally taken for granted.

The positively Old Labour Blackbird Leys Councillor, Tony Stockford, has informed IWCA canvassers that he is withdrawing from the June election contest - new which will not be welcomed at all at party HQ. This only increases the headache for New Labour locally.

The struggle to conjure up enthusiasm for the County Council election battle with the IWCA is illustrated by the attendance at the recent Oxford East constituency Labour Party meeting. Only seven members could be arsed to turn up, three of them being cabinet minister Andrew Smith, his wife the City Councillor and ex-Lord Mayor Val Smith, and the aforementioned Tony Stockford.

Issue six of the *Leys Independent*, an 'election special', is currently in production. Included are the results of the recent house-to-house survey, a profile of the County Council candidate Stuart Craft, and an article entitled 'New Labour red tape prevents use of IWCA name' which explains why the candidate will, for this election only, be standing under an 'Independent' label.

The survey which was taken to over 3,000 doorsteps on the Blackbird

Leys estate, has been a real shot in the arm for the IWCA activists involved. The general feeling towards the canvassers was summed up in the words of one resident: 'At least you made the effort to come round, not like the other buggers.' These sentiments have been repeated time and time again across the estate.

Much valuable information has been collected from the survey, and during the course of the campaign the IWCA has been called in to represent residents who are frustrated by the lack of help received from local councillors.

All work and no play, however, makes Jack a dull boy, so the Blackbird Leys IWCA took some time out to organise a trip for 43 residents to Ostende, Belgium, on 24 March. Like the previous IWCA trip to Calais, places in the three minibuses were sold out almost as soon as they were made available. The trip was a very enjoyable day out and all those involved have asked to be put down for the next continental excursion in the summer.

In addition, a coach trip to Alton Towers in July is also being organised to satisfy the demand created by the success of last year's Drayton Manor trip. Also on the social front, the IWCA Children's Cinema has recently gained access to a projector and screen, which will make more regular screenings possible.

Morale amongst Oxford IWCA activists is definitely on the up and up.



## SIGNIFICANT VICTORIES Islington - N. London

The IWCA kicked off the new year with two significant victories. The issue of mobile phone masts being imposed on council estates was thought to be an issue pretty much dead and buried after the Lib Dem council had announced a ban on them. However, a phonecall from a concerned tenant revealed that the council, obviously swayed by the amounts

of money being offered by

the phone companies, was quietly looking at granting permission for masts again. The IWCA immediately leafleted and petitioned the estate concerned and, working alongside tenant association representatives from across the borough finally secured an official three-year ban on any further masts from the Lib Dem council. The IWCA then slammed the Labour party and particularly Councillor Shonagh Methven for claiming the victory as their own: "a remarkable feat" an IWCA spokesperson told the *Highbury & Islington Express* "given the fact that in all the leafletting of estates and meetings I attended, never once did I stumble over Cllr Methven or any of her colleagues."

As part of building up its profile, the IWCA doubled the size of the Spring edition of its *Islington Independent* newsletter from a four-page A4 to A3. The lead article announced a hard-earned victory for the local FACTS (Fight Against Council Tenancy Sell-offs) campaign on the Kings Square estate. After facing strong opposition from tenants and campaigners, the council announced that it was finally throwing in the towel and abandoning its plans to privatise the estate. This comes as a particularly bitter blow to the Lib Dems, as the estate is home to the council's chair of housing, The Chair of the FACTS campaign, who is also a Kings Square tenant, told the *Islington Independent*: "We're delighted that the council have finally been forced to take notice of tenants, it's just a

shame that the thousands of pounds that have been wasted

on this scheme hadn't been spent on repairs. At the end of the day we refused to be blackmailed,

we pay our rent and all we want are the decent homes we are entitled to. What tenants want is investment not privatisation."

