

Red Action

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Prepared to FIGHT

New technology who gains?



THE LAING'S LOCK OUT COMMITTEE, PUTTING THEMSELVES ON THE LINE FOR THE RIGHTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

In the last two issues of Red Action, we have reported on a dispute being fought between a group of six building workers and the giant John Laings building firm. At the heart of this dispute was the attempt by Laings to get rid of these men from one of their sites, because they were known trade union activists, to operate what is known in the building industry as the 'blacklist'.

After a while successful picketing, which caused severe disruption to several Laings sites in the London area, forced them to negotiate. Then an arbitration panel, made up of representatives of the employers and the unions, found in favour of the men and they were reinstated. It seemed that here was one dispute with a successful conclusion.

However just a couple of weeks later Laings reneged on the agreement and the men found themselves dismissed again. The lads had no option but to resume picketing of Laings sites again, in order to force their re-instatement again.

However the effect of the picketing this time round, was severely hampered by the treachery of certain full time officials from the construction union UCATT. Not satisfied with merely doing nothing to help the men, these fine fellows also took it upon themselves to send circulars to other unions, informing them that the action was not official and the men's picket line should not be observed. In doing this, they were directly responsible for breaking solidarity action at a least one Laing's site.

OMINOUS

However an even more ominous threat was soon to emerge. Having unsuccessfully tried everything else to get rid of them men, Laing's now resorted to the law.

On the 19th of February, Laing's were granted High Court injunctions against the six named men, under the 1982 Tory employment act. Under the terms of these injunctions, the men are not only banned from picketing any Laing's site in London but also from addressing any meeting about the dispute anytime anywhere. They are also being sued for massive damages.

LIBERTY

This is the first time that the 1982 act has been used in this way against named individuals as opposed to a whole union. It represents a staggering intrusion upon the traditional level of personal liberty in our supposedly "free society".

Think about it. Not only can they not picket, they can't even talk to anyone about it. So what happened to freedom of speech, or freedom of assembly.

Courageously, these men have taken a hard decision to defy these injunctions, and they have continued to picket and address meetings. They do this because as committed trade unionists and socialists, they can see the threat that laws such as this pose to all working class people if they are allowed to come into practice without resistance being offered to them.

They know that if Laing's were to be successful and scare them off with these

injunctions, it would be the thin edge of a very large wedge, and that very soon any union activists involved in any successful industrial action would find him/herself outlawed in this way.

MARTYRS

They have found themselves thrust into the front line, and because they are people who are committed to the fight for a better life for working class people they are willing to risk their freedom for that fight.

In taking this move, they join a long list of working class people who have faced this threat in order to fight for the rights of their class. It is a list that stretches back from the miners who are in prison today, right back to the six Tolpuddle Martyrs, who in the last century were deported for forming a trade union.

In the last year or two, we've heard a lot of talk about total opposition to Tory laws and being willing to go all the way with it, particularly from some Labour councillors. Somehow, when it comes to the crunch

they always seem to have an excuse to back down.

These men are not backing down. They have already been openly defying the injunctions daily and could be jailed at any time. They may even already be in jail as you read this.

If they are not, it is up to all of us to do everything we can to ensure that it stays that way. One way in which we can do that is by getting as many people as possible down to the picket lines to show Laings that these men have support. To show Laings that there is sufficient support to picket dozens of Laings sites to a standstill if they have these men jailed.

OURSELVES

There is no way that the union beauracrats are going to do anything to help build such a movement. It has to be done by ourselves, and it has to be done quickly. Contact the strike committee today at PO BOX 551, LONDON S.E.5 8JJ.

THESE MEN NEED THE SUPPORT OF EVERY ONE OF US. THEY MUST NOT BE LEFT ALONE.

The current dispute between publishing baron Rupert Murdoch and the printing unions, began in January when Murdoch announced that he was moving the base of his printing empire from Fleet Street to Wapping. At the same time, and without any consultation with the unions or attempt at negotiation, he also announced that all of the agreed conditions of employment - working conditions, staffing levels, closed shop agreement etc - which had formerly operated at his plants, would no longer apply at the new site.

Soon after this, rival publisher Robert Maxwell also announced sweeping changes in his publishing empire. The last few weeks have also seen the birth of Eddie Shah's new colour daily paper "Today" which with the aid of the latest technology can be produced far more cheaply than papers produced by traditional printing methods.

TURMOIL

It is quite obvious that the printing industry is at present in a state of great turmoil, and it is when we look at the last example of those given above that we can see what lies at the heart of it. New Technology, and the desire of the owners to introduce it to boost profits, and the unions to resist it to defend the livelihoods and working conditions of their members.

Disputes of this kind are not unique to the print. They occur from time to time in nearly all major industries with organised workforces.

