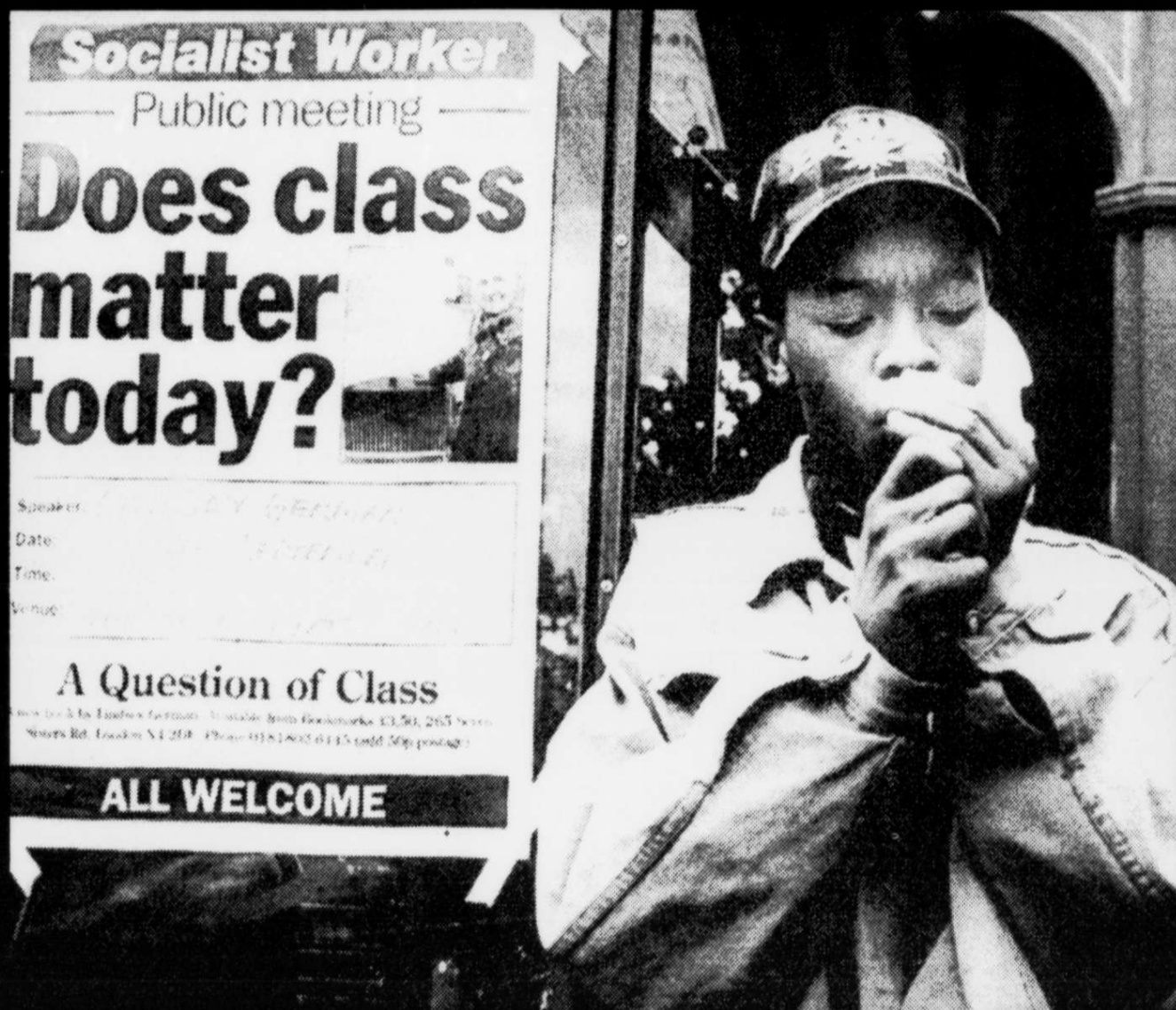


RED ACTION

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RACE or CLASS

**FATAL
DISTRACTION**

EDITORIAL

It is now over a decade ago, since a 2,000 strong AFA march to the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day first attempted to highlight the issue of race attacks. Under the title 'Remembering victims of fascism yesterday and today' AFA vainly sought to bring both Left and media attention, to the epidemic which back then registered at a mere 70,000 incidents a year. Apart from a negative response from the *Daily Mail* the initiative was ignored by the rest of the media, and attracted no response from the left. In 1989, in Camden, in 1990 in east London, in 1991 and 1993 in south-east London, militant anti-fascism repeatedly sought to make links at a grass roots level, in order to hammer out an effective counter strategy. On every occasion, those efforts were rebuffed, or in some cases sabotaged by the council appointed 'community representatives'.

With the latest race attacks figures being put at 290,000 many of that same strata, indeed many of the very same individuals, are now crowding in behind the new Civil Rights movement. It would appear that in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence campaign, the race attacks issue, has become sexy. Their overwhelming concern now, of course being that the whole thing is controlled by them. No place for social undesirables like AFA who media

darling, Suresh Grover, recently described "as a bunch of skinheads who intimidate people". A point underwritten by fellow steering group member *Searchlight* who snubbed an AFA approach for a pre meeting to discuss it's concerns.

For the signatories to the Macpherson Report meanwhile racism, is not only society's greatest evil, but it's only one. Consequently everything, civil rights and common sense included, must be sacrificed toward it's eradication. Defending the proposal to outlaw racist behaviour in private, inquiry member Dr Stone asks: "is there really no way we can nail someone for using disgusting racial language." 'Is there no way to nail some one for disgusting racial thinking' is the same question put more precisely.

A mindset borne of a belief that the various anti-racist strategies proposed by liberals like him over the last fifteen years are actually working. And therefore, all that is required is one final push. Except, that the evidence strongly suggests the exact opposite is happening. If racial violence, which has been on a steadily rising curve since 1982, is judged an effective barometer, racist thinking is becoming more rather than less entrenched. A reactionary

reservoir that will at some stage be tapped politically. But like a blind man dancing on a roof, Dr Stone knows nothing of this. In his 'expert' opinion the far-right were so resoundingly defeated after the war; they "haven't been back since". Having never even heard of the National Front, he will be blissfully unaware that the BNP intend standing in all regions in England in the European elections in June. And of the millions of recruitment leaflets distributed in that campaign, his own furious defence of the Macpherson recommendations, will in probability, feature prominently in every one of them.

It is not of course being suggested that racism must be tolerated for fear of provoking a backlash. But people need also to be made aware that politicising the issue of race; placing race at the top of the national agenda, dovetails nicely with agendas other than their own. Britain is indeed a deeply divided society but not only, or even primarily, on grounds of race.

And so those who point to statistics which show that blacks are five times more likely to be stopped by police than whites, as evidence of blatant police bias, something that can and must as a priority be addressed by quotas or better training, miss the real point by as wide a margin as Dr Stone. 'Stop and search' figures compiled by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki demonstrate, that in places like Hackney and Lambeth, where blacks make up 22 % of the local population, they represent 44 % of those stopped. However, in places like Kensington and Chelsea, and Harrow, areas where black motorists are perceived to be socially 'out of place', the odds of being stopped increase from 2-1 to 7-1. An acknowledgement that the

police whatever their personal prejudices accept that their primary duty is not to protect white from black, but rich from poor. Consequently, Richmond upon Thames, where blacks make up only 0.75% of the population has proportionately the highest racially based stop and search figures in the Met, and therefore probably in the country.