A large section of the *Islington Indi* dealt with the issue of anti-social behaviour. The IWCA's initiatives to tackle the problem received widespread media coverage. The *Highbury & Islington Express* reported: "The IWCA has put forward its proposals for tackling the problem of anti-social behaviour on Islington's estates. The organisation has called for places to be made available to all the borough's youths at after school clubs and summer play schemes. Members have also proposed that funding should be allocated for a Community Restorative Justice programme where young offenders are taken to meet their victims and make amends for their crimes. An IWCA spokesperson said, 'Many people on our estates feel abandoned by the council and police and have become virtual prisoners in their own homes.'" The *Islington Gazette* carried two separate articles on the proposals for setting up a CRJ programme and the funding of youth facilities, quoting an IWCA spokesperson as saying: "Apart from the obvious advantage of a better quality of life for all residents of all ages it would also lead to long-term savings due to a reduction in crime."

In the last month, the IWCA have taken both Labour and the Lib Dems to task in the local media over their stance on affordable housing, changes to local democracy and their support for the 'contract culture' which has seen companies making huge profits from providing poor services.

The forthcoming General Election means that we have also witnessed the arrival of the Socialist Alliance onto the political scene. Their campaign in the south of the borough against government minister Chris Smith limps along, lacking any real focus or cutting edge. They appear far happier tailing the borough's other MP, Labour-left Jeremy Corbyn. A number of the LSA's efforts have been warmed-over versions of issues or campaigns taken up previously by the IWCA such as the IWCA's condemnation of the exclusive, yuppie-only, housing to be incorporated into the new Rose Theatre development. When the LSA finally decided to take this issue up, it was a full six months after the IWCA's original intervention!

The IWCA continues to work at raising its profile in the area with a number of new campaigns already planned.



# 'RAW DEAL' FACED DOWN Hackney - E. London

When the Hackney IWCA was launched just three years ago we were faced with an aggressive 'New Deal for Communities' quango dedicated to selling-off council housing in Shoreditch. There was no organised opposition, and of course all three political parties in the area supported it, as did the three glossy magazines delivered in the area by the Council, the New Deal and the private company that manages the local council housing.

We came out very strongly against the New Deal, branding it a "Raw Deal." Now things have changed to the extent that the New Deal is no longer a major threat and we can now use it to bring about real gains for the area. The New Deal organisation has officially bid for £55 million of government money to refurbish every flat in Shoreditch in the next seven years and dropped all plans for privatisation. Their magazine - which has twice carried full page attacks on the IWCA in previous years - has recently covered a meeting we helped to organise to plan for a campaign of withholding rent in protest at rent rises.

The IWCA has not achieved this on our own - and a number of local tenant activists can take a lot of credit - but we can also state that it would not have been possible without our consistent presence in meetings, in the letters page of the *Hackney Gazette* and in the columns of our newsletter, the *Hackney Independent*. What we managed to do was to give confidence to the strongest tenant activists that, not only did they not have to accept wholesale privatisation, they didn't even have to accept any compromises of a few blocks being sold off or the PFI scheme. When the New Deal's own rigged survey results came in, showing that 93% were against their estates being sold, the New Deal officers should have realised that the game was up. But they still put forward their "preferred option" of demolishing 20% of the council housing. Unfortunately for them, 100 angry tenants turned up at the meeting to observe the Board, and all the work they had done at house-training the most amenable "community representatives" was lost, as the Board felt the pressure and voted for full refurbishment of all council housing.

While the Hackney Socialist Alliance has been concentrating on "Taxing the Rich" and "Cancelling Third World Debt", the IWCA has been growing in numbers and influence by consistently taking up the immediate interests of the area's working class majority.

Below we re-print an article from the recent issue of the *Hackney*

*Independent* - expanded from four-page A4 to A3 and delivered free to 15,000 homes in our target area - which shows the kind of practical work we have been doing:

## Harwood Court - the block that fought back

Tenants in one of Shoreditch's most neglected blocks have shown what can be achieved when people work together to stand up for their interests. Hackney Council and the New Deal, until recently, believed that the tenants wanted Harwood Court knocked down. Until, that is, somebody actually asked the tenants.