When they do occur, the arguments used against the workers are invariably the same. They are accused of being backward looking and selfish. Of trying to hold up progress and advancement. Of trying to deny society the benefits of new and advanced technology, so that they can hang on to antiquated and obsolete production methods, and unnecessarily inflated manning levels.

On first glance it is a very plausible sounding argument. After all, why should a few trade unionists be allowed to resist the introduction of new scientific knowledge which could benefit us all.

BENEFITS

In actual fact it is precisely on this point that this argument falls down. It is not society as a whole which benefits from the introduction of new technology into

industry. The only people who benefit are the small number of people who own those industries. The only effect that it has on the rest of society is to take away the livelihoods of thousands of workers.

BENEFITS

Those people who assume that all scientific development automatically benefits the whole of society, are forgetting one very important fact.

They are forgetting that the society in which we live today is not a united one where we are all "in the same boat together". Our society is a divided one. It is divided into two camps.

EXPLOITERS

The rich and the poor, the owners and the workers, the exploiters and the exploited

However you wish to describe them, they can never be anything other than two groups whose interests are totally opposed and hostile to each other. One can only prosper at the expense of the other. The rich can only get richer if the poor get poorer, and vice versa.

That is why workers can find themselves in the position of having to resist changes in production methods which could perhaps enable some things to be produced more efficiently.

Because the only people who benefit from those changes are those who are least in need of it. Those who already have more millions than they could ever spend. For thousands of workers and their dependents, it means no more than the poverty of the dole queues.

AS LONG AS THIS IS THE CASE, WORKING PEOPLE HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO RESIST THOSE CHANGES.

Featured in this issue:

Days of hope and Glory

The Story of the Spanish Civil War

Days of hope and Glory

The Story of the Spanish Civil War



MEMBERS OF THE CNT IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE WAR

The nineteen thirties. A grim time for socialists the world over. In Germany, the largest and best organised workers movement in Europe has been utterly crushed by the Nazi dictatorship. Italian fascism looking towards building an empire walks into Ethiopia, slaughtering the ill armed native population. Japan is doing the same in China. In Austria, the government quells workers demonstrations in Vienna by ordering troops to fire cannons into working class districts. A wave of reaction seems to be destroying the workers movements of the world country by country. Then in July 1936 in Spain, General Francisco Franco leads a fascist military coup against the liberal government. It seems that Spain is destined to be the next country to fall to fascism. But no. Against all expectations, the Spanish working class act where so many others failed to, and they rise up against the fascists. So begins the story of the Spanish civil war 1936-39. A story which was to begin with one of the proudest chapters in working class history, and end with one of the greatest betrayals.

1 Resistance

When Franco made his bid for power, on July 18th, it sparked off a massive wave of working class resistance particularly in the large industrial cities in Eastern Spain. From declaring an immediate general strike, within days the workers had moved on to open armed resistance. Arming themselves however they could, and aided by those police and army units which had remained loyal to the government, this spontaneous and untrained force fought with incredible courage and enthusiasm against Franco's trained military forces.

Barricades were smashed and machine gun nests overrun by driving taxis into them. Teenage boys and girls charged across squares hurling dynamite into fascist positions. Up to three thousand people were killed in a single day in

3 The War

To many anti fascists, the question of what sort of society should be established after the fascists had been defeated seemed largely irrelevant until they had actually been defeated. In order to do this, it was necessary to try and organise some sort of conventional armed force. It was to turn out to be a very hastily raised and ill organised force. The various political groupings all set about raising militias of their own supporters, whose enthusiasm and commitment was usually matched only by their lack of knowledge of traditional military practice. Lack of centralised co-ordination between the various units was to lead to further inefficiency and demoralisation.

Against this passionately committed but ill prepared force, was ranged not only Franco's trained standing army, but also the considerable military aid that Germany and Italy were supplying to him. In this situation the anti fascists or Republicans as they were known were also desperately in need of some sort of military aid. Either from other Liberal democracies, or more likely from that country which claimed to be the champion of workers revolution and anti fascism, Russia. It was towards Russia that many Spanish eyes were looking as 1936 drew to it's close.

In 1917 in Russia a revolution had taken place which had aimed to overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist state. This is not the place to go into the subsequent history of that revolution. It is enough to say that by 1936, the regime which had been established by that revolution, ruled over by the dictator Stalin, placed it's own survival in a hostile world as far more important than being seen to adhere to the principals of socialism. For some years past, it had felt compelled to pursue policies which had nothing in common with these principals.

This was not as apparent in 1936 as it is today, and although there were some socialist movements which had become critical of the Soviet government - the POUM were

savage encounters. But such was the courage and fortitude of the workers, the fascists were driven out of all the major towns and cities in Eastern Spain.

There can be little doubt that without this spontaneous resistance in the early days, the coup would almost certainly have been successful. Such was the weakness and spinelessness of the government in the face of the threat, that at first they were not even willing to take the step of arming the workers, the only people willing to defend them. It was only later on that they conceded this point in the face of popular clamour, and due also to the fact that the workers had made the question largely irrelevant by the fact that they had taken over most of the government arsenals and commanded the weapons anyway.

