

RED ACTION

The bi-monthly bulletin of
the organisation Red Action
• Price: 70p • Vol. 4 Issue 3
• October/November 1999

BNP



New Leader New Danger

EDITORIAL

Initially the slashing incidents in

Dover in August were put down to

“refugees”, denomination uncertain.

Whether they be Kurds or Kosovans appeared to be largely a matter of indifference. No one, not least the media, seemed particularly bothered about the facts, much less securing any agreement on the identity of the guilty party. With battle lines drawn on the basis of the editorial line being either in the pro or anti immigrant camp, truth rather inevitably was the first casualty.

Playing fast and loose was certainly the *Guardian* style with this interpretation of events: “The violent scenes, as local knife wielding thugs clashed with asylum seekers leaving 11 people wounded gave a nightmare glimpse of the future that may face those who arrive in Britain each year to claim refugee status” (24.8.99). “Local” in this context, presumably meaning white. *Socialist Worker* was a trifle less gung ho. While denying “lurid pictures” of refugee violence as “filthy lies” it tacitly accepted some refugee culpability in the affair. In mitigation adding that the community had been provoked beyond endurance, and “in the face of racist taunts one asylum seeker had gone for local youths with a knife... allegedly”. Whatever the damage done, (of which there is no reference) this was ‘a lone nut’ for which no one else should be held to account was the *SW* spin. Complaining that the *Dover Express*, which last year described refugees as “human sewage” and this time round under a title “blood bath at funfair” illustrated the piece

with “a graphic picture of a slashed Kent youth”, the *Observer* expressed outrage that the papers coverage seemed so “completely one sided”. “The paper does not” fumed the *Observer* “highlight that at least one Kosovan had his face slashed” (*Observer* 22.8.99). Curiously neither, when presented with the opportunity, did the *Observer*.

In any case having nailed its colours so firmly to the mast last year, being ‘one sided’ is hardly a charge the *Dover Express* is likely to refute. But what of the *Guardian*, *Socialist Worker* and the *Observer* itself? It would be hard to imagine the *Observer* absolving anyone else of blame, regardless of provocation, if for instance on a ratio of ten to one, the victims had (a) not been white and (b) not been working class. Here as with the race killing of Richard Everitt, the liberal press allowed itself to appear entirely neutral. There are of course two sides to every story, but their reticence speaks volumes. When in the liberal mind such things, the slashing of a couple of ten year old girls, or even a racist murder is ignored, dismissed as ‘hype’, presented as under-

standable, or if done in the right cause even meritorious, it is easy to see the danger signs. Promoting a minority over majority, policy regardless, is reverse nationalism, not anti-racism. Automatically, from this stand-point, the interests of refugees or other minorities are counter-poled to the interests of, as the *Guardian* described them, the “locals”. And with the white working class cast as the enemy designate, ‘round up the usual suspects’ is the watchword. Quite simply liberals wants to abolish ‘the abuses of society on the basis of the same principles that gave rise to those abuses’, so the entire race question is approached from a moral stand-point - only ‘Nasty ‘locals’ versus ‘nice’ refugees and vice versa. Talk of extra funding to ‘grease’ proper integration is considered impossibly vulgar. Thus in the competition for dwindling resources the most impoverished are set against each other. Politicians and the media merely choose sides. “In Oxford a racist gang took its cue from the right wing press” according to *SW* “ [and] with iron bars, axes and bottles attacked a house where Kosovan refugees lived.” Local papers in Oxford however presented a very different account. Again, somebody, somewhere was telling porkies.

Obviously when the media take sides on the basis of race, without regard to objective truth, it makes it harder and harder for everybody else to discover what is actually happening. The

general uncertainty as to what is really going on only makes it easier to for a fundamentalist agenda to find favour. Truth might be the first casualty but in a war of half truths the ‘big lie’ will always be victor. And we all know who has the pedigree in that department.

Ascribing to refugees a host of virtues highly prized in middle class culture but assumed to be absent in the host community (usually the toughest of neighbourhoods incidentally) is self defeating. Particularly when not true. Particularly when impossible to live up to. A compound error being to lie, when as in Dover, the unpalatable happens.

By contrast authentic anti-racism is to recognise that when you really get down to it ‘refugees are as bad as the rest of us’. So for anti-fascism ‘no better, no worse’ remains the anchor. To attempt to ‘improve’ reality for some imagined political advantage stumbles, perhaps unwittingly, into the camp of those for whom racial preference is second nature.

Just recently Anti-Fascist Action was denounced as “racist” in the letters pages of a weekly left-wing paper for questioning the efficacy of liberal anti-racism. But ‘Refugees welcome here!’ is not a strategy, but a proclamation. And those who bawl it loudest, mostly hide, rather stand behind it. They hide from reality in other ways too. Not least the notion that they, as sterling defenders of the status quo, are at one and the same time, attacking militant anti-fascism from the left.

Ultimately the extent to which a positive outcome is possible depends entirely on how refugees interests can be shown to be a defence, not of narrow sectional interests merely, but of needs which are accepted by working class communities as universal.

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FRONT COVER: Newly elected leader Nick Griffin at the 1997 BNP AGM employing Red Action prop to deliver his message: ‘avoid the streets, avoid the reds’. (Full story back page).

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

RED ACTION WEBSITE

ANY OF YOU who tried to access our website using the address published in the August/September bulletin would not have got very far. So while apologising for this cock-up we are also pleased to announce that the site can now be located at the correct address below. Already, since going online a number of suggestions have been forwarded that will ensure that its presentation, structure and content can all be improved. We would also like to encourage our readers from both within and without the organisation to e mail us with constructive criticism and ideas for additional features you would like to see.

There is no doubt that the pace of new developments in information technology is formidable. While many technological developments can sometimes be a double-edged sword (when placed at the disposal of the State for instance) IT should be keenly embraced by any progressive movement because of the opportunities it offers. The Far-Right, as is often the case nowadays, were among the first on the political fringes to recognise the real potential that the internet offers. Largely ignored by the mainstream media and unable to venture out onto the streets to disseminate its propaganda, the internet provides the Far-Right with a cheap, censorship-free means of getting regularly updated information, news and views to thousands, and potentially millions, of ordinary people.

Internet use has soared in the last couple of years with everyone from schoolkids to pensioners being offered courses in its use. Its former status as that of 'trainspotters' hobby is already outdated. Within RA, even staunch members of the 'luddite faction' can now be observed surfing the net.

As the Left in Britain continues to contract, the number of left-wing bookshops, meetings, marches and demos, are set to become increasingly scarce and with them the opportunity to sell our publications and come into contact with potential recruits. The internet then, will take on an increasingly important role ensuring that potentially anybody, from Edinburgh to Essex, Berlin to Brisbane who wants access to the latest Red Action publications, news and views, will have it.