Even then the outcome, depends entirely on how the suspect is classified *after* identification. Of course by the police criteria middle class black professionals are initially just as likely to be stopped as the working class unemployed. But generally for the black professional the inconvenience ends there. Once identified they are treated as respectfully as their status entitles them. They are not, abused, strip searched, denied bail, framed, beaten or killed. On the occasions when the police get it wrong huge sums are paid out in compensation. As a result black lawyers, journalists and doctors are no more likely to figure in police deaths in custody statistics than their white counterparts. For blacks their colour may get them stopped, but it is their class, or from a system perspective, their lack of it, that gets them killed. Class matters. Fatally so. Or put another way, of the 32 deaths at the hands of the police referred to by Ken Livingstone recently, nine were black. Disproportionate certainly, but any guesses on the common denominator with the remaining 23?

In December 1998, an AFA representative took part in a seminar on racism and race attacks on the Isle of Dogs. The majority of the contributions were from academics and youth workers. A consensus that current anti-racist strategies were counter productive, was agreed from the outset. An underlying reason being that in rejecting either the possibility and desirability of a redistribution of wealth from rich to poor, multi-culturalism instead places it's entire emphasis on resources such as they are, being shared on an equitable basis, thereby racialising social issues. In a nut shell, it is a sham. A stratagem to deflect the consequences of increasing social inequality back into the section of society that bears the brunt of it. Fanning the flames of racial and cultural division, while systematically depriving the targeted communities of resources is akin to the mother, invited to explain the anti social nature of her child who commented: "She was born like that. I beat her raw everyday and it didn't do any good".

Similarly, despite platitudes from the organisers prior to the launch meeting of the new National Civil Rights Movement on March 28 about 'not forgetting the white working class', in attempting to block any input from militant anti-fascism the NCRM is effectively ensuring the working class are excluded as well. Without this anchor, the likelihood is that it will be swept into the black nationalist slip stream. And under the motto 'equality before the law and fraternity in exploitation' civil rights will be perceived by the public to be broadly synonymous with the narrow aspirations of a wannabee black elite. An opportunity squandered is on thing. To conspire in a scenario where the BNP, in the eyes of the public, can then quite legitimately 'return the serve' - a boo boo of historic proportions - will require a political response of an altogether different calibre.

For blacks their colour may get them stopped, but it is their class, or their lack of it, that gets them killed. Class matters. Fatally so.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS NATIONAL MEETING

THE LAST year has been a crucial one for Red Action. At last year's RA National Meeting, our most ambitious strategy document to date was put to, and endorsed, by the membership. Steadily, we have seen probably the most under-resourced organisation on the left drive forward a number of genuinely radical projects. After breaking free of the 'foot draggers' from the left, independent working class politics is now in the process of being placed, albeit in embryonic form, onto the agenda in a number of working class communities. Militant anti-fascism has been repositioning itself to deal with both the BNP's change of strategy and the new challenges thrown up to it from the fall-out from the Lawrence inquiry. On a lower level the emergence of a new, bi-monthly *Red Action* has given our members, supporters and contacts a regular focus; resulting in a growth in membership. A number of RA regions have reorganised themselves recently and the next issue of RA will carry news of an RA web-site.

This year we need to build on these foundations, which will mean more than ever, "every member of RA being conscious of the role of the organisation in the greater scheme of things, and being doubly conscious of their own role within the organisation." While last year's National Meeting was well attended there were still far too many members, particularly from outside the Southern region, who failed to materialise; and this must be improved upon this year. Unlike National Council meetings, RA National Meetings are for **all** RA members, **not** just Regional delegates. This is where the organisation's work for the previous year is reviewed and policy decided for the forthcoming year. All members have the opportunity to propose, debate and vote on policy. Ultimately, it is the guarantor of Red Action's democratic integrity. For RA members it should be one of the most important events of the year, as well as providing one of the few opportunities to meet other members from the length and breadth of Britain. So this year, every member and supporting member should try to attend. There's no reason, with three to four months notice, why you can't. If you work weekends, book leave now; if you're one of those lucky buggers booking a holiday, avoid 26-27 June; if you've got kids, sort out the in-laws: money doesn't enter into it, as there'll be a pooled-fares system. Put simply, if you take your politics, your organisation and yourself seriously... you'll be there.

RED ACTION 1999 ANNUAL NATIONAL MEETING

**Saturday 26th June
Sunday 27th June**

(Supporting members and contacts wishing to attend should apply to the RA National Office)

**NEW RED ACTION TELEPHONE NUMBER:
07971 784 280**



THE BIG ISSUE

APART FROM allegations of RUC collaboration in the murder of Rosemary Nelson, the *Observer* (21.2.98) suggested that the bombing was not carried out by the Red Hand Defenders as claimed, pointing instead to the "shadowy Ulster Resistance". Ulster Resistance is the military wing of the grouping known as the 'Committee'. *The Committee* was the title of the book that exposed the role of Ulster's 'social aristocracy' in the systematic targeting and assassination of its nationalist opponents. Libel damages to the tune of £500,000 have already been paid out to the author, Shaun McPhilemy, by one national newspaper for repeating attacks made by David Trimble under the protection of parliamentary privilege.

Rosemary Nelson was born, lived and died in Lurgan. Lurgan is in David Trimble's Portadown constituency. Trimble's constituency is also regarded as the heartland of the 'Committee'. Not only was Rosemary Nelson a high profile civil rights lawyer like the other Committee victim Pat Finucane, she was also Sean McPhilemy's solicitor. Until amended recently in an effort to 'accommodate' the Metropolitan Police, institutional racism was defined as a top down, systematic process of discrimination. Whatever the merits of describing the Metropolitan Police as institutionally racist, (ie no evidence of collusion with right wing death squads) the RUC which is 97% Protestant and 100% Unionist undoubtedly fits all available criteria. And more. Now the political order in the North of Ireland is Unionist. And Unionism is institutionally racist to its very core. Institutional racism is pivotal to its existence. A reality that renders any notion of genuine power sharing as an impossibility. For if unionism shares power; it is by its own definition no longer unionist. And so as long as unionism exists, not only will the past not be history, the past will not even be past.

BIG ISSUE PREDICTION: Unionism to be decommissioned.



St. Patrick's day

MIDLANDS - based supporters of

the Republican fanzine *Tíochfaidh ar la*, caused controversy by leafleting the St. Patrick's day parade in Birmingham to highlight the eccentric decision of the parade organisers to allow the West Midlands Police pipe band onto the parade; a police force particularly notorious for their ill treatment of the local Irish community. The leaflet also pointed out that "we have nothing more in common with the Irish businessmen or businesses who support or sponsor the event than we do the police (is it better to be shown the door by an Irish subby or a Brummy one?"

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NOT WAVING...

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

FOR ABOUT six months now the Socialist Workers Party has been openly stating it's changed line on standing in elections. At the same time hasn't stopped it cheerleading the campaign to get Ken Livingstone elected as Mayor of London. The post itself is an irrelevance. But one that fits into Tony Blair's policy of coming up with shiny new ideas that are totally meaningless. In line with their policy of courting the old Labour Left it fits the SWP like a glove. As they see it they can't lose. In the increasingly unlikely event of Livingstone standing and winning, they will have shown how they're willing to help their chums on the Labour Left against the evil Blair clones. However, if, or rather when Blair dumps 'Red Ken', they have already expressed in tones of moral outrage at a recent pro-Livingstone rally, that "Paul Foot will stand to make sure there will be a voice speaking up for socialism" (*Socialist Worker*, 19.2.99). Interestingly, comedian Mark Steel appears to be equating Livingstone with Foot which will probably annoy the former more than the latter. It also, of course, assumes that Livingstone is a socialist, whatever that means. The headline of the article: "Ken Livingstone's campaign to stand as mayor has revitalised many on the left of the Labour Party" makes him sound like cheap rate Viagra for desperate old lefties past their prime, which is quite apt. Livingstone is of course an interesting character. But for all the wrong reasons. Despite his 'leftie' reputation as leader of the Greater London Council, Livingstone is, and was, a devious bastard whose sole interest in life is his own advancement. His style is labelling anyone to his left with whom he falls out as 'MI5 agents'. Meanwhile he drools with envy at his old GLC mate, Tony Banks, whose chief role as Sports Minister appears to be 'licensed fool'. Livingstone has written a number of crawling articles in the press in a desperate attempt to be allowed to stand as Mayor. When Blair was predictably unmoved by this, Livingstone reinvented himself as the 'People's Candidate', knowing full well the idiots of the left would embrace him like the Prodigal son. Which of course they did. His best case scenario is a minor government post like minister for the welfare of Newts; Blair being more likely to amputate one of his own legs than be seen to be giving in to the 'Labour Left'.