2 Revolution

The massive sense of achievement and confidence experienced by the working class immediately after their early victories over the fascists, opened the way for a massive revolutionary upsurge in the parts of Spain now under their control. All large factories and estates, all public services and amenities, were taken over and placed under the control of those who worked them. All large public buildings were taken over by revolutionary organisations. The streets were policed by armed workers patrols. A whole new social outlook blossomed and flourished as the habits of capitalist society were swept away. People who arrived in Spain in those days including hundreds of socialists from all over the world who had come to join the fight against fascism, spoke with amazement at the society that they arrived into.

All servile forms of address such as Sir or Mister had disappeared. It was comrade or brother. Nobody cringed in any way before their boss or commanding officer, but looked them in the eye as an equal. People who would normally have been considered at the bottom of the pile in capitalist society took a full role in society as equals. Even the shoe shine boys had their own union, and played their part in the political life of the city.

Now increasingly the call was heard not just for the defeat of fascism, but for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers state as well. This call was voiced by two organisations in particular. The Confederation Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT) a mainly anarchist group, and the Party Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) a revolutionary socialist group.

Of these two groups the CNT was by far the most significant. Indeed in terms of membership and support, it was the largest single group out of all the groups which formed the Anti Fascist Defence Committee, and it was to a large degree CNT members who had been responsible for organising the first resistance to the fascists in the early days. Such was the extent of the CNT's influence that at one time, at the height of the popular revolution, the government feeling itself totally isolated had offered to hand over power to them. However, as a proclaimed anarchist movement, they were against all traditional forms of government and refused to take power on principle. In the opinion of some, it didn't really matter anyway. Such was the strength and depth of the popular revolution, that it seemed that capitalism had already been destroyed. In that they were wrong. Capitalism had not been destroyed. It was helpless in the face of the revolution sweeping over it but it had not been destroyed. It was merely keeping it's head down.

one of these - the vast majority of socialists the world over still looked upon the Soviet Union as their spiritual homeland.

Thus when the Spanish Civil War broke out, the Soviet Union if it was to maintain it's credibility as the centre of the international socialist movement, was compelled to offer aid to the Republican forces.

It might also have been expected that they would give there support to those on the left of those forces. To those who were calling for the overthrow of capitalism. In fact this was not the case, and the reason for this lay in the world situation at that time.

At that time, the Soviet Union felt itself very threatened by the growing power of Nazi Germany - This was just 3 years before the start of World War 2 - To try and counter this threat, Stalin had for some time been trying to build up a system of alliances with other western countries, principally Britain and France.

Ever since the revolution of 1917, these countries had always been intensely suspicious of the Soviet Union. This particularly so in the case of Britain, which was governed by the sort of traditional Conservative government that saw in Russia nothing but the formentor of international unrest. The devil incarnate.

In order to be able to pursue his aim of striking up alliances with these countries, Stalin had to reassure them that the Soviet Union was not seeking to promote international revolution. Therefore, it was impossible for him to be seen to be supporting the revolutionary movement in the Republican part of Spain.

And so the policies of the Soviet Union in Spain were contradictory. They had to be seen to be working for the defeat of fascism, while at the same time they were working for the defeat of the popular revolution. Their instrument for achieving these aims, was the Spanish Communist Party which like most Communist Partys in the world, was totally sub-servient to Soviet wishes.

4 Betrayal

With the commencement of Russian military aid to Spain the role of the Spanish Communist Party in the Anti Fascist Defence Committee began to become more significant. All of the aid was dispensed through their organisation, and this automatically raised their prestige within the Republic. It also meant that they were in a position to be able to make sure that the bulk of that aid, went to the units which they wanted it to go to. The Communist Party was also growing in size very rapidly. This was largely because of the large number of recruits that they were attracting from the ranks of the former middle and upper classes. The sort of people who had been keeping very quiet during the popular revolution, but were now re-emerging attracted by the non-revolutionary slogans of the Communists.

The vast political experience available to the Communists the access that they had to printing facilities etc, and the considerable administrative experience of many of their members - especially among the new recruits from the middle and upper classes, all these factors enabled the communists to slowly move themselves into a position of dominance in the Anti Fascist Defence Committee. The revolutionary socialists and anarchists began to become isolated. Most of their most committed and politically conscious members were away fighting at the front. Those left behind to represent them in the rear, were neither numerically strong enough nor politically experienced enough to oppose this growing communist dominance.