It will also mean that we can improve and speed-up internal communications as well. All regions should ensure that they have their own e mail facility and that they are linked into the rest of the organisation. Similarly anybody who has advice and expertise in the area of IT shouldn't be shy in coming forward.

Though constrained by our meagre resources, this November we will be undertaking our most ambitious promotional drive to date. In line with a decision taken at this year's National Meeting, thousands of stickers will be distributed, adverts will be taken out in selected publications and we will have a general RA recruitment leaflet available for the first time. This will seek to boost sales of the RA bulletin, raise awareness of the RA website and equip members for the first time with a general, easily accessible introduction to RA for new contacts, as well as enabling us to take full advantage of any forthcoming mobilisations and events.

All regions of RA will be expected to participate fully next month and ensure that their full quota of materials are distributed. At the same time though, we should not allow other ongoing projects to fall by the wayside, so this is a good opportunity for organisers to pull in and involve those around the fringes of RA. **Steve Potts**

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THE BIG ISSUE

THE BEST electoral result for the European Far-Right since the war would, it could be guaranteed, be greeted with a mixture of sanguine complacency along side panicky warnings of dictatorship.

Thus liberals contrive to be wrong on either side of the debate. For instance, on the grounds that Haider does not call for a new Third Reich, or have a tattoo of a swallow on his neck, *The Times* concludes that 'Haider is no Nazi'. A verdict shared by some of his political opponents in Austria who insist that he is a mere 'populist'; his prominence 'transitory' and his 27 % plus of the national vote dismissed as a 'protest'. This ignores the fact that Haider's 'overnight success' has been flagged up for more than a decade and no one has been able to stop him. Making something of a mockery of the SWP position for instance that 'fascism is only a threat when it involves large numbers of people'. Well, one in three of the population must satisfy that criteria, so what now?

'Waving banners', jeers of 'Nazis out', 'defacing election posters with Hitler moustache's' has rather surprisingly not proved a deterrent so we look with interest at what will pass for Plan B. It is not inconceivable that in the face of further defeat, and as an alternative to a total collapse in morale the Left will in time begin to take comfort in the *Times* prognosis. While not conforming to a stereotype 'Hollywood Nazi' Haider nonetheless lacks for nothing in the credentials department. Both parents were involved with the SS. The Freedom Party has been a home for unreconstructed fascists since the war. Little surprise then, when he describes Hitler's unemployment polices as "orderly"; SS veterans as "men of character" or brands concentration camps as "punishment centres".

Some nine months before the recent election, when asked to comment on new medical legislation, Haider remarked that it meant in future "Any bush nigger will have the possibility to treat his colleagues in Austria". An outburst that has led to incitement charges under the penal code. In all an inconvenient curriculum vitae for the 'Haider - not so Nazi' school. Others, like the *Guardian*, who reluctantly admit he might indeed be the 'genuine article', instead seek refuge in the myth of 'special conditions'. For them the "low poll" (ie. the election was somehow unrepresentative of a more decent Austria) is presented as sufficient reason not to take the Far-Right "very" seriously; retaining just sufficient objectivity to acknowledge that the statistic of "one in two workers" voting Far-Right is "startling".

Not however to *Red Action* readers. Nor *Fighting Talk* either. Instead Austria merely confirms a pattern long identified and evidenced in every country where the Far-Right are in the ascendant. To be able to confidently claim as Haider's does that "We're more socialist than the socialists" shows they have absolutely outflanked the conservative Left and won the 'battle for position'. With the result that in Austria as well as France, Italy and Germany and elsewhere, the Far-Right are perceived (quite rightly) to be the radical alternative.

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NOT WAVING...

RED ACTION CONTINUES IT'S REGULAR LOOK AT THE BRITISH LEFT

IN FEBRUARY, I wrote in this column about the SWP's Action Programme, as being the latest in a tradition of finding something for their members to campaign around. Since then, the emphasis on the Action Programme has faded, and replaced by another 'initiative', this time a lobby of the Labour Party conference. Such activity is used to create the impression that there is some kind of movement growing against Blair in an organised way, but even the SWP's own publications show this is not the case.

"The Labour Party's annual conference takes place this month against a growing clamour of opposition to the policies of New Labour, which in all too many aspects mirror those of the Tory government" sighs central Committee member Lindsey German "but there are signs of resistance across the country. Housing workers from London's Tower Hamlets have struck for several weeks over the summer against the Blairite council's plans to replace local housing offices with a call centre. Council tenants are fighting privatisation of their homes. Pensioners have organised a national demonstration this month for decent pensions."

Hardly 'storming the winter palace' is it? The SWP have been having these lobbies for years now and, they're nothing except a day out for their members.

Under the slogans, "Let's tell New Labour: Restore the link - decent pensions; Welfare not Warfare; 35 hour week - No loss of pay; £5 an hour - tax the rich; End privatisation and PFI/PPP; Full union rights - repeal the anti-union laws; Scrap the Asylum and Immigration Act.", the SWP, despite developments, continues to orientate to Labour. Reinforced by having Labour has been like Tony Benn and Liz Davies speaking at the rally. If they dislike Tony Blair so much, why are they still in the same party as him?

It's not just the SWP who have a monopoly in ignoring reality, while talking nonsense, old favourites Workers Power have long been international leaders in this field. In December I wrote about the exciting new developments in their paper. An excitement based solely on the change of colour on their masthead: "We think the [new] look now reflects the fact that Workers Power is the only really revolutionary paper in Britain." This step forward for revolutionary newspaper design was so exciting that they decided to redesign and relaunch their website as well. The main feature on the site was a discussion page.

Predictably, the contributions were generally so uncomplimentary it led to all messages being "erased" and the site closed down. "How can the LRCI lead the international revolution if it is so intolerant and incapable of debating on its own internet space?" one asked afterward.

How indeed? Well, under the heading 'Ten years of the LRCI', Dave Stockton explains. "The LRCI has passed the test of the end of the century's historic turning point. It has a programme adapted to the new period of wars and revolutions that lies ahead. We have advanced and developed our programme and theory, expanded our range of publications... We accumulated a cadre increasingly steeled in internationalism as a day to day practice. The ten years work of the LRCI represents a basis for real advance, an achievement of which every LRCI member can be proud." Which is nice.

So confident are they of their politics, they have been forced to censor any disagreement in public. In reality, like their parent body, the SWP, they have not and never will achieve anything. The era of the sect is well and truly over.

Colin O'Brien

So despite Haider's need to 'touch base' occasionally, with for instance the deliberate use of the word 'Uberfremdung' (coined by Goebbels to suggest a country over run by foreigners) far from the strident calamities the defacing of his electoral posters portend, his real strategy is, in the words of the newly elected BNP leader, 'to put politics before principles in order to acquire the power to put principles into practice'.