The IWCA has been active in Harwood Court since September 2000, working alongside tenants and asking them what they want for the block, through a series of canvassing sessions. At every stage, the tenants have been consulted and involved and as in most blocks the tenants all agree what the main problems are - security, repairs and cleaning. Because a lot of the low rise blocks in the area have security doors, Harwood Court is an obvious target for a number of anti-social elements and the tenants have suffered from more drug dealing, muggings and intimidation than most blocks. Evidence of vandalism and hard drug use is obvious to see and the day before one of our tenants' meetings, a young girl was the victim of a serious sexual assault in broad daylight on the stairs. On top of this, many of the flats didn't have central heating and the wind whistles in through dodgy windows.

IWCA members worked with several tenants to collect signatures calling for entry phones to be installed and for a full refurbishment of the block to be carried out, holding meetings in the lobby, drawing up a manifesto of tenants' priorities and organising a delegation of tenants to put the petition to the New Deal Board, who have the money to make a difference. The fact that 90% of the flats in the block signed up to the petition and that tenants themselves went to put their case, meant that the New Deal Board agreed to support the proposals for entry phones and work is now underway to improve life in the block. Coincidentally, since the IWCA and tenants got active in the block, the council have started putting central heating into all flats, which is a start. But pressure needs to be kept up to make sure that entry phones are installed and the longer term goals - like refurbishment - aren't forgotten like all the previous promises.

There's more to be done and we're not complacent that change will happen overnight, but as long-term tenant June Cleevely said "Morale in the block was very low and it was good to see the IWCA come in and take some interest. This encouraged people to feel that they could change things". The success of the Harwood Court tenants shows what can be achieved when community politics addresses the real issues.

## POSITIVE STEPS FORWARD Harold Hill - Havering

Recently, in the London Borough of Havering, an independent candidate, Neal Stanton stood on a working class-first ticket in a local council by-election in Harold Hill; a huge, sprawling, suburban estate. From a standing start the candidate, up against Labour, Tories, Lib Dems, UKIP and the pseudo Residents Association (the second biggest 'party' on the council), came fourth with 134 votes or 11%; just a few votes short of pipping the RA to third.

Shortly after the election, Neal, a former local Labour party Chairman, announced the launch of the Harold Hill Independent Working Class Association. He told the *Harold Recorder*: "Today sees the launch of an exciting new political force in Harold Hill. The Harold Hill IWCA is a community-based organisation which aims to redress the present diabolical situation where the working class majority on Harold Hill have no real representation. We will start straight away to address the problems faced by the residents and tenants on Harold Hill, through organised campaigns, community activism and, most importantly, by listening to, and acting on behalf of, the working class of our estate.

Already we have been raising issues at the forums, talking to local people and taking up housing problems. However, we are under no illusion about the task ahead. Winning the trust, confidence and ultimately the backing of the community we live in will take a considerable amount of time and hard work."

One of the IWCA's first major initiatives was to organise a public meeting in response to a call from local residents for action to be taken

over escalating anti-social behaviour from gangs of youths. The meeting was well attended, with over a hundred people turning up to air their views, and has led to the setting up of a local Action Group to address the problem. IWCA spokesperson Neal Stanton, who chaired the meeting, told the *Harold Gazette*: "We have got to work together and stick together as that is the only way we will overcome these problems. Everyone I have spoken to has said the troubles have eased since our last meeting a couple of weeks ago. But if the gangs sense we have turned our backs or lowered our guard they will come back. It is very important for us to keep taking positive steps forward. Our newsletter will be a powerful weapon because it will allow people to see exactly what is going on and how we are progressing."

In a relatively short space of time, parts of the community have come together to look at what the community can do to 'help themselves', completely rejecting notions of calling the police or wasting their time on councillors who are simply not interested.

The type of community resistance being carefully built in Havering, dispels the notion that this kind of political alternative can only be built in the so-called 'radical boroughs' of the inner cities.