The Communist attitude towards the anarchists and revolutionary socialists became more and more hostile. The Communist press waged a ceaseless campaign against them. Now they were accused not only of being politically in the wrong, but of actively and knowingly being agents of the fascists. Stalin sent two of his most seasoned and experienced hatchet men to orchestrate the campaign of slander and vilification. Tensions within the Republic grew. It became increasingly obvious that open hostility was not far away. The Communists bided their time until they felt it was the right moment. Then in May 1937 they moved. Armed Communist troops attempted to move into buildings occupied by CNT and POUM militiamen. This sparked off open fighting between those two groups and themselves which went on for several days.

Now the Communist controlled press had a field day. Here was the proof they claimed that the POUM and CNT were really no better than fascists. Now the Communists were able to use their influence to get the POUM officially suppressed. Hundreds perhaps thousands of their members were thrown into jail, many to be executed. Hundreds more just managed to flee the country hotly pursued by Communist police.

The POUM was effectively smashed. A few months later, it was the turn of the anarchists to be as effectively, if not quite so violently suppressed. The revolution was effectively destroyed. All of the large anarchist collective were broken up. Capitalist relations and practices were restored in all of the major cities. Once again it was possible to see people in posh upper class dress. To see those in menial tasks cringing for tips off of their superiors.

The suppression of the CNT and the POUM lost the republic the support of many of it's best and most committed anti fascists. It was impossible now to rally the mass of the workers in the way that they had been rallied in the days July 1936. Too many of them had been betrayed by those supposed to be on the same side. Too many more disillusioned by the spectacle of it. From then on it was merely a matter of time. One by one the major cities fell to the fascists, until the Republic fell in the summer of 1939. The revolution, and with it the war, had been betrayed. Betrayed by the intrigue of a movement without principle or scruple. It did not even serve any purpose. In spite of Stalin's efforts in Spain on their behalf, The British and French governments were still unwilling to come to terms with him. With his customary lack of regard for principle he then struck an alliance with Hitler, this leaving Germany with its eastern border secure, and free to unleash World War Two.



J. STALIN - A FITTING END.

Taking us for a ride

A few weeks ago, those of us unfortunate enough to live in London, suffered another increase in the cost of travelling by Bus or Tube-train. Since London Transport was taken out of the control of the GLC the cost of public transport in the Capital has rocketed.

However, it is not only so many working class people in London that people have depend for jobs and transport. The penalty for living under a Govt committed to slashing subsidies given to public transport.

BATTLE

British Rail, in order to meet the financial constraints put on it by the govt have recently put up their fares again, they are continuing their policy of closing down workshops and cutting services. This all adds up to longer dole queues, falling standards and something the Tories call efficiency. If this sounds bad I'm afraid that there is much worse to come

What it comes down to is an ideological battle. The govt believes that people should only have what they can pay for in hard cash. If you are unemployed or on low wages and can't afford to travel by car, then you must pay high bus or train fares, if you can't afford them its tough, get on your bike or walk. They tell us that the 'country' simply cannot afford to subsidise anything that doesn't pay for itself.

DRASTIC

In April, when the abolition of the Metropolitan Councils is completed, many areas of the country will face drastic changes in local transport. For instance in Greater Manchester, where subsidies have kept fares constant for 4 years, massive cuts in jobs and services are planned. The reason for this is that after abolition, bus services must be put out to tender. This means that the routes will be given to the companies quoting the cheapest cost. To achieve these low costs workers wages are cut, services are cut and of course, redundancy notices will be issued. Yes it does seem a very strange way of running something that is supposed to be a public service.

This position, taken up by our rulers, is both criminal and nonsensical. Criminal because like everything else this govt does, it is based on the rules of a system where a minority of the population take everything they need from the sweat and toil of the working class. In return we get whatever crumbs happen to fall off their well laden tables. The rich are the only group in this system who are subsidised, we produce and they take.

STRANGE

Their transport policies are not only criminal but also seem to make little sense when considered in the context of a capitalist system. Most other western nations have found it makes sense, even by their own strange methods, to heavily

VICIOUS

Why then is it that such a vicious attack is being made on services upon which



subsidise public transport in their cities. Even New York has bigger subsidies than London. Studies show that for every 100 pounds spent on subsidy there is a return of 120 pounds. There are many other factors that make a highly developed public transport system a great asset to society. Fewer private vehicles on the road means less pollution, less congestion and less wasted energy. Every time fares have risen in London road casualties have increased as a result of more people deciding to drive their own cars. In 1982, when London Transport were forced by the courts to double fares, road injuries increased by 4,000, despite the introduction that year of compulsory seat-belts.

the death of communities dependant on the link for jobs and access. Talk of efficiency, when applied to transport, is as meaningless as it is when applied to coal mines.

LAWS

It is significant that the use of vast sums of the public money used to construct and maintain motorways are not subject to the same economic laws. The companies that build them are privately owned by people with close and powerful connections to the Conservative party.

NECESSITY

An extensive, cheap (why not free) public transport system is an absolutely vital part of a civilised society. It is a social and economic necessity in the same way as a health service and education service.