By comparison for socialist/anarchist sects 'let the class perish but let my principles remain immaculate' remains the watchword. Politically marginalised when fascists seek to set the agenda, they have little option but to hug the sidelines shouting instructions, or throw in their lot with the establishment parties. Compounding a fatal lack of ambition and confirming their innate conservatism in the eyes of those who most seek change.

Big Issue Prediction: More to come.

Red Action delegation - Belfast

August 6, 7, 8: The biggest Red Action delegation for years travelled to the annual West Belfast Festival. The majority there for the first time. The impression made was considered invaluable in regard to taking in the bigger political picture both over here, as well as over there. (full report Page 5)



Celtic - Glasgow

Despite work around Celtic Park remaining impressive, sales of the Red Action bulletin, which currently sell at an average of 10 bulletins per seller, will only continue to rise if supply meets demand: ie. if there are more sellers.

National Civil Rights Movement - London

September 19: Plans by London AFA to secure a stall at a National Civil Rights Movement benefit in Hackney were continually thwarted by the organisers who insisted there was no room. Only the NCRM itself, the ANL, 'Friends of Garvaghy Rd' (or Gadaffi Rd as the organiser insisted on calling them!) were facilitated. Why AFA, who are represented on the NCRM Steering Committee, were not invited was not adequately explained. Instead people were leafleted on the way in. Less than 200 attended.

Royal National Theatre security was called after a couple of AFA leafleters were spotted distributing material to people attending the play 'Lawrence Story' in order to highlight issues relating to race attacks. Not only did one 'jobsworth' stop further distribution but attempted to retrieve those already handed out. Following negotiations 200 leaflets were placed on a stall in the lobby next to recruitment leaflets for the Metropolitan police!

Tiocfaidh Ar La - Birmingham

September 11: In the face of confident forecasts, a benefit organised by West Midlands AFA in conjunction with the hugely popular and influential Celtic fanzine *Tiocfaidh Ar La* was something of a let down. Haphazard organising and a failure to put in the required amount of work to guarantee a respectable turn-out meant the attendance was poor. Must do better.

Cable St. Beat - Brighton

October 1: Cable St. Beat gig in Brighton, despite a relatively small attendance of less than 200, proved hugely successful politically and financially with fresh contacts established. The AFA stall doing steady business throughout the evening and £300 made on the door.

Feile an Phobail '99

Red Action delegation to the West Belfast Festival

Steve Potts reports on this year's Red Action delegation to Feile an Phobail, the West Belfast Festival. With the majority over for the first time, this was the biggest and most politically rewarding for many years.

Established in 1988, Feile is the largest community festival in Europe. The main festival celebrations are timed to take place around the anniversary of the introduction of internment - the 9th of August, 1971. The injustice of internment was marked in subsequent years by street disturbances. Feile was intended to replace this with a time of creative expression for the people of West Belfast.

Most members of the RA delegation arrived early Friday afternoon, and were taken straight from the airport to the famous (or infamous according to the security forces) Felons club on the Falls Road, home of the Irish Republican Felons Association. As its name suggests, membership of the Felons is open only to those who have served time for the Republican cause and counts Nelson Mandela amongst its honorary members. Originally set up by Gerry Adams Snr in the 1940's, the club is presently at the centre of a concerted attempt by the RUC to have it closed down.

Every year the club hosts 'Prisoners Day', to coincide with activities arranged by prisoners inside the jails during Festival week. This year the main theme was the 1981 Hunger Strike exhibition and also included a display of Republican prisoners' handicrafts and artwork. In a packed main hall there then followed an emotional launch of a new book about Tom Williams, *EXECUTED Tom Williams and the IRA*, who at the age of 18 was hung in 1942. In the presence of Joe Cahill and John Oliver, themselves originally sentenced to death with Williams, it was introduced by its author, serving Republican prisoner Jim McVeigh, who was on leave for the weekend.

After this powerful opening to the weekend the delegation headed for their billets in New Barnsley and Turf Lodge, in West Belfast and the Lower Ormeau, in the South of the City. A raucous evening followed with entertainment provided by Glasgow's *Eire Og* at the Sloan's club at the Whiterock.

Bright and early next morning the delegation gathered at Milltown Cemetery for a tour which profiled some of the approximately 120 Republican volunteers and activists from Belfast who had given their lives during the last 30 years of war and who had been buried at this historical site. These included the Gibraltar 3 and the Belfast hunger strikers, Bobby Sands, Joe McDonnell and Kieran Doherty. The guide read some passages from Sands' diary and pointed out the sometimes forgotten fact that had they not put themselves forward for hunger-strike, all ten, bar Francis Hughes, would have been released from prison by 1987. Attempting to place the esteem that republican dead are held in by the local community, the guide asked those assembled if they could remember a single name of a British soldier who had been killed during the 'troubles', or the location of a single public memorial. No one could. The tour also took in the burial plots of both the INLA and the Official IRA volunteers and profiled Joe McCann, Ronnie Bunting and 'Ta' Power amongst others.

Immediately after the tour the delegation travelled to the newly opened Sinn Fein (SF) centre on the Lower Ormeau Road for a meeting with SF councillor Sean Hayes and two of his colleagues. The Lower Ormeau nationalists are a

relatively new community in Belfast and have been the target of a concerted campaign of loyalist violence, peaking with the infamous Sean Graham's bookies shop massacre. The area has also been the scene of recent state violence as the RUC have forced through a number of unwanted Orange parades.

The meeting which lasted for over two hours and centred around RA members obtaining an insight into the building of SF electorally and in particular its successful development of working class community politics. Despite a host of useful advice, to a man the SF members were at pains to stress that at the end of the day what is required for success, was hard work and commitment; it had for instance taken them 10 years for them to take a single seat in the Lower Ormeau. There was also a look into the new Community Restorative Justice schemes being pioneered in the North, before the meeting finally had to be brought to a close.

That evening RA members attended the controversial play, *Forced Upon Us*, by Dubblejoint Productions made up of local and professional actors, including ex-prisoners. The play, which is a dramatic argument about the history and experiences that lie behind the call for the RUC to disband had had its funding withdrawn by the arts board, on the grounds that it was lacking in artistic merit. In typical fashion the local community responded, packing out every performance.

Sunday was the delegation's final day in Belfast, which began with the thousands strong annual march and rally to the City Centre to commemorate the introduction of internment. Followed almost immediately by a tour of the tiny nationalist enclave of Short Strand in east Belfast. The historical, political, social, economic and cultural background of the area was outlined by a local republican activist.