Neal Stanton, pictured in the *Harold Gazette* delivering copies of the IWCA's newsletter the *Harold Hill Independent*.



# Should we stay or should we go?

Shortly before the news that the LSA would not 'on principle confront the BNP at the ballot box for fear it might split the Labour vote' broke, controversies surrounding Red Actions affiliation to the LSA were already surfacing.

**With many RA members at best ambivalent, concerns were also voiced in letters and posts to the internet discussion site from interested parties who might loosely be described as Red Action periphery.**

Below we publish a selection of questions from one, Gill Emerson an ANL member once fire-bombed by C18, who was also involved in discussions around the formation of the Independent Working Class Association in the mid-90's.

Joe Reilly replies.

**QJ** *While agreeing with your assessment of the Socialist Alliances and the reason the various sects have battered on to them, why do you view the "Left's new willingness to confront Labour electorally" as "a real step forward"?*

**AJ** There are, I think, two sections to the situation, which though separate, are both undeniably progressive. The first is that the formation of the Socialist Alliances signals that the 'era of the sect is over' - even if the sects were always going to be the last ones to recognise this. Trotskyism, the rock the Left clung to for half a century has crumbled in the face of harsh reality. This is surely undeniable. Over a period of fifty years Trotskyism is shown not to have the answers to contemporary working class problems. In reality it never had. That collectively we can now safely put such cant aside is a step forward, for all of us, adherents and detractors alike. Without the perennial tussle to be proved Trotsky's true heirs, a more rational debate amongst those who instinctively identify with each other on everything else must emerge. This is not to say that the Socialist Alliance is the way forward in itself, but at least it opens up the possibility of shared objectives, something which hitherto was unrealisable. And only when the idea of common enemies and shared objectives can be discussed rationally can there be any real discussion on what those objectives might be. So in that alone, Left unity is objectively progressive. Equally, 'standing against Labour' is not so bad when you consider the alternative!

Again, this formal break with Labour, though significantly not theorised, is another step in the right direction. It would be impossible to regard them otherwise, particularly as these were two very basic measures RA has been arguing for since 1995.

**QJ** *Why, at exactly the time when a significant number of working class people are for the first time dissillusioned with parliamentary politics, is it a positive step for revolutionary socialists to decide now of all times, to join the race for votes?*

**AJ** In the first place there must be a huge question mark placed against the accuracy of the description 'revolutionary socialists', for two reasons. One, there is little or nothing in the custom and practice of the component parts of the Socialist Alliance to mark it down as radical, much less revolutionary. Secondly, as a number of RA publications have addressed, there is also in an even larger question mark over the existence of socialism itself. The very notion of an all encompassing 'Labour Movement', or terms like 'the point of production', 'municipal socialism', 'workers control', 'nationalisation; all previously hallmarks, have about them now a tangible air of antiquity. Socialism is moreover a programme of action no longer widely understood, or indeed accepted. If you doubt this, ask any socialist to define it in a single sentence, and watch them stumble over the basic construction. As for public disillusion with 'parliamentary politics', I think the voting trajectory shows that it is very specifically the working class who increas-

ingly since 1997, see the pointlessness of voting either in parliamentary - or - councils elections. The alienation is not just from parliament but from the mainstream parties who seek their votes at a local level. It is arguably at this local level that it is most marked.