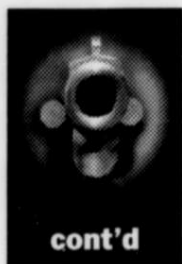
In the same *Socialist Worker* (SW), the author laps it all up like a thirsty dog: "His speech was a breath of fresh air compared to several of his recent statements in the press. He disappointed many people when he tried to play down his disagreements with Blair. He wrote a column in the *Guardian* newspaper saying that he had 'no ideological conflict' with the government and agreed that if he was elected mayor he would work with the government, not against it. But last Monday's meeting showed he is popular because people believe he opposes what Blair is doing. People want to see him attack New Labour, not make concessions to it." All a long way from the previous issue, where Livingstone was accused of running away from providing a left alternative to Blair. But a week is a long time in the mind of anyone who thinks Livingstone could be a left alternative to anything. If SW is to be believed, 'socialism' was the most overused word at his campaign launch rally, except that 'Red Ken' didn't mention it. Even once. Still for them it is the magic word, repeated often enough will... However, no one told the punters, who when presented with an SWP backed 'Socialist Unity' candidate in a recent Hackney council by election, gave them last place behind the Tories. So far so good. As an SWP member proclaimed not long afterwards, "there never was a better time to be a socialist!"

All of which tends to disprove that Ancient Greek proverb which maintains that, "those whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first make mad." In the case of the SWP it's clearly happening simultaneously

Colin O'Brien

Bhoys Against Bigotry

GLASGOW CELTIC football club sought to capitalise on the consistent work of Celtic Fans Against Fascism and *Tiochfaidh Ar La* fanzine, by hosting a conference entitled 'The Equality Goal' which sought to put on display the club's 'anti-racist' credentials, courting Asian businessmen, of whom a number were assembled to make up the 200 strong audience for the day. Once representatives from CFAF and the Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks were spotted in the audience, they were immediately approached and assurances demanded that they would 'behave' themselves. Meanwhile the club's chairman Fergus McCann, who had been billed as the main speaker, suddenly withdrew due to "a mystery illness." Celtic's PR man went on to proclaim that not only were "Asians the new Irish" ie subject to systematic discrimination, but in line with this, the club felt free to continue with the forced removal of the last vestiges of sectarianism and bigotry (ie the singing of Irish rebel songs and displaying Irish tricolour flags) from the ground. It was left to a representative of CASA to point out that Celtic FC had done little to address the rampant racism of the mid-80s leaving it to people like him, and more recently nothing to address the real issue of sectarianism; the routine harassment, physical attack and even murder of Celtic fans by loyalist bigots travelling to and from the ground. Buttonholed later the PR man explained that the club's hostility on the issue was due to TAL's "terrorist links." Then visibly blanched when informed that TAL was increasing it's print run to 5,000 to deal with demand, putting his earlier triumphalist claims of imminent victory over the 'irreconcilables' into perspective. The biggest round of applause was reserved for former player Paul Elliot, who revealed that when playing for Charlton FC he reacted to sustained racial abuse by a rival player, by sticking one on him!



cont'd

BACK ISSUES

REMEMBER BLAIR PEACH 1946-79

ON APRIL 23rd 1979 Blair Peach was battered to death in a quiet street in Southall. The murderer was an officer of the Special Patrol Group. In spite of the massive cover-up, that fact had to be admitted even by the police. Blair was a committed socialist and dedicated to fighting racism and fascism. It was because of these commitments that he went to Southall on the night that he was murdered. In 1979 the National Front were making a massive effort to win success at the ballot box. They stood candidates in every area possible and the few days preceding Blair's death, had seen demonstrations in Islington, Wembley, and Leicester where thousands of people had come out onto the streets to show their opposition to the Nazis. In Leicester the N.F. had been severely routed by anti-fascists and the police had lost control of the situation. In Southall they were determined to show who was boss.

The N.F. had decided to hold an election meeting at the Town Hall in an area which had a large black and Asian community. Many anti-fascists went to Southall to support the community and for the sake of protecting a few stinking Nazis the police turned out in force including several units of the S.P.G. Hundreds of anti-fascists were arrested, and almost as many more suffered severe injuries at the hands of the police. It isn't just enough to mourn Blair's death but it is more important to understand why he died. He died because the forces of the State had to prove that they were the masters. To all those who loved Blair Peach, and who knew him, and to all those who may not have known him but understand what he died for, we say don't mourn, mobilise before it is too late. What we must not forget was that on April 23rd 1979 the police rioted in Southall the ultimate consequence of that riot was the death of Blair Peach.

Red Action, issue 2, April 1982

DEAD MAN ON LEAVE

Although the name of Thomas 'Ta' Power is virtually unknown outside of Irish republican circles, Steve Potts explains why he continues, despite his death, to have a profound and lasting effect upon Red Action.

The violent death of over a dozen members of a fraternal organisation would have a profound and lasting effect on anybody. Not least when links built up over the years meant that many involved in the 1987 INLA/IPLO feud were personal friends. When the dust had settled, RA was determined that it at least, should learn the lessons of this tragedy.

Recently circumstances within AFA have pushed these lessons to the fore once again. A campaign of intense vilification by the 'Real AFA', opposed to the AFA policy of fighting fascism politically as well as physically, saw one of their number, (who had some years previously been expelled from AFA) offering to slash a RA member in order to things to a head.

On December 22 1986, when leading Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) member, Thomas 'Ta' Power, was released from jail after the collapse of the Supergrass system, he was, to quote his comrades, "a man on a mission." Ta, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment, had used his time in jail to analyse in detail the problems that had dogged the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) through much of its existence. It would be necessary, he believed, to entirely transform the INLA/IRSP if it was to develop into a genuine revolutionary force. This could only be done he offered, by "confronting the basic contradiction" within the movement. Not to do so, by making only cosmetic changes, would, he argued, result in the same problems simply replicating themselves at a later date. On his release he debated his ideas extensively. He was, as a colleague later commented, "a breath of fresh air, displaying a vitality and zest for the work ahead that served as an inspiration to us all, here was a man with a breadth of vision." Within a month he was dead. Murdered by those opposed to the contradiction being unravelled.

Fortunately, before he was murdered, Ta committed a number of his ideas to paper. His essay, *An historical analysis of the IRSP; its past role, root cause of its problems and proposals for the future*, was eagerly consumed within RA ranks. Part of the essay referred to the relationship between the INLA & the IRSP. Ta argued that the previous relationship, where the IRSP played junior partner to the INLA, should be reversed: instead the INLA would become the cutting edge of a new, revitalised, revolutionary party. The tail would no longer wag the dog. Under his proposals, all new recruits into the INLA would have first "gone through the training school of building [the political wing]; they will all have this background, with revolutionary politics uppermost, with allegiances to [the party]; with being familiar with all the trends in [the IRSP], with all its problems, personalities, policies - and never 'divorced' from these."

