

Red Action

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LOOK BACK IN ANGER

special edition supplement inside

There can no doubt that as we leave '88 and enter '89 the bells welcoming the new year will for many have a hollow ring. There is no prospect of change, so there is no course for optimism. For the working class in Britain 1989 will simply be the final year in what can only be described as "a decade of despair". Many of the rights and freedoms, to belong to a Trade Union, right to strike, a right to decent housing and a decent wage etc., fought for and won by previous generations; Peterloo 1819, Bloody Sunday 1887 have been eroded, clawed back, or challenged. The old consensus you hear Bishops, Lords, and labourites nostalgically bleat about has ended.

Thatcher's government are quite naturally representing in all areas economic, social, and political, the interests of just one class their class, the ruling class. In pursuit of their objectives, they are smug arrogant and vindictive. They ignore the hard-wringing of the Liberals and appear deaf to their muted pleas for compassion. They often ride rough-shod over the wishes of a bewildered majority; when occasionally defied by a pocket of resistance in the working class, the miners, blacks on Broadwater Farm, or printworkers. They hide behind their police, appeal to their courts, or seek sanctuary in their houses the House of Commons and the House of Lords. With less than 40% of the popular vote, but a majority of 100 M.P.s, they have in fact become an 'elective dictatorship'. One result is that parliamentary democracy, and indeed parliament itself is no longer seen as a vehicle or institution for 'real change'. Those seeking to reform the system to present themselves as the alternative administrators i.e. Kinnock and the Labour Party all ridiculed,

and made to look limp, impotent and stupid. For those with an investment in the system this is of course potentially very dangerous. If the camouflage of parliamentary democracy is stripped away. If discussion and debate appear futile, if elections themselves offer no prospect of real change they know that those seeking justice will be forced to look outside parliament for a solution. That is what the Queen who comiserated with Kinnock after Govan, the expressions of concern from liberals about the 'fabric of society' the founders of charter '88 'the north south divide' and so on, are really worried about. Don't for a moment believe that they are concerned with your welfare or mine it is only their own welfare their very own existence they cherish.

They know that Thatcher and the Tories are hated. The chilling indifference or even disappointment displayed by the 'lower orders' after the Brighton Bomb in 1984 is indication of deep seated division.

Historically when capitalism enters a crisis, then antagonisms among classes that always exist but are largely hidden in times of relative prosperity come to the surface. People go to extremes left or right, and 'desperate' measures are considered in pursuit of desperate solutions.

Class conflict is the norm and the class warriors re-enter the political arena. Issues are discussed and decisions taken on class rather than national interests. The only people who have anything to gain from such a development are the working class as the Tories operate on this basis already.

Whatever else they may be and despite vast evidence to the contrary the Tories are not stupid. In fact they are very astute. Why

then do they constantly provoke and ignore the guarded warning of their colleagues. It is quite simple. They are looking to the future, you see despite all the hype, all the propoganda and deceptive Bullshit pumped through the media, an economic miracle putting the Great Back in Britain etc. The system we live under - capitalism - is in deep trouble and they know it. Monetarism is simply a economic con-trick. Production has rarely at the high points of the '80's reached the low points of the '70's. What has increased is productivity which simply means that workers in work have produced more per head rather than greater production overall. The bosses have increased their profits at the expense of the unemployed. The workers in work are allowed a small share in this success. The millions of unemployed surplus to requirements are taunted, accused and attacked. This illustrates two things, one that is the workers rather than the bosses that create wealth, and secondly that capitalism isn't working.

Similarly, the US the Jewel in the Crown of the 'free world' has a balance of payments deficit between what they make and sell against what they buy and consume of 132 billion. In percentage terms this is on par with many of the so called debt-ridden under-developed Third World countries. In fact since 1968 the US has been transformed from the biggest net creditor the nation lent the most, to the worlds biggest debtor, who borrowed the most.

That is why the Tories appear so vindictive, so relentlessly ruthless, in pursuing their programme. They are operating in the long term interests of their class. They know the crunch is coming so they are dis-arming the 'enemy within' and shoring up their own defences. On the one hand they are disabling the institutions of the working class, Trade Unions etc. on the other, centralising the power of the state, arming the police removing the right of silence, building more prisons etc.

Everything is being done with an eye to the future, to inevitably of class conflict provoked by the collapse of the system. They are in a hurry; in a race against time. They have expressed their intention to place all nationalised industries in private hands. They no longer even pretend, that it is an attempt to create a 'small share owning democracy'. Lord Young admitted candidly that the sale of British Steel was not aimed at



TORY CLASS WARRIORS CELEBRATING THE PAST VICTORIES IN THE 1980'S. AND LOOKING CONFIDENTLY TO FURTHER TRIUMPHS. OVER THE WORKING CLASS IN THE 1990'S.