The last formal event of the weekend was a presentation to an ex-republican prisoner and his family from West Belfast. This family have welcomed our members, supporters and contacts into their home, sometimes with little or no warning, for over a decade. Presenting them with a set of framed prints from the Spanish Civil War, a RA organiser pointed out that "while it is often said that Red Action never forgets who our enemies are, we certainly never forget who our friends are either". The opportunity was also taken to thank the organisers of the delegation, Matt and Tommo, who had put in a lot of hard work to ensure that this year's delegation to Belfast was one of the most politically successful in our organisations history.

Red Action would like to thank the Republican communities of Belfast for the hospitality and generosity shown to our delegation during the Festival weekend.



FRAUDULENT CHATTER

In highlighting a push within academia to favourably revise fascism in practice, leading SWP member Dave Renton does us all a service, but it is his own revisionism, according to G. O'Halloran, which carries the greatest threat

I recognised the name right away. A colleague who was himself reviewing the book *Fascism: Theory and Practice* assured me the author Dave Renton 'wouldn't recognise a fascist, or indeed an anti-fascist, if he jumped up and nudded him'. Primarily because "physical confrontation" according to Mr Renton is legitimate as a tactic - so long as it remains "non-violent". 'Must' is the term Renton employs.

So on seeing his name attached to a headline 'Understanding fascism' I enthusiastically volunteered, without even a cursory glance at the article, to demolish him.

Rashly as it turns out. Not that my colleague was wrong, merely that it wasn't half as bad as I had hoped - at least to begin with. Writing in the August edition of *Searchlight*, Renton introduces his argument as follows: "The past fifteen years have witnessed the emergence of a new academic discipline. 'Fascism studies', is itself a response to developments in the outside world, including the rise of Far-Right parties in Europe and elsewhere".

Renton's concern with the coincidence of 'fascist studies' and the rise of the Far-Right is perfectly legitimate. As he explains there is "a developing consensus in the academic world on what fascism is, and what it actually has been". The express intention is, as he warns, to revise "our understanding of how fascism behaved" in practice.

"Fascism is now over" is the starting point of this academic consensus. With fascism dead they feel they can, and indeed argue, as academics they are obliged to view fascism for the first time with detachment; "without favour or criticism", or as one don puts it "in the quiet of the library rather than the heat of battle".

Along with fascism being dead (and so harmless), another key ingredient to the consensus is the notion of "a model fascism"; a fascism not unduly adulterated by outside forces, or the circumstances of the time. The three major historians Griffin, Payne and Sternhall whose arguments Renton confronts in the *Searchlight* piece all agree, in so far as any one regime can be seen as "typically fascist" it is the Italian version. The more infamous German version had deviated to such a degree they concur, it was not properly fascism at all. "Fascism can in no way be identified with Nazism." "Nazism... cannot be treated as a mere variant of fascism." "Hitler's Germany" was "a non-communist National Socialist equivalent to Stalin's Russia". "Mussolini's Italy bore little resemblance to either one" etc.

The 'hard distinction' they claim exists between fascist Italy and national socialist Germany, "enables" these historians, Renton notes, to revive the notion of the



ideal of a 'pure fascism', one freed from the clutches of the Holocaust and the camps. "In other words" as Renton points out "[they] deliberately choose Italy as their model of an 'ideal' fascism, ...in order to rescue fascist Italy from stigma; while it is still not possible to destigmatise fascist Germany". A fact Payne at least is candid enough to acknowledge: "Forces that promoted a world historical disaster are hard to view from scientific detachment". Quite. Yet only tentatively, (as if he can hardly believe it himself) does Renton suggest that in explaining their motives the historians are little less than candid, and far from 'detached'.

Key to understanding the whole exercise of detachment, according to Roger Griffin Professor of History at Oxford Brookes University, is the concept of parity of esteem. "If", as he explains "the appropriate way to define liberalism would be from the perspective of a liberal, therefore the best way to define fascism must be from the perspective of a fascist".

One problem Renton spots right off is that it then "becomes unclear when the fascist is speaking and when the historian." Such congruence is a recurring feature, according to Renton, in Sternhall's work in particular. To such an extent that when Sternhall writes: "In August 1914, when the old world of the 19th century collapsed, the proof was made that the motor of history is not Class but Nation" it is hard even on "close reading", Renton ruefully concludes, "to see it as anything other than the verdict of Sternhall himself."

Nevertheless Renton is clear where the threat lies. "The danger of the academic [ie. detached] approach to fascism lies in the path it treads from the idealist definition to a positive description of fascism. The argument that fascism equals Mussolini and not Hitler is an argument for a positive re-evaluation of fascism." Nor as he acknowledges "is it likely to end there."

As importantly, as Renton also acknowledges, the exercise did not begin there either. Euro-Nationalism was not stimulated by academic revisionism, rather the reverse. Fascist revisionists clearly find their inspiration in the renaissance of the Far-Right. While the academics re-writing of history inevitably provides the Far-Right with additional succour and respectability. Certainly the MSI in Italy has benefited from the fresh evaluations of Mussolini for instance. Yet it is precisely this reality Renton, a member of the Anti-Nazi League, struggles to get his head round. For two reasons. Brought up on the liberal notion that fascism can be put squarely down to 'ignorance', which safely confines it to the lower orders, he is reluctant to come to terms with the idea that highly educated lecturers like himself, might conceivably have similarly base leanings.

Simple snobbery, or just plain funk, does not entirely explain why

despite a formal adherence to 'class over race as the motor of history', when the chips are down, rather than attempt to 'out-radicalise' the Far-Right, the SWP/ANL opts for the moral argument as weapon of choice

he places all his stress on the danger of the academic "approach", rather than pin point those doing the actual 'approaching'.

Temerity aside, there is a fundamental and self serving reason why the 'detached approach' is flagged up as the greater threat. Quite simply the anti-fascism which Renton espouses has for fifty years eschewed any objectivity in favour of a complete reliance on emotional appeal. For liberal anti-fascism, moral imperative has, and remains, the order of the day. Not for them an emotionally

detached strategy rooted in objective reality.

As a consequence, if revisionism can successfully 'detach' fascism from the horrors and imagery of the Third Reich, the Holocaust as principle liberal anti-fascist icon will simply be past it's sell by date. Routine use thereafter, ensuring a diminishing return in terms of propaganda, before becoming totally counter productive in terms of realpolitik. Already existing evidence for such a scenario can be found from a study of the ANL campaign on the Isle of Dogs in 1994. There, despite (or because of), the ANL saturation of the working class community with placards bearing the legend 'Never Again!' the BNP despite losing their council seat, saw their vote increase by 30%. It was of course precisely this 'Never Again!' sloganeering (aligned it must be said to the tactic of countering violence with violence), which was responsible for the success of the ANL Mark I against the National Front in the '70's.