Alternatively as Ta pointed out, "When it's asked: What is the imperialists... policy and how do we aim to thwart this? - we get the same old answer ie. that it's necessary to confront them, that the struggle goes on; we get no analysis, we get no strategy outside the basic confrontation - it simply becomes an end in itself due simply to the fact that they don't know of any other strategy. Other

trends manifest themselves due to this for e.g. psychological traits: there arised the condition of elitism, superiority etc. that we're the lads, that this is the real macho way to do things, that those in [the political wing] are wankers, bluffers etc. who always harp on about 'meaningless' things. Therefore there arises a definite trend of spurning [political] type work as being beneath their 'style,' standing etc; there arised a contempt for those involved in [political] type work etc. Another trend arises of prestige building, of wanting to be seen and known as the 'lad' etc. This in turn attracts the ambitious power seeking individual who in turn begins to consolidate his position, to build a power base etc. A lowering of standard eventually comes into being - where criminal type elements, unsavoury characters, inept individuals are allowed entrance and rise to prominence - the result is constant crises, factions, instability, discredit."

Many column inches have been given over in recent editions of *Red Action* to deal with the debates that have gone on within AFA, but I think Ta Power probably best summed up the 'Real AFA' mindset 12 years ago. Simply replace "imperialists" with "fascists" and I think you have it in a nutshell.

Although in many ways our circumstances differed our high profile involvement in physical action against organised fascist gangs, has meant that we always had to be alert to the danger of people joining RA for the wrong reasons. Of course, we can't expect anyone to join RA as the 'finished article' but RA studiously ensured that the left's much cherished stereotype of the apolitical bootboy, never actually became fact. In practical terms, a motion was put to the 1988 RA conference calling for the formation of a 'Stewards Group' to deal with all matters of our organisations security. Initially there was some opposition. Some members voiced the concern that an 'organisation within an organisation' was being proposed. However, the vote was carried by a large majority, with those in favour arguing that the ad-hoc nature of stewarding at that time could lay it open to the kind of abuse that had been witnessed in the Irish republican socialist movement and that what was required was a stewarding body whose activities could be held directly accountable by the organisation as a whole.

In a rare, insightful moment in an otherwise deeply flawed book Jack Holland and Henry McDonald (*INLA - Deadly Divisions*) point out that, "Subordinating military struggle to carefully thought-out political strategy had been Ta Power's dream for a long time. In the 1980s Sinn Fein and the IRA made that a reality with their ballot box come armalite policy. The provos learnt well from the lessons and mistakes of the IRSP/INLA." And they weren't the only ones.

THE LINE OF THE MARCH



Socialist Unity: The beginning or the end?

While the forced unity of socialists might suggest that the era of the sect is over, G. O'Halloran argues that this is unlikely to make any difference where it really counts, in working class communities. Precisely where the Independent Working Class Association is making ground.

When a far-right candidate, famously got one less vote than he had sponsors, it was safe to deduce that conducting (and losing) running battles with anti-fascists in Burnley town centre did little to endear muscular nationalism to the electorate. Easy as well to work out that no leafleting, much less canvassing had even been attempted, and that the candidate even by the standards of the far-right at the time, was not exactly top drawer.

How the cream of British socialism must wish it had such excuses to fall back on. In late January, in an otherwise insignificant local by-election in Hackney, east London all challengers, past and present, for title of 'biggest party on the left', jointly sponsored a single Socialist Unity candidate to stand in North Defoe ward. Initially expectations were high; conditions seemed ideal. According to *Weekly Worker* "practically everyone who answers the door to our canvassers is anti-Labour, or very disillusioned". In strong contrast to the "low key Tory campaign", Socialist Unity ensured that by polling day "every household had been leafleted and canvassed efficiently." Moreover the candidate, a young, attractive, articulate, working class mother, who had previously stood in the ward, was far and away superior to the specimens the left is prone to put up. "A qualified success" was how the candidate described the result after coming bottom of the poll with 37 votes.

Though it made no public comment, it is hard to imagine the SWP being so sanguine. For, having for the first time in over twenty years actually backed a candidate against Labour, not out of principle, but as a deniable test run for themselves, the outcome will still surely have chilled the leadership to the bone. From the post mortem that followed, two very distinct conclusions were drawn. On one side the recognition that "in the absence of mass political and industrial struggles we need to sink deep roots in the life of local communities, and there are no short cuts" on the other the overwhelming need for "a global vision." While sniffingly conceding that "local campaigning on grass roots issues in the boroughs is no doubt part of our work as socialist activists" 2.3% of the poll was, 'everything considered, a creditable performance'. In any case sinking roots into working class communities was "decidedly not the answer" according to the local Socialist Alliance.

Instead "we must fight hard to demonstrate that 'the left' is not a collection of hopelessly divided sectarian grouplets propounding an outmoded ideology." But demonstrate to who? The Labour Party? The working class? Each other? And what if it is? What if the left is hopelessly sectarian and outmoded? What if the

left is in fact the principle problem? What then? "Have you ever thought" as Alan Shearer is reported to have said to Glenn Hoddle after yet another England disaster: "that it might be you?" Fact is, after at least half a century of false promises, cowardice, opportunism and betrayal, the working class is not merely alienated and indifferent to all socialist parties like them, but at a more fundamental level has lost faith in socialism itself. Or as Marlene Dietrich remarked: "It took more than one man to change my name to Shanghai Lilly".

And so while forced unity might indeed signal that the era of the sect is over, merely pulling together out of desperation, neither inspires confidence or qualitatively alters prospects on the ground. Particularly when it is the message itself that is the problem.

Not only is socialism itself proving an insurmountable electoral handicap; it has become precisely the type of 'sectarian principle by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement' the *Communist Manifesto* warned communists against.

Moreover, the entire political history of the working class this century is now in any case like a video on rewind. Just after the war, the Communist Party (CP) had 45,000 members, 256 councillors and two MPs. By 1968, it was just about capable of winning two council seats on the Isle of Dogs, east London. Less than a decade later, the CP would find itself losing in 26 out of 29 common contests to the NF, while a Socialist Unity Mark 1 would be beating the CP in five seats out of seven. Nowadays, Socialist Unity Mark 2 can describe 37 votes as "a creditable result" and hardly raise an eyebrow. A 'global vision' by all means, but to infer that it must be regarded not merely as a priority, but as a precondition for victory in places like North Defoe is the politics of the nuthouse.

Implicit, in the knee jerk response to organising where the working class live rather than where it works (the much revered point of production) is the idea that such activity far from being revolutionary is barely political. And if it is political, is all too obviously the 'wrong sort' of politics. Compared to a 'commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of the United Kingdom and the arming of the masses' addressing meetings of council tenants, even when hundreds strong, is, admittedly small beer. Possibly even misguided. Running the risk according to it's revolutionary critics of 'resurrecting the failed social palliatives of Old Labour's left social democrats'. Even if such an unlikely outcome was conceivable, ie social democratic politics without social democracy, that is precisely the dilemma 'revolutionaries' are in the business supposedly to resolve. Not sit on the sidelines wringing their hands, and limiting themselves 'to making phrases and otherwise doing nothing'.

Making phrases and doing nothing was precisely how on an instinctive and confused level, the left greeted the arrival of the trade unions in the middle of the 19th century. Then as now, the socialist sects were suspicious, if not opposed to the self activity of the working class. Indeed some of the best organisers of the new unions had to break with sects like the Socialist Democratic Federation in order to do effective work as trade union militants. Then as now, in order to unionise a factory or politicise a community, you have to be in it to do it.

A prospect that has no greater appeal for their counterparts today. One such outfit which appeared perfectly happy to be involved in the many months of intensive discussions prior to the setting up of the Independent Working Class Association (IWCA), used a minor incident on one of its very first outings as a pretext to abandon any further involvement. Ironically the withdrawal sparked the instant resignation of the very people, (some of whom had been associated with them for almost 20 years) it had been designed to prevent.

