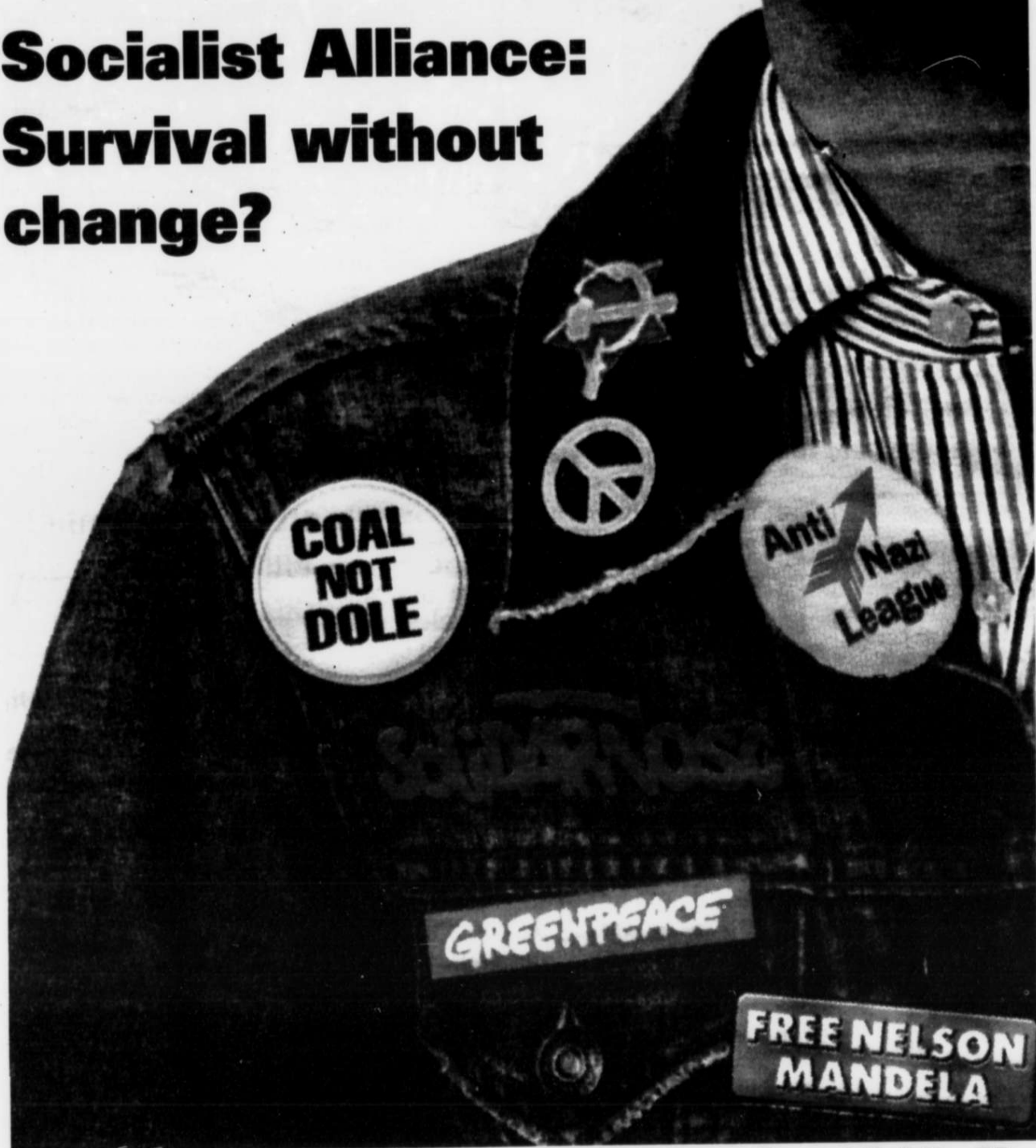


# RED ACTION

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## **Socialist Alliance: Survival without change?**



**inside:** Guilty - till proven innocent • Searchlight's *Mr Evil* • Nearly all working class now? • Israel and the new McCarthyism • Have you ever heard of a man called Trotsky?

# EDITORIAL

**In the run-up to Christmas Tory leader William Hague was widely hammered in the media for linking the deaths of Steven Lawrence and Damilola Taylor to 'police incompetence' and Labour cuts in police numbers respectively. By general consent Hague was attempting to play the race card out of political opportunism borne of desperation.**

Linking the decline in 'stop and search' and the consequent rise in street crime to the Macpherson report saw him lambasted by what he refers to disparagingly as the 'feign outrage of the liberal elite'. Imagine the furore had he further demanded the abolition of jury trial for certain people for certain offences - and given that a racial spin? Exactly. Hague's chagrin that Jack Straw is allowed to do so, and come up smelling of roses is therefore perhaps understandable.

Straw wants to get rid of jury trial, for certain offences - for certain people. Jury trial is expensive. Many people opt for jury trial because the chance of conviction there hovers around 50%, where as in the magistrates, or, as they were once commonly called 'police courts', the conviction rate can be somewhere in the 90% and upward bracket. So Jack Straw's initiative having already been rejected by the House of Lords and seen a rebellion by Labour MPs is not a widely popular move with civil liberties groups, influential sections of the legal profession and nor, despite his protestations to the contrary, is there any significant public backing either. Understandably, given the weight of opinion what was needed, Jack decided, was to wrong-foot his opponents, and in the process make himself fireproof on the issue.

What Jack needed was some of that old Millbank spin. And what better way currently to protect himself and his legislation, than stamp the Lawrence logo on it. Hence his rationale that the Lawrence case was the 'defining case of the 90s'; the 'political equivalent' of the score or more of Irish citizens incarcerated by a lazy incompetent and bigoted police force in the '70s and '80s. The principle difference with Lawrence being, that rather than fit a victim up, the system just as controversially let a victim down. Or as he put it is his own words: "the issue was not someone who was innocent and found guilty, but the opposite failing: the system's failure to secure a conviction in respect of whoever it was who murdered a black teenager."

But unfortunately for Straw apologists it is not the opposite failing, but the same one. It is the same lazy, incompetent and bigoted police force responsible whatever the scenario. A police force the Macpherson inquiry decided, are moreover 'institutionally racist', which is to say they were prone to decisions that led to discriminatory conclusions. And if the police are institutionally racist, is it not a fair bet 'their' courts might be as well? No inquiries planned there though, in effect greater powers instead. One amendment Straw proposed was that only those with 'a reputation to protect' would be entitled to opt for jury trial. On what criteria someone's 'reputation' was to be assessed has never been made entirely clear. Moreover if in assessing whether or not the defendant was sufficiently respectable, in that a conviction for say, theft, would unduly damage his reputation; the defendants current social standing (ie whether upper middle or lower class) would undoubtedly be a consideration.

Whether of 'good character' or the other. Good character being based on whether the defendant 'had form' or was, as the saying goes, 'known to the police'. Now obviously if someone on a shop-lifting charge had a string of previous convictions for a similar offence then is unlikely his or her reputation would be unduly damaged by a further conviction. A sort of common sense analogy Straw himself might have employed to reassure his doubters, but for the fact it would have let

the cat out of the bag. For whether de facto or de jure it underlines the need for a magistrate to have access to a defendants record prior to hearing the evidence.