Whatever his views on the 'squadists' back then Renton (along with the rest of today's SWP's theoreticians) has very firm views on the unacceptability of the physical tradition now. In terms of contemporary strategy, the most revealing passage in *Fascism: Theory and Practice* is where Renton concludes that while "For fascists violence is a happy condition and fits with their view of the world... For anti-fascists violence is not part of their world view, they do not seek to create a society where violence is natural or common place, violence is not something which anti-fascists can glorify. For these reasons physical confrontation against fascism has to involve large numbers, must be primarily non-violent and should involve layers greater than any professional anti-fascists in order to build a truly mass opposition."

While acknowledging that theory very certainly coat-trails practice, this unilateral declaration of non-aggression nonetheless confirms that the SWP/ANL have actually crossed the Rubicon. In rejecting the physical force tradition, and being out flanked on the moral question, what is left in the ANL's arsenal by which it could define itself as specifically anti-fascist is a moot point? Certainly the SWP is not confident it is up to the job of beating fascism politically. Which is the crux of the matter:

In other words, though it might not admit it, the SWP is acutely conscious that in '30s, fascism defeated the working class movement not only strategically and militarily - but ideologically. And having done so once, might do so again. An elementary example of such dishonesty being Renton's comment about 'the kind of world anti-fascists wish to create'. In point of fact anti-fascism by definition is not in a position nor in the business of creating anything! Anti-fascism is a negative concept which only comes into play when the Left as a whole has lost the initiative. An implication the SWP and the conservative Left simply refuse to address, let alone come to terms with.

So despite a formal adherence to 'class over race as the motor of history', when the chips are down, rather than attempt to 'out-

radicalise' the Far-Right either at the ballot-box or in working class communities, the SWP/ANL in tandem with the liberal establishment opts for the moral argument as weapon of choice. The whole idea designed not to crush Far-right but - quarantine it. Not once, not even when the opportunity sat up and begged as in the East End in 1979, has it sought to ameliorate, or indeed politically exploit, the social conditions that repeatedly give rise to fascism. Instead in routinely rejecting the immediate and legitimate concerns of working class communities as unworthy of its attention, it not only alienates them from its own organisation, but more often than not, in the eyes of the locals, caricatured anti-fascism itself.

Furthermore through presenting anti-racism exclusively from the perspective of minority rights as is the fashion, anti-racism has become divorced, or all too often is counterposed to real questions of social justice for the community as a whole. Consequently the overriding argument that fascism is in essence an anti-democratic response to working class social and political aspirations, is carelessly forfeit when the most visible or vocal proponents of the counter argument, on the one hand stand aloof (stridently addressing the symptoms only) while at the same time conveying through word and deed that the principle problem is inherent in the working class itself.

The subliminal message of liberal anti-fascism post war: the thought process underpinning propaganda typical of the ANL is the employment of social stereotype to combat racial stereotype. 'Fascists are poor - fascists are stupid' is that public and private refrain in a nutshell. The irony of both fascism and anti-fascism holding the working class in mutual contempt appears not to have occurred to them.

Besides which, if Sterhall can define fascism as "socialism without the proletariat", then multiculturalism, of which the ANL is such an open advocate, and which in a similar fashion to Sternhall places 'race over class', can be defined and is widely perceived (almost unanimously in working class communities) to be 'anti-fascism opposed to the proletariat'.

Just how far the rot has set in, is demonstrated by Renton for whom the antithesis of fascism is not working class communism (even with a small c), but middle class liberalism. Which is why, perhaps unconsciously, in listing those "jailed and executed by fascist regimes" he places "liberals and feminists" first and second in order of merit. (One example of his own revisionism now clearly being dwarfed by an aggressive nemesis.)

In typical white feather fashion Renton concludes by agreeing with his academic protagonists that there must be 'a clear definition of fascism'. Of course European fascism having re-invented itself is doing very nicely, if the eleven million plus votes (off a low turnout) in the Euro election is any guide thank you very much. Instead what the debate is really crying out for is a clear definition of anti-fascism. Something clearly beyond Renton, *Searchlight* and for that matter the entire conservative Left. And even where there is no 'hard distinction' between Renton's theory and his practice, there is a very real distinction between his cloistered reality and the outside world. Anti-fascism to mean anything is about doing, not being. Being pro-active. Making a difference. Active anti-fascism is something Renton airily admits, he always 'preferred to leave to others'. Accordingly the revisionist discipline applied to anti-fascism ie. - 'the appropriate way to define anti-fascism is from the perspective of an anti-fascist' leaves Renton (not being one himself), unqualified to comment.

In 1935, two years after Hitler had taken power, in a withering attack on the type of politics Renton espouses, Trotsky wrote: "Fascism finds unconscious helpers in all those who say that the 'physical struggle is impermissible'... nothing increases the insolence of the fascists as much as 'flabby pacifism' on the part of workers organisations. This fraudulent chatter parading under the banner of 'Bolshevism' arouses only disgust and loathing". "Disgust and loathing" he might have added in fascists and anti-fascists alike. A reality which explains why people like Renton never see the head-butt coming, or even comprehend that it is his own effete meddling that enrages the owner of the forehead to begin with.

the thought process of liberal anti-fascism is to employ social stereotype to combat racial stereotype. Fascists are poor - fascists are stupid, is the refrain in a nutshell

Community Resistance

Oxford, Blackbird Leys Hitting the Headlines

WITHIN DAYS of the launch of the Blackbird Leys IWCA in Oxford, the branch made headline news in the local daily paper. The *Oxford Mail's* front page screamed 'VIOLENT FILM HERO USED IN LEAFLET - Vigilante image just a bit of a laugh', in reference to the first issue of the branch newsletter, the *Leys Independent*, which addressed the thorny issue of anti-social neighbours. The newsletter had carried a picture of Travis Bickle character from the movie *Taxi Driver*, as light relief. In an editorial comment, the *Voice of the Oxford Mail*, the editor stated:

"No-one would argue against families wanting to live in peace. No-one would deny their right to protest about the anti-social behaviour of a minority and press for those in authority to sort it. To that end we have sympathy with the Blackbird Leys Independent Working Class Association. But we are not too happy with its methods of publicising its aims. If the use of a picture of a deranged, gun-toting character

from a violent film was meant to shock, it succeeded. If it was intended to demonstrate the determination of the group to get results, it was alarming. If it was included for light relief it was not funny. There are those who would take this as an invitation to join a vigilante group. They look for this sort of action and the association could unwittingly be encouraging it. If its aim is to assist the police with information rather than action, then we applaud the public-spirited nature of the move. If it is anything more, we urge the members to think again".

The story was picked up by Teletext, which carried an edited version. 2,000 copies of the *Leys Independent* have been delivered on to the Blackbird Leys estate prompting a healthy response from residents and panic from the council and housing associations. The newsletter was raised in the Oxford County Council chamber where the local Labour councillor suggested that "they could be fascists", displaying his complete inability to perceive of progressive working class organisation. Either that, or the councillor has an entirely different agenda. We shall see.