For like their predecessors the Revolutionary Communist Group lacking the ambition to take the working class forward have instead 'turned marxism into an orthodoxy'. Where the RCG fetishises the "selling of communist literature", the SDF insisted on one of its members, a dockers leader, unfurling the red flag during a dock strike. As Engels commented "such an [sectarian] act would have ruined the whole movement, and, instead of gaining over the dockers would have driven them back into the arms of the capitalists." (Selling *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism*, would by contrast simply have complimented the propaganda of the BNP).

Now, organising in working class communities today is no easier than it was for socialists working with the early unions.

Specifically, when balancing tactics and strategies, particularly the inevitable tension between immediate short term interests and long term goals. Entirely conscious of the problem Marx, in writing the *Communist Manifesto* quite deliberately outlined the precise relationship appropriate for communists working within the trade unions.

Though for the most part ignored by the left, as a guideline for organising and politicising working class communities today, it is word perfect. To paraphrase: 'Revolutionaries should act as a loyal left wing of the class, not as an alternative counterposed to it; they should start with the working class as it is and where it is, in order to change it; they should be a part of its real class organisations no matter how backward the class might be from their stand-point; and they should become the best militants for the immediate limited aims of that movement. But at the same time, through this association they seek to push the whole class movement upwards to higher levels of class consciousness by means of the lessons of experience, all without giving up or hushing up their own views, or ceasing to criticise mistaken policies'

All important according to the *Communist Manifesto* is the 'lessons of experience' It is first hand experience that raises working class awareness, not global visions, revolutionary platforms, or the sectarian principles beloved of the left. Not, that sectarianism is the type of trap the IWCA is ever likely to fall into. On the contrary it must instead guard against the opposite extreme: a tendency toward opportunism. This is not opportunism as is commonly understood, ie the jumping on and off bandwagons, but rather as Engels defined it, in a rebuke to a colleague: "a tendency to sacrificing the future of the party to a momentary triumph." Already in a number of high profile cases the IWCA, has shown symptoms of the tendency to gamble everything on the possibility of a momentary triumph, at sometimes fatal cost to the implementation of the wider strategy

In 1997 in both Newtown in Birmingham and Welwyn & Hatfield in Hertfordshire it proved too eager to get a scalp; to draw class enemy blood. But in its enthusiasm, to maximise the immediate dividend, everything, including the IWCA itself, was jettisoned the better to leave the facts, untarnished by the inevitable questions, and accusations of political manipulation, to speak for themselves.

As with the mugging issue in Newtown, the scandal of Labour corruption in Hatfield was initially addressed through leafleting and large, hundreds strong public meetings in both cases attracting local and national media coverage. Then in an effort to



FACTS campaigners, pictured in *The Big Issue* magazine, prepare to canvass the Bagnall estate, Islington.

further politicise the campaign, IWCA activists in Hatfield decided to stand an 'articulate and attractive working class mother' on an anti-corruption ticket in the district elections. Without, needless to say, a fraction of the resources expended in North Defoe, over a 1,000 votes, and roughly 50% of the working class Labour vote was secured. According to witnesses at the count, the look of incomprehension and horror, on the face of the newly elected Labour MP alone was almost worth it.

In two successive by-elections both contested by IWCA activists, again under the name of the campaign. The Labour vote virtually collapsed in the face of the propaganda offensive. But as in Newtown the IWCA on the ground has left itself in no position to capitalise on it. Though worthy and even exemplary, neither initiative resulted in the lasting political transformation planned for, at the outset.

So when taking on board the 'lessons of our own experience' it cannot be too heavily stressed that every momentary interest may have either of two functions: either it will be a step toward the political goal or else it will conceal it. Which of the two, will ultimately depend on the impact of the campaign on the class consciousness of the working class on the ground, not in the victory or defeat in isolated skirmishes. Simply from the point of contemporary working class morale winning is of course important, but winning is not always everything.

From very early on, Marx was alert to this danger, even then acute on the trade union front of eschewing the long term political goal in favour of immediate improvement in conditions: "the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate consequences of these struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, not with the causes of those effects... that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady." The obvious danger of relieving but not curing, is that each application comes to be regarded as a valuable achievement in itself, or at least a step along the path toward the stated goal, and the pragmatic tactic can very quickly be transformed into the pragmatic but unimpeachable principle.

In a mere twelve months, by applying these lessons, IWCA influence amongst working class communities in Islington is already substantial. From a standing start, in February last year a single IWCA leaflet led directly to discussions with long term working class activists. The resulting anti-privatisation campaign 'Fight Against Council Tenancy Sell-offs' has by confronting the mainstream parties on the issue of gentrification, secured the public allegiance of almost 50% of the tenants associations in the borough. In conjunction with the tens of thousands of IWCA newsletters distributed door to door, the overall impact of the campaign has placed the idea of independent candidates and with it the notion of working class rule in working class areas in the political mainstream. Proving to initially sceptical community activists on the way, that independent working class activity (in contrast to appealing cap in hand to Labour) is not only the best and most effective way of righting wrongs and gaining support in the short term, but working class self determination is also a desirable intermediate political objective in itself. This is not to say that everything is already in the bag. Far from it. IWCA activists in Islington as elsewhere are still on a learning curve. From time to time mistakes will be made. Occasionally the IWCA will get it wrong, but in contrast to the partisans of North Defoe, who take the line 'that communists have the advantage of understanding the line of the march' literally, who regard it as a birthright, rather than the qualification Marx intended - a misreading responsible for a detour lasting the best part of the century - not that wrong.

Community Resistance

N. LONDON Islington 'BELMO militia'

AS THE date of the ballot, which will decide whether the homes of tenants on council estates throughout the Copenhagen neighbourhood will be privatised, draws close; the powers that be are pulling out all the stops to ensure an emphatic 'yes' vote. Tenants have been deluged with all the usual tricks and trinkets to buy votes, at a huge cost to Islington tenants. Everything from endless glossy propaganda, numerous 'fundays' for the kids with visits from the stars of the BBC soap 'EastEnders,' days out with players from Arsenal FC, carefully staged coach trips to 'show estates,' free promotional videos, full-colour glossy 'vote yes' calendars, beer & barbecue and cheese & wine 'ballot parties,' to name just some. Then the 'Independent Tenant Advisor' who exists in order to ensure that tenants are able to get 'impartial' advice, has announced to campaigners that he doesn't



'mad, bad,' Olly McMahon doing his bit to ensure a free and fair ballot on the Barnsbury estate, Islington

actually support even the idea of social housing! Despite the enormous amount of resources at their disposal, the 'yes' campaigners still appear worried about the result. Events have taken a sinister turn recently, with a small number of paid workers from the tenant management organisation BELMO, attempting to prevent members of Fight Against Council Tenancy Sell-offs (FACTS), a tenant-led group running a 'vote no' campaign; from canvassing tenants. FACTS, which is made up largely of well known tenants activists from the area, many of them elderly, has been accused by BELMO (led by Oliver McMahon) of 'intimidating and terrorising' tenants on the Barnsbury estate. These members of BELMO (who it's believed stand to benefit personally from the proposed privatisation) have demanded that FACTS campaigners submit their literature to the BELMO board

for approval by their lawyers before they are allowed to distribute it on the estate.

