

RED ACTION

The bi-monthly bulletin of the organisation Red Action • Price: £1 • Vol. 4 Issue 8 • September/October 2000

Paulsgrove: Not Hysteria, Respect



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EDITORIAL

STRENGTHENING THE CENTRE

On the heels of Red Action's application to join the London Socialist Alliance, 'just what are they up to' has clearly been the question on many lips. More than once the accusation has been made that we are simply jumping on a band wagon. And a successful one at that.

But few eyebrows will raise on realisation that the rationale, is a mite more complex than that. Particularly as the support of one and a half per cent of Londoners, is hardly the stuff to set the pulses racing.

What is of genuine interest however, regardless of the motivation of the sponsors themselves, is what the emergence of the LSA signifies. Here at last, is the entire Left (almost) collectively attempting to 're-invent itself'. Judged objectively, that has to be regarded in a positive light.

A tacit though untheorised admission that 'the era of the sect is over' must also be judged progressive. In such circumstances, if Red Action is to remain true to its own politics, it is duty bound to seek to maximise its influence within the new formation.

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All who voted at the RA conference, including those that moved the motion (particularly them), recognised that even at its most productive, the most the orientation to the LSA offers is - possibilities.

Of the many possibilities, perhaps the vital one, is the opportunity it provides for the entire Left to take stock - to politically re-group. And while the LSA is not itself a real movement of the class, it is for the first time in more than 30 years undeniably a real movement of the Left, the simultaneous movement of the class away from Labour and the rich potential/danger offered up, by the otherwise almost unrelated desertions coinciding, is key to understanding the Red Action attraction.

Given Red Action's history, it will be no surprise that we are keeping at least one wary eye on the far-right. Already the BNP look more than capable of pulling away from the LSA in London. Barring an implosion, the BNP currently has the potential to repeat the trick in the general election, and thus lay claim to the radical alterna-

tive slot nationally. As has been pointed out before, there is no proven antidote to Euro-nationalism.

In short, what the far-right renaissance, not just here but across Europe, heralds (though many on the Left seem unaware of it) is a new phase of struggle.

A new phase of struggle always means change. Immense change certainly, over a relatively short time for the more conservative of the left. First, and especially, for the conservative wing of the LSA.

Accordingly a central part of the RA remit within the LSA will be the stress on the need for new thinking, new strategies, new tactics and even new language, if that is - working class hegemony remains the unchanging goal.

An acknowledgement on that issue, and there is a real possibility of the LSA being transformed into something of genuine value. At present the Left may not appear to have changed all that much, but exterior conditions have. Accordingly the dynamic for political change both inside and out is - not - under the control of the Left.

On the contrary, they are, as the pace of their own development shows, controlled by it.

They are not changing the course of history as they might imagine, or make out - but adapting to it.

That cherished straplines like 'Rebuild the Fourth International!' 'General Strike Now!' 'Vote Labour without illusions!' now appear cretinous - even to them - is proof of the changing landscape. The day of reckoning between loyalty to antiquated theories and political survival, also beckons.

Currently the LSA meets the immediate needs of the left when the real task is to meet the immediate needs of the class. That is the Red Action objective. Red Action has joined the LSA with honest intentions. It is in short, our intention to revolutionise it from within.

Over the last few months a disturbing trend has begun to emerge. In France there are attempts to impose sanctions against the internet company Yahoo! on political grounds.

In Germany there is call for the banning of political parties. In Britain there is support for jailing political opponents without charge. Now none of this is new. Such calls for censorship have been a feature of political life in most countries, particularly at times of political crisis. What is novel today is that these demands are almost uniformly coming from the left. They are moreover being made in the name of anti-fascism. In Germany there is wide support among the Greens for the banning of the far-right NPD and others. Anti-racists in France want Yahoo! closed down because an American client is trading in Nazi memorabilia. In Britain, not only does the ANL want the state "to jail all the Nazis", but Searchlight's Gerry Gable feels comfortable in describing, live on television, the deputy head of the anti-terrorist squad as "a colleague". Meanwhile, the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force on which Gable serves as 'a lay member' openly admits that it targets "extremists on the right... and on the left".

In an even more bizarre departure from anti-fascist custom and practice, the ANL sought to extend the 'no platform principle' to a democratic debate, where the legacy of the Holocaust was being discussed - in front of an audience made up overwhelmingly of Jews

A notable feature of this stridency, and the almost complete loss of a sense of priorities, is that in the real world, the far-right go about their business practically unmolested. One gets the impression that in parts of Germany the far-right, control the streets in what they refer to as 'liberated zones'. In France successive surveys find that the majority, as much as 60% of the population, reject anti-racist perspectives. In Leicester a gay rights march attacked by a small number of NF and forced to be diverted by police, is still hailed as a 'victory' by the ANL, the Socialist Party, and even elements on the periphery of AFA.

Consistent with this is that Bexley, Tipton and Burnley where the BNP have recently polled over 20% are all studiously ignored by these largely bogus dot.com anti-fascists. Just as comically, fraternisation with Searchlight, a self-confessed conduit to the state/from the state, continues to be defended on the grounds of 'information' requirements by these same elements. Under these twin pressures something called 'anti-fascism' is not only becoming embourgeoisified, but is gradually being totally assimilated into a state strategy of anti-extremism.

Thus to strengthen the centre against extremes is merely to strengthen the state against one's self. Those unable to understand the implications, will more and more come across those happy to make the distinction for them.

BACK ISSUES

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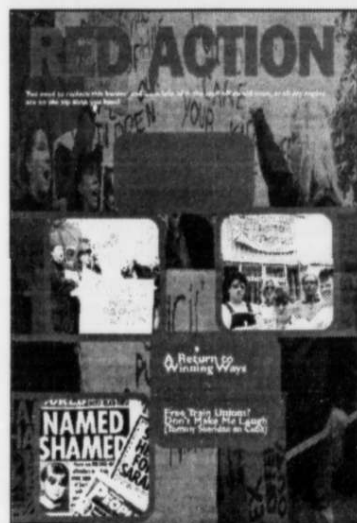
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FRONT COVER: Should the 'white' working class be allowed rights? For the people who claim it as their constituency, not many on the liberal Left seem to think so. SEE: Big Issue page 3 for RA analysis.



THE BIG ISSUE

The beginning of August witnessed an upsurge in working class activity that sent ripples, if not waves, throughout Britain. However, unlike distant Seattle and the excited anticipation of the Prague G8 summit, this particular combination of class consciousness, and direct action, failed to spark the type of opportunism normally associated with the British left. No demands of support, banners or paper sellers. At best the response was one of mute disapproval, tinged with the type of throwaway remark, more at home in right wing broadsheets. The Left as a whole were 'agin it'.