The Blackbird Leys IWCA has also been busy with the launch of its children's cinema. The first

show in early September proved very popular. It is hoped that, funds permitting, this will become a regular event.

East London, Hackney "Class Crusaders"

Picking up on the Hackney IWCA branches hard work, the local paper the *Hackney Gazette*, devoted a whole half-page feature to the new branch, even carrying the address and phone number. It is reprinted below in full...

CLASS CRUSADERS have called on tenants to fight off a yuppie invasion of Shoreditch and South Hackney. In a leaflet hand-delivered to 8,000 council homes, the Hackney Independent Working Class Association blames spiralling housing costs for forcing out traditional Hackney folk and slams a £50 million government giveaway for being the springboard for the trendy trainer brigade invasion. In February, Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, announced the £50 million New Deal for Shoreditch re-generation package.

£50 million facelift sparks yuppie fears

Tenants urged to fight back over regeneration package

By ANN DAVENPORT
A £50 million facelift for Shoreditch and South Hackney has sparked fears among tenants of a yuppie invasion. The Hackney Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) has urged tenants to fight back against the regeneration package. The package, announced by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott in February, is worth £50 million and is intended to regenerate the area. The IWCA says the package will lead to a massive increase in housing costs, forcing out traditional Hackney folk and replacing them with yuppies. The IWCA has distributed leaflets to 8,000 council homes, urging tenants to fight back against the regeneration package. The IWCA says the package will lead to a massive increase in housing costs, forcing out traditional Hackney folk and replacing them with yuppies. The IWCA has distributed leaflets to 8,000 council homes, urging tenants to fight back against the regeneration package.



Council sells empty house for £151,000
The council has sold an empty house in Shoreditch for £151,000. The house was one of the properties targeted by the regeneration package. The IWCA says the high price is evidence of the yuppie invasion.

The Hackney Independent Working Class Association fears that Hackney residents will be run out of the area and replaced by yuppies and City business folk.

Peter Suttle, chair of the association, says: "Why are they investing all the money in the Shoreditch area, instead of other places further away from the City like Hackney Wick? Most of the estates marked for redevelopment are either next to the canal or the proposed new train link in Kingsland Road.

"These are prime sites for canalside flats and trendy bars and restaurants and the estate residents will be forced to move away. "There is nothing wrong with new homes, shops and bars, but we should have new homes for our community and shops and bars that charge prices we can afford and that employ local people," adds Mr Suttle.

Mary Graham, of the Foilingham Court Tenants' Association, told how its bid to buy a shut-down school next door to the estate was turned down in favour of converting it into luxury flats, which are now being sold at prices that few can afford.

The Hackney Independent Working Class Association is aiming to attack council and New Deal policies through independent councillors drawn from residents' associations, who will answer directly to the voters.

"We will support independent councillors", said Mr Suttle. "We want to break away from the established council party system that only represents the middle classes. "We are not Old Labour, or Socialist Workers' Party. We are not a reaction to any extreme right-wing groups. We just want the residents to have a voice".

Hackney IWCA's newsletter, the *Hackney Independent*, was also reproduced in full, in the August edition of the 'New Deal Trust' info newsletter, distributed throughout the area. Entitled "Raw Deal - What Raw Deal?" the article stated that the IWCA newsletter "contains some inaccuracies about the New Deal for Communities, and gave space to "a local resident" to outline her disagreements. An IWCA spokesperson commented, "The New Deal Trust board (which includes ex-Hackney Chief Executive Tony Elliston) are obviously feeling the pressure; still nice of them to give us the free publicity!"

In response to previous articles relating to the effects of drug policy on users and communities, **Bob Martin** argues that while State policy creates the illusion of prohibition, the reality is one of withdrawal and containment

DON'T RUN BEFORE WE CAN WALK

My family live in one of the many areas of the Black Country currently plagued by a growth in heroin use. Robberies and burglaries are rife, hence it's no coincidence that prostitution, pimping and gangsterism are also widespread.

There's inextricable daily evidence on these streets that where one facet exists the rest will follow. Within twenty or so yards of our house in each direction there are smack users, at least two are known burglars, one is also a mugger. Another is dealing, and is rumoured to be involved in under age prostitution. One is a decent lad, but he's only been a recognised addict for three months or so, and therefore probably not yet struggling to support a £200 a week habit. A lot has changed in the eleven years we've lived in this street. A once vibrant solid community is being sucked dry. It's never been perfect, but where has? Many good families are leaving, and many more want to, ourselves included. It's not that we're isolated - we've got many good friends and allies in the community - but collectively that community structure, from the family to the street to the neighbourhood, is under sustained attack, and as things stand, ill-equipped to fight back.

All the perpetrators, from the big-shot dealers and pimps to the 'wannabes' involved in robbing and street gangs, operate with an alarming degree of impunity. It's common knowledge who's up to what, the information is freely available on the ground to any casual enquirer. Obviously, the problem is wider than just smack, but it's a fact that smack is a big component of the deterioration. An observer could only conclude that key individual police officers have vested interests in allowing 'acceptable' levels of crime, or that the police and the council as a whole are involved in a deliberate containment strategy, an active policy of 'ghettoisation'. If that's the case then New Labour, Keith Halliwell and all the prohibitionist bleatings of the government sponsored anti-drugs campaign are tokenistic and meaningless, because on the ground there's a conflict of disinterest. Regarding "the devastation allegedly caused by drug use on our estates" (RA Vol. 4, Issue 2) frankly, there's no 'allegedly' about it.

Although drugs themselves clearly aren't the root cause of run down estates, the drug economy and related activities compound the problem more than any other side effect of social decline and should be dealt with accordingly, and that means realistically. The problematic elements have nothing to gain and everything to lose from naive attempts to establish 'social contracts'. While we're at it, perhaps it might prove expedient in the long term to draw up similar social contracts with the police, councils and other anti-working class aggressors. Likewise, other arguments tabled about

'displacing' the problem are nonsense, unless we conclude the same applies to fascists, paedophiles and other equally reviled elements. We have to be both realistic and representative in our approach to the problem, lest we may become seen as a part of it. Community responses to drug/hood related problems (as more often than not the two are synonymous) aren't about the 'demonisation of powders, plants and pills', it's about fighting scum off, scum who don't give a fuck about their immediate friends and family, never mind the wider community.

We are all living in difficult conditions, and bleeding heart excuses for involvement in the most derogatory aspects of drug culture could also apply to any other disruptive, harmful or intimidating behaviour. These people are not 'Robin Hood' characters, they are shitbags with no moral regard for the consequences of their actions. The romantic images of abject drug visionaries yearning escapism don't apply, it's more about 'badass' identity, and an emulation of glorified ghetto gangsterism. This falls neatly in tow with Labour's emulation of American government policy towards it's own ghetto 'underclass'. Containment and withdrawal creates a vacuum that only the communities themselves have the potential to positively fill, and the IWCA will only contribute to that if it can establish a clear, no-nonsense strategy around the drugs issue.