Obviously FACTS refused this with Secretary Sharon Hayward telling the *Islington Gazette* that "It is a blatant and absurd attempt to prevent tenants of the Barnsbury estate hearing all sides in the debate. I would be interested to know if they demand information given out in local and general elections and if promises made by politicians are also checked by lawyers." BELMO then sought to 'up the ante' by attempting to engineer a confrontation. McMahon, with one of his caretakers in tow, harangued FACTS campaigners until he made effective canvassing impossible. With this the campaigners left the estate, followed by McMahon who had now been joined by two photographers who proceeded to pursue them, paparazi style, down a side road. When one of the campaigners was forced to push a camera from their face, BELMO skulked off, immediately staging photographs of the 'victim' which they sent to the local press. Dismissing the BELMO story as a smear and ignoring an implied threat from BELMO who warned FACTS members to be aware of two recent 'threats with knives'; FACTS returned to canvass in the presence of two reporters from the *Big Issue*. Sure enough, McMahon appeared on cue to perform for the press, which they gleefully reported in a two page article. Despite considerable intimidation and broader implications for local democracy, FACTS campaigners have continued their work in the area, worrying the council and the various agencies involved enough for them to bring the ballot forward by three weeks.

SCOTLAND Edinburgh

'community politics'

IN THE February edition of *Housing*, Convenor of the Edinburgh Tenants Federation and Publicity Officer of the Scottish Tenants Organisation (who have publicly stated their intention to stand against Labour in elections), George McKie, proposed a radical new direction for 'community politics.'

"It may be that in some areas, especially those where backward councils refuse to recognise, or even talk to, organised tenants groups, tenants will voluntarily opt to transfer to any other landlord with an apparently more human face even if that does mean a serious gamble on the future. Council tenants who express a vote of 'no confidence' in their present landlord should be looking at wider options - if we cannot trust them to manage our homes should we trust them with managing anything else on our behalf? Perhaps we should be looking at developing a new style of community politics. We are told that we should set up our own organisations to manage our homes. If we are considered competent enough to do that why stop there? Why not manage all our local services? The easiest way to do that is to take

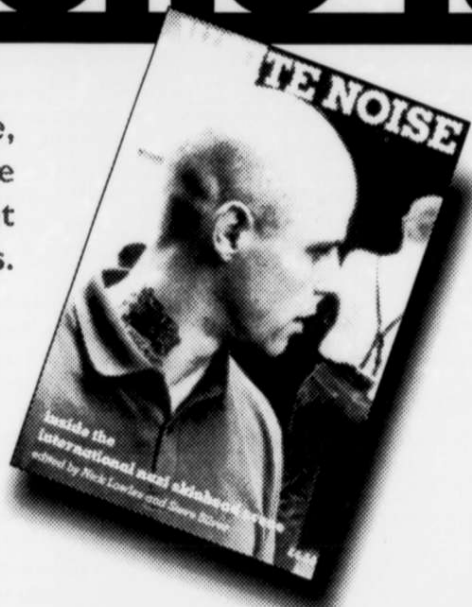
over control of our councils rather than go through all the hassle of 'transfer of undertakings'. That would solve two problems in one act - we would have genuine community ownership and control, and we would be rid of all those politicians who, by their insistence on transfers, are admitting that they are incompetent managers. Community ownership and control - what a dream, what a revolutionary idea - perhaps we could call it democracy." IWCA activists will be looking to make contact in the near future.

MANCHESTER Whalley Range council climbdown

IWCA MEMBERS in Manchester have been heavily involved in a campaign to have a mobile phone transmitter removed from the roof of St Margarets Primary School in Whalley Range. Since our last report there have been a number of articles in the national media highlighting increasing concerns about the safety of mobile phones and particularly the transmitters which work by emitting low level microwave radiation. Parallel to this increase in coverage in the national media the St Margarets Parents Action Group have stepped up the campaign, leafletting local residents about the possible dangers and organising a successful lobby of Manchester City Council Education Committee on March 10th. The lobby was attended by about 20 adults and over 20 kids, who marched up to the Town Hall waving mini placards and chanting 'turn it off,' featured prominently on both BBC and ITV evening news bulletins. A member of the Parents Action Group spoke to the Committee outlining the parents case, that the transmitter was potentially deadly, that there had been no consultation with the parents or residents, and that it was not accidental that it was working class kids who were being used as guinea pigs. While the councillors squirmed, claiming they were bound by the contract with Orange, they gave an undertaking that no more transmitters would be permitted until tests were completed and if there was any evidence they were unsafe they would be removed. While this is a clear victory for the campaigners it in no way satisfied parents who were promised safety tests in November that still haven't started. These transmitters have been banned in many states in the USA and Australia but with safety levels in Britain up to 200 times higher; even if safety tests are carried out and it is found to be 'safe' parents are unlikely to be satisfied. Parents left the meeting determined to carry on the campaign and to return to the next Committee meeting when it again will be on the agenda. In the meantime the campaigns focus will switch to the mobile phone companies with a series of demonstrations at mobile phone shops. In this the Parents Action Group will be joined by a campaign group recently established at Arden College in Wythenshawe, Manchester, who have been set up by IWCA members opposed to a similar mast on their college.

It woz AFA wot done it!

The new *Searchlight* publication, *White Noise*, promises to reveal the true history of the neo-nazi Blood & Honour movement. But does it? Joe Reilly explores.



To say I approached the new *Searchlight* publication, *White Noise*: inside the international Nazi skinhead scene, with a keen sense of expectation is an understatement. For two reasons. One, I wanted to see how they would deal with the rise and fall of Blood & Honour, while ignoring the Anti-Fascist Action role of nemesis in it. Secondly, it was part written by Nick Lowles. Lowles it was, who in July last year I publicly identified as a key member of the state-friendly *Searchlight* team.

At the time he was, you may recall, the 'mysterious journalist' whose identity according to former Leeds Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) organiser 'Simon', had for "security reasons", to remain kept secret - even from an AFA internal inquiry. Initially the inquiry into *Searchlight* infiltration of AFA had been assured that Lowles had "only ever taken a couple of photos for *Searchlight*".

A mere nine months after being outed as a leading member of the '*Searchlight* Team', in *Red Action* (June/July 98) Mr Lowles, has been introduced as the new joint editor of the *Searchlight* magazine. A meteoric rise by any standards.

And with *Searchlight* refusing to even publicly acknowledge AFA's existence from 1994 onwards, it was only natural to be curious to see how the combination of airbrush and story telling, would be accomplished.

Expecting the usual elaborate construct, where *Searchlight* are the centre around which all else revolves, it came as a surprise to find that they had taken the easy way out by sticking roughly to the facts. The facts, as they know them that is. *White Noise* (WN) even corrects the story deliberately fed to the media at the time, that it was *Searchlight* rather than London AFA, that was the lone anti-fascist target of the Combat 18 letter bomb campaign in 1996. There are nonetheless glaring omissions. Particularly irritating is the cropping of pivotal events, that occur throughout. The final crippling of the Blood & Honour (B&H) operation as a serious recruitment/fundraising outfit is for instance dismissed in two lines. 'Badge Sales' which is described "as surviving" the campaign by "anti-fascists" against outlets selling fascist propaganda in Central London, was once it came to AFA's attention, WN omits to mention, forced to cease trading. Of the one successful operation directly attributed to