Though it was hard to find out what they were 'for'. Typical was *Socialist Worker*, who advertised the "Answers to Paulsgrove on pages 3, 4, 5, 9", yet never advanced any alternative - apart from quiescence. 'Let the police and professionals deal with it' was the uniform message. "Is this" as one sceptical pundit put it "'the inherently racist' police force that 'bungled' the Stephen Lawrence case or is it another lot?"

In many ways the confusion that besets the liberal left, when the 'delicate' issues pertaining to reality in working communities ever arises is almost comical. There is the, 'oh what now?', sense of irritation. But overriding all liberal 'instincts' is the undeniable fear and sometimes loathing that instantly manifests itself on such occasions against what are perceived as entirely 'lumpen' elements. A sense of outrage at the insolence of these people, who repeatedly mess up the liberal lefts' wholly misconceived ideas of how the working class ought to behave, what issues truly affect them, who their enemies really are, and what are considered harmonious solutions. Furthermore, as events like Paulsgrove make clear, the distinction between the stance of the liberal elite and the revolutionary vanguards - if it exists at all - is marginal.

So if the working class aren't ragged trousered philanthropists standing around picket line braziers, or the unsullied and plucky working class folk that spontaneously attend every SWP demonstration, then what are they? Well, according to ex-communist David Aaronovitch, writing disdainfully in *The Independent*, the Portsmouth protesters were contemptible if only for their "peroxidized hair" and "pale faces... brought on by a diet of hamburgers, cigarettes and pesticides".

Adrian Chiles, on *Radio Five Live*, felt that the community reaction to the campaign to oust paedophiles was tantamount to a 'feelgood factor' - where burglars, muggers and assorted 'scum' (read 'working class opponents') could vent themselves against a lower social denomination - i.e. paedophiles.

Other observers from further left harboured a similarly malevolent tone. The SWP's *Socialist Worker* talked of 'lynch mobs' and 'murderous vigilante attacks' and on August 12, desperately struggling to maintain its distance from the real issue, cited a *Daily Express* allegation that *News Of The World* editor Rebekah Wade had even "approached the nazi National Democrats group" in order to collate further information on child sex offenders.

Mary Godwin, writing in the *Weekly Worker* (27.7.00) went even further, cursing about "scapegoating", "hysteria" and "an orgy of vilification" against paedophiles. She aloofly questioned the nature of the prison hierarchy, whereby prisoners "feel it is their duty" to attack sex

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THE BIG ISSUE - continued

offenders, especially child sex offenders. Communists "are not in favour of scapegoating anyone, including paedophiles (if that is what is meant by those who abuse rather than love children)". "Our goal" she went on "is a just, and truly humane society, in which people have the best chance to develop fully as human beings, liberated from the distorting influences of capitalism and the commodification of everything, including social relations". Are we to assume then, that we can comfortably avoid contending with all social and political wrongs on the grounds they are merely a product of "capitalism and commodification"? Trade unionism, anti-fascism, national liberation, can all be accurately so labelled.

Typically, rather than address itself to the real issue of working class communities being used as a dumping ground for sexual predators, *Socialist Worker* as apologist-par-excellence grubs around to provide its readers with the 'facts' that accord with its own instincts: "93% of paedophiles don't reoffend whilst being supervised by probation... In Britain 97% of child sex offenders comply with the sex offenders register, this means the police know where they are... More children are killed in car accidents... 90% of child sex abuse takes place in the home... etc". Apparently unaware she was proving the case for the opposition, Julie Waterston took up the cause of the 'innocent victims of mob terror'.

Of the 20 names on the Paulsgrove hitlist, three" she announced triumphantly "were people who never committed any crime". And the rest? Paul Barker, senior research fellow at the Institute of Community Studies, summed up the hypocrisies succinctly. Writing in the *Evening Standard* "In defence of the women of Paulsgrove" (14.8.00), he described the actions as an "outcry by the powerless", whilst adroitly acknowledging that "the marchers were, mostly, from the rougher end of the working class, not the respectable end". A fact that he seems comfortable with, unlike our predictably extenuating left counterparts. "If" he went on "the protesters had been black or brown, we would have been told by all the usual public mouths that - first and foremost - we must listen to their concerns. And rightly so. I sometimes think that no-one terrifies the chattering classes so much as the white working class. But they too have a right to their say".

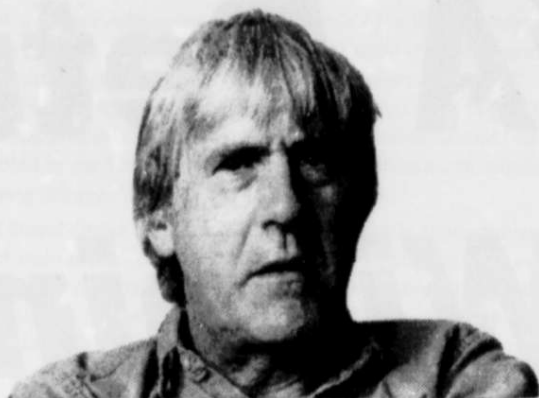
Though coming from an unusual quarter that of course is entirely the point. The working class, even when white and from the rougher end of the market - ought to have rights. Though bizarrely you'd be hard pressed to find a 'revolutionary' to agree with you. For them victimhood has become inverted. For many of them too, paedophiles are possibly the last 'sexual outlaws' and therefore, almost romantic figures. This intellectual belief in 'inter-generational sex' does not however extend to their own off-spring. These social experiments are, it is presumed, to be conducted with other peoples kids. Working class ones. And though not mentioned by anyone it is 'self-respect' rather than 'scapegoating' that motivated the women of Paulsgrove. Class in other words permeates the whole affair. As *The Guardian's* Julie Burchill put it: "The fact is that the contempt shown to anxious parents is part and parcel of the contempt shown to the working class of this country over the past twenty years. For make no mistake it is working class children who are the victims of abduction, assault by strangers and murder: the rest of them live their lives in a cradle to rave bubble of of play-dates and people movers."

Paul Barker concurs: "When the letter-writing classes say that for example paedophiles should" he observes "be reintegrated into 'the community' these are the communities they mean. Not on our own doorstep, thank you; and excuse me now while I load my daughter and her friend into the four-by-four to take them off to their fee-paying nursery school."