Sid from British Gas. No he said "They were not looking to Sid but to Sidney a superior type of investor" Their intention to privatise water and electricity is not just for short term profit, it is not in pursuit of a political dogma. It is for the long term political control. As we enter the final year of 'Thatcher's decade' the Labour Party the party of the alternative government is in a complete shambles. They still claim to be a socialist party but no longer even talk of socialism instead they talk of 'new realism'. Socialism is a system whereby the working class who produce all the wealth in society take power and run society in the interests of their class. As the rich who designed the current system run it in theirs. Of course the rich who

will never relinquish control voluntarily, it will have to be taken from them. So by definition to be a socialist to achieve this transfer of power, is to recognise the necessity of revolution.

Under parliamentary democracy though people have class interest they do not vote as individuals

Under parliamentary democracy though people have class interests, they do not vote as a class, a block vote, they vote as individuals, they vote for the party they identify as being best able to represent their individual interests. This is the dilemma for the Labour Party reform.

In the past Labour Party manifestos have promised to re-distribute wealth in the direction of the poor, during the 1970's they even threatened to "squeeze the rich until the pips squeak", stirring stuff. Of course the Labour Party have never actually taken power, but through the electoral system have achieved a parliamentary majority. The problem is

that the real power exists outside parliament with the industrialists, judiciary, police etc. If they do not want to co-operate then Labour cannot implement the necessary changes and so are forced to renege on their promises. Their supporters feel betrayed and become disillusioned, they are all the same etc. In 1945 Labour got 48% of the vote, 1966 47%, 1970 43%, 1979 37%, 1986 32%. Funnily enough it is only when Labour are elected, when they take 'power' that they are exposed as frauds and charlatans. After each election there follows a string of broken promises, betrayal which further erodes their credibility. Bit by bit they destroy their own social base.

In an attempt to remain viable they drift right wards to woo the middle classes. To attract them they make concessions at the expense of the working class. Standing up to the unions etc. causing further alienation and loss of support. The strategy of a coalition of classes the Lib-Lab pack etc. has worked in the past, but it is no longer possible. This is where the new realism comes in Kinnock and Hattersley recognise that since '79 the Tories have caused a fundamental change in the balance of forces in Britain. The capitalists and the rich have gorged themselves on privatisation, aligned to the gelding of the unions through, unemployment and legislation are now simply too strong to be threatened let alone taxed. Any proposals to finance plans for social reform, NHS, unemployment etc. By taxing the rich would force these patriots to flee the country with their loot. (Prior to '79 it was illegal to take more than £50 in cash out of the country. Removing this restriction was the first Tory law through parliament). Soon they will again own all the industries; coal, electricity, water etc., on which the country relies, so

it is they rather than the unions who 'can hold the country to ransom'. During the last election in '86, Hattersley acknowledged that it would have to be the middle classes on £50,000 a year rather than the rich that would have to finance his plans for the poor. The effect was to drive them back into the arms of the Tories Catch 22.

The left wing of the party attempt to compensate for this rightward drift by empty rhetoric and futile threats. The posturing and posing by a number of councils on a number of peripheral class issues, equal opportunities, gay rights etc. is exploited by the media to suggest that it is the looney left rather than the rabid right that is responsible for the crisis. The basic appeal of these left-wingers is to self sacrifice rather than self interest. It is an appeal to middle class liberalism rather than working class socialism aimed at people who have nothing. It creates resentment rather than understanding. Meanwhile, consistently checking their own impeccable credentials on anti-apartheid or the importance of using Nicaraguan coffee. They close creches and libraries, sack caretakers and teachers, crushing without a qualm the very people they rely on for support.

These are the reasons why Labour are 'unelectable'. Thatcher set as her goal the destruction of socialism what she has actually achieved is the demolition of the Labour Party as we have seen not quite the same thing. The Labour Party will not disappear it will contest the ground previously held by the liberals. Having betrayed both the working class and the middle class, if they are ever to be elected they will first have to prove to the ruling class, the capitalists, that they



VICTIMS OF THE 'ECONOMIC MIRACLE'.

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ONLY A FLAG



Recently the Palestine National Council at a meeting in Algeria declared the independence of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza strip. Recognition of the new Arab state has come from 60 states. The Palestinian Liberation Organisations leader Yasser Arafat sees the 'moral force' of the Palestinian case providing the basis of a diplomatic offensive and further recognition of their right to exist as an independent state. It represents a new stage in the established tendency towards international diplomacy aimed at achieving Western support and a rejection if only temporary, of the military struggle waged against Israel.