Consequently, in sitting as judge and jury so to speak, it would require of the magistrate in 'Diplock court' fashion to 'remind himself', once having been convinced of the defendants guilt, to set aside any preconceptions or prejudices, in handing down out a sentence. Quite clearly, under such a system any defendant with a record, once charged, would, faced with the inherent presumption of guilt, understand the need to prove his innocence. Many would also quickly come to

understand, that even when innocent, copping a guilty plea might be preferable to pleading not guilty and subsequently incurring the possible wrath of a vengeful magistrate. The then arbitrary nature of British justice, would not be lost on the 'bobby on the beat' would either. Any arrest where actual evidence other than the word of an officer(s) was absent, could result not only in a charge, but would also practically guarantee a verdict of guilty. Wary of allegations of discrimination Straw nonetheless proposes to extend that logic to include jury trials as well. But if, as Straw insists, the police are 'institutionally racist', on what precise sectors of society does the caring Mr Straw imagine his 'anti-racist reforms' will have the greatest negative impact?

Any removal of jury rights

aligned to prior disclosure, will certainly guarantee for Straw the fast track American style justice he so craves, but only by turning the law on its head. America, so admired in certain liberal/left circles for its overt affirmative action policies, implemented such measures some years back, it now has more people, and more working class black people in jail, one million and counting, than other country in the world.

Allowing for the reality of class rather than race being ultimately the defining factor, the hypocrisy bridging anti-racist rhetoric and reality is surely unsustainable. In the meantime for scoundrels everywhere 'anti-racism' has displaced 'patriotism', as the body armour of choice

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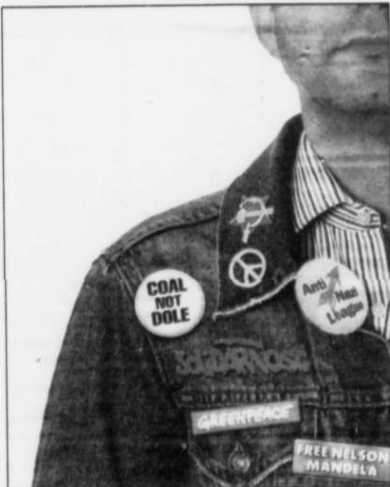
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**FRONT COVER:** Supporters of the Socialist Alliances believe that it offers for the Left a chance of political survival, without political change. To that end the smaller sects are together, working to create one bigger sect.

(see *Plan but not a clue*, page 5)



## THE BIG ISSUE

A *Sun* editorial approvingly quotes a *Guardian* pundit, who in turn echoes a consistent theme of *Red Action's* articles and editorials. It might seem an unlikely watershed, but this is exactly what happened on December 19 when Hugo Young rounded on "the left for recklessly playing the race card and risking social cohesion for political advantage".

Young accused Jack Straw and Bill Morris in particular of "instinctive exaggeration" in response to William Hague's remarks on policing and Macpherson. Morris likened Hague's mundane efforts to Enoch Powell's infamous rivers of blood speech in 1968, while Straw employed terms like "disgusting" and "disgraceful" to milk any perceived advantage. If anything *The Mirror* editorial on the same day went even more over the top when in the interests of 'democracy' it called for Hague to resign. "It is now impossible" it continued "for any decent person to vote for the Tory Party under Mr Hague" while Blair and Straw were championed as "men whose boots he is not fit to lick". To his credit, Young found the whole performance "grotesquely irresponsible", commenting that it was "a lot more likely than Hague's words to stir up antagonisms which many good people, including Bill Morris, have spent years working to reduce. On the whole it is the left by recklessly interpreting Hague as racist who have raised the temperature more than he did."

'Wogs out!' is one way to play the race card the other, and arguably more damaging way, is as Young points out "to accuse the other side of playing it when the card is so firmly face-down that hardly anyone would otherwise notice it."

Detecting unconscious racism while simultaneously dismissing in-your-face evidence of studied aggression is of course a balancing act British liberals have finessed to an art. For instance finding ways 'to ban racist thinking' was an idea Macpherson toyed with, but when a Mori poll on October 23 explained that 66% of the population felt there were 'too many immigrants in the country', if remarked on at all, this was dismissed by liberalism as a 'blip'. A successive Mori finding that 'race relations were now worse most felt than five years ago', which is to say pre-Macpherson, drew no comment either. Not even the warning from the Lawrence family solicitor Imran Khan, that the near 100% rise in racial harassment is *not* in his experience "reflected" in victims being "more confident in reporting harassment" (*Guardian*, 22.11.00), which is what the CRE, when confronted with the Runnymede Trust statistics, offered by way of explanation. What a remarkable gift for people whose job it is to see racism at every turn, to detect the positive in such a negative tale?

Further confronted by a British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey published toward the end of November which revealed that of the increasing number of those who describe themselves as English rather than British, 37% admitted openly to being "very or a little prejudiced against people of other races", uberliberal Polly Toynbee remained steadfastly up beat. "In the world of Goodness Gracious Me and Lenny Henry, Britain, says the Runnymede Trust, is the least racist country in Europe." (In a Europe where the leader of a party that wanted to put 'homosexuals on spikes' took 30% of the national vote as in Romania recently 'Britain as least racist' (even if true) is not much of a boast.)



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## THE BIG ISSUE - continued

Of course for liberals like Toynbee, racism is absurdly irrational for the inexcusable error of applying to *whole* peoples, common and garden prejudices the enlightened British middle class properly reserve for their social inferiors. Only from such a stand-point could Toynbee maintain that only "to be liberal is to be free of superstition and irrational fear". Consequently as "people become more liberal the more educated they are" and "as graduates will soon be half the population... if we are the elite", she smugly concludes "that is because we are winning". Such idiocy (if only the educated are progressive who votes Tory?) is not restricted to the 'elite'. All to readily when provoked the 'hard left' subscribe to not dissimilar reactionary palliatives. Take the editor of the *Weekly Worker*, Peter Manson's comment that the poor showing of the BNP in the Preston parliamentary by-election "ought to scotch *once and for all* the notion that extreme right wing groups" are worth even bothering about. Though no doubt stoutly maintaining his 'internationalism' he nonetheless seems to believe that as an 'island race' the same paternalism extolled by Toynbee that is failing all over Europe is working here. "For too long the left has spent too much time" he added "chasing tiny bands of fascists, instead of putting forward our positive [Socialist Alliance] alternative."

Considering the overwhelming majority who make up the SA, took absolutely no political responsibility, and played no positive role in dealing with the far-right, how different their 'positive alternative' from the thinking and sentiments of the likes of Toynbee bears investigation. In October Liverpool City Council announced that it would not take any more refugees because of unpaid debts owed to it by the Home Office. In November's *Searchlight*, SWP member Dave Renton took the council to task, "What would you think of a hospital that tried to win an argument about funding by stopping operations? What would you feel about a school that raised school funds by excluding all of its students? The council is using refugees as the victims of its row with the government. The injustice of its action is clear. Asylum seekers should not be punished for a problem which they did not create." Tortured analogies aside, the logic is less than compelling. Liverpool Council should continue to take refugees regardless of what the government owes. Let the local working class foot the bill in reduced services, greater competition for housing, medical treatment and school places and to hell with the social and political consequences. Under no circumstances should the government's failure to meet its commitments, much less the demand 'for extra resources to help grease integration' be raised for fear of polluting the anti-racist 'ideal' with criminal materialism. If the rights of the working classes were considered on this issue who knows where it would end?

It therefore follows the working class must continue to be punished, (and 'recklessly' denounced as racist for uttering the mildest of protests) for a problem deliberately created by the state. Rather than advance toward a genuinely independent working class position, there is this constipated funk. With the upshot that it falls to Michael Heseltine a Tory 'wet' to be the first to even raise the question (albeit negatively) of working class communities paying the price, for commitments reneged on by New Labour.