Oddly enough, though approaching the problem from precisely this perspective, it is *The Guardian* which stumbles on the solution. According to its editorial, the "standoff" has "exposed the chasm which divides the 3,000 or so estates like Paulsgrove from the more affluent sheltered parts of Britain." Here it claims "calmer discussion prevails", based on "the liberal arguments familiar in the newspapers, TV studios, parliamentary tea-rooms and bishops studies." Well, if true, the solution is surely obvious. If as *Socialist Worker* says "press witch-hunts or repressive sentencing is not the answer;" if the longterm solution is to be reintegration, then it is within the 'affluent, sheltered, liberal, communities' sex offenders should be re-housed. There, at least they could be 'outed' without having a brick (or worse) thrown through the window. At the same time the temptation to abuse their trust, would due to the 'cradle to rave' culture be limited to the point of non-existence. Wonder why no one has thought of it before?

Bob Martin

THE FEW



For more than fifty years the 'United Front' has been a talisman of the Left. Leading SWP member and journalist, Paul Foot, recently explained why. Astonishingly as Joe Reilly discovers, the whole rationale is based entirely on a series of lies.

Maybe it's something to do with the Millennium but revisionism is everywhere. You can hardly open a paper without some widely accepted historical truth being traduced as 'myth'. From the comment of American academic Norman Finkelstien that the Imperial War Museum view of the Holocaust read 'like a Harry Potter story'; to the Mel Gibson reworking of the American War of Independence, to the refighting of 'The Battle of Britain' along class lines.

Yet in the midst all the dissembling, a single paragraph by Paul Foot, on where the blame for the rise of Hitler should lie, is, by some distance, the most treacherous and despicable of the crop. Where *The Mirror* columnist Charlie Catchpole rushes to the defence of the well cultivated myth of 'The Few' as "dashing young pilots with upper class accents" (when as C4's *Secret History* shows they were overwhelmingly working class recruits, buttressed, by more than a fair smattering of generally, better trained. Poles) Foot invents a series of myths to malign 'the few' in another not unrelated conflict. Catchpole does not attempt to deny the facts explored in *Secret History*, but was insistent nonetheless that it was "nasty and mean-spirited" of the makers of the programme to bring it up.

'Nasty and mean-spirited' were some of the more restrained criticisms that greeted Norman Finkelstein's book *The Holocaust Industry*. Unlike Mel Gibson's, *The Patriot*, which was accused of inventing atrocities in order to depict the British as Nazis, the central charge against Finkelstien is that he is intent on denying the 'uniqueness' of the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews. For Jewish leaders like Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal and Elie Weisel, the Nazi attempted extermination of the Jews was 'a unique event - and uniquely irrational'. Weisel for example is insistent the Holocaust remains "a religious mystery, unknowable and inexplicable." (*Evening Standard*)

As is all too evident, the quarrel generally is not over the hard facts of the past, but more hegemony over the future. For many the past is not history. Indeed in all too often cases as with fascism, the past is not even past.

It is against this back drop that Foot's own contribution has emerged. It is a falsification of history at least as politically loaded as the accusations laid against Finkelstien. Because as a mere glance at the map of Europe 2000 shows, the far-right are winning arguments and making substantial political gains hand over fist, without any evidence of a cogent counter-strategy.

Central to this inertia is that notion that fascism was an 'inexplicable aberration', and could, had tactics differed a fraction, been entirely avoided. Hitler could have been stopped by entirely legal and, most importantly, non-violent methods. By constitutional means, by democratic elections, by, in a word - pacifism.

Writing in *The Guardian* on June 3 Foot, by seeking to explain the theoretical

underpinning, went out of his way to endorse this line of thinking. "Though their combined vote and their influence in the country was substantially greater than those of the Nazis, both sides - especially the communists - rigidly refused to form a united front against the fascists. The communists, who at one stage were getting 6million votes, renamed the social democrats 'social fascists'. So great was the sectarian divide in those crucial months before the deluge that the communists preferred even to link up and stage strikes with the fascists rather than campaign in the country and the factories for a unified force against fascism. 'After Hitler, our turn' was the boast of communist leader Ernest Thalmann. After Hitler as it happened communists and social democrats were at last united - in the concentration camps."

Paul Foot is a highly respected and indeed influential journalist, so his thesis deserves to be accorded some respect. I will therefore address the main points chronologically.

Before we begin it is only fair to say that as a simple statement of fact it is in almost every respect false. Worse it is knowingly false. Paul Foot, not to put too fine a point on it, is a liar - and given the level of research on the subject - a brazen one to boot.

1. Let's deal first with his claim that the Communist and Socials Democrats "combined had substantially greater influence in the country generally than the Nazis". The facts differ starkly. In November 1932 the Nazis took 33.1% of the vote. In this election the Communists were big gainers with 16.9%. This put them little more than 3% behind the Social Democrats on 20.4%.

Simple arithmetic, is therefore, all that is required to rip to shreds Foot's statement "that the combined the vote for the Left was substantially greater than that of the Nazis". In November 1932 the joint SPD/Communist vote came to 37.3%. In that election it amounted to a lead of a mere 4.2% over the Nazis. But this was in a reduced poll. Only three months earlier, in July, the Nazis themselves had received 37.4%! So comparing the results over the two elections reveals the differential to be - 0.1% - and that in favour of the fascists! So Foot's inference that by merely casting aside 'sectarian differences', Hitler could have been stopped, can be dismissed as a nonsense. Also in making it clear whose sectarianism was at fault, it is evident who, in the name of 'unity', Foot believes should eat crow. Again what this skates over, is that from 1928 onward, SPD support was in free fall. Unlike Foot, even in voting terms it was not 'communist extremism' the German working class were holding to account. For instance in 1928, the SPD took 29.8% while the Communists took just 10.6%. By 1932 the differential had been whittled down to just

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'A Return To Winning Ways'

On August 9, Red Action addressed a seminar as part of the Communist Party of Great Britain's *Communist University 2000* under the title of 'Official anti-racism and the white working class'. What follows is an edited version of what *Weekly Worker* described as "a controversial speech".

Among the many millions of words written about the murder of Jamie Bulger, one sentence sticks out.

In a book on the case, the author comments that "it was a pity the boys had to kill Jamie Bulger to get a proper education". It is a sentence that says as much of society as the killers it produced.

It is of course the same society that has produced the contemporary Left. Will it too need to suffer a similar trauma before it gets a proper political education one wonders? I sometimes think so. To see why, it is necessary only to study the arguments and theories that sets much of the left in confrontation with objective reality. And more to the point, in conflict with it's supposedly core working class constituency.