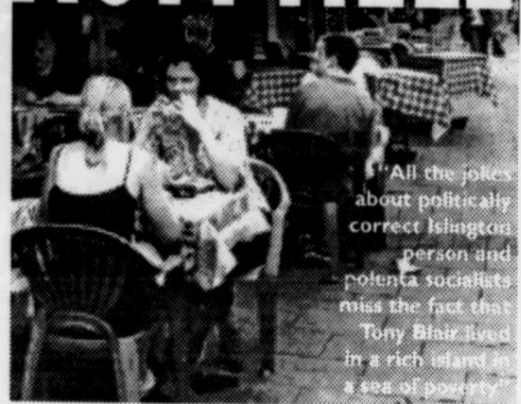
There are notable examples of successful local initiatives to promote social responsibility, some of these cited by the drug users movement, but when the situation has gone so far they are the exception rather than the rule, and so naturally remain secondary to the resolution of the drug-related social problems that concern affected communities here and now. As stated, there are plenty of examples of socially responsible people who hold down jobs and run families etc, or at the very least don't let their habits curtail their social 'decorum'. These users don't pose a problem, because on the whole if you didn't know them you probably wouldn't be aware of their drug habit in the first place. They may get into problems, some will inevitably die of misuse, but the social impact is limited. Within this community I've never heard of anyone condemned solely for drug use, without there being some adverse anti-social activity to warrant the condemnation. Ultimately, the question is, how can you realistically market collective social contracts to: 1) The perpetrators - anti-socialists, who thrive on a scared and fragmented community (Note, not *all* drug users, and not *all* of them drug users) and 2) The 'victims' (i.e the bulk of the community) who understand point one only too well?

Charlie Dow's articles have detracted from the significance of the alarming combination of drug-related economic interests, and the overall political disinterest that blight working class areas. These problems, and eventually the people behind them, must be publicly identified and confronted. Without a mandate there is no strategy, and in turn there will be no mandate unless we open a dialogue based on the apparent facts. That is not a euphemism for bowing to prejudice and hearsay, but dealing with the issue as it stands, not as we'd like it to be in a more ideal world.

There are obvious risks involved in taking on hoods, there is also a risk of touching a potentially reactionary 'raw nerve'. But such risks haven't dictated our trajectory in the past, it's only ensured we've been more careful in our preparation. We should identify a clear middle ground between prohibitionism and what could be dismissed as liberal naivete. It has to be progressively tangible without being ultra-liberal, and uncompromising without being reactionary. From that position we'll be able to, yet again, deliver a strategy that is both applicable and groundbreaking.

NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

Following Steve Potts' look at Islington, the spiritual home of New Labour, Observer columnist Nick Coen confirms all his suspicions



"All the jokes about politically correct Islington person and potentia socialists miss the fact that Tony Blair lived in a rich island in a sea of poverty."

I live in a district like no other. To most eyes, my patch is not a network of streets and parks, encircled by council boundaries, but a shorthand note for a social mentality and a political programme. I live in the cliché that is Islington. As my neighbours dominate much of what passes for metropolitan government and intellectual life, it may be worth your while getting to know them.

At first glance, they look remarkably convivial. The neighbours believe they have dismantled the old barriers within the middle classes - the sneers against trade, the worship of the professional man, the unteachable snobbery of the shabby-genteel - and overrun the higher barricades of sex and race. Women friends who give up work worry they will have nothing to say in a polite society where female career achievement is taken as a given.

If you believe your kind of people are the natural leaders of the country, you regard democratic attempts to hold them to account by the millions who have not 'succeeded' as not simply impertinent, but all but incomprehensible.

their views and experience are shared by every one. They can be evenly divided between those who think north London is the centre of the world and those who think it is the world.

Parochialism prevents us seeing the peculiarity of our lives. In most cities, the bohemian middle-class district has a bodyguard of comfortable suburbs fanning out behind it. But the neighbours' rear is exposed. We are surrounded on all sides by slums. All the jokes about politically correct Islington person and potentia socialists miss the fact that Tony Blair lived in a rich island in a sea of poverty. Sixty per cent of Islington residents live in council housing, half are without a car, nearly a quarter have no work at all. The solid suburbs are miles away and our isolation makes us frightened that the neighbours we prefer not to know will break in through our roof terrace windows, and obsessed with keeping our young away from the rough boys at local schools.

If you're gay, you can be - you are practically required to be - open about it. Racism is an unforgivable sin. Although it's easy to mock the neighbours, it is, to say the least, a relief not to be forced to choose between wearing a fixed grin or starting a scrap when cracks about our 'coloured brethren' are dispensed with a complicit wink.

Now I think about it, I'm surprised to have been naive enough to have hoped for more from them. For all their apparent tolerance, there are many groups barred from Islington dinner tables. If I'd been paying more attention, I'd have thought earlier about the gaps in the guest list. There's a brilliant study waiting to be done on the effects of London's urban geography on the government of Britain.

Like all political classes, the neighbours assume

I said they were frightened of the poor, but that's not quite the right word. The failure of socialism has meant that there is no pressure to buy off discontent. Thatcher has taught the neighbours that protest can be marginalised even when there are four million unemployed. In a prophetic essay, 'The SDP and the New Middle Class' published in 1982, the late historian Raphael Samuel said that the old sense of humility before the working class and a desire for camaraderie which inspired Hugh Gaitskell just as much as middle-class Marxists had gone.

The working classes were now 'anachronisms... jobs deeply sunk in lethargy'.

The new middle class 'are not, in the conventional English sense, snobs,' he wrote, 'because they don't feel anyone can threaten them. They believe they earn every penny they get.'

A faith in meritocracy may seem innocuous, even admirable, but Samuel and dozens of other thinkers have pointed out that when the rich feel they deserve their wealth because they made it by their own efforts, they lose all sense of guilt, privilege and duty. The poor are poor because they are stupid and feckless. You don't respect a skilled carpenter for mastering a trade, but despise him for not doing more with his life, for not striving to be you.

Such prejudices not only exclude the refugees, the poor and the working class from the neighbours' parties, but teachers, public sector workers and manufacturers. They are all stuck in the dirty, old world far from the clean and outstandingly lucrative sun-rise industries of the Internet, media, finance and biotechnology. For the neighbours have become very wealthy. Cautious estimates put the joint income of Tony B and his barrister wife at about £350,000. When you are surrounded by neighbours making similar amounts, your bank balance is normal rather than exceptional. You regard yourself as a 'regular guy', not a lucky freak.