The declaration of independence is merely a tactical starter backed by the continuing 'Intifada' or uprisings in the occupied territories of Palestine, a gesture which although celebrated in the West Bank and Gaza will remain an unreliable entity for years to come. Arafat indicated that if the current policy was met with a rebuff "God knows the outcome". Perhaps more accurately Dr George Habash leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that he did not believe the PLO's strategy would succeed and that 'armed struggle' would eventually have to be resumed.

In Israel the leaders of the two main political parties predictably rejected and derided Palestinian claims to independence. The right wing Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir stated that the struggle against 'terrorist organisations' would continue. For 'terrorist organisation' also read unarmed Palestinians protesting in the occupied territories and Palestinian settlements in the Lebanon. The repression will not be halted and Western 'opinion' and 'diplomatic pressure' won't alter the aggressive militarism of the Israeli state. Leader of the opposition Labour Party Shimon Peres stated the Israeli position clearly when he said "The right to self-determination is in fact another name for a Palestinian state. There is no chance even from the Palestinians view point that any of their demands will be met before negotiations. I am not saying that after negotiations they will be met either".

The Israeli state, backed by US dollars and guns is a profoundly racist entity based on denying the Palestin-

ian Peoples right to exist within a sovereign state. Pre-war and post-war plantations spurred by their own oppression in Europe the Zionists bought up Arab lands for settlement; when they couldn't buy a homeland they launched a terrorist campaign which has not halted. Outfinanced and outgunned the Palestinian people have suffered defeat upon defeat. The retreat into international diplomacy is a symptom of that. The uprisings among the Palestinians in the occupied territories has been an honourable and heroic reassertion of the peoples opposition to the Israeli state. In itself and despite the morality of their case this is not enough for victory.

A wishful scenario could be constructed. Diplomatic pressure might produce economic and military sanctions. The US might join in exerting that pressure. The Arab might have to exert its own economic power to achieve the latter. Yes pigs might fly. Essentially agitation, political pressure and the 'moral force' of the case has done nothing to achieve liberation in South Africa, Ireland, Latin America etc.

The PLO will make political gains in the short term but in the end liberation for the Palestinian is inextricably tied up with the liberation of the Arab and Jew alike. It is tied to the development of the overthrow of Israel from within and of the Arab world from within. The Palestinian may achieve some local autonomy but such as it is, it will be determined by the needs of Israel and the US. To break out of that it requires revolution.

RED ACTION IN ACTION

ON FRIDAY NOVEMBER 11TH, FORMER MP BERNADETTE MCALISKEY (DEVLIN) SPOKE AT CONWAY HALL IN CENTRAL LONDON. THE MEETING WAS ORGANISED BY THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT, MAINLY DUE TO A CONVERSATION OVERHEARD IN A PUB IN RETINAL GREEN, THE CHIEF STEWARD FOR THE MEETING CONTACTED RED ACTION AND ASKED US TO SUPPLY SOME 'AUXILIARY' STEWARDS. WE OBLIGED. WHEN WE ARRIVED, AN HOUR BEFORE THE MEETING BANDS OF FASCISTS WERE ALREADY ROAMING THE AREA. LARGE NUMBERS OF POLICE WERE ALSO IN THE VICINITY AND IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE THE HALL, WAS CONJESTED BY LEFT WING PAPER SELLERS. IN THE CONFUSION SOME FASCISTS TRIED TO GET INTO THE HALL BUT WERE CHALLENGED. THEY INSISTED THAT WE HAD NOT RIGHT TO QUESTION THEM AS IT WAS ADVERTISED AS A 'PUBLIC MEETING' AND TRIED TO PUSH PAST. ONE WAS IDENTIFIED AS RICHARD EDMUNDS, SECOND IN COMMAND OF THE BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY. HE INSISTED THAT HE WAS NOT, AND THAT ALL THE FUSS WAS 'RIDICULOUS'. THOSE INVOLVED HAVE ASSURED ME THAT THEY SPENT A CONSIDERABLE TIME MULLING OVER THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM IE PUBLIC MEETINGS, BUT WITHIN TEN SECONDS HAD DECIDED ON A SUITABLE REPLY - DROP KICKING THE WOULD-BE FUEHERER STRAIGHT OVER A FENCE. THE OTHERS, AND MORE WHO APPEARED ON THE SCENE SHORTLY AFTERWARDS WERE SIMILARLY DEALT WITH.