Plainly not prepared to break with the liberal consensus strategically, when pushed, the case for 'refugees welcome here' is even made for the boost provided by immigration to the economy, the 'black economy' that is. This remarkable line of argument was advanced by London Socialist Alliance candidate Mark Steel in an article in *The Independent* on August 3. "For example farmowners in Kent are currently complaining that tons of strawberries are rotting in the fields because of a shortage of people willing to pick the things. This is the same Kent which we are told 'can't take any more of them we're full up as it is'. This is why most people find economics so confusing. If the problem involves a field of desperately unpicked strawberries and a group of people desperate for work, some might suggest the solution is for the potential workers to pick the strawberries. But they'd be stupid." Of course not. In the liberal world of the Toynbee's, Renton's, Manson's and Steel's the really "stupid" would be the potential workers who resented being forced to take less than the market rate. A crime for which they would in turn be condemned as "racist", "uneducated" and "irrational" in short order. This is why most people find *socialism* so confusing. This is why Hague is not racist but opportunist. *The Sun* knows this. Hugo Young now knows. Red Action do too. The final recruit to this otherwise extraordinary alliance was, to the utter dismay of *Socialist Worker* and company, William Macpherson himself.

Strategical disarray of such magnitude promises profound political upheaval, possibly as early as May 3. If that happens - remember - you read it here first • (For further reading see, *Race and Class* at: [www.redaction.org](http://www.redaction.org))



# A PLAN BUT NOT A CLUE

**Supporters of the LSA like to think they are leading the working class, but are in reality more often than not threatening open collision with it. G O'Halloran explains why.**

**Crime writer Raymond Chandler once remarked that "if you believe in an ideal, you don't own it, it owns you." Nowhere is this more apparent than within the various organisations currently coalescing beneath the Socialist Alliance banner, who off the back of the 'success' of saving a deposit in a by-election or two, are clamouring for unity to be formalised within a 'Party', and thus at a stroke restricting support to true believers only.**

Needless to say the truest believers are those elements least likely to have the courage to look objective reality in the face. The type of people who after 83 years of calamitous international failure have the gall to say 'Here is the truth kneel here'. In an ideal world the Socialist Alliance would, according to them, be best served by becoming a replica of their own top down structures, dogmatic programmes and undemocratic constitutions, and adopting as much as possible their strategies, tactics and even slogans. Thus political survival -



**A mass meeting of Ford workers vote to strike in the early 1970s. There is a refusal to acknowledge that the British manufacturing base, and along with it industrial workers are declining year on year, and as a consequence the cherished 'point of production' even discounting the impact of globalisation, is fast becoming strategically irrelevant.**

*without change* - is the common denominator which explains why the sects are all busily beavering toward the creation of - one big sect. That is not to say there are not tensions. There are. But in the wider scheme of things they are artificial, for all are heading unerringly toward political or organisational boundaries, to firmly separate them from those whom, they none the less doggedly maintain is their constituency.

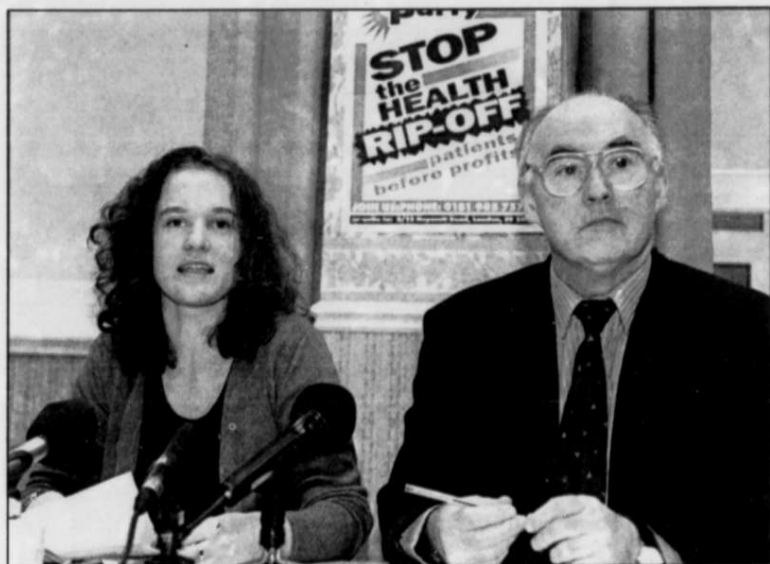
For some, this necessary creation of boundaries will be best achieved by insisting the alliance be 'revolutionary' only. For others like the SWP, there is the insistence that it must be made 'comfy' for those on New Labour's Left. (Which is to say made politically comfy for themselves.) But what is perhaps most striking about the London Socialist Alliance in particular, is the absence of an analysis of how these previously bitterest of rivals found themselves in an alliance in the first place. Nowhere is there an acknowledgment that the road they have been on for forty years has led up a blind alley, and so it is survival, aligned to the total lack of enthusiasm for retracing steps, to possibly picking up another road which forked off a certain distance back, which is currently binding them together.

In contemporary terms reality fares no better. Examples abound. All of whom serve to illustrate that though the Left may have a unity 'plan', collectively they haven't a clue. One reason why, if, in the unlikely event they were ever to snap out of it, something quite calamitous will be needed to do it.

It is true, that here and there, as a result of operating in the political mainstream, practical adjustments have been forced on them. Despite this tentative contact with reality, events by and large continue to be viewed through the prism of the sect, and thus their overall view of the world remains a savagely 'distorted' one. So distorted in fact, that they can conclude, that defining issues such as constitution, structure and programme are best addressed - in house, without consultation with, much less direct input, from the working class proper. Such introspection is the clearest message yet that the Socialist Alliance is geared, not to replacing the socialist sects, but to accommodating them as a priority. Which is one reason many find it 'exciting': the internal workings are as familiar and gratifying as their own internal structures, but on a grander scale. Thus while the SA structures provide the impression of momentum, dynamism and growth - to the myopic - the overriding objective of 'hot-housing the revolutionary party' remains unchallenged.

A recent Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) leaflet illustrated the common design succinctly. "A key question facing socialists in contemporary Britain is that of the unity of revolutionaries, the question of Party." As they explain, for the CPGB, the "logic" of the Socialist Alliance means "the unity of revolutionaries in a single organisation with a revolutionary programme and organised on democratic centralist lines". If pressed, the 'logic of revolutionary unity' is the reforging

**continued  
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## A PLAN BUT NOT A CLUE

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of the Communist Party proper, accompanied naturally, with a big red 'C' and all the usual trappings. An ambition which explains why their boundless enthusiasm for erecting barriers between the SA and the class holds no fears for them.

In that context the triumphant tone adopted following the national Socialist Alliance conference in Coventry on September 30 is understandable. "The protocol recommended by the [national] officers was that we should 'welcome' as part of the SA intervention any groups standing under their own name, provided they agreed to 'make their participation in the Socialist Alliance campaign clear on their election material'. The CPGB put forward an amendment deleting this. For us it is essential that we move toward the necessary centralised but democratic forms. Our amendment was carried by 206 votes to 174." (*Weekly Worker*, 5.10.00).

Attacking this whole segregationist drive, one LSA delegate commented: "Those who try to limit this movement to the unification of all conscious revolutionaries in a single genuinely democratic centralist party, with a revolutionary programme to arm our class for the battles ahead, fell into the trap at the Coventry conference of telling new independent forces that their general election candidates will only be supported by the SA if they take its name."

But that is not all the Coventry conference was telling independent working class forces. As well as saying we won't support you, it was also telling them if you are not with us, we naturally reserve the right to stand *against* you. As a result, instead of being an element to theoretically 'enrich' the class, the sect, as Marx himself remarked, invariably demands that the 'class subordinate itself to the sect'. The SA conference decision of which the CPGB is so inordinately proud, is exposed as a classic and self-defeating example of such an approach. While correctly the CPGB insist the "age of the sect is dead" they are also more than happy to kill off the concept of the 'big working class tent' almost casually. Largely because they believe that their blue-print is the only "path out of the sectarian impasse that held back the Left in the 20th century." As well as confusing symptom and cause, because they refuse to return to 'where historically the road forked' ('not all the Left have failed') the 'path' they insist leads 'out' merely leads back in.