At the beginning of this piece I said that the neighbours appear to be open. And so they do. But their self-confident insularity is destroying their promise to bring openness to the rest of us.

If you believe your kind of people are the natural leaders of the country, you regard democratic attempts to hold them to account by the millions who have not 'succeeded' as not simply impertinent, but all but incomprehensible.



This is an edited version of Nick Coen's article, first published in the August edition of Red Pepper

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New Leader, New Range

NICK GRIFFIN BEATS JOHN TYNDALL IN BNP LEADERSHIP CONTEST

The BNP have a new leader. Following a postal ballot of all members Nick Griffin secured 62 % of the vote thereby replacing John Tyndall at the head of the BNP.

This will come as something of a shock to the uninformed, (or to readers of Searchlight who are mostly misinformed) for while Griffin was correctly fingered as coveting Tyndall's title he was according to Searchlight's spin, in competition with Tony Lecomber for it. In fact Lecomber was Griffin's election agent! That Lecomber himself did not stand gives a key insight into the thinking of the 'modernisers'. Jailed for an attempted bombing in the early '80s and then again for a further three years for a violent assault in the early '90s, Lecomber was often at the forefront of clashes with AFA.

Of all possible leadership contenders, Lecomber has by some distance the most distinguished 'war record'. Nothing if not game, he ended up on the deck so often he was christened "Tarmac" by AFA militants. That apart, it was him rather than Griffin surprisingly, who first promoted Euro-Nationalism as the strategy of the future. Significantly as well, it was Lecomber rather than Tyndall who announced to the press in 1994 that 'the battle to control the streets was over and there would be no more meetings, marches, punch-ups'. All in all, Lecomber appeared to have the perfect pedigree; just the right amount of stamina, vision and thuggery required to replace Tyndall. Though unlike Tyndall he was never captured in full Nazi regalia, in all other respects Lecomber more than met the criteria of a brown-shirt of the old school. Rather too well for the modernisers liking however. Even Griffin, who has only a single 'white collar' conviction under the Race Relations Act (of which he is rather 'proud'), allows that if the links with Gaddafi or other 'youthful indiscretions', prove a handicap, the 'job of fronting our public image would be allotted to someone who presents even less of a target to the media'.

So 'media image' is an obvious reason for the modernisers to jettison a pronounced Mosleyite like Tyndall. Getting rid of Tyndall would also allow a clearing of deadwood such as Keith Axon, whose only talent is his loyalty to Tyndall. Griffin promises to replace them with 'under-used talented supporters' possibly including Eddy Butler, the architect of the Isle of Dogs victory in 1993. Butler along with others left the BNP not long after in disgust at Tyndall, who fearing he would be 'out-Nazied by C18', flatly refused to face down C18 politically. It is for such reasons that the majority came to accept Lecomber's view that the steady rise of the BNP was down to people 'other' than Tyndall.

Without doubt it was Tyndall's bizarre attempt in January 1996 to make a 'return to the streets' which sealed his fate. Only a humiliating climb down forestalled an instant leadership challenge then. This fatal blunder was a result of 'not knowing the situation on the ground'; not fully appreciating the "stiff opposition" to use Lecomber's words that the BNP had faced from RA/AFA in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The only explanation for his ignorance is that fearful of his political reaction (ie a further lurch toward C18) if the graphic details were not kept from him, he was instead misled as a matter of routine.

Which helps explain why, though only a little younger, press officer Michael Newland dismisses Tyndall's political thinking as outdated and borne of "a wartime mindset" ie. "the assumption that the prospect of being attacked would stiffen the sinews of our sturdy British folk. In reality most run a mile." For Griffin, while citing an incident at Stockport British Rail station in 1986 where the NF did not "run" as his "proudest moment" (though being completely over run by a formidable outfit from Manchester was only prevented with the help of a fireman's axe!) Stockport was still for him the exception that proved the rule. Before the year, was out, following yet another NF debacle in Bury St Edmonds at the hands of London AFA, Griffin foresaw what Tyndall would still be struggling with a decade later, ie. "the temptation to hold exciting but basically futile street activities... [to] very little effect, save to allow Red Action to use the NF threat to boost their own support on the streets. Now that he's in charge 'avoid the streets - avoid Red Action' will continue to be his motto.



1997: John & the Mrs discovering 'the situation on the ground' - for himself. Right: Griffin and Lecomber.

Particularly, as at present, a mere doubling of the 20% turnout in the Euro Election in June 1999, (when the BNP still took over 100,000 votes) would leave them within shouting distance of the 250,000 votes accrued by the NF in its heyday in 1977. And with Griffin as front man (of a collective leadership) the BNP have completed the make over from 'Hollywood Nazi' to European Nationalist in little over five years. To even keep pace the conservative Left are going have to suffer the trauma of a similar transition. Up to know there is absolutely nothing to suggest they have either the ambition or the stomach for it. Accordingly, just as the Far-Right give the appearance of leaving the wilderness, the conservative Left seem destined to replace them there.

Something We Said!?

Well given Red Action's distaste for theory it is not surprising that you should equate 'unconditional support' with tailing the political lead of revolutionary nationalism (or even not-so revolutionary nationalism!). Red Action do not have a political analysis of Ireland, or the world in general (hence your complete lack of activity over the latest imperialist outrage in Yugoslavia). You buy hook line and sinker the political line of the Adams/McGuinness Sinn Fein strategy - that is not socialism, it is not Marxism. You are more anarchist than Marxist. SWP outburst following a challenge to it's interpretation of "unconditional support" during debate on Celtic-Ireland internet site, 21.7.99

"the dodgiest analysis of the 'troubles' this side of Class War or Red Action." Letter, Direct Action, issue No 11, Summer 99

The SWP is not a predominately middle class organisation... Unless of course you are going to argue that teachers, nurses, social workers, civil servants, retail workers, bank clerks and students are all middle class. SWP in defensive mode, Celtic-Ireland website, 21.7.99

"For me what was extremely worrying even frightening was that the percentage of votes for the fascist British National Party, the BNP, was up from 1997. In Scotland, the North East and London, Socialist Labour did come out ahead of the BNP, but if anything should inspire campaigning for Socialist policies, it's the need to fight the evil of fascism." Arthur Scargill, SLP General Secretary, responding to the loss of seven out of ten head to head Euro election contests with the BNP. Socialist News, August/September 99.

The energy once spent in making society fairer is now spent on articulating sectional interests. The new line seems to be: since we can't do much with the basics of economy and society, let us focus on politics. So the agenda pushes legal equality for women and the removal of inequality based on race - though here things get more complicated because equality arguments have to encompass the celebration of "differences, and even professors of gender studies tend to draw the line at extolling ethnic difference when it takes the form of clitoridectomy. David Walker, The Guardian, 3.9.99