MOST OF THE PAPER SELLERS JUST STOOD AND GAUPED, BUT OTHERS LET THEIR HEARTS RULE THEIR HEAD AND SPRANG INTO ACTION. SOME TRIED TO RESCUE EDMUNDS; TO A BACKGROUND SHRIEK OF 'DICKHEADS' FROM A PROMINENT MEMBER OF T.O.M. WHO BERATED US 'FOR STOPPING PEOPLE FROM ENTERING THE BUILDING'. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, AN AUXILIARY STEWARD WAS PHYSICALLY ATTACKED BY WOMAN SELLING SOCIALIST WORKER WHO ACCUSED HIM OF BEING A THUG ETC. RED ACTION HAS BEEN IN THIS BUSINESS FOR A GOOD NUMBER OF YEARS AND THE LAST THING WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT IS GRATITUDE, EVEN SO GIVEN THE FACT THAT THERE WERE ESTIMATES OF BETWEEN 60-100 NF/BWP IN THE AREA, TOOLED UP, FULLY INTENT IN SMASHING UP THE MEETING AND EVERYONE IN IT, THIS WAS STILL A REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE. LATER THERE WAS SOME SUSPICION THAT A CAR PARKED NEAR THE BUILDING MIGHT CONTAIN A BOMB, THE NAME TONY LECOMBER WAS MENTIONED. WE DISMISSED THE IDEA AS IT WAS NOT HIS STYLE BASED ON HIS PREVIOUS EFFORT, IF IT HAD BEEN DUE TO GO OFF, HE WOULD STILL HAVE BEEN IN IT. (IN 1985 HE WAS BLOWN UP IN A PREMATURE EXPLOSION). LATER IN THE EVENING WE HAD CAUSE TO QUESTION A LATE ARRIVAL LOOKING FOR 'BERNADETTE', AND OBVIOUS 'WRONG/UN' WHO UNDER INTERROGATION REVEALED THAT THIS ATTACK HAD BEEN PLANNED AT LEAST A MONTH IN ADVANCE. ACTING ON INFORMATION RECEIVED A CERTAIN MR JARVIS FROM LOUGHTON HAS BEEN PUT ON OUR CHRISTMAS LIST. WHEN WE FINALLY ASKED HIM TO LEAVE, HE APPEARED RELUCTANT AND ENQUIRED IN A HIGH PITCHED VOICE 'IF THEY (THE IRA) WERE GOING TO KILL HIM, HE WAS TOLD IN A GENTLE BANtering TONE - YOU UNDERSTAND - THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY 'AS THERE WERE TOO MANY COPPERS ABOUT'. HE DIDN'T APPEAR REASSURED. HIS RELUCTANCE TO LEAVE MEANT THAT IN THE END WE HAD TO PHYSICALLY THROW HIM OUT ON THE STREET.



WHEN THE MEETING WAS OVER WE DECIDED IN THE INTERESTS SAFETY OF THE AUDIENCE, MANY ELDERLY IRISH AMONG THEM, TO ESCORT THEM TO THE NEAREST TUBE. TO WRONG-FOOT THE FASCISTS WHO WERE MASSES IN A PUB NEARBY WITH AN EASY ACCESS TO BOTTLES AND GLASSES WE LEFT BY THE REAR EXIT. THE TROOPS OUT ORGANISERS WHO HAD BEEN CRITICAL OF US EARLIER DID NOTHING TO DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES LEAVING THE AREA BY CAR. CURIOUSLY IN THE LATEST EDITION OF THEIR MAGAZINE THEY MADE NO MENTION OF ANY OF THIS.

THE PALESTINIAN 'INTIFADA' RAISES THE STAKES

OTHER GOALS

There is only one team in London which is currently providing a creche for its supporters on Saturday home matches. Millwall Football Club who for the first time in their history are competing in the First Division have encouraged new community initiatives that have proved extremely popular. Whilst other clubs are concentrating their financial resources on building new stands and special executive boxes, Millwall with the assistance of £70,000 from Lewisham borough Council have funded a community scheme that offers far more to the local community at a price that they can afford (not a price of the cheapest £8.00 seat at Chelsea).

The community scheme - a proposal previously set by the GLC three years ago - was suggested to all London clubs with only four taking on the initiative; Arsenal, Charlton and Fulham folding due to their upheavals. Millwalls scheme which

consists of two community development officers, offer the following:

- * A Saturday afternoon creche.
- * Visits to local schools where black footballers discuss racism and hooliganism.
- * 200-300 FREE TICKETS for home matches to school children.
- * An over 50's club who use the executive suite for their bowls games.
- * Soccer and tennis clinics for boys and girls and professional footballers.
- * Fun runs with the players.
- * The Millwall mural.
- * Promotion of womens football. (Millwall Lionesses).

Lewisham borough Council have sponsored the club for £70,000 which means the name Lewisham is printed on the shirts and local events are hosted by Millwall footballers. The club has received many letters of support for the scheme.