Over thirty years ago Hal Draper, the renowned American intellectual, identified the formula followed religiously by all sects before and since. Naturally in the act of sect building, real working class interests or concerns, are the very last things considered. "Generalised as the normal pattern, this hothouse road to a revolutionary 'Party' (or facsimile thereof) went like this: You raise the Banner of the Correct Program to establish your organisational boundary... You do this regardless of the objective situa-

Leadership figures Hannah Sell and Peter Taffe at the launch of the Socialist Party (previously Militant) in 1997. Oddly as the third discernible trend within the SA, the 'tendency' most fearful of change, and currently the brake on the ambitions of the other two, the Socialist Party is the least objectionable. Which is not to say their Socialist Party hacks are anymore attractive, honest or visionary. If anything their visibly desperate attempts to avoid being hoovered up by the SWP, more often than not makes them appear somewhat less principled.

tion for it is a supra historic imperative... You do this with whomever you have around -2 other good people for example... You declare yourself the Revolutionary Party and since you have the Correct Program, eventually the workers will have to come to your door... and you have your sect." As is all too apparent the similarity between the designs of the CPGB and Drapers' analysis are almost tragically comic.

In place of an inclusive strategy with a clear-cut class character, which adapts 'the programme and ideals to what the working class is ready for', as Marx might have recommended in the circumstances, we see instead all the SA components, the CPGB included, embracing instinctively the antithetical method.

A set course which only highlights the reality of the Alliances nationally, even without a possibly fatal alienating push toward centralisation, already lacking any resonance outside of the 'revolutionary Left' as it is. Significantly, of the members present in Coventry, almost 80% were reported as 'members of existing organisations'. A further cause for alarm, for affiliates not otherwise preoccupied with sect building, is the realisation that of the 3,000 independents supposedly recruited during the GLA election campaign, less than a handful have materialised or been retained. Part of the reason may be that the names and addresses nominally collected under the auspices of the LSA, were instantly 'blagged' by the SWP. Tellingly, rival factions were neither concerned nor surprised at such a blatant hi-jacking. Given the opportunity, they reasoned, it is only what any sensible sectarian would have done. Of the untold (possibly terminal) damage to the integrity and credibility of the unity

project itself within the capital, not a word. What sense of injustice there was revolved around being denied the opportunity for 'sloppy seconds', and a go at the list themselves!

**Ironically the Socialist Alliance was originally an SP initiative. Nowadays under the pressure of its detractors the body language, is of a blind man being cajoled to dance on a roof by relatives he unwisely included in his will**

As might be expected, SWP manoeuvring is not restricted to pinching membership lists. Like the CPGB, it too has a set design for the future of the SA's. Once again it is governed not by the immediate or wider needs of a working class movement but by the motivation to create the least possible political distress to a declining membership. Therefore what they have in mind for the future of the SA is a kind of 'Anti-Labour League' within which the smaller component parts, will, once gobbled up, be tolerated but invisible, while the real work will in the words of prominent SWP'er Weyman Bennett, be directed toward giving disillusioned Labour liberals "a home". In contrast to the CPGB who are seemingly set on constructing a politically barren environment with constitu-

tional barriers against any unwelcome working class incursions that might dilute the existing revolutionary hegemony, the SWP are complimenting this conservatism by ensuring that the SA's remain socially homogeneous as well. Keeping in mind, that the LSA is already governed top to bottom by, at best, an educated, white collar, upper echelon of a seriously fragmented working class, any new Labour elements attracted will decisively reinforce the cultural separateness of the SA from the section of the class

Sects are by definition politically sterile, accordingly any combination thereof cannot ever hope to be greater than the sum of the parts. All the ill-considered drive toward centralisation resembles is a film of the sects initially breaking away - run backwards

currently unrepresented. For any serious bridge building between the Left and working class a yawning chasm of ominous implication.

Oddly the third discernible trend, the 'tendency' most fearful of change, and currently the brake on the ambitions of the other two, is the least objectionable. Which is not to say the Socialist Party hacks are anymore attractive, honest or visionary. If anything their visibly desperate attempts to avoid being hoovered up by the SWP, more often than not makes them appear somewhat less principled. Once again though, motivated by the threat of being the permanent and despised minority, (prior to involuntary liquidation), their

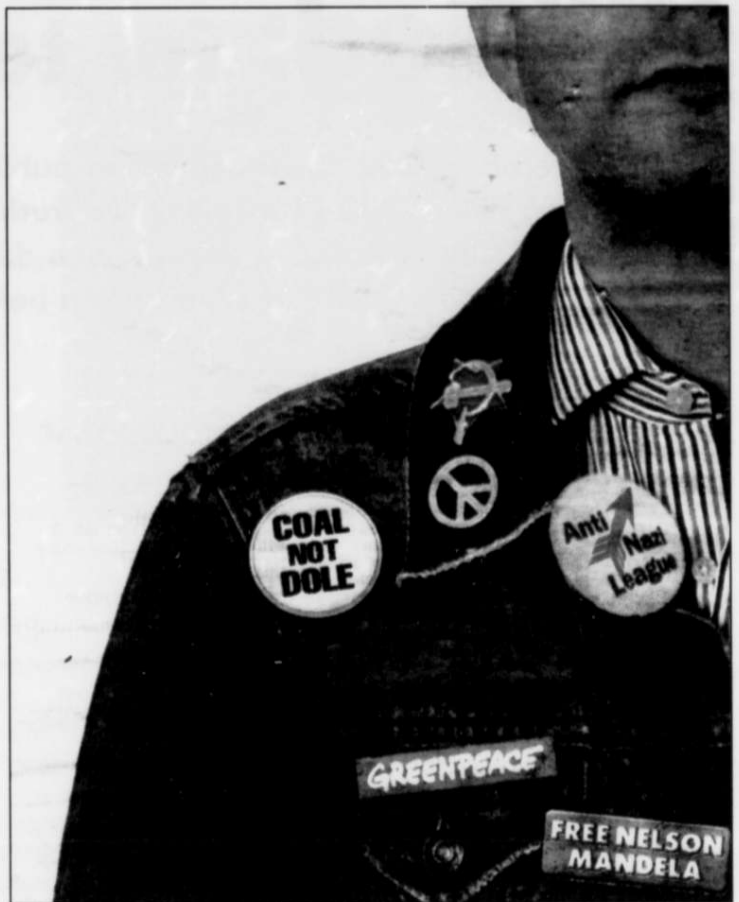
counter-position vis-a-vis the other trends is to aim for the setting up of a 'mass workers party.' Here too, as the use of the antiquated 'Amish-type' language exposes, is the refusal to acknowledge that the British manufacturing base, and along with it industrial workers, are declining year on year and as a consequence the cherished 'point of production' even discounting the impact of globalisation, is fast becoming strategically irrelevant. That said, in comparison with the alternatives, it is not hard to have some sympathy with the stated objective.

For what it offers, in contrast to the CPGB who simply want to collectivise the sects, and the SWP who sees the SA as being an extension of themselves, is, at least when decoded, a call for an orientation, via the inevitable 'point of production' detour, to the working class proper. What's more, the SP can, unlike their detractors, point to up to half a dozen councillors as evidence of their sincerity. Unpromisingly, this relative success is used as a bulwark against their detractors, and on occasion, indeed whenever the opportunity arises, against the very concept of sect unity itself. Because again for the SP, the base motivation is not the creation of real political change, but rather to stave it off as best they can, for as long as possible.

Ironically the Socialist Alliance was originally an SP initiative. Nowadays under the pressure of its detractors the body language, is of a blind man being cajoled to dance on a roof by relatives he unwisely included in his will.