"Communists", the *Weekly Worker* tells us, "are uncompromising in our demand for the smashing of all immigration controls. We say - if the product of labour is legal so must the worker. Every human being - from developed or underdeveloped countries - must have the right to travel, visit, live and work where they choose". (22.6.00)

Was this statement not more than a little compromised by the rider which states: "clearly" (my emphasis) that this "can only be implemented fully and permanently though the realisation of our complete minimum programme..." it is a concept of unconditional immigration easily misunderstood. And though the Communist Party consider it "gratifying", that on its initiative, the London Socialist Alliance incorporated the call for the "scrapping of all immigration controls" in it's platform for the GLA elections, for sponsors, it remains quite sensibly - an aim. An aspiration, to be implemented subject to very specific conditions: unconditional immigration but not unconditionally. However on LSA propaganda, stickers and the like, there was no room and some may have felt, no need, to explain the caveat. Denied the opportunity to study the 'small print' the public would have assumed, as I did, that this was LSA strategy for the here and now.

Nor is it just on the refugee issue that the left has tied itself in knots. Not nearly. The inadequacy in that regard is but a symptom. Far wider contradictions between principle and practice, and between cause and effect, are also beginning to surface.

"Multiculturalism" is pro-actively "pitting all communities against each other" according to a recent report by the Foreign Policy Centre think-tank. Moreover the "cloak of multi-culturalism" is being "worn by those with no interest in integration". It further warns, that out of date terms like "ethnic minorities" are not only an obstacle to integration; but the whole idea of permanent minorities is based, it argues, on the "ludicrous assumption" that there is some "larger homogeneous white" community out there, that must be continually confronted until vanquished.

It is in the interests of all, author Yasmin Brown therefore concludes, that multiculturalism is "laid to rest". ('Why Multiculturalism has failed', *The Telegraph*, 23.5.00)

If multiculturalism is to be laid to rest, a self-confident left should be the very last to mourn it's passing.

Of course as part of a defensive formation, the articulation and support for minority rights, be they racial or sexual, must remain an absolute. But it is not for the left, the way forward. Quite the reverse.

To attempt to politically move forward with minority rights to the forefront, sooner or later fragments any alliance, needlessly antagonises the neglected majority, ultimately reinforces rivalries, and institutionalises division. Often reducing politics, particularly at a local community level, to a feudal-type system of 'special pleading'. Even worse, a class divided against itself on such lines, can have no cogent platform from which to demand, and fight for, a greater allocation of national resources. And thus unable to move forward, it is also powerless to efficiently defend what it has got.

'Reactionary ideas' were, Cliff made clear, to be firmly locked out of 'the workers movement' even if this meant excluding the workers themselves.

So year on year its 'allowance' systematically shrinks. Perpetuating first poverty, then an increased rivalry between ethnic divisions. A situation which has allowed the political sponsors of multiculturalism a rule untroubled by radical or sustained opposition for well over a generation. An outcome, we can assume, which was no accidental by-product, but very much the intended result. 'Divide and rule' was the old term, the 'promotion of diversity' can be read as it's contemporary manifestation.

Historically, reactionary purposes have been well served by divisions within the lower orders. Oddly for some time now, it is the left which has promoted 'minority versus majority causes' with nationalistic zeal.

Why the left felt compelled to pursue such a misguided course is instructive. Fittingly, it is Tony Cliff, founder of the SWP, and through expulsions, splits and splinters, the

negative creator of a host of other trends, who provides an insight into how this flawed 'minority versus majority praxis' took root. In his autobiography, Cliff cites an incident which sounds like a prototype:

"...there was a time when the Socialist Review Group was tiny, with between 25 and 30 members only. A worker wanted to join. He liked our programme but thought that our opposition to immigration controls would prevent other workers from joining. I said, 'You join the group over my dead body'".

Lost in admiration for his fortitude, Cliff was unable to accept that the 'worker' in question was speaking objectively. Historically, and for all the usual reasons, widescale immigration is more often than not, the focus of tensions and resentments.

Yet in Cliff's example, 'the worker' who made this observation, appears not to have had a problem with political opposition to immigration controls himself. Nonetheless, for 'Cliff the revolutionary', any further discussion was out of the question. In raising the problem he, 'the worker', was seemingly judged guilty of 'unconscious racism' of some form or another. Consequently before allowing him into polite revolutionary circles, it was necessary to see, as David Trimble might put it, whether he could be properly 'house



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trained' first.

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From such a perspective, it is a small remove to seeing anti-racism not as a question of enlightened self interest, but more an acculturating of the lower orders; the drilling into them, like any good colonialist, of 'our superior customs and habits'.

When you consider that the working class is the only social group where assimilation is genuine, the missionary analogy seems both more apt - and - more misplaced.

Like much of the Left, *The Guardian* has persevered with the

blind-sided approach. Addressing the implications of "a third of refugees" having "degrees or professional qualifications", it drew the conclusion that "the temptation to place refugees on sink estates must be avoided". "There are", it went on "plenty of good empty houses without resorting to the use of condemned property". (1.5.00) On June 29th, a senior United Nations official quoted in the *Scottish Herald* also saw fit to chastise the powers that be for leaving refugees "trapped on nightmare estates".

In left and liberal circles this sort of comment is widely applauded as the epitome of anti-racism, even when the overall sense of 'nightmare estates and condemned property' being considered perfectly adequate for the existing occupants (in line with 'the natural order' presumably) is inescapable. Liberals express shock and outrage when the residents of said 'sink estates' knock back such perspectives. Such signs of rebellion are ominous signs, we are told, of 'an essentially tolerant and liberal country losing touch with it's own values'.

In truth, it is some time since Britain could accurately be described as a 'liberal society'. A champions league position in regard to race attacks, incarcerations, in addition to spawning 'the most reactionary youth in Europe' are not normal by-products of such a society. A society perfectly capable of re-producing the Stephen Lawrences and the David Copelands is hardly, as the saying goes, 'at ease with itself'. Of course it is perfectly possible, that the communities that live on the sink estates, that house the perpetrators are no longer judged to be part of 'society'.

All too firmly within the catchment considered unworthy of first class rights, are of course refugees. As non-citizens and even lower on the food chain, the political right demand they be treated most harshly of all.

On the contrary, the left counter, in the interests of justice their rights to housing, education, health, etc. must be given priority. A priority that should, if necessary, override the interests and rights of their inherently second class and, lets not forget, racist hosts.

Such a resolute approach is widely considered to be both honourable and tactically astute. A tad disappointing then, when following the adoption of their recommendation, animosity to refugees, race attacks and support for the far-right all - visibly intensify.

A recent audit commission report, *Another Country*, concluded that a perception of preferential treatment does refugees few favours. Among other things, it warns councils "not to feed hostility by providing services for asylum seekers that are not available to other residents".

Where the accommodation of asylum seekers is most inflammatory, it flagged up, is where "the cost of support is borne by local tax-payers" alone. A problem sharply compounded by "the shortfall of up to £30 million spent by local councils, but yet to be reclaimed from central government".