Cynics such as myself always take such schemes with a pinch of salt. Of course



This community scheme of Millwalls is part of the way of building a particular image and developing attendances at games as well as sports sessions. Millwall might not be building new directors boxes out of the pockets of their fans but there is still a directors box, the club does not belong to the fans. But there is a positive result to any attempted manipulation; a club like Millwall that expounds anti-racism through its players in local schools, and develops activities and facilities for women to participate in the club can create an environment in which the accepted norms

don't include lobbing bananas at black players. It also provides an opportunity for socialists to take their ideas onto the terraces and reclaim them from the right wing and fascist ideas that variously prevail.

In a game where mega payments are exchanged on transfers, ticket prices increase, facilities for the poor get better whilst the average poor is excluded Millwalls experiment has shown the potential football clubs have of servicing the local people rather than just ripping them off on the door. THE SCORE AT THE MOMENT IS MILLWALL 5 REST OF THE UK 0.

cenotaph 88

LIKE LAST YEAR A.F.A. MARCHED DOWN WHITEHALL AND ONCE AGAIN THE NF MARCHED ON REMEMBRANCE DAY FROM VICTORIA TO THE CENOTAPH. BOTH MARCHES PAST OFF WITHOUT INCIDENT. IN PREVIOUS YEARS RED ACTION PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT PART IN PLANNING AND POLICING THE ANTI-FASCIST MARCH, BUT WE DID NOT TAKE PART THIS YEAR. WE FELT THAT THE MARCH ORIGINALLY DESIGNED AS A PUBLICITY STUNT HAD INSTEAD BECOME A RITUAL, AN EXCUSE TO AVOID CONFRONTING THE FASCISTS. THE WHOLE OBJECT OF THE EXERCISE IS AFTER-ALL IS TO STOP THEM MARCHING. SIMILARLY THE PATRIOTIC THEME IE 'RECLAIMING REMEMBRANCE DAY' (FROM WHO? FOR WHO?) WAS A SYMPTOM OF AN APPEAL TO RESPECTABILITY WHICH IS LITTLE TO DO WITH ANTI-FASCISM GENERALLY AND EVEN LESS TO DO WITH THE POLITICS OF RED ACTION PARTICULARLY. ALONG WITH MEMBERS OF DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT WE DECIDED THAT SOMETHING MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SYMBOLISM WAS REQUIRED. FOR REASONS THAT WE CANNOT GO INTO HERE, THINGS DID NOT WORK OUT AS PLANNED. NEVERTHELESS THAT WAS OUR INTENTION, AND WE MAKE NO APOLOGY FOR THAT. IN THE BATTLE 'FOR CONTROL OF THE STREETS' THE MET, THE BIGGEST MOB WON EASILY. DESPITE THIS THE WHOLE AREA OF CENTRAL LONDON WAS STILL CONTESTED WITH CLASHES AT VICTORIA, TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LEICESTER SQUARE, EMBANKMENT (HEADHUNTERS RAN AGAIN), AND KINGS CROSS, WE STILL MANAGED A RESPECTABLE SECOND. RED ACTION IS THE ONLY LEFT WING SOCIALIST GROUP AFFILIATED TO AFA. WITH AN EPIDEMIC OF RACE ATTACKS RUNNING AT 70,000 A YEAR AND STILL RISING THE LEFT'S OSTRICH LIKE POSITION 'WHAT FASCISTS - I SEE NO FASCISTS' IS COWARDLY AND CONTEMPTUOUS. IN A WAY IT ECHOES THE ATTITUDE THAT EXISTED IN THE GERMAN WEIMAR REPUBLIC THAT PRECEDED THE THIRD REICH. TACTICS APART THE ISSUE OF RACISM MUST BE HIGHLIGHTED, THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTED NOT TO DO SO NOW AMOUNTS TO A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MEDIA AND THE STATE. THROUGHOUT THE DAY THERE WERE THIRTY FOUR ARRESTS MAINLY ANTI-FASCISTS. CABLE STREET BEAT HAVE PROMISED TO ORGANISE GIGS AND FUND RAISING BENEFITS TO RAISE MONEY FOR FINES AND COURT COSTS.

SUB

CONTRACT KILLERS

Once again 'Red Action' rocks the nation, only hours after a blanket ban on TV coverage of Sinn Fein and its supporters was announced by the government. Two Red Action members and notorious IRA/INLA supporters appeared on a BBC2 documentary Brass Tacks.

The programme however, it has to be pointed out, centred more on the state of safety in the building industry than on matters concerning the six counties. The programme itself raised some very pertinent points not only about safety in the building trade but also the attitude of employers and employees alike.

I started off with some startling statistics ie a staggering 1,500 people have lost their lives in the past ten years alone and at least a half a million have suffered injury of one kind or another in the same period. The question must then be asked how such statistics can be tolerated and why safety standards are so blatantly ignored by the employers.