A not dissimilar paranoia was of course what defined Scargill's leadership of SA rival and forerunner, the SLP, and like him the collective leadership of the SA are marked by the same aversion to reality. But where Scargill wanted to make the SLP safe for Stalinism (all too successfully) by proscribing Trotskyite sects, the LSA have over corrected his sectarianism by ensuring it is doomed to be a safe haven (for a time anyway) for themselves, and for themselves only.

On top of that what, along with a now defunct SLP, the three discernible trends within the LSA share, is an unbroken ideological conviction that the working class exists to service them, the 'Party'. Accompanying this perspective is the notion that sect unity alone, the mere gesture of pooling resources without any other tactical adjustments, is guaranteed, is in fact historically obliged, to deliver a significantly enhanced electoral appeal overnight. When it doesn't happen, to avoid demoralisation they merely pretend it has. In a letter to *The Guardian* Anna Chen LSA press officer



quoted the Centre for Research into Elections who apparently claim the SA enjoy "the best record for the far-Left in post-war Britain" (*Guardian* 33.1.01). There are at least a couple of major considerations that need to be factored in before such a claim can be sustained. One, the platform of the SA is by no stretch of the imagination "far Left". And secondly, and more significantly, the SA are for the first time pre or post war competing as the only party intent on claiming the title 'socialist'.

In truth, as successive London Socialist Alliance council by-election results (Rise Park, Romford 35 votes, Hackney Wick 134, Stratford in east London 60 votes, Custom and Silverhouse east London, 55 votes and the latest 61 in White Hart Lane in Tottenham) vividly illustrate, stepping up a gear without understanding the need to return to 'where the road forked' serves as a compound on the original boo-boo. Apologists may point to the "success" of saving deposits in two parliamentary by-elections but in each case there were special conditions. An indication of how laboured the LSA electoral performance really is, is proved by the fact of the one 'candidate' backed by the IWCA in 1999 still retains more than 70% of the total accrued by the LSA in the five by-elections it contested in 2000.

Centrally, what the unity miscalculation ignores, is that sects are by definition politically sterile. Accordingly any combination thereof cannot ever hope to be greater than the sum of the parts. 'Unity', as we have repeatedly stressed, will not be enough. In such a context, all the ill-considered drive toward centralisation resembles is a film of the sects initially breaking away - run backwards.

Hitherto, the price paid for being on the wrong political track was public indifference, and the ignominy of being regarded as a joke by working class communities. And on the surface it may appear that the LSA is still being ignored. But it is worse than that. In London, certainly in the by-elections contested, the work has been put in. In White Hart Lane for instance, the LSA candidate could boast that he had 'more canvassers supporting him than all the other parties put together'. With such a well-oiled party machine the 'message must be getting across'. Which means that having eliminated the usual political get-outs, what remains, no matter how unpalatable, must be truth. And the truth being, the unreconstructed 'ideal' to which the Left remain so devoted is no longer being ignored, it is now being consciously rejected. Thus, as a result of being 'owned by the ideal', the Left are not leading the working class but accelerating toward open political collision with it. Calamity awaits. Worse than stupidity this is crime, beyond crime, this is, also, fittingly, punishment •



# Vilified: for telling the truth

On 13 December 2000, the *Independent* published an article by Robert Fisk entitled *I Am Being Vilified For Telling The Truth About Palestinians*, where he claimed "The abuse being directed at anyone who dares to criticise Israel is reaching McCarthyite proportions". It is reprinted below in full.

## In the Middle East jungle, a journalist has to expect a few sticks and stones. A

**Bahrain newspaper cartoonist once depicted me as a rabid dog (fit, of course, for extermination), and Cairo's most lickspittle columnist called me "a crow pecking at the corpse of Egypt".**

But the degree of abuse and outright threats now being directed at anyone - academic, analyst, reporter - who dares to criticise Israel (or dares to tell the truth about the Palestinian uprising) is fast reaching McCarthyite proportions.

Take Edward Said, the brilliant Palestinian academic who is a professor at Columbia University. He has been facing unprecedented abuse from the Zionist Organisation of America, which last year demanded that he be fired from the Modern Language Association and which now demands on an almost daily basis his dismissal from his professorship at Columbia - solely because he points out, with clinical ferocity and painful accuracy, the historical tragedy of Palestinian dispossession, the brutality of Israel's continued occupation and the bankruptcy of the Oslo "peace" agreement. Columbia University has issued an unprecedented public defence of Said and "the fundamental values of a great university", quoting John Stuart Mill and adding that to give way to the Jewish lobby's demand would be "a threat to us all and to academic freedom".

Too true. Noam Chomsky - himself Jewish - is one of the most profound philosophers of our age, but his scathing reviews of the Israeli occupation and America's blind, unquestioning support for Israel now earn him ever more ruthless abuse. In the United States, he wrote recently, a whole population is kept in ignorance of the facts because "the economic and military programmes (of Israel) rely crucially on US support, which is domestically unpopular and would be far more so if its purposes were known."

Ignorance of the Middle East is now so firmly adhered to in the US that only

a few tiny newspapers report anything other than Israel's point of view. You won't find Chomsky in *The New York Times*. It was put very well by Charlie Reese in a recent issue of the *Orlando Sentinel* - note the boondocks location - when he wrote that "Palestinians won't get their independence until Americans get theirs".

But the attempt to force the media to obey Israel's rules is now international. We must say that Israel is under siege by Palestinians (rather than occupying Palestinian land), that Palestinians are responsible for the violence (even though Palestinians are the principal victims), that Arafat turned down a good deal at Camp David (though he was offered just over 60 per cent of his land, not 94 per cent), and that Palestinians indulge in child sacrifice (rather than question why the Israeli troops have shot so many Palestinian children).

Israeli ambassadors and Israel's lobbyists have never been such frequent visitors to European newspaper offices, to complain about reports or reporters, sometimes in a quite disgraceful manner. *The Johannesburg Star* - a sister paper of *The Independent* which carries my own Middle East reports - was confronted by one pro-Israeli group this year which claimed that I was in some way assisting the right-wing historian David Irving - someone I have never met and never wish to meet. They subsequently withdrew their allegation.

Then an odd thing happened in Ireland - at a prize-giving ceremony in memory of a Belfast journalist. Mark Sofer, Israel's ambassador in Dublin, had been invited to talk about reporting in conflict zones to journalism students under the auspices of Co-operation Ireland, a charitable movement dedicated to North-South relations. But at one point he chose to use the opportunity to attack my own reporting of the Middle East, to suggest that it should not be read or believed.

Mr Sofer is, of course, entitled to his views - but not to air his prejudices in a charitable forum without allowing a right of reply. The charity has since announced that it "totally dissociates itself" from the ambassador's remarks. So it should.

And yet it goes on. In South Africa, in Europe, in Australia - I still treasure the five pages of abuse in an Australian lobby group's magazine headlined "The Ignoble Scribe" and accusing me of a "stupor of self-deception". Oddly, you can now learn more from the Israeli press than the American media. The brutality of Israeli soldiers is fully covered in *Ha'aretz*, which also reports on the large number of US negotiators who are Jewish. Four years ago, a former Israeli soldier described in an Israeli newspaper how his men had looted a village in southern Lebanon; when the piece was reprinted in *The New York Times*, the looting episode was censored out of the text.

So here's just one final question. If Arab ambassadors and lobbyists behaved like their Israeli opposite numbers, would we listen to them? Would we respect them? Would we run for cover and print only one side of the story? Would we hell • (c) 2000 Independent Digital (UK) Ltd.



# Nearly all working class now?

Contrary to the working classes becoming more middle class it is in fact, A Shaw argues, the middle classes who are being proletarianized.