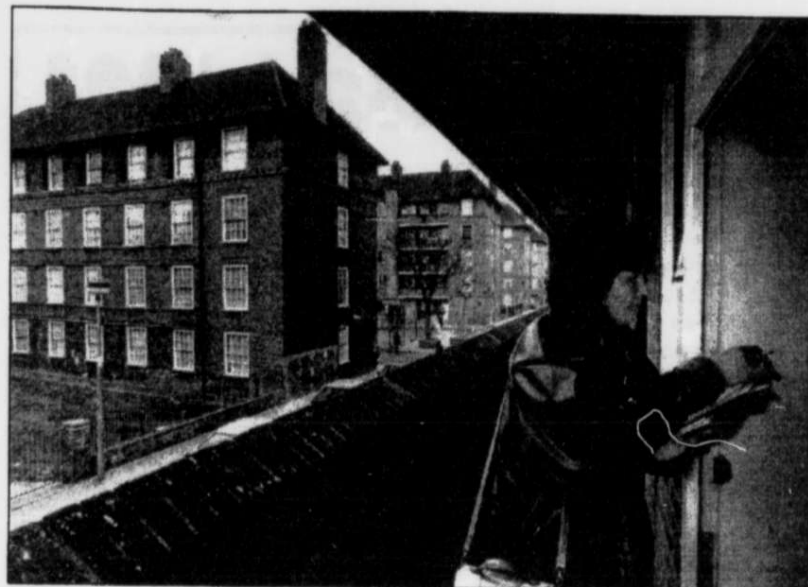
**QJ** *What exactly is the point of exposing socialist candidates to public humiliation, lost deposits, and almost certainly getting less votes than fascist candidates?*

**AJ** I think that the Left generally would need to first take on board the concept of individual shame before ever dealing with the more complex and subjective concept of 'public humiliation'. As regards the vista of 'lost deposits', it is RA's conviction that the whole General Election initiative is both ill-judged and wrong headed. It seems to be defined by the need of the SWP to be seen to be confronting Labour rather than any particular ambition to serve the needs of the working class. Contrary to received wisdom within the SA, grandstanding in parliamentary by-elections and representing working class interests are not the same thing. This subtlety, the components parts of the SA are still to come to terms with.

Yet another contentious area for the SA revolves around the question of confronting the Far-Right at the ballot box. Clearly the Beckton decision involved far more than a concern to avoid 'letting the BNP in'. After all this is the same BNP whose 80,000 votes the SWP described as 'tiny' following the GLA elections last June. Following a poor showing in a by-election in Preston toward the end of the year, this is also the same BNP whose challenge another highly vocal member of the 'alliance', felt ought to be dismissed from any tactical consideration 'for once and for all'. So while in the short term, the ducking of the BNP at Beckton might have avoided the forced eating of a lot of crow, in the longer term the current SA posturing on a range of race related issues will have to be squarely faced up to. If in the short term, 'getting less votes than fascist candidates' forces a re-think - then the sooner the better.

**QJ** *Wouldn't it be more productive to engage in the general election by campaigning, leafleting etc on a platform of stating clearly what we actually believe in; ie voting is a sham, big business/money rule things not voters, get active in your community to change*





Strategy means taking consultation and accountability seriously. It means targeting wards and putting your record to the test against the mainstream parties at elections. It means regardless of the result getting back out after the elections to build on the foundation. It means hard work, that ultimately registers in the public mind a commitment to 'the long haul'.

*things yourselves, don't rely on politicians..?*

**AJ** Again the whole 'voting is a sham' strategem is not unrelated to the Beckton scenario. What it tends to indicate is that behind all the pseudo revolutionary bombast there lurks a critical lack of belief in the resonance of the politics being espoused, not to mention the willingness and ability of the working class to identify with them. Stripped down, the problem certainly at a local level is not simply that 'money rules', or that 'voting is a sham'. In truth when really put to a vote the cherished programmes of the sects, anarchist and socialist alike, do not pass muster. Generally, elections do not lie; afterwards everyone knows where they credibly stand. Which is exactly what all sects and ideologies find abhorrent.

Of all the tendencies who claim to believe in the notion of 'getting active in your community' it is only, and I include the BNP in this, the IWCA which in its various pilot schemes has fully grasped what the concept of being 'politically active in the community means'. At a more advanced level, Sinn Fein are turning this strategy into a political art. What it involves is fighting for immediate working class interests, and through this being seen to be the most committed and effective fighters for the class. Such a strategy means taking consultation and accountability seriously. Not just on issues with which the Left is comfortable like anti-privatisation, but also on others like drugs, anti-social crime, the impact of immigration and so on.