CLOSURE

On a wider scale closure of rail lines on so called economic grounds, can mean

Gutter Press

Today, fanzines are more widespread and varied than they have ever been, with contents as diverse as the people who produce them. Politics, sport, humour are all featured almost as much as music. All tastes are catered for. The standard of presentation has improved although many fanzines still retain much of the scruffy street credibility that gives them their appeal. Some of them sell over a thousand copies per issue, and reach as far as Europe and America. Quite an achievement for something put together on the living room floor (Editor's note: "Where do you think Red Action is put together.") Their editors work with great commitment, putting them together, getting them printed, and then selling them at gigs festival and marches etc. The response is often disheartening, but enthusiasm and a sense of pride makes them persevere.

VIBRANT

In 1976, the punk rock phenomenon elbowed aside the stagnation and general air of apathy in the music world with shock tactics. However punk provided something much more valuable and lasting than just spikey haircuts and safety pin fashions. It provided a vibrant and lively alternative to the regular music press, in the form of fanzines, a democratic form of communication at the lowest level. In the wake of the first fanzine, Mark Perry's "Sniffing Glue" scores of bedroom publications sprang up. They provided a healthy diet of cynical abuse of the music establishment, and much needed information on new wave bands. However like the new wave music which they championed fanzines eventually lost their original bite and grew too formalised for their own good. By the time they had shaken off the image of the safety pins and anarchy cliches, Mod and Two Tone had arrived to provide new material and fans of the band Crass were reproducing dour black and white "hippy" drivel. But there were still some excellent fanzines around, and the late seventies and early eighties saw them progress and flourish to a remarkable degree with the aid of better badge printing and Rough Trades distribution. Jamming Fanzine went on to become a glossy monthly national magazine, although it has now sadly packed up.



The value of fanzines should not be underestimated. They provide everybody with the chance to voice their opinions, without editorial control or advertising pressure. This independence makes them unique. In this age of mega publishers and media distortion, we should be grateful that some people still take the time and trouble to produce a home made alternative.

RECOMMENDED FANZINES :-

Out On The Floor, 40p from 55, Portsmouth Rd, Willesden Green, London NW2.

Pack Of Lies, 40p from 232, Halling Hill, Harlow, Essex.
Notes From Underground, 40p from 176, Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

New Youth, 30p from 26, Ella St, Newlands, Hull.
Wake Up, 50p from 12, Sutherland Drive, Lowestoft, Suffolk
To Hell With Poverty, 30p from 33, Wren St, Hillfields, Coventry. CUT 4FT.

Traces (No 8) 25, Floral St, London WC2E 9DS. This contains an interview with Red Action.
Stand Up And Spit, 25p from same address as Red Action.
Enclose S.A.E. (at least 22p stamp)

Through the post

A Chara

On behalf of the "Sons of Ireland" Republican flute band Glasgow, I wish to thank the members of the Red Action group for their kindness and their financial aid in helping the band to take part in a most memorable parade. At such short notice it was both for the committee of the Sons and Red Action, a great success. All the band wish to thank Chloe, Pat, Derek, Ama, Fiona and the rest for their efforts at the dance on the Saturday night.

Hopefully we will be asked back next year and also have some more bands down with us. I am filing a report with the "Republican Band Alliance Scotland" with a strong recommendation that the march was a major success, and should be fully supported by the Republican Movement in Scotland. The people of Derry City, and the relatives of the 14 innocent civilians murdered by British Paras, will be more than happy to know that they are not forgotten. Victory to Sinn Fein and to all Republicans everywhere.

Joseph Pearse
President, Sons of Ireland, Republican
Flute Band "Tiofaidh ar la"
(Our day will come)

Red Action pamphlet

**We are
Red
Action**

A SHORT HISTORY OF RED
ACTION. WHERE DID IT
COME FROM, AND WHY?

30p

First published two years ago, this pamphlet, although slightly out of date now, still gives a good insight into the discussions and events that lead to the formation of Red Action. Available from the box number, price 50p inclusive of postage and packing.

SUPPORT RED ACTION



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

If you support our aims but do not wish to become a member, you can become a supporting member. This does not entitle you to vote, but you will receive:

1. A free subscription to the newspaper.
2. A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of what is going on in the organisation.
3. Notification of any Red Action activities in your area.

The cost for this is £10 for one year.

Subscriptions to the paper are still available separately. The cost is £3 pounds for ten issues. Please remember that producing a paper is a very uneconomic business and we are always very grateful for any donations, and especially grateful to anyone who can take extra copies to sell.