## A recent British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey concluded that "Working class people" had been reduced to "those in households where a bread winner does a manual job".

The employment of such narrow classification reminds you of the time when, and more to the point why, Blair used to declare, 'We're all middle class now.'

When he did so it was generally assumed, in *Guardian*-reading land anyway, that this was 'a sop to the working classes -for whom olive oil is a character from Popeye.' "What", according to *Guardian* pundit Barbara Ellen, Blair really meant by the statement was: "If you're a good boy or girl, you could end up doing a bad impersonation of a middle-class person for the rest of your life." Doing impressions, being all things to all people, is what of course Blair is good at himself. Indeed if the middle classes are marked by any particular characteristic, hypocrisy is fairly certain to be a defining one. But of course being middle class is not predicated on what you think you are. No, what you actually do is still what counts. And so contrary to the BSA criteria, the working class cannot be defined by the numbers working in manual jobs only.

If that were the case, then someone employed on the check-out in Sainsbury's say must be considered clerical, and therefore middle class, while by comparison a shelf stacker would be deemed 'manual' and therefore working class. But if a check-out girl is self-evidently not a middle class profession, what then does that say about others in not dissimilar lines of work. Take bank clerks for instance, who in previous times would be considered the epitome of political and social rectitude, (they were required for instance to know a little Latin), are these days skills wise, only narrowly distinguishable from people they would have previously considered their social inferiors. A similar downgrading through mechanisation is visible in many other lines of work. So far from the working classes disappearing and thus becoming more middle class, it is arguably swathes of the middle classes who are being proletarianized instead.

Certainly the old working class is no more. On July 6 the Office for National Statistics deleted coal-pickers - who collected the pieces of coal that fell from the train track from steam engines - and buttermen, timber throwers, ice trimmers, etc from its official list of occupations. In came desk-top publishers, web designers and software architects who would be all automatically classified as white collar and therefore middle class, but are in the majority of cases simply skilled workers. So while traditional "bluecollar" jobs and trades are disappearing, class is alive and well. Indeed the hype surrounding New Labour and the 'new economy' disguises much continuity in the workplace, according to Nick Burkitt of the Institute of Public Policy Research. "New technology is creating new jobs both in professional and routine occupations and destroying some others, but some of the biggest growth areas are in old-fashioned personal service jobs such as waiting, bar work, cleaning and especially care work." (*Guardian*, 7.7.00) Accordingly in a new twist on a familiar theme, the growing sector of the labour market belongs to those who clean, shop, child mind, or garden for the professional classes who lack the time to do it themselves. It is a new upstairs downstairs though nowadays the servants do not live in.

Meanwhile, the biggest single occupation groups remain administrative or



secretarial workers among women, and skilled trade workers among men - in other words, working class male blue-collar jobs and female white collar jobs. 25% of women and 20% of all men are still employed in these groups. Only a minority of the workforce are employed in middle class jobs, managerial or professional occupations. Accordingly the number of people likely to be able to afford to have someone 'iron their clothes and walk their dogs' remain tiny. The IPPR's Peter Robinson argues that despite John Major's aspiration of a classless society and the Blairite focus on the middle classes, the majority at the very least, remain working class. This apparent discrepancy between official accounting and the social reality is he explains because:

"Most writing on the future of work is written by well-educated professionals about well-educated professionals for well-educated professionals. The real focus should be on the policies affecting people in the middle and bottom of the workforce." In the real world too, the main political parties are geared to representing, and are representative of, the same narrow social strata, and are thus all the more vulnerable to swallowing the political message apparently implicit in the statistics whole. One consequence of the subsequent narrow focus by the well-educated on the well-educated, is to present the middle class minority with a choice of three mainstream parties, which inevitably leaves the working class majority without any. Another unforeseen effect of the Blairite propaganda offensive has been, that significantly large sections of the working class, judged no longer to exist, have ceased voting all together. Such working class alienation allowed the Tories to win on a 23% turnout in the European elections, a result which proved to have no relevance to their actual standing in the country among the majority.

Yet on the working class as a whole the effect of the 'social cleansing' message has been profoundly demoralising. Without a party they are openly regarded in the media as the 'failed' middle classes; sort of Endsleigh type wannabees. Far from going unnoticed such open contempt seeps into all sections of society. Canvassing in a local by-election last year an IWCA member was confronted one morning by a 30-year-old woman already worse for drink who belligerently demanded to know the policies of the candidate he was representing. On explaining that the candidate was committed to representing 'working class interests in the area' the near-wino bristled: 'Who are you calling working class?' she shrilled, 'no one is called working class anymore!' Meanwhile, unlike the dated stereotypes in the BSA report where the breadwinner is not only manual but singular, many working class families see both parents needing to work to keep the family afloat financially. As *Guardian* economics reporter Charlotte Denny put it: "Karl Marx would recognise their situation even though the job description might be unfamiliar." •



# NOT WAVING

*Red Action's regular look  
at the British Left*

**When posters advertising a public meeting organised by the Oxford Socialist Alliance (OSA) appeared, the IWCA decided it would be prudent to send a small delegation along on the night to investigate. RA member, C. Stewart reports.**

**It was felt that the IWCA should attend for two reasons: Firstly because the OSA has declared that it intends to stand candidates in East Oxford, which is the neighbouring ward to the IWCA's Blackbird Leys base, making them political rivals.**

The second, equally legitimate reason for attending, was to i.d. any non-aligned working class people that may turn up to the meeting who might be persuaded by IWCA arguments.

The leaflet advertising the meeting had the dominant organisation in the OSA, the SWP, stamped all over it. Under the hackneyed title "It's time for a socialist alternative to Blair", the target audience is quickly identified... "More and more pensioners, students, trade unionists, anti-racist campaigners and Labour voters are fed up with Blair". Pensioners (not all of whom are working class of course) were only recently elevated to the top of the list in an attempt to capitalise on the Pensioners Action Group's recent media exposure. Leaving pensioners aside then, the striking thing about this opening sentence is that it manages to exclude the mass of the working class, whom it is a safe bet would, when presented with the OSA wish list, tick none of the above.

The meeting hadn't even got underway before IWCA activists were approached by an individual asking if they wanted to sign up for a subscription to his party's magazine. "Have you heard of a man called Trotsky?" was his alluring chat up line. Once this character had finished his rounds the proceedings began.

The speeches were standard Lefty waffle, leading up to the inevitable call for all in attendance to sign up to the OSA. The fun only began when the audience were asked if they had any questions for the panel. First up was a representative from the Pensioners Action Group who wanted to know whether the SA would support the pensioners if they got into power. Not a difficult one you would think, but it soon became apparent that the panel had no party line worked out for this one. Rather than admit as much, they played safe and used a classic SWP set-piece. This consists of ignoring the question altogether while a 'comrade' in the audience asks another on a completely different subject, the answer to which they had prepared earlier. The PAG delegate was getting impatient, no doubt not relishing the thought of having to sit through the meeting until the very end. "Excuse me? I asked you a question. It is very rude of you not to answer me". "Too right, answer the man's question" an IWCA member interjected. The answer was however unforthcoming. The next two questions came from the IWCA... "If you are serious about building in working class areas you have to address issues that are seen as important to people in those areas: grassroots issues such as anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, lack of community facilities etc. What strategies does the OSA have to deal with such issues?" Even more straightforward was question number two... "We've heard New Labour being slagged off all night and now you say that you intend to stand against them at the polls. Are you not embarrassed by the fact that at the General Election it was you who told people to vote for them?" Both questions were well received by the non SA members, the second question eliciting a loud "That's a bloody point!" from a council refuse worker in the third row.