Searchlight itself: the closing down of the "only public outlet for Nazi CD's in Camden north London" WN is a little less than candid. Far from being "public" this was very much a tiny, word of mouth, under the counter type operation. It was moreover already under AFA surveillance. *Searchlight*'s great achievement, in exposing it was to deny militant anti fascism a source of intelligence on the far-right, independent of them: in line with general policy, motivation enough. Some obvious flaws are a natural consequence of producing a pamphlet without any direct involvement from the principle protagonists, but in terms of realpolitik the continued relegation of militant anti-fascism to a peripheral role is no accident. Even in WN where AFA is actually mentioned, it remains a case of being damned by faint praise. Pointedly, while the far-right leadership are routinely quoted, militant anti-fascists are never once allowed a speaking part. In the same way, whenever possible AFA's exclusive efforts are routinely awarded to the collective 'movement'. This long established custom and practice is a result of an abiding *Searchlight* obsession, that militant anti-fascism in particular, needs to be kept very firmly in it's auxiliary place. Or as the manipulative real estate agent in the film *Glengarry Glenross*, might have put it, militant anti-fascism must never be allowed to be seen "to close the deal". A small example is the 1987 march on the 'Prince Albert' pub in King's Cross, N. London, by "hundreds of anti-fascists" WN reports that "the landlord eventually gave in to pressure and the skins were forced to find a new venue." The march itself, was planned by AFA, not as the culmination, but the opening shot in the campaign to force B&H out of the area. This 'long war' approach was adopted in recognition, that the pub's governor who admitted the fascist business was worth "£50,000 a year" had no intention of giving up as a result of 'one poncy march'. WN is correct when it says 'the landlord eventually gave in'. 'Eventually' being the operative word. After losing the 'Prince Albert' it took B&H a couple of years before establishing a new base of operations this time in fashionable Carnaby St smack bang in the West End of London. More significantly they were for the first time openly using two retail outlets, 'Cut-Down' and 'Merc M' to sell B&H merchandise. In January of that year AFA launched a campaign, beginning with a press conference in the House of Commons, with, (it must be said) the cooperation of *Searchlight*. This was followed by a three hundred strong picket of the shops WN reports "that local Westminster councillors supported the protest and over 30 shop keepers added their signatures to a petition calling for the shops to stop selling Nazi propaganda." Well yes, but what they neglect to mention was that many of these petitioners also sold fascist paraphernalia, Carnaby St having become as an AFA press release described it at the time "the cultural centre for fascism in Europe", and the trade as a consequence extremely lucrative. What is more, the one 'Westminster councillor' who joined the picket, and who was dispatched by AFA to collect the petitions was singularly unsuccessful, until

continued on page 10

some 'weight' was added to his canvassing team. His innocent delight in the spectacular turn round in attitudes, drew wry smiles from militants present. Within the month, as *WN* acknowledges: "Cutdown closed it's premises in Carnaby St" and also lost their pub "which was shut down... as a result of Anti-Fascist Action pressure on the brewery." (And not just on the brewery, or only on that pub either). Having moved to new premises in Riding House St, just off Oxford St; but by now under the cosh, literally and figuratively, B&H decided to go for broke. Just six weeks before the 'Main Event' London AFA were tipped off to it's significance by a contact in Belgium. A seven band line up, and a thousand tickets had already been sold in advance. AFA was told. Also provided was information on the re-direction point, but not the venue. As *WN* acknowledges: "On both sides it was clear that more was at stake than just a concert" with Blood and Honour promising their supporters that the "the Jews and the reds are going to be trashed by our international efforts."

In a fit of pique, the *Searchlight* report on May 27 omits to mention AFA at all, putting the absolute chaos and the considerable damage inflicted on the visiting fascists in Hyde Park entirely down to some "young students". Remarkably despite correcting this omission, though relegated to a walk on part, the fictional "young students" reemerge in the *WN* account.

Otherwise, while the *WN* description of the day is adequate, it concludes with a scene of "anti-fascists a thousand strong marching out of the area in a triumphant mood to Trafalgar Square." What is not mentioned is that the AFA 'Stewards Group' the architects of the victory were not with them. Instead they were busy trying to shake off a considerable number of plain clothes plod in and around central London. And with purpose. At dusk some hours later the Blood and Honour outlet in Riding House St was attacked by a large gang led by masked men armed with sledge hammers. Access to the building was quickly gained and the entire stock destroyed with acid. An eviction order against B&H was granted with immediate effect.

"Cut-Down Shut Down!" On the climax to the six month campaign *WN* is of course silent.

Much like the Main Event, the description in *WN* of 'The Battle of Waterloo' in October 1992 also ends in another rather abrupt 'anti-fascist victory': "As more and more fighting broke out in the station and its immediate vicinity the police decided to evacuate the station signalling a victory for the anti-fascist movement as the Nazis meeting point was now closed." Fact is, the station closure merely set the scene for major clashes outside that lasted until dark. Not only was traffic stopped on Waterloo Bridge, but in addition to Waterloo, the neighbouring Charing Cross, and a number of smaller tube stations in the vicinity were also closed. As a sign at one succinctly put it "due to riots."

Oddly the *WN* emphasis on accrediting the victory to the 'movement' is in total contrast to the *Searchlight* report at the time, which was more than happy to acknowledge this major and singular AFA victory. Not only was the mobilisation by AFA only, but was directly off the back of another AFA event, a rain washed 'Unity Carnival' in Hackney a couple of weeks earlier. Neither the ANL, YRE, or ARA offered any support prior to Waterloo. ARA in fact claiming that they were unable to mobilise because "AFA could not guarantee their protection!"

Yet another example of unnecessary revisionism is the two line dismissal of the return to London of B&H in January 1994, when according to *WN* "anti fascists gave the authorities little choice but to cancel the event." In fact, while generally not as acclaimed, as either 'The Main Event' or the 'Battle of Waterloo' encounters, events around 'The Little Driver' pub in Bow, E. London proved to be the final nail in the B&H coffin. And as a by-product the beginning of the end for C18.

As soon as night fell a 150 strong AFA stewards group advanced on the pub. Initially, about 50 C18 emerged to do battle, but whether they were unnerved by a flare hitting a bridge overhead, or the 'Zulu' chant of the menacing mob, they broke ranks and were there for the taking. A complete rout was prevented, by the intervention of mounted and baton wielding police from a station opposite and the attack lost momentum. Leading C18 figures utterly humiliated, were seen begging for police protection, one even jumping unsolicited into the back of a cop's car in an effort to get out of the area. As a result it was the last time B&H would even attempt to play in the capital. And worse everybody knew why C18 after being brought into existence in 1991, to protect the far-right, were now shown to be incapable of protecting even themselves. It was probably not entirely a coincidence that within weeks of the debacle, the BNP choose to declare that "there would be no more marches meetings punch-ups". C18 meanwhile, clearly incapable of sustaining the media myth of invincibility (a myth carefully nurtured by *Searchlight* incidentally) began to turn inward on itself. For them, the gig, forgive the pun, was up. After The Little Driver the C18/B&H operation limped along only for a while, before ending in ignominy, betrayal and ultimately grisly murder. This is not an analysis that *WN* shares. It concludes instead by lamenting, the failure of

the "authorities to do more" particularly in Europe to halt the production and sale of CD's. With good reason it estimate "the White Power music scene internationally, remains a multimillion pound industry", and quotes a former C18 leader who estimates "their 20 CD's" alone brought in "almost £200,000 profit." But fundraising is not the *raison d'être* as an authoritative quote from the BNP's *Spearhead* points out: "Anyone who thinks that this scene is important primarily on account of the money it can generate has missed the point completely, what really matters, is it's power to catch the souls of thousands, and turn them into racial nationalists." Which means that for the contemporary fascists it remains a chicken and egg situation. To have a "scene" they must have gigs. To recruit, the gigs need to be open to the public. Being public demands advance publicity. This in turn requires the necessary logistical back-up to be on hand to deal with the inevitable opposition. A conundrum B&H, despite having on more than one occasion, as a result of advance sales, more than a thousand 'racial nationalists' at their disposal, were never able, because of AFA, to satisfactorily resolve. Even when taking into account it's less than forthright account of the B&H rise and fall, the political summary in *WN* is quite ridiculous. "While it is important that the police *alone* (RA emphasis) cannot halt the White Power music scene especially in areas where the skinhead image is dominant within youth culture, the authorities only seem willing to act when external pressure is forced upon them." 'Pressure' as has been chronicled, is undeniably key. And by definition 'a pressure group' applies pressure. But crucially a pressure group of itself, lacks that vital dynamic to act independently and create change on the ground. Instead in order to achieve its objectives it is obliged to either persuade, or manipulate, those with the capacity to apply the vital "external pressure".