That a government, which can at the drop of a hat, donate almost exactly that sum to shore up the Dome, is allowed to escape its responsibilities so blatantly, with hardly a murmur of protest from left-lobbyists is damning.

Rather than grasp the opportunity of confronting an enemy common to both immigrants and working class hosts, liberals pass, exposing again the essential dilettantism at the heart of the pro-refugee lobby.

In such circumstances, that it took the leader of arguably the only progressive party in Europe with an authentic working class base, to identify the need for a more holistic approach, is telling. Speaking at an internal meeting on May 17, Gerry Adams claimed that the strategy of the Dublin government was failing on two fronts. "Not only has the government failed to address the needs and rights of refugees and asylum seekers", "it has" Adams claimed "also ignored the needs and rights of urban and rural communities. Communities have a right to be consulted, and to expect adequate resources and supports. But communities also have obligations and responsibilities as human beings". (*Republican News*, 25.5.00)

Rather than allowing or worse, tacitly supporting, the 'pitting' of the most wretched against the most disadvantaged, forging precisely such a unity of interests model, is for a variety of reasons, 'the way forward'. Conversely the continued failure to acknowledge that the working class as well as refugees have rights is to play directly 'into the hands of our enemies'. Understandably, what is seen to be - imposed - will be automatically - opposed - in one way or the other.

Not to champion the economic needs and democratic rights of working class communities on this issue, also ignores the consequent plight this failure causes refugees: a hypocrite invariably makes a poor apologist.

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A Return To Winning Ways

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To fail both sections equally, ought not to be regarded as evidence of a balanced argument. While standing up for the 'rights of refugees' might win brownie points on the letters page of *The Guardian*, it is not socialism. Nor interestingly, is it perceived to be. A 'minority first' stance is instinctively, and quite properly, understood to be nothing more than a reverse of the 'majority first' arguments of the BNP.

Which is precisely why for the left, minority over majority will always be the wrong argument, pitched to the wrong audience.

More pertinently, for the likes of the LSA, who express the ambition and are indeed historically obliged to try and replace New Labour, in it's now, former heartlands, it is an argument it cannot win. One consequence of multiculturalism often overlooked, is that it casts race rather than class as the motor of history. The implication being that communities are thus encouraged, if not obliged, to think along nationalist lines politically. What do we get out of it? Meaning my tribe first. Or only. More to the point my tribe rather than my class. In such a climate, to identify with the stand point of a race or culture, other than your own, to see it from a perspective other than your own, can come across as mealy-mouthed, weak, and ambiguous: the standard hallmarks of a renegade whose views thereafter, are not to be trusted.

Dribbling virtue, is generally a poor substitute for a strategy of constructive engagement. A poor substitute too, for a strategy grounded in objective reality. To return to winning ways rather than seeking out race in every equation (as the BNP do); rather than recklessly racialise social problems, the strategy must from here on, be to try and socialise racial problems instead. In simple terms anti-racism should be just that; the absolute and automatic rejection of discrimination or victimisation on racial grounds. No more no less.

Any attempts to right past wrongs, socially engineer a black middle class, or allocate resources by divisive criteria, is to dangerously over reach, to the utter detriment of anti-racism's core value: 'fairness'.

Besides which, hierarchical divisions are overwhelmingly determined on the grounds of class not race. Only when released from minority over majority constraints, would a 'unity of interests' paradigm allow for the putting forward of forceful demands, not only for 'adequate' resources sufficient to ameliorate hostility, but for the extra resources necessary to both grease integration and refloat the 'sink estates' 'invited' to play host to immigrants of whatever classification.

An unapologetically vulgar demand, for an injection of Lottery money to finance projects seen to benefit the entire community, would instantly outflank all who currently seek to exploit the refugee crisis negatively. Rather than lobbying the Home Office in pursuit of what is widely perceived to be sectional interests, imaginatively targeting prestige projects, who have themselves enjoyed huge subsidies from Lottery handouts, would see race instantly displaced by class in the debate. Having demanded sacrifices from everyone else it would be revealing to see how liberals responded when invited to make some of their own?

Moreover, as is evident from the political invective unleashed by the "10 minute riot" in Charleroi, (surely the shortest 'riot' on record?) anti-racism is increasingly a camouflage for anti-working class elitism. Official anti-racism allows the middle classes to publicly air their fear and hatred of the lower orders publicly. By invoking the anti-racist clause liberals feel free to express their contempt for society's base. Anti-racism makes it perfectly all right to hate the poor.

One *Observer* reporter for example "regretted that the Belgian police were not armed with real bullets", while another "wondered whether the [England supporters] were human at all?" Topping them all was the "GRUNT, GRUNT,

GRUNT: the only language they understand" headline in the *Mirror*. A timely reminder that Mid-Victorian perceptions of race, related originally to social gradations within European society, and were only later transposed to the non-European world.

What we now see as social distinctions, were then seen as racial ones - and may be again. As author Nick Cohen put it recently: "We live in an age where racial hatred is persona not grata, so is hatred of women and hatred of gays, but the one thing that's flourishing is class hatred."

To assume that such negative stereotyping and the near Victorian perceptions of the 'white' working class are confined to the liberal media, would be a grave error. Across the left, and specifically within the LSA, finger-wagging and worse, (as attempts thus far to promote rational debate on the refugee issue have exposed) is *de rigueur*. During one discussion, it was even suggested that the 'military occupation' of working class areas like Tipton was the practical solution to support for the BNP there.

Fascism was once described as 'socialism without the proletariat'. And here is the flip side. The novel but increasingly popular concept of 'anti-fascism not only without the working class - but opposed to it'. So for Tipton, ditto Bexley, and if necessary naturally the working class as a whole.

Not unnaturally those who regard the working class as 'a lost cause' champion the Greens as natural allies. Happily others recognise that in the 'battle for working class hearts and minds' it is not the Greens, but the far right which will be the LSA's arch rival for the title: radical alternative.

Not unnaturally those who regard the working class as 'a lost cause' champion the Greens as natural allies. At present within the LSA this may even be a majority. Happily others recognise that in the 'battle for working class hearts and minds' it is not the Greens, but the far right which will be the LSA's arch rival for the title: radical alternative.

Many [of the same] people point with satisfaction to the recent Haringey result as proof of 'life in the left'. Saving a deposit is 'perfectly respectable for a party of the far-left' we are told. A mindset yet to come to terms with the LSA, to all intents and purposes, these days actually being the Left. Here now, with all the attendant responsibility, is where the buck stops.

Over the last century, socialism has lost the economic argument with capitalism, the ideological argument with liberalism, and is now faced with the possibility of losing the tactical argument with fascism. Realistically, the only hope of ever returning to winning ways, is by first having the courage to acknowledge 'a lucid registration of historical defeat'. Meaning that if working class hegemony remains the unchanging goal, then tactics and strategies require some serious revision.