It means targeting wards and putting your record to the test against the mainstream parties at elections. It means regardless of the result, getting back out after the elections to build on the foundation. It means hard work, that ultimately registers in the public mind a commitment to 'the long haul'. Ultimately, as both the IWCA and Irish republicans in their separate ways both found, there is no

getting around claiming to represent the interests of the community and *not* standing for public office. Either you enjoy popular support and have a mandate or you don't. With eternal lobbyism, which is one alternative, one or two things can happen. Either your real achievements are filched and represented by someone else as theirs, (which was the political relationship between republicans and the SDLP prior to 1983 when SF first stood) or alternatively the vacuum is filled by someone from the opposite end of the political spectrum, as AFA has long warned would inevitably happen, even in areas where anti-fascists were previously dominant.

The IWCA slogan 'working class rule in working class areas' is about empowering working class communities through the persistent foregrounding of immediate working class interests. Not only is such 'out-radicalising' the best bulwark against the Far-Right establishing electoral footholds it is also the only building block for 'total social change'. This is the message RA delegates will be confronting the LSA with in July, (when the London steering committee is reconstituted). After all, confronting the conservative Left is essentially what RA is in the LSA to do •

## Now & Then

Disillusion is now too great to ignore and everyone who matters has come up with a reassuring explanation... But the idea that we're living in a bourgeois paradise won't work. Turnout is collapsing in the slums and not in the gentrified docklands. Large sections of the poor and the working class have concluded that no party will do much for them, and, broadly they're right.

The danger is that as millions become justifiably cynical we will become more like the United States, Hague, Blair, and the media owners worship. Politics will be about pleasing the corporations who fund parties and placating the comfortable half of the electorate which bothers to vote. The rest can be left to rot.

Nick Cohen, *The Observer*, 25.3.01.

And as the establishment abandons responsibility for sections of the population socially they will as consequence be forced to abandon large sections of the urban areas politically as well. This ceding first of social responsibility, then of political control will mean areas being abandoned commercially and eventually paramilitary police apart - territorially. This means that the political organisations that still seek to influence events in those areas will be doing so for the first time this century free from competition from either of the two mainstream parties. The Tories have no say in any working class areas now and Labour's manifesto means that they're too destined to a similar fate. The coming election will be the last in which Labour candidates will campaign in working class areas with any real confidence.

*Red Action*, Issue 74, Spring 1997.

# Something we Said!?!?

We're fed this inert lying phrase like comfort food as another little Palestinian boy in trainers and a white tee-shirt is gunned own by the Zionist SS whose initials we should - but we don't - dumb goys - clobber in that weasel word *crossfire*."

Tom Paulin, *The Observer*, 15.2.01, (see *Big Issue*, *Red Action*, Vol. 4 Issue 9, Nov/Dec 2000)

Not only does anti-racism sometimes painfully mimic the language of racism (the use of black as well as Asian are worth deconstructing in this context) but anti-racists too often trip over their own logic. If it is wrong that "Asians" are represented in football so far below their proportion in the population, why is it right that black people (of Afro-Caribbean origin) are represented so much above? Racism in sport should be stamped out: real racism not imaginary.

Geoffrey Wheatcroft, commenting on the *Asians in Football* initiative which 'encourages' youngsters to take up football in the belief that the absence of a profile in the professional game is down to 'prejudice'. *Guardian*, 8.8.01

The British are the most hostile to political refugees of all EC people, according to a report from the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia... in the UK 23% questioned in the survey of more than 16,000 Europeans said political asylum seekers who had suffered human rights violations in their own countries should not be accepted.

*The Guardian*, 21.3.01

The last refuge of the scoundrel used to be patriotism. Modern scoundrels hide behind accusations of racism. There are members of the present government, for example who are seriously going about telling people that the calls for the resignation of Minister for Europe, Keith Vaz, are "racist"... The logic used by Vaz defenders is of course in itself deeply racist.