As a pressure group par excellence, *Searchlight* is perpetually torn between hyping the threat of 'imminent criminal violence', while at the same time working feverishly to conceal it's own impotence. Conflict resolution is only ever really successful when the interests of the 'movement' become subordinate to the continued existence of the pressure group itself. While perhaps inevitable, it is also a rationalisation which leaves the dividing line between parasite an asset so narrow as to be subjective.

Thus while pressure groups might interpret the world, the point is to change it. And dissemble as it does, *WN* cannot quite conceal that reality. To paraphrase a famous *Sun* headline: 'It woz AFA wot done it!'

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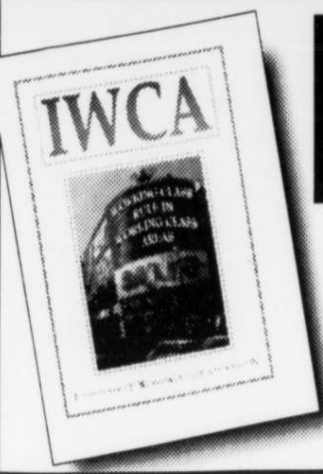
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A Word In Your Ear...



THE SHADY BUNCH

FORA group which at any one time has never exceeded a three figure membership, few in the history of the left can have provoked such an amount of malicious gossip. Everything that could possibly have been said about Red Action must surely by now, have been said. And generally everything thing that is said is taken at face value. Guilty beyond reasonable doubt, until proved otherwise is the order of the day. Any disproving, if undertaken at all, is needless to say, by the organisation itself. "Leaving the distinct impression" as fellow smear victim Terry Venables remarked recently, "that there was somebody or *something* behind it."

Everybody likes to see themselves in caricature now and again.

Red Action being no exception. On more than one occasion members have played up to it, probably because, from its very inception Red Action was regarded as the cuckoo in the lefties nest. It looked different it talked different, it subscribed to different cultural values and so on. When not intrigued, the left appeared politically defensive. From quite early on, RA was stereotyped. In the very early days, a not uncommon inquiry was: 'Who writes your paper?' The assumption being that it must be somebody other than the 'donkey jackets' selling it. On another occasion following a clash with the far-right, in the presence of Red Action members some 'pencil-neck' puzzled over whether the motivation of the street fighters could be judged to be 'really political'. "Why do you dress like that?" would be asked as if a common dress code was agreed party policy.

"But you look like the National Front" exclaimed one outraged school teacher, simply because the people who had just handed her an anti-fascist leaflet, had not taken the time to disguise their class origins she felt entitled to be offended. A long standing member of the same revolutionary organisation expressed the view that 'the types most comfortable beating the fascists would prove equally prone to beating their girlfriends and wives'. While they in turn, were routinely dismissed as 'gangsters molls'. At an early AFA national conference the Chair, laid a formal charge that the RA contingent had, I kid you not, 'collectively made monkey noises' at a black man vote counting. Likewise, on being informed that three AFA members had been sentenced to a total of 11 years for defending a Blood Sunday March, Kilburn Troops Out branch hardly distinguished itself by its expressions of concern. The gasps and exclamations 'Is he alright?' 'Will he recover?' and so on were directed not toward the anti-fascists (one a young Irish kid had just a three year sentence for a first offence) but for the victim - a former member of the British Movement's elite Leader Guard and later a founder member of the neo-nazi Blood&Honour. Nothing inverted, if that what it is, about that snobbery then.

Nor has this protracted smear campaign restricted itself to sociological study either. In addition to the burden of 'collective guilt', all prominent figures without exception have since 1990 been systematically 'bad jacketed'. Special Branch informant; child pornographer and rapist are some recent samples. Not you will admit common or garden leftie sectarianism.

Despite everything the policy up to now has remained one of passive resistance. No longer. For two reasons. First, the forced resignation of a young Red Action member (the first known casualty to the war of black propoganda) opened eyes to the level of damage being sustained on our periphery. Secondly, as the result of an investigation the almost accidental discovery that the campaign, may at least in part be state related, with the dual objective to stymie militant anti-fascism and quarantine 'mainland' republicanism.

For example a high profile RA presence within Saoirse (the Irish republican prisoners support group), coincided with the republican movement's most dynamically successful campaign in this country. One which briefly opened up a whole new vista. Swiftly followed by rule or ruin ploy; an anti-RA blitzkrieg of such reckless and destructive malignancy that Saoirse itself was scuppered. Curiously neither the elements who railroaded RA, nor the 'innocent bystanders' who stood by as it happened have managed anything of value, even by the low standards they traditionally set themselves, in the three years since. Funny that. And while such a vendetta invariably results in chaos, recrimination and collapse of morale for all concerned, it is triggered when the complete reverse is the case: when organisation, camaraderie and potential (as in Saoirse) is at its height: ie success rather than failure, appearing to be the stimulus for the black propogandists. Make of that what you will, we couldn't possibly comment.

From that and other more recent salutatory experiences, RA organisers are under new instructions. Rather than turn a blind eye they must from now chase down every rumour. How effective can it hope to be? Ask the fascists if you don't believe Red Action, like the mounties, always get their man.

NOTICE

RECENTLY a total misrepresentation of an article in RA, that asked questions of the Glasgow-Irish folk music scene and the band 'Athenrye' in particular, has been doing the rounds. Our criticism was aimed only at those bands who sought to make a killing off the backs of primarily republican audiences, doing cover versions of republican material at the expense of the republican movement itself.. As is the way of things this sparked counter-allegations by the guilty parties that it was genuine republican bands and indeed, the republican movement itself that was being attacked! To reemphasise our original point, we would like to draw attention to bands like 'Shebeen' who have just produced a CD, 'Disband the RUC', with all proceeds going to POW welfare. Available from SHEBEEN, Po Box 11500, Glasgow, G3 8HZ

Something We Said!?!?

Red Action were always the thinking person's bootboys; their newspaper alternated gleeful reports of 'discussions' with BNP members with analyses of key Marxist concepts. Times change: the bootboy days have gone ('the physical strategy is by no means absolute') and Red Action comes out in reader-friendly magazine format. Otherwise the - often unpalatable - recipe is unchanged. RA hate the middle-class left, despise New Labour, support the IRA - and are committed, like few others, to recovering revolutionary Marxism from the long dead end of Leninism. In the battle of ideas, Red Action is a bit tasty.

Red Pepper, January 1999

Among the Sinn Fein people in Stormont are many who had been in jail. And it struck me that their very presence, their easy informality allied with a professional approach and their healthy disrespect for rules and procedures was as subversive here as it had been in the jails... But what the Sinn Fein presence also symbolises is that unionists cannot turn the clock back. The castle walls have been breached and the rebels are swarming all over the fine furniture. They are ready to turn the place upside down and, ultimately, there is nothing the unionist leadership can do about it.

Brian Campbell, An

Phoblacht/Republican News, 25.1.99

"Middle-class, liberal multiculturalism doesn't address political and economic problems," he said. Instead people are 'manipulated' by advertising which uses black images to win a market and 'misled' by the success of a few wealthy black people. Citing the example of the black US general, Colin Powell, Professor Marable dismissed him as 'the whitest man in America.'

New York Columbia University don and a leading writer on black politics, Manning Marable, giving an hour-long talk during the Windrush celebrations in Camden.

Camden New Journal 29.10.98