More fundamentally winning the battle for position means stubbornly rejecting the solutions proffered by both middle class liberalism and nationalism alike, and constructing, from scratch if necessary, a progressive working class alternative to both. How is this to be done? To begin with, each situation must be looked at from the long and short term interests of the working class itself. Which is to say by first assessing objective conditions and only then envisaging what the working class as ruling class might consider an ideal. A method of operation made possible only by, as Marx did, 'entirely trusting to the intellectual abilities of that class' itself.

So, if the LSA is to prove the way forward, if the LSA truly wants to change society, it must change the working class. To change the working class, the left must first be prepared to change itself. Something else 'communists' will, I suspect, need to be 'uncompromising' on.

(The complete version of this speech can be found on the RA website)

THE FEW

over 3%. Even the banning of their left-wing rivals couldn't stop the SPD melt-down which dropped a further 2% to 18.3% in 1933.

As bad, Foot totally ignores the reality of all other parties in the Republic being, to one degree or another, (by today's standards certainly) extremely right-wing. And so while tactics differed, all were united in the fight for the 'total extermination of Marxism'. So much then for the "substantially greater influence" of the Left.

2. Foot also throws in that other old SWP favourite, the inference of some sort of routine communist fraternisation. Or the "communist preference" as he puts it, for creating alliances with the Nazis rather than the social democrats. Foot alleges that the communists preferred "to stage strikes and link up with the Nazis rather than argue for a united front in the country and the factories against the fascists". This too is almost complete rubbish. In truth, while communists enjoyed wide support particularly among the unemployed within working class communities, it was the far larger Social Democrats who held sway in the factories. Barring a miracle, if a 'united front' was to materialise from there, the initiative undeniably lay with the SPD. Even more erroneous is the charge of 'linking up with the fascists' and the inference of 'strikes' jointly staged. To start with, even the use of the word 'strike' in the plural, is an exaggeration.

On the one occasion the Nazis joined a picket line it was in support of the Berlin Transport Workers Strike in 1932. It was a strike that was indeed communist-led. The Nazis, who at the time, for entirely tactical reasons were emphasising the 'socialist' over the 'national' in their strap line, felt they had no option but to support it. Otherwise their support from among the German working class (something else the SWP deny incidentally) would have been seriously shaken. "We are in by no means an envious position" Goebells wrote at the time. "Many bourgeois circles are frightened off by our participation in the strike. But that's not decisive. These circles can very easily be won back. But if we'd have lost the workers they'd have been lost for ever". The loss of 'a few thousand votes' in a more or less 'pointless election' was of no consequence in the 'active revolutionary struggle' the propaganda boss commented.

Not only was the election itself not pivotal as Foot insinuates elsewhere, it is perfectly plain that it was fascism that was forced with gritted teeth, to temporarily adapt to a communist-led class war agenda. The exact reverse of the outrageous Foot allegation that it was the other way round.

3. So far so bad for Foot you might think. But the biggest and politically most dangerous calumny goes to the very heart of his revisionism. This is the largely unchallenged assumption, of the capacity of the tactic of the 'united front' to 'stop Hitler' by itself. Numbers alone, (regardless of tactics, which are deliberately never mentioned) would, Foot implies, have been sufficient. We have already identified one gaping hole in it. But there's more.

For Foot, of those who, to quote Pastor Niemoller, "stood up" to the Nazis, it was the "rigid refusal" of working class Communist street-fighters to bond with the Social Democrats, which more than any other factor was responsible for handing the Nazis victory on a plate.

But even thoroughly reformist Social Democratic leader Karl Kautsky, generally reviled in Bolshevik circles as "the renegade Kautsky", appreciated that "acts of violence cannot be prevented by votes and editorials, or by protest meetings".

Moreover, without "organised combat detachments the most heroic masses will" as Trotsky repeatedly emphasised would "be smashed bit by bit by the fascist gangs".

Even when leaving aside for the moment the pivotal question of political 'unity on whose terms', (revolution v reform), the very best in the circumstances SPD/CP unity as proposed by Foot could possibly have provided, was - electoral unity only!

Yet "a united front" on such a limited basis, Trotsky was absolutely adamant, "decides nothing". Particularly when the real 'battle was for control of the streets'. Thus for Trotsky the real "value of the united front", was "when Communist detachments come to the help of Socialist detachments and vice versa".

Fascism's paramilitary cutting edge and the necessary 'return of serve' by anti-fascism, is something Foot, as a liberal, entirely ignores as if it were a side-show. But as any reading of history bears out, controlling the streets was, and was considered to be, strategically pivotal. A reality even the official record of injuries and fatalities bears out. In 1932, the year before Hitler took power, the authorities reported that between January and September of that year, seventy Nazis, fifty four Communists, ten Social Democrats and twenty 'others' were killed in clashes - in Prussia alone. As guns were used only rarely, the level of the fatalities are a testimony to the

ferocity of the hand to hand clashes, and also signify that the level and nature of the struggle was both persistent and intense. A low level form of civil war in fact. Other statistics give a sense of the scale of the conflict. Red Aid a communist support organisation committed to looking after victims, prisoners and dependents, reported that, between 1930 and 1931, no less than 18,000 communist volunteers were wounded in such skirmishing.

Not only does the level of struggle gives a lie to the Foot prognosis that this could have all been sorted constitutionally and possibly even more ridiculously by implication - on the result of that one election - it also exposes the myth of the united front solely on an electoral basis providing any form of solution. Moreover as Trotsky makes abundantly clear, the real value, (in total contrast to the SWP interpretation) was not in an electoral alliance but was, first and foremost and almost exclusively a - paramilitary one!

A yet even more startling truth is hidden within the dry and dusty statistics. Though a mere detail, it nevertheless explodes the myth of communist intransigence, and emphatically reverses the finger of blame.

What the official records show, is that far from communists being 'especially sectarian', or having a 'preference for linking up with Nazis' pound for pound, and by some distance, the commitment of the far smaller organisation to the fight against fascism, dwarfed and shamed, (though not in Foot's eyes) the strikingly larger Social Democrat Party. Staggeringly, the Communists had two more of their fighters killed in Prussia in the first nine months of 1932, than the 52 the SPD lost across - the whole of Germany - in the previous eight years! Statistics which are all the more extraordinary, when you consider that in 1928 the Communists had a membership of only 130,000 while around the same time, the SPD boasted of a membership just 30,000 - short of a million! Cold statistics such as this utterly demolish the Foot argument that it was the communists who were guilty of not pulling their weight. On the contrary it is the 'flabby pacifism' of the SPD that emboldened the Nazis.