Bob and Steve two Red Action building workers pointed out that it was the employment structure which is unique to the building industry which allows employers to shirk responsibilities. They explained how the main contractors employed little or no staff but employed firms of subcontractors who in turn employed casual or lump labour to actually do the work, therefore passing the buck down the line.

The programme centred on the daily work of the factory inspector whose job it was, to inspect safety standards on building sites. Some of the scenes shown as the camera followed her around on her visits could have been laughable but for the fact that this wasn't some comedy programme but an everyday situation which caused the death of 152 people last year alone. One incident on one site was where main supports on a section of scaffold had been removed to make way for 'access'.

Another scene showed a couple of blokes from 'Murphys' working on a dangerous trench which was liable to collapse on them. On the instructions of the foreman they were told not to work in the hole until it was made safe. Half an hour later when the inspector returned they were back in the hole working away on the instruction of the same foreman. The tragedy that can result from such situations was reflected in the death of John Tattam a 37 year old office worker who had only just started work in the building industry. He had no previous knowledge of building work and was an epileptic, yet his employers amazingly enough sent him up to work on the second floor of a building. He fell backwards over the side of the building and was killed. There were no statutory safety barriers. In court Johns employers were found guilty and fined a mere £250. Who says life isn't cheap?

There were other cases such as 23 year old Thomas Fahey who lost his hand in a complex concrete mixing machine after given a mere 30 minute instruction on the operation of the machine.

However such accidents do not appear to bother the employers. Why should they? With an average fine of £450 in a magistrates court they are hardly going to be wetting their pants, particularly when last years combined profit of eight construction firms alone stands at £500,000,000. So why then do the workers stand for such conditions. As Bob and Steve were quick to point out 'theres always someone waiting to take your place'. As Steve pointed out, "if you complain,

they say hey look just another trouble maker get rid of him". Steve also told of the time he refused to work in an unsafe trench (which was constantly caving in) and was promptly given the boot.

It was a documentary that made one feel bitter about personal tragedy in this vast industry, but mainly it made you rage about nonchalant attitudes to constant deaths and injuries that are becoming a daily incident, are nothing more than another statistic to the employer who treat such deaths and injuries merely as another piece of plant equipment that has to be replaced.

As Bob pointed out "you just never think its gonna happen to you, I bet the 152 workers that died last year did not think it would happen to them either."

Though the programme heavily laid the culpability for the deaths and maiming of thousands on the employers it ignored the real scandal which is the collaboration of the trade unions in what amounts to corporate mass murder. Instead of really attempting to organise the sites they opt instead for the infamous 'check off' system. In return for a guaranteed trouble free future the subbies agree to deduct a £1 a week from the workers wages. Why

should they worry, it costs them nothing. On paper the official increases the size of the union. The workers of course get literally nothing.

As revolutionaries we have no illusions that in a conflict between safety and profit under capitalism there can only be one winner. The bosses are after all in the business for profit. We know that, they are the recognised enemy. However, in class war, as in any war, special hatred is always reserved for treachery and traitors. When that day of reckoning comes the officials in question can rest assured that their collaboration will not be forgotten that of course, is another story.

THE DOCKERS

On The Brink of Confrontation

SINCE THE MINERS STRIKE IN 1984-1985 AND LATER THE PRINTWORKERS AT WAPPING IN 1986-87, THE ISSUES ARE CRYSTAL CLEAR - IT IS THEM AND US. THERE WILL BE NO COMPROMISES, IT IS A FIGHT TO THE FINISH. THE DOCKERS WILL FIGHT.



THE ARTICLE BELOW IS BY MICHAEL FENN, FROM THE NATIONAL PORTS SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE.

Since the Tories took power ten years ago, they have been intent on smashing the trade union movement. The Thatcher government has not forgotten the defeats the Tories suffered in the hands of the miners and the dockers in 1972 and 1974. When it comes to class warfare, the Labour Party says this is a thing of the past, while the Tories carry it out on behalf of those they represent the middle and upper classes.

Trade union rights that took a century to build have taken only ten years to demolish. Trade unions are now in strait jackets. They must hold secret ballots before any strikes, and on failure to do so the union is liable to sequestration of its funds. If the result of a ballot is 89% in favour of strike action, any scab who has taken part in this vote can ignore the result and go to work with the full protection of the law. The Tories call this democracy.

Now th unions are in handcuffs and chains, the Tories feel free to attack, knowing that at any sign of court action, the trade union leadership will desert their members. A recent example of this is the seamans strike in Dover, where Sam McCluskey said on TV that if necessary he would run the union from a tent on Clapham Common. Within weeks, he was appealing to a court for the funds and buildings of the National Union of Seaman. He left his members to fight on without official support.

After smashing the miners in 1984, the printworkers in 1986, and the Dover seamen in 1987, the Tory backbench hyenas are still looking for blood.