Alison Pearson, *London Evening Standard*, 21.3.01

In the comfortable far-off days of the Thirties and Forties a mans' work was more about position than pay - the way to get on was thorough loyalty and long service, and in return a company provided a job for life. But in the Seventies and Eighties all that changed. Nowadays, it's all about money, and "contract culture" means there is little security. The result is that contrary to the usual conclusion that "we're all middle class now" we really are all working class now.

*Evening Standard* comment on BBC series *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl*, 30.3.01

Nineteenth-century social theory is dead. Of course it is of only academic interest. The conflictual model of prole and bourgeois, capitalist and worker, is

gone with the mills that manufactured it. Imperialism too is gone. New technologies of oppression have replaced empire. You wonder that no-one will listen to your politics? Is it any wonder? Your language is as dead as your society. Empire is gone, the masses have moved - or been moved on.

Neil Pattison, letter printed in *Weekly Worker*, 29.3.01

Eg, for SWP leader John Rees the Socialist Alliance is a united front of a special kind, a stealth theory which in actual fact camouflages plans to build his confessional sect. Such an essentially dishonest and self-serving approach complacently assumes that the revolutionary party already exists - its initial for comrade Rees, being S, W, and P of course.

Jack Conrad, *Weekly Worker*, 29.3.01

A racist incident is reported to the police in London every 25 minutes and numbers have quadrupled since the Macpherson Report... Sir John concedes it is "an incredible figure" but he views the reports as good news. "It means to say that people from ethnic minorities have the confidence to report these cases hoping something positive will be



done".

Scotland Yard Commissioner Sir John Stevens, *Evening Standard*, 5.4.01. What no one in the race relations industry seems prepared to answer is, if one every 25 minutes is 'good news', at what stage - one every minute? - 25 every minute? does it begin to become bad news?. ED

...the road the South African government went down, which led to apartheid and a two-tier schools system.

Gary Craig professor of social justice at Hull University responding to state funding for a Muslim only school in Bradford, 2.3.01

This just in: according to a new poll half of all 14-25 year-olds in the old East Germany believe "the Nazis had their good points", by which, I assume they don't mean der Fuhrer was kind to animals... No, I don't think of Britain as

an anti-Semitic country or not irredeemably so at least. But there's part of me which would prefer not to see the results of the same poll taken in Britain.

John Diamond, *Sunday Telegraph*, 11.2.01

The AC poll questioned 537 people in detail about their views on racial equality in Britain today. The street survey was carried out in Manchester, Blackburn, Liverpool and Bradford... Three quarter of White respondents thought that ethnic minority communities receive too much advice and assistance from the government.

Campaign for Racial Equality press release 2.4.01

Because of our necessarily high expectations for the Socialist Alliance, communists have sought all available means to build an authoritative centre - the word 'authoritarian' does not bother us at all.

Jack Conrad, *Weekly Worker*, 5.4.01

Whatever other criticisms can be levelled against Sinn Fein, few would accuse the party of failing to see the big picture. On the contrary, as our front-page account today suggests, they are congenial gazers into the future, forever shaping a long term strategy - and a strategy for the period after that... They are breathing down the necks of the

"according to a new poll half of all 14-25 year-olds in the old East Germany believe 'the Nazis had their good points' by which, I assume they don't mean der Fuhrer was kind to animals"

Social Democratic Labour Party, casting themselves now as the energetic authentic voice of nationalism/republicanism... If they don't overtake the SDLP this time they reckon they will at the next. What blots this sunny horizon? You might think the change within unionism would alarm republicans a bit. The Ulster Unionist Party could take a pasting at the next election, surpassed by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party; even within the UUP, those who support the Good Friday Agreement could lose out to those who say no. David Trimble may well be ousted, leaving Sinn Fein to deal with a naysayer like Jeffrey Donaldson. Surely that would trouble Sinn Fein? Not a bit of it. If unionism walks away from the agreement, republicans have a plan B and C.

*The Guardian*, Editorial, 12.4.01