Again, as expected, no answers were offered from the panel. One SWP member at the back of the hall did get up to make a speech about drug dealers being 'victims of capitalism', etc. He opened his defence of dealers with the hilarious (well he thought so anyway) "Seeing as alcohol and tobacco are the biggest killers in the country, then the comrade must surely be referring to people who sell these when he says drug dealers". It was pointed out quite firmly by a by now seriously irritated audience member, that the speaker was well aware that what was being talked about here is the dealers of heroin and crack cocaine and that 'he should stop trying to be a clever cunt!' The whole SWP/OSA attitude was summed up in his statement that drug dealers are a symptom of capitalism that must be tolerated

until the system is overthrown.

The next person to speak was another Trotskyist, the one trying to flog his magazine before the meeting. He directed his attention to the IWCA members. "What you need to do comrade is read Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, then you will understand." Under their collective glare he started to falter. Stuttering, he tried to bale himself out but plunged even deeper. "What you need is for us intellectuals to come onto your estate and educate you". "Fuck off you patronising wanker" came the response, at which point the OSA knew that it was too late to pull the mask back up, as their potential new recruits drifted over to the IWCA. (The Pensioners Action Group delegate actually stood up, walked over and shook the IWCA delegates hand, to exchange contact numbers. His parting remark being. "These people are idiots!" Afterwards others joined the IWCA group down the pub for a fruitful discussion over a few pints).

The meeting was brought to a close, leaving the questions unanswered despite constant haranguing of the speakers. Alan Thornett, by no means the worst panelist, even summed up with the obligatory 'Refugee's welcome here' chant (complete with victorious punching of the air), in spite of the fact that the issue hadn't been raised anywhere else in the meeting. All the while the SWP speaker, mortified by the IWCA dominance of the evening, sat staring down at his desk wishing he were elsewhere.

As far as Oxford IWCA is concerned, the Socialist Alliance must be watched closely. The IWCA has no fear in its own Blackbird Leys ward, but it has neither the finance nor the resources to take on the OSA in other constituencies at this moment in time. The concern is that they will stand candidates in these wards doing more damage than good. The worst case scenario being that the OSA with typical Trotskyist tact, will bulldoze through working class communities making such a ham-fisted job of delivering Leftist ideas, that they roll out the red carpet to more reactionary forces.

The thoughtless incompetence and political naivete is perfectly illustrated in the aforementioned offer to visit council estates to spread the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky. If these people had any real desire to affect social change they would accept the fact that it is they who should be looking to us, the working class for education, not the other way around.

Lenin and Trotsky we'll leave to their disciples in the SWP et al. But in the tradition of Left wing polemic, I shall leave you with the words of another crestfallen old tyrant. Uncle Junior Soprano, the Victor Meldrew of the New Jersey Mob, recently hit the nail on the head with this statement that describes the leading lights of a Oxford Socialist Alliance perfectly... "Some people are so far behind in the race, that they actually believe they are leading" •



# inside the LSA Winning hand or busted flush?

## The regular RA delegate finding himself double-booked; it was time to blood a couple of "new boys" into the murky world of the LSA steering committee on December 12.

We may have been uncertain what to expect but it was business pretty much as usual for the rest of the delegates.

With the General Election now more than a mere dot on the horizon, the Socialist Alliances have decided to stand fifty-plus candidates nationally (enough for an election broadcast) and much of the discussion was taken up by reports on the progress being made in election work. The trouble is, there's not an awful lot of progress to report.

The LSA candidate got 5.8% (55 votes) on a turn out of 10.5% in the recent E. London, Tower Hamlets council by-election in the Custom House and Silvertown ward. The general view of the meeting was that this was a success, though it was pointed out by the Socialist Party delegate that the BNP, when they stood in the same ward in 1997, had got more than 700 votes. However, such a sobering view of reality was less than welcome to the majority of delegates. We were assured that campaign work in the White Hart Lane council by-election was progressing "excellently" and canvassers had already been promised 150 votes by the previous weekend. In the event, SWPer Gary McFarlane did achieve a "respectable" 6.9%, but some 89 of the promised votes failed to materialise.

Red Action has said from the outset that we view the Left's new willingness to confront Labour electorally as a real step forward. Unfortunately, any objective observer at the meeting would have to question how serious most of the participants are about the project. Delegates were informed that there were currently about 450 LSA members in London, though actual figures were "sketchy". Only three of the London constituency SAs have so far chosen candidates and there is a grand total of £500 in the kitty. Readers who are aware that the post-GLA election rally in July reported an "individual" (ie. non-party affiliated) membership of over 3,000 and that the election deposit alone for each parliamentary candidate is more than £1,000 could be forgiven for expecting these tidings to have injected some note of urgency into the proceedings. Not a bit of it. Instead, we were treated to vague mumblings about the need to raise more money and to encourage those who attend LSA meetings to join. The same sense of turpitude continued, with a motion from the CPGB calling for the launch of a "daily paper of the Left" (for at least the period of the election campaign) being overwhelmingly defeated. Some might think that this smacks of the old "forward to the workers daily paper" style hokum, but the clear intention was to point out the gulf between where the Socialist Alliance is and where it needs to be if it is serious about competing for working class votes.

Red Action introduced a motion (later described as "carping" by the CPGB) that also sought to encourage honest appraisal of the political landscape. In mid-October, LSA candidate Diana Swingle received 134 votes (third behind Labour and the Liberals on 11.4%) in the Hackney Wick ward by-election. This was a respectable vote (though given the recent meltdown of the New Labour council, no more than respectable) on the back of which the LSA press office pronounced "London socialists now third party in Hackney". This on a turn out of 18.7%, when the third largest party (Tory) on the council has 9 seats and the Greens, with 2 seats, didn't bother to stand! The RA motion condemned such "over the top" propaganda, pointing out that it could only hinder a realistic assessment of the work and political change needed if the LSA were ever really to become Hackney's third party. However, the CPGB delegate kindly explained to the RA new boys that such self-publicity was necessary in the "game of politics" and with palpable contempt, the SWP chair moved to an immediate vote. The motion was defeated, eleven votes to one.

In our continuing belief that if you intend to dig yourself out of the hole you first of all have to acknowledge that you're in it, we submitted a further motion which returned to the question of just how effective current LSA slogans around refugees and asylum seekers actually are. At a previous meeting on September 5th, RA's call

for an "urgent review" had been rejected. Yet the following week, Mike Marqusee, one of the leading nay-sayers, had performed a complete volte-face in the letters page of *Weekly Worker*, effectively arguing that current propaganda was lacking "class content" and "does not add up". In the intervening weeks both a MORI poll and the annual British Social Attitudes report had confirmed that the Left is losing the debate on asylum, immigration and race. Conscious of previous efforts to stymie debate, the motion was worded to increase the chances of the issue being aired and so called for re-assessment "at a sub-committee level." The CPGB proposed an amendment (happily accepted by RA) that, given its importance, the issue be "critically re-evaluated" by the LSA manifesto sub-committee and the national SA Liaison Committee executive.

RA were attacked by SWPer Weyman Bennett (he whose canvassers were instructed "not to raise the issue of asylum seekers unless they do" when he stood in August's Tottenham by-election) for "trying to duck the issue of race", while other delegates testified to how "proud" LSA slogans made them feel. The motion was defeated by 10 votes to 4, with the SP, RDG and CPGB voting with Red Action. RA was grateful for the support of the CPGB delegate, but heavily outnumbered, would have preferred his contribution to the debate to have concentrated on why he believed the substance of the RA motion to be correct, rather than simply on where the re-assessment should take place.

The majority of delegates at the meeting seemed content to view RA as a mere irritant, the real vitriol being saved for the Socialist Party. And to be fair, they don't do an awful lot to help themselves.