One of the last strongholds fo organised trade unions, particularly unofficial organisation, is in the dock industry. The dock industry is also a hundred per cent closed shop, another of the Tories obsessions. Some leading Tories are most violently opposed to the closed shop. Thatcher and Leon Brittain are barristers and member of the Bar Council, the oldest, and probably most powerful closed shop in Britain.

Approximately 95% of dockers in Britain are members of the T&GWU. The other 5% are members of the National Union of Railwayman. Seventy per cent of all cargo going in and out of Britain goes through what is known as registered ports. This means that ports where the labour is controlled by the National Dock Labour Board. The rest are known as unregistered ports, but most of their workers are still members of the T&GWU. They include two of the biggest ports in Britain - Felixstowe and Dover. Dover does not handle cargo, as its tonnage comes from roll on roll off ferries.

The registered ports (DLB ports) labour is controlled by local boards, with equal numbers of trade union and employer representatives, with an alternating chairman. They meet to decide on discipline, and recruitment,

although this has not happened in London since 1973. This means that no docker can be sacked by an employer until his case has been agreed by the DLB. He can be sacked for stealing or for violence or for failing to attend for work for any long period without notification, but for very little else.

It is this control of the industry which the Tories call a job for life. The safeguards offered by this scheme are the centre of the attacks on the registered dock workforce. The National Association of Port Employers and their Tory backers want one thing in the dock industry - THE RIGHT TO HIRE AND FIRE. This would allow them to get rid of the shop stewards and any militant docker who opposed them.

The Tory government in 1972, aiding the employers, arrested five dock workers who were picketing inland container depots which were stealing dock work. This campaign was led by the National Port Shop Stewards movement, and two of those in prison were members of this committee. The NPSSC immediately called for a national docks strike. Within twelve hours, every major port in Britain had stopped work. The strike spread rapidly to other industries, and when approximately one million people were on strike, in support of those in prison, the Tory government of the day, retreated and ordered their release.

They were imprisoned for contempt of court and they refused to purge that contempt. They were released due to the solidarity action by other workers.

The attack now being built up by Tory backbenchers to abolish the NDLS shows that they have not forgotten their defeat in 1972. At the centre of the fightback against this latest campaign is the same committee, the NPSSC, as defeated the Tories in 1972. The T&GWU docks section is committed officially to defend the NDLS, but if in the event of a strike, the official union gives its priorities to its funds and buildings, and not to its 10,000 dock workers, the NPSSC will be the ones to defend the dockers jobs. This could prove to be a strength and not a weakness.

We as the dock workers do not have vast bank accounts or buildings to be sequestrated. We will be fighting for our jobs and we will fight to the finish. This country is still an island, has as yet no tunnels, no bridges and just 10,000 handle 70% of all this countries imports and exports.

We proved ourselves once in 1972, and if the Tories attack us again we can take them on and win. As in 1972, we will need the assistance of every trade unionist to help us in this task.

RED ACTION ON MERSEYSIDE

If interested in finding out more / getting active in the North West or on Merseyside. There is a grouping of members and supporting members on Merseyside who can be contacted by writing to:

RED ACTION MERSEYSIDE
P.O. BOX 80
SOUTHPORT
PR8 6BH

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.

All cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'Red Action'.

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THE VOICE OF REASON



The Chancellor has recently given massive tax cuts to the rich. Meanwhile, the NHS is collapsing, hospitals are closing and nurses are denied a living wage. Children are actually dying from lack of funds. You will be forgiven for thinking that the Chancellor is just a big fat bastard who doesn't give a fuck. Not so, and here is a photo to prove it, good old Nige at a fund raising benefit for Great Ormond Street Childrens Hospital. Aaaaarrrggghhh.

British Coal is to hand exclusive bargaining rights to the U.D.M. at two new superpits for the first ten years of production irrespective of the number of members they will recruit there. British Coals industrial relations director Mr Kevin Hunt made it clear it would negotiate with the scab U.D.M. even if it failed to recruit any members at the pits. Why negotiate with a union which has no members? Why indeed? In the absence of unions the miners can always rely on managers like Ken Hoses to look after their interests, as he remarked recently on proposed changes in conditions 'It doesn't seem to me to be anything very onerous about working underground for 10 hours or so.' - OR SO?

Asked by Edinburgh Labour M.P. if she thought 'her Chancellor Nigel Lawson was still brilliant' Thatcher replied 'I think Edinburgh is a very flourishing city.'