Had the SPD even matched the Communists in terms of the wearing down of Nazi morale: "correct the papa's son's patriots in their own way" as Trotsky put it, not just in the "crucial few months before the deluge" that Foot typically refers to, but in the eight years from 1925 onwards when battle was joined, neither party, whether 'united' or otherwise would have ended up in the camps.

To sum up, a compound of the 'Jews first' (see *Hegemony over History*, vol 4 iss 7) 'hardmen responsible' revisionism favoured by Weisel and Foot produces a unitary view of events, that is both grotesque and Orwellian. Working class communists are written out of history on the one hand, at the same time as being held to account for it's darkest chapter on the other. To then use, as is the case, this 'false memory' "to arm us against any repetition of similar horrors in the future" as Foot argues; to use it as the template for current anti-racist/fascist strategies is, lunatic, and suicidal.

If Catchpole can describe "C4's attempt to destroy 'The Few' as it's slimiest hour", then surely Foot's attack on 'The Few' in the another conflict, is his slimiest paragraph.

'History', as someone once said, is merely 'prophecy in reverse'. For the SWP, as Foot demonstrates, what is reversed is not prophecy but truth.

REDNECKS OF THE WORLD...

Over a period of some three weeks during July Red Action members engaged in a 'debate' on the UK Left internet discussion site. Louise Cooper reports.

News of Red Action's affiliation to the London Socialist Alliance travelled fast and has not, it must be said, been greeted with universal approval. Within the 'alliance' itself the response has been muted. In other quarters, the reaction has been vitriolic.

On the UK Left internet discussion group, for instance, there was outright hostility from the start. It all began innocently enough. We inadvertently became involved, when an SLP member, entirely off his own back, posted an item from the Red Action Newspaper on the LSA showing in the GLA elections in May, that he felt deserved a wider airing among the Left. The site holder Phil Holden, among others responded along the lines "that's it's all right to criticise from the sidelines but what have Red Action got to offer as an alternative... surely they should take this perspective into the alliance and fight for it!" When news then filtered through that Red Action had in fact affiliated, joy was hardly unconfined.

Setting the tone, Ian Donovan was first into bat: "I have been involved in the Socialist Alliance project for well over two years, before the SWP comrades, and I have never heard of Red Action having the slightest inclination to support the Socialist Alliance up till now. It looks to me like they are trying to jump on a gathering bandwagon."

And in any case, he went on "...they do not have the wherewithal to do anything to address the masses except publish a widely unread and obscure newspaper, which of course, is not really addressing the masses at all. They have no solutions, they are just another tiny and isolated left sect, albeit with a reputation for being 'hard knocks' vis-a-vis the fascists and a libertarian aspect to their politics. They really don't offer very much of anything at all to the working class."

Fatefully, in the immediate exchanges that followed, the term "middle class left" was used to describe the priorities of a certain section of the left: 'the age of consent', etc. This expression was used by - and this is important - the SLP member mentioned previously. In a flash, Donovan was not only hanging the accusation on Red Action but, immediately began retaliating with some soubriquets of his own. He would continue to do so on practically every posting he would go on to make thereafter. As the debate went on for over three weeks and the total contributions amounted to over 60,000 words this was, depending on your point of view, either heroic or just plain barmy.

When Red Action's under-representation on the LSA's steering committee was raised, Donovan described it as "whingeing". And added, if RA were not happy, we should go back to our "working class ghetto... why would you want to join a 'middle class' alliance anyway".

Having worked up a head of steam the IWCA, an entirely innocent in the affair, was condemned as "sectarian and redneck" and its slogan "Working class rule for working class areas" described as "bullshit". For Donovan: "The working class should rule the whole of society, not just some self-defined 'working class' ghetto. From this you would think that the working class are not immigrant, gay or anything else not native to Red Action's self-defined constituency in the most deprived but less integrated sections of the white working class in the East End."

Without any prompting Donovan had begun to betray the unhealthy obsession of the liberal left with colour.

In later exchanges, he routinely employs the term "multi-ethnic working class". Red Action's use of the term "working class" as an all-encompassing one is quickly redefined by Donovan as really expressing an interest in the needs of the "white" working class - only! Throughout, these colour-coded prefixes are all exclusively of Mr Donovan's own making.

A little too readily, others on the list unquestioningly accept the Donovan stereotype. Janine Booth of the Alliance for Workers Liberty piled-in to deliver her tuppence worth, "...it does not mean - as Red Action seem to do - denouncing everyone who disagrees with you as 'middle class', every concern with basic humanitarianism as 'liberal', and thinking that you've got all the answers because you're hard and everyone else is a wimp."

Liam Sharp of West Midlands RA sought to introduce some clarity. "Far from being content to produce an 'obscure newspaper' or casting aside our work in the Independent Working Class Association, we are also prepared to become involved as part of a larger alliance of left wing groups in order to advance within that alliance the need for the left to re-orientate themselves back to working class communities rather than become a 'rainbow coalition' of interest groups."

This reasonable account of RA's motives in joining the LSA, was instantly thrown back by Donovan: "What that means translated, is that your sectarian, redneck, IWCA project has failed and you now see the Socialist Alliance project as the means to revitalise your flagging fortunes, based on its relative success (which you played NO role in) against the IWCA's failure." (Remember that this 'relative success' of the LSA is based upon them polling half as many votes as the BNP in the London election.) The torch paper really took light when, prompted by the furore, a Donovan acolyte visited the Red Action site and returned with an item attacking the slogan 'Refugees Welcome Here!'

Naturally for Donovan and co, the call for 'Refugees Welcome Here!' is not a well-researched tactical demand based upon the objective conditions faced by both refugees and the 'host' working class communities, but is a statement of 'basic socialist and working class principle' - regardless of consequences. Anyone who dares question it, can be expected to be immediately categorised by Donovan and friends as 'lumpen', 'redneck', 'sectarian' or as Donovan himself puts it: "If you don't agree with this, you are a chauvinist or a racist, or both."

In vain, Red Action's Tony Evans fought against the increasingly warped invective of the Donovan camp: "Red Action's 'reasoning' is that against a background of a beleaguered working class, being forced to compete for resources with even more beleaguered refugees, for the left to seem so eager to take sides with the minority (to no useful effect) merely invites the BNP to take sides with the majority. If such thinking is 'strange' what should we make of someone who calls himself a 'communist' yet seems to see the

working class as an enemy to be conquered?"

Donovan has no time for such pussy-footing. Either Red Action proclaims 'Refugees Welcome Here!' or it stands to reason that RA must therefore be opposed to refugees.