PO box 158
Hatfield
Herts

THE FLYING COLUMN

As the news of nuclear leaks and contamination of workers at Sellafield continues to catch my attention, I hear that 'British Nuclear Fuels' have just paid out £20,000 for new, luxury 'pigeon lofts'. The lofts are a replacement for ones which were demolished to make way for a new running track, built as a result of BNFL's eagerness to keep sweet, people living near the Sellafield plant. The pigeon lofts themselves have all sorts of 'mod-cons', including central heating. I believe the idea of fitted carpets was ruled out, on the grounds of the birds' rather primitive toilet habits. Less fortunate than the pigeons is the widow of a former Sellafield worker. He died of a radiation related disease, she received £8,000 which she herself described as a 'booby prize'.

Also somewhat less well blessed than 'Cumbrian pigeons' are a number of council tenants in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The council is planning to sell a block of empty flats with a legal guarantee that another 340 flats on the estate, which are currently occupied, will also be sold. There are currently 150 homeless families in B&B accommodation in the borough and far from being housed in the near future, it looks like the council will be sending them some more company. When the 'housing and Planning' bill goes through Parliament, the council will be able to evict as many tenants as they wish in order to sell off property to private ownership.

A group of Labour M.P.s recently backed the occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR, and denounced Margaret Thatcher for refusing to meet the country's President and supporting 'counter revolutionaries instead'. Mrs Thatcher's reply was quite clear. She said that occupied people had the right to fight for freedom. Are we to assume that she also supports the fight of the nationalist community in Ireland whose country is occupied by British troops. No? Well what would you expect. Did I hear someone shout hypocrite?

News has reached me that forty-two top executives of the U.S. chemical giant Union Carbide, have voted to share out \$26m amongst themselves should they ever face the strain of having to travel more than thirty-five miles to work. At the same time the company, whose plant in Bhopal killed about 2,500 people and injured another 200,000, has donated \$1m to the victims cleaning-up operations - not a tidy sum.

Good news for intellectuals, my contact in the toy business informs me that a new board game will soon be in the shops. It's called 'Police' after a well known group of hooligans. The game was drawn up by two officers in the metropolitan police and consequently is suitable for people in the age range of one to two months.

After a hard day walking the streets of London, working up a sweat looking for that ever elusive job, I was somewhat peeved to discover that according to the DHSS the unemployed can only have one bath a week. Yes I'm serious people on supplementary benefit are given an allowance to pay for just one good wash and brush up every week, unless there are medical grounds to justify any more. I always thought the government treated the unemployed like dirt but isn't this taking it a bit far.

In a recent game between two teams from Cardiff and Newport, one player had half his ear bitten off and another his nose broken. In another game a team from South Wales playing Richmond, had two players sent off for punching and stamping on the opposition. The violence was so bad that Richmond have yet to decide whether they should ever play against the Welsh side again.

Following these distressing examples of violence, the Welsh Rugby Union Board asked Red Actions' sports desk to try and find the cause of such savagery. Easy, they were all Police teams.

Thatcher and her cabinet must be quaking in their boots as Red Action seem to have acquired their very own mole (or clairvoyant) Our very own bony guitar hero from Scarborough band 'Burial' has been keeping his ears firmly glued to the walls of number 10, and it paid off during the Westland affair, LITERALLY. It seems that he got odds of 30 to 1 from his local bookie, against the chances of Leon Brittan doing a runner, and hey presto two days later he was three hundred sobs better off. Being the dedicated socialist and party member that he is, the donation is no doubt in the post (Ahem)

It seems that some trade unionists in this country could learn a lesson from three paper boys who live in a mining village, and whose fathers had been on strike during 1984-85. Because of the support that printworkers had given their village during the strike, the boys refused to deliver copies of the Sun when five thousand printers were sacked by Sun owner Rupert Murdoch. This meant that they faced the sack because of the newsagents loss of revenue. So they explained to each of their customers the reason behind their course of action, and persuaded them to order an alternative paper. Norman Willis and the TUC please take note.

The good old days?

In our society today, one of the most common targets for attack by Tories and their friends in the establishment, are the large nationalised industries. How often are we being told about their supposed wastefulness, and inefficiency. How they were so much more efficiently and profitably run, in the days before nationalisation when they were owned and run by individual bosses. These industries they tell us, are massively overmanned by lazy workers who do nothing all day, and are only kept open by massive subsidies from the public purse -ie you and me. Sadly, there are plenty of working class people who also accept and support these arguments. Who don't realise that even if these industries were to show a profit on the balance sheet, they would be the last ones to benefit from it. Who forget that whatever extra profits these industries might have shown in "the good old days" they were strictly for the benefit of the bosses, and were only achieved by people like themselves were literally worked to death to make them. They have forgotten a simple and basic truth. That the quality and conditions of people's lives is far more important than any set of figures on a balance sheet. The following is a short story by Jack Raymond Jones, recently published in the newspaper "The Miner" about life in the coal industry in the days before nationalisation. If you are one of those people who has ever had a bit of a moan about nationalised industries, have a read of it, and if you've got a job, think about the conditions that you'll be working under tomorrow.