In fairness to the SP, they do at least recognise that a working class orientation is key to the success of the SA. Years of consistent work saw Ian Page elected councillor in Lewisham's Pepys ward earlier this year and their leading role in the successful resistance to the Council's plans to privatise council 13,000 homes was partly responsible for the recent election of a second SP councillor (Sam Dias with 550 votes) in the same ward. The SWP found it impossible to disguise their envy at this, being unable to offer congratulations to the SP (or to a candidate they themselves had supported) and preferring instead to concentrate on their aforementioned "success" in Tower Hamlets.

Some RA cynics were initially convinced that the SWP saw the LSA as a simple mopping up operation. For organisations like the AWL and Workers Power the appeal of "safety in numbers" is obvious. Even for the comparatively "large" Socialist Party this was the main motivating factor in initiating the Socialist Alliance. Given the apparent willingness of most smaller organisations' delegates to cosy up to the SWP (even the CPGB seem to have no ambitions to expand their role beyond that of "loyal opposition"), time may well prove the sceptics correct. However, time may also prove there was no safety and, eventually, no numbers. Over a pint after the meeting, the CPGB delegate revealed that, at a recent get together of the "European Left" in Paris, a drunken Rob Hoveman had let slip the true state of the SWP. Using a criteria of "being active with any degree of regularity", true membership figures were "down to 1,000 - 1,500". The numbers game is clearly beginning to look less like a winning hand than a busted flush •

H. Simon

# Book Review

## MR EVIL - The Secret Life of Racist Pub Bomber and Killer David Copeland

by Graeme McLagen & Nick Lowles

**It is only fair to say that Mr Evil is a rivetting read for all the wrong reasons. Seasoned anti-fascists will either snort or gag.**

Co-written by *Searchlight* editor Nick Lowles and fellow traveller Graeme MacClagen the first half of the book appears to have been written with the 'serial killer' market in mind, while the final third is a polemic against foes and rivals in the security services. It is an uneasy mix. All is simplicity to begin with. "This is the chilling insight into a mind so warped it practically defies belief," the introduction promises, and before long you know you are in for a treat - of sorts. Following a conviction for common assault Copeland received a community service order. This the authors warn darkly, proved to be the first sign Copeland "was getting out of control". Later we are told, "like many on the far right he [another bombing suspect] had been bullied in school".

On page 28 "anti-Zionist" is defined for the simple reader as "a far-right euphemism for anti-Semitism." The temptations of reaching a mass market may have encouraged such... ahm... simplicities, but then dates too are also modified to accord with the "Copeland inherently evil" script. Thus it is inferred that it is was only after Copeland joined the BNP in 1997, that the BNP sought "to remodel the party as a respectable alternative" rather than three earlier in 1994 when at a press conference it announced there would be "no more marches, meetings, punch-ups". Wouldn't do to have Copeland the nutter joining anything other than the "most extreme racist political organisation in Britain" now would it?

In the same vein, it is announced that by 1999 "any hope of achieving a racist society through the ballot box... seemed more distant that ever" so bombing (in frustration with democracy you see) inevitably had greater purchase among right-wing extremists generally. Except that in the GLA elections less than a year after Copeland's arrest, the BNP attracted the highest popular vote for any far-right party for a quarter of a century!

More seriously, despite a hardbacked 300 pages, the core questions in regard to the nature, and the basis for the mysterious police warning to the Admiral Duncan on the day before the bombing, is cynically skated over. A particular pity as these key questions the book side-steps are the ones the victims and their relatives, who are suing the pub's owners, are asking.

Now, it is generally accepted that Copeland carried out reconnaissance in Soho on the same day, he planted the bomb in Brick Lane. Five days later *The Pink* a gay newspaper ran a headline 'Gays in fascist bomb alert'. According to the book "acting in response to the headline" police then warned some gay pubs in Soho including the Admiral Duncan, but as the book coyly frames it, "other well known gay venues in London were not visited". More to the point, other well know gay

venues in Soho were not visited either.

Whatever way you look at it, police

conduct seems extraor-

dinary. Put simply, either they picked Soho and the venues they visited entirely at random, (as a PR exercise) or working on information received, chose to warn instead only those pubs Copeland had reconnoitred the previous Saturday. And if indeed they were acting on some specific information as would appear to be the case, they could have done so only if Copeland been under surveillance by 'persons unknown' prior to the bomb in Brick Lane as he went directly to Soho from there. If so, then someone 'in the know' very deliberately withheld such info from Scotland Yard.

Though none of this is addressed, a little finger-pointing is not entirely resisted. Describing the "relief and jubilation" of police at the Scotland Yard news conference after Copeland's capture there is reference to "a significant omission in the widespread congratulation offered by Assistant Commissioner Veness". "Missing most notably from the list of those deserving congratulation was any mention of MI5 and Special Branch". As is stressed this was no oversight, "the omission was deliberate". A consciously public snub in fact, primarily because of "what one senior detective described to us later as an intelligence void". Here at the very least is tacit confirmation of the intense and bitter rivalry (though vehemently and repeatedly denied in the media) that exists between competing sections of the security services, not least of course that 'lay adviser to the Met': *Searchlight* itself.

In truth *Searchlight* were central to the in-fighting. Trenchant criticism of police handling of the investigation was a marked feature of *Searchlight's* Gerry Gable contribution to the public debate in the run up to Copeland's arrest. With every opportunity, came the same complaint: the investigation needed to be "intelligence led". A comment made in the knowledge, as the book confirms this is exactly where the operational "void" existed.

No bouquets for guessing what organisation Gable felt was best equipped to fill it. Though the likes of the ANL unashamedly endorse the strategy of 'filling the vacuum *Searchlight* style' a still widespread and commendable uneasiness at such collusion is evident by the fact *Searchlight*, just three months after a hardback *Mr Evil* was being offered to the public for £14.99, are giving it away for "free". Hopefully, if people are not buying the book they're not bying the theory that underpins it either •

A. Shaw

## Something We Said!!

Under it's present leadership, the BNP has already 'moderated' its position; replacing the unsaleable compulsory repatriation policy with ...financially assisted resettlement. Similarly, we have conformed as permanent the decision accepted only reluctantly on an experimental basis in the past - to avoid counter-productive confrontations with the far-left. BNP magazine, *Identity*, Oct/Nov 2000

**American Holocaust museums are not keen on finding space for the communists, the socialists, the trade unionists and the mentally ill - Hitler's first victims - either... Holocaust commemoration is too often the manipulation of the past for the present purposes... US and Israeli Jewish leaders have disgraced themselves by claiming that the suffering of the Jews was unique and used it to brand protest against the persecution of the Palestinians with race laws and overwhelming force, as anti-semitism. If what happened to the Jews is unique, replied the brilliant (and Jewish) Peter Novick what are these 'lessons' Holocaust days are meant to teach us? Surely the unique can never be repeated and we can all therefore ignore it.**

Nick Cohen, *Observer*, 5.10.00.

**JR argued that disillusion with New Labour is reflected in lower electoral turnouts and it is vital to unite socialists to fill this vacuum or the beneficiaries could be the greens or even the far right.**

Comment by leading SWPer John Rees at annual conference as reported in *Weekly Worker*, 23.11.00.

**What is the use of slogan which is palpably untrue? Some comrades actually suggested that it's purpose was to provide a degree of comfort to the communities and groups being targeted. As a sentiment, this is quite laudable - it is a "statement of human solidarity" as comrade Mountford put it. As a political slogan, a response to a real problem in our class as whole, it is absolutely hopeless. As comrade Heemskirk of the SP correctly observed, "who does it convince?" It seems to imply the battle is won - clearly untrue.**

CPGB's Mark Fischer reporting on the discussion revolving around Red Action's resolution to the LSA executive, calling for strategies for confronting racism to be "critically re-evaluated". *Weekly Worker*, 14.12.00.