During the much hype U2 film 'Rattle & Hum', Bono reveals that he is not a pacifist as previously rumoured, he supports the A.N.C. 'When a man is forced to take up arms against an oppressor blah, blah' His new found militancy does not extend to the co-terrorists of the I.R.A. The I.R.A. say they are fighting a revolution 'Well I say fuck the revolution.' People who do not live in Belfast 'do not realise what is going on' will it be churlish to point out that Bono was himself Dublin born and bred. He goes on 'I want no part of a revolution that drags people out of their houses in front of their wives and kids', of course as methods go necklacing is much more refined.

Some people began to disperse, but we told them DON'T RUN THEY WON'T CHARGE THIS IS BRITAIN. (Student quote 6th December, Guardian.) Next thing you know they will be shooting unarmed suspects in the back.



LOOK BACK IN ANGER (Cont.)

can be trusted. The real future is as the unofficial left-wing of the Tory party. In ten years Britain has developed from a two party system into a one party state.

For those who believe the system must be smashed, this presents a great opportunity but the opportunity must be grasped, the failure to do this could mean great danger. In an accelerating economic crisis the political vacuum is more likely to be exploited by the far right/fascist than the revolutionary left. The influence of the left among the working class can never have been lower this century. The Communist Party has splintered and in any case is often more right-wing than Labour. The largest or

most visible of groups on the left lack confidence in themselves their politics and the working class. There often exists a massive gap between their theory and reality. The leadership are not unaware of this, so to avoid collision they instinctively turn inwards instead of outwards. They turn their faces to the left and turn their backs on the class. They need to recruit, so they poach on each others members. As a defensive measure sectarianism is tolerated, when not openly encouraged. The composition of their organisation reflect this, being increasingly student based academic led movements. The public perception is that revolutionary socialism is the exclusive property of the middle classes rather than the working classes. In all the left wing organisation probably number no more than 10,000. If practical

'In Thatcherism as Gaullism the leader embodies the popular will; knows instinctively what the popular feel and want; her heart beats in time with the peoples heart. So....she can appeal over the heads of the supposed representatives of the people to the people themselves.' A quote from a new book called 'Thatcherism' analysing the success and style of the Prime Minister a more suitable title for the book might have been 'One Leader, One Race, One Nation.'

night thoughts

'The same people who welcome tax cuts which give £100 a week or more to the very rich, very solemnly announce that it is utterly wrong that the very same people should receive £7.25 a week in child benefit. The rich don't need the money they tell us, but, if the rich don't need child benefit, they don't need tax cuts either.'

Tory M.P. Sir Ian Gilmore. Observer 6th November.

'Rupert (Murdoch) and Mrs. Thatcher consult regularly on every important matter of policy....he is the Phantom Prime Minister of the country.'

Charles Douglas Home. Ex-editor of 'The Times'.

'Whoever gets elected will certainly be the evil of two lessers'

A comment from a voter on the eve of the U.S. Presidential election.

With only 91 million Americans voting and another 91 million staying at home, George Bush was elected by about 26% of the whole country.

'The best two minutes of my life'

Actress Angela Dickinson. On her affair with President Kennedy.

'Mr. Bush is an intellectual.'

Bill Ingham radio 10th November.

'Bush is no Ronald Reagan.'

American speaking on BBC World Service.

'I've got George Bush by the balls.'

The confident boast of Panamanian dictator General Noriega. Based on the fact that the planes used to ferry guns to the Contras in Nicaragua, via Ollie North on the instructions of George Bush, were also used to ferry drugs for General Noriega. Guardian, 2nd November.

'I've only got two words to say to you, 'Fucking traitor.'

A government whip during the unsuccessful Tory back-bench revolt and eye test charges. Guardian, 10th November.

'Her' approach is economic, and she doesn't want to know about human rights.'

The verdict of Mr. Helvati of the Turkish human rights association, on human rights activist Margaret Thatcher.

WE ARE RED ACTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

of others, but we are not fools. We learn from the mistakes of others who do not admit to making any. We do not claim to have all the answers, but then we are not the finished product. We know that it is not a good time to be a revolutionary. In a capitalist society it is only natural that capitalist ideas have greater currency. Socialism is on the retreat and people do not like to join losing sides. We know it is our job to help politicise the working class or fail in the attempt. There is no other way. Red Action know what we are fighting for and more specifically what we are fighting against. There are dark days ahead but if we continue to operate on this basis, if the worst comes to the worst, at least we'll be among the first to know.

support for the national liberation struggle in Ireland is used as a litmus test to distinguish reformists from revolutionaries, then it is 100's rather than thousands. That is the brutal reality.

Last year Red Action responded to an appeal by the Irish Republican Socialist Party for the help in sponsoring some of their prisoners. It was almost 12 months before other political groups did likewise. Even then we still set up three times as many support groups as anybody else. For us there can be no gap between theory and action. We believe individuals or organisations should be judged not by what they say but what they do. Talk is cheap. We may have many faults but few illusions. We lack the 'sophistication' and some of the resources