It was not so long ago and only two weeks before Christmas when Ifor Griffiths was cut down in his prime. A sturdy and stocky miner of twenty-five, he always worked at the coal-face of Brynhyfryd pit where the money was better.

Although the work was back-breaking, Ifor accepted it as something naturally or divinely destined for him ever since he started at the pit as a boy of fourteen. He was a happy man who smiled and often sang for no reason at all. He loved the warmth of his two-up-two-down miners cottage which was filled with him, his twenty-two year old wife, Rhianon, and his two young children, Sion and Bronwen.

CREAKED

It happened towards the end of the morning shift. Ifor was cutting coal from the face stripped to the waist, the sweat streaming down his blackened body. He was working a seam which had only four feet of head-room and in which he was up to his knees in water. At eleven thirty the pit props creaked like animals in pain.

Ifor and his helper, a boy of sixteen, scrambled for safety. But neither God nor time was on their side. They were but ten yards from the face when the roof caved in. Within seconds they were

buried by heavy rocks and they lay silent, half a mile from the earth's surface. More water rushed in until it was only a foot from the roof of the pitch dark tunnel.

BLOODY

It was never revealed whether Ifor and his young friend died from the crushing of the rocks or from drowning by the water. It took a team of miners two days and two nights to pump out the flood water, and to break through the rock barrier to the battered and bloody bodies.

They were buried in Cwmgelli cemetery which looked down on the small houses of the village. Five-hundred cloth-capped men came to the funeral. The little chapel could not contain them all. Many stood outside in the bitter cold and joined in the singing of "O Jesu mawr."

Two simple pine coffins were lowered into the ground and all the men walked home in silence.

DUMPED

Three days later in the street where Rhianon lived with Sion and Bronwen, all the miners cottages had a ton of coal dumped in the roadway before their front doors. There was a consp-

icuous gap where no coal lay before Rhianon's door. She waited in all day thinking "they've made a mistake, they will come back and give me my coal." Four loads of free coal a year was the only perk the colliers had.

Next day the coal had still not arrived. Rhianon wrapped her children warmly and the three of them set off hand-in-hand for the pit-head half-a-mile away.

Rhianon made straight for the mine managers office which was situated near the pithead winding gear. She knocked on the door and went in.

MISTAKE

The mine manager, Uriel Watkin-Thomas, a thin bald pale man in his fifties, took off his gold rimmed glasses and looked up at his visitors.

"What do you want?" he said, without a trace of welcome in his voice.

"I am Rhianon Griffiths. My Ifor was killed in the accident and the little boy with him was killed too."

"I know that" replied Watkin-Thomas sharply. "What do you want, I'm a very busy man?"

"I haven't had my free coal like the others" Rhianon said quietly. "All in the street have had it, but me no. I thought it must be a mistake so I've come to you."



PROFITS FOR THE BOSSES ON THE BLOOD OF THE WORKERS

The two small children stared at Watkin-Thomas' watch chain which gleamed of gold against the black of his waistcoat. Their mother stood silent and patient waiting for the mine managers reply.

Watkin-Thomas stood up, walked across the room and looked out of the window for a full two minutes. Then he returned to his desk and sat down. He put on his gold rimmed glasses again, leaned back in his chair and put his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets. With his fingers he fiddled with the gold chain. After what seemed to Rhianon, an eternity, he looked up, his eyes as hard as flint.

"Mrs Griffiths, we don't give coal to dead men."

Rhianon's face went pale and taut as she clutched a shawl around her shoulders.

Mr Watkin-Thomas stood up, turned his back on her to take a book from the large mahogany bookcase behind his desk.

"Good morning Mrs Griffiths" he said.

WHEELS

Rhianon's hands tightened on her childrens hands. She turned and made for the door. The cold rain fell from a sky of lead. For a moment she stared at the spinning wheels of the pithead winding gear, then started for home, a child in each hand.

WE ARE RED ACTION

Red Action is an organisation founded to work towards the ending of the capitalist system of production, and the establishment of a socialist one.

CAPITALISM: The working class form the overwhelming majority of society. They produce everything, but not for themselves. It becomes the property of the minority upper class. A worker would have to pay many times his/her wages to buy back the goods that they produce in that time. It is legalised robbery. This system also allows the minority to decide what should be sold and when on the basis of their personal profit rather than social need. It is this that allows food to rot in butter and beef mountains, while people go hungry, and buildings to stand empty while people are homeless. Capitalism also allows a small minority to own all of the resources and means of production on which we all depend—raw materials, factories, machinery, etc. This means that most people have no say in how these resources are used. Billions of pounds in labour and materials can be, and often are wasted on socially useless projects while people die for the want of medical equipment that could have been produced. Private ownership of these resources also allows the owners to deny to society the use of them as they wish. It is that, that causes people to be unemployed while the machines on which they could be producing the things that they need stand idle.

SOCIALISM: A socialist society will be one that millions of people will be involved in shaping. Therefore no one group of people can say exactly what that society will be like. However, there are certain features that would have to be present in society, before we would consider giving up the struggle for socialism.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION: Only this will create a basis whereby the whole of society can collectively decide how best to employ all of its resources, mechanical and human. In this way wastefulness, whether by the production of socially useless things, or by enforced idleness of machines or workers would be eliminated. When all resources are used in useful production instead of just a part of them as at present, the amount of labour required from each individual would be much less than at present. Development of new technology would further reduce the labour requirement. Society will stand on the brink of an era of leisure and plenty that past generations could not even have dreamed of.

CONTROL OF SOCIALIST SOCIETY: In capitalist society all of the institutions of social control—army police force judiciary—are run and controlled by unselected representatives of the upper classes. The majority of people have no say in their appointment and no control over their actions. We believe that in a truly socialist society the need to police people will eventually die away. Whatever form of social control may be necessary until that stage is reached, all of its representatives will be elected by and subject to dismissal by, the community that they represent.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY: All of those that contribute to a socialist society will receive equal reward and enjoy equal rights, irrespective of colour, race, sex or creed. All of society's facilities—leisure, education, medical, etc—will be equally available to all. All questions of personal morality—homosexuality, abortion, divorce, etc—will be left to individual choice and free from state interference. There will be freedom of worship for all religions, but no church will be allowed to interfere in state matters.

CLASS STRUGGLE: Real Socialism cannot be achieved through parliament. The Labour Party does not try to end capitalism, merely to give workers a better deal within it. If they did attempt to take real power from the ruling class and give it to the workers, they would suffer the same fate as other parliamentary movements that have tried to do this. The ruling class would use its control over the forces of the state to crush them. To achieve Socialism, a Socialist movement has to be ready to overthrow capitalism by force. The law is made and administered by the upper class and used by them as a weapon in the class struggle. Therefore, a socialist movement has to be prepared to defy the law when necessary. We support the right of national liberation movements around the world to engage in armed struggles to free their countries from oppression by foreign powers. We fully support the revolutionary armies, The Irish Republican Army, and the Irish National Liberation Army in their war against the British state machine which is also the enemy of the British working class. The war in Ireland is caused by the British presence there, which is only maintained by armed force. Only armed force can remove that presence and stop the war.

THE EASTERN BLOC: The Eastern Bloc countries and China, Cuba etc, are used as examples to try and prove socialism to be undesirable. In our view although capitalism has been overthrown in these countries, none of them have succeeded in building a truly socialist society. In some cases this has been because incorrect policies within the new regimes have led them to adopt the wrong policies. In others because the new regimes have inherited such under-developed economies, and because of external pressures beyond their control—threat of American invasion, economic boycott and sanctions etc—there has been neither the political and economic stability nor the economic resources, necessary to begin the construction of a socialist society. We do accept that some of these countries have made significant advances from very primitive beginnings, and may continue to advance as they develop more modern industrial economies.

THE ORGANISATION: The period of capitalist growth and expansion during the 50s and 60s raised working class living standards considerably. Mainly because of this the working class that emerged from that period, showed little interest in revolutionary socialist politics. They became the domain of professional thinkers and intellectuals. A cultural gap had been created between the working class and the left. The organisations that were created by the left in this period, were in nearly every case modelled on the Bolshevik Party in revolutionary Russia. It is a form of organisation in which a small intellectual leadership, wields great authority over a highly disciplined membership. History gives us many examples of how easily in this form of organisation, a corrupt leadership can invade the discipline and authority, merely to maintain its own position of power. Any who question the leadership or the party line that they head down, are dangerous heretics to be cast out as soon as possible. The atmosphere in such an organisation is one that is totally alien to most working class people. They shun it, finding it not relevant even further into abstract politics. The estrangement between the organisation and the class is complete. Even in organisations where the leadership is not corrupt, the tendency to look back to revolutionary Russia for the solutions to all of today's problems leads to them coming up with answers that have little or no relevance to the working class in Britain today. Seeing the need for a new form of organisation, Red Action was formed in 1981. Its primary aim is to be able to relate revolutionary socialist ideas to working class people, most of whom are cynical if not hostile towards the left. To achieve this the organisation must itself be of the class, in content and character. It must be able to recognise that the vast majority of workers are not revolutionary, and not expect immediate revolutionary commitment from them. It must show that it does not just talk its politics, but is willing to back them up with action when necessary. It must show that it is principled and consistent in its politics, and not just raise and drop issues when it suits. It must recognise that no leadership is immune from possible corruption, and allow free internal democracy. It must be ready to work with other socialist and progressively minded groups in a non-sectarian manner. We recognise that a revolutionary working class party is necessary if capitalism is to be overthrown. We are not that party, but neither are these groups that claim to be. We will work to keep alive a tradition of militant working class action until such time as enough working class militants can be brought together to form that party.