The political fight to win over the hearts and minds of the working class to progressive politics within their communities, thereby making those communities welcoming places to all who want to live there is dismissed, in order to win some phoney point of 'principle' within the confines of the left. Damn the working class and their sensitivities. If they can't see that the left are always right, even when they are wrong, then they will just have to be coerced into what is good for them - the "socialist" alternative as prescribed by the LSA. "Confronting prejudice and reactionary chauvinism is always a 'price worth paying'. It is a question of principle."

In areas like Tipton and Bexley, according to Donovan, this might be achieved by 'militarising these communities' and reminding the working class of these areas of their responsibilities to the "multi-ethnic working class" which will form the vanguard of this mythical revolution.

"Maybe such backwaters will not be won over this side of the revolution, which may be based elsewhere (perhaps in the mainstream of multi-racial London). Maybe red guards based in Brixton or somewhere similar will put Bexley under military occupation. Maybe similar formations based in Handsworth or Sparkbrook will do the same to places like Tipton. Who knows?"

Not at any time is this challenged by the 120 list members. On the contrary the gloves come off.

One former WRP member, Gerry Downing, goes as far as inventing a new verb in his eagerness to join in the verbal assaults on RA, "those that seek to descend to the ideological level of the fascists in order to fight them (to the extent of skinheading to look like them!) can never defeat them." ("skinheading"!?!)

Despite strenuous Red Action efforts to take race out of the equation, Donovan and co continually raise it and re-raise it, in relation to the refugee question. Owen Jones offered the following check-off list: "How politically healthy a group is can be judged by a number of things - principally, their attitudes to women, to other races, to homosexuality, to refugees, to nationalism, to chauvinism, and to imperialism".

Or as Janine Booth, was forced to remind him "possibly even to the working class".

In the sectarian rampage that followed, all Red Action, AFA and IWCA initiatives were trashed. The non-racial anti-mugging campaign in Newtown, Birmingham, is dismissed as "racist" and as "KKK-style vigilantes" without so much as even a modicum of knowledge about the area, or the campaign, being volunteered. The IWCA challenge to Labour in Hertfordshire is also waved away as an irrelevance. "Council corruption" we are brusquely informed "is not a class issue".

All Red Action arguments are invalidated by our

dismissal of the left as being "middle class", while any baiting of Red Action is, acceptable because, as Ian Donovan says, "We do not want the left to capitulate to white nationalism like Red Action."

Even with any sense of objectivity a distant memory, Donovan finally goes too far. "You can argue about the formulation of a slogan, about what would be the best form of words to make up a strategic demand or even series of demands to forcefully express the need to defend refugees, but to go steaming in and denounce the left as 'middle class' for making this a focus of agitation, I find strange and deeply distasteful... in my experience the one's who go on about this are usually the worst middle class elements themselves."

It had taken more than a fortnight for the argument to come almost full circle. It would not have been entirely complete without the ritual condemnation of Red Action 'intimidation'. After weeks of goading, the Donovan faction suddenly began to complain of "thinly veiled threats of violence... I certainly wouldn't trust a Red Action member on a dark night..." etc. Following appeals, the site holder decided that something would have to be done. Comically, it was by now, the equally long-suffering SLP member who, in the interests of 'democratic debate', was duly fingered and 'escorted' (if that's the right word) from the site!

Looking back, it may have proved something of a turning point. 'Ubersectarianism' was suddenly on the defensive with others beginning to support the Red Action position and acknowledging that his campaign of vilification was used to 'stymie debate'.

"Stop complaining about the use of 'lumpen' and check the record" Donovan screeched. "The use of 'middle class' preceded the use of 'lumpen' in this discussion by quite a long time."

"It is very clear who started the abuse. Those who steamed in screaming that anyone who didn't agree with their reactionary position on refugees was 'middle class' were the people who 'started the abuse'.

But as is all too clear from the archive, it is Donovan himself who is the 'screamer'.

More seriously it has taken socialism some 50 years to get to a point where it attracts significantly less than 5% of the vote in London. There are many reasons for this. Chief among them, is the apparent inability of the Left to tell the truth on any consistent basis. This is seriously disabling for any form of activity. In politics, where there is a perennial tussle between ends and means anyway, it is terminal. If the tolerance of the level of sophistry displayed on the UK Left site is accepted as the norm

within the LSA, then it is doomed. And precisely because of that same methodology it will take them at least half a century to discover why, and yet another fifty years to publicly admit it.

"Maybe such backwaters will not be won over this side of the revolution, which may be based elsewhere (perhaps in the mainstream of multi-racial London). Maybe red guards based in Brixton or somewhere similar will put Bexley under military occupation. Maybe similar formations based in Handsworth or Sparkbrook will do the same to places like Tipton. Who knows?"



While in pubs after meetings relationships at leadership level can be convivial, among other strata it is 'business as usual'. Leading SWPer Rob Hoveman (left) chatting amiably to former Labour MP, Militant member and bitter rival, Dave Nellist (right).

A Word In Your Ear...



FREE TRADE UNIONS..? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

The "red" wedding of the year took place recently in the unlikely surroundings of a Catholic Church in Glasgow. That fist-clenching 'fighter for socialism' Tommy Sheridan bit the bullet, along with his principles, and married his trophy wife, Gail, an air stewardess. As can be seen from the picture of the "handsome couple", it was a jolly affair, with Tommy sporting the MacLean tartan which he picked in honour of one of his recently acquired revolutionary 'heroes', the Scottish socialist republican, John MacLean.

More curious than the ceremony itself is the honeymoon destination picked by this "man of principle". Cuba. Then again, Tommy and his Scottish Socialist Party colleagues believe that Cuba is a model of 'socialist' democracy that the people of Scotland should look to for inspiration.

This isn't an uninformed personal attack upon Sheridan either, because he is on record and in print as identifying Cuba as his prime example of 'socialism'. Indeed, while honeymooning in this "socialist" utopia, he even managed to devote his weekly *Daily Record* column (circulation 1.2 million) to a propaganda piece on behalf of the Cuban regime. Describing it as an, "Island where socialism is at its best," this is the Sheridan vision of what a "socialist" Scotland might look like.

Tommy's dispatch from Cuba was awash with references to his meeting with two Cuban government officials, as well as some quite hypocritical references to the genuinely revolutionary figure of Che Guevara, who himself fell foul of the regime, and was politically isolated by the very people who still run Cuba today. Instead of promoting the revolutionary legacy of Che, Tommy Sheridan's article was actually promoting the current leadership in Cuba who are light years removed from the politics and actions of Guevara, despite the murals of him that adorn many buildings, including the tourist hotels.

Tommy reminds us in the same newspaper column that the Cubans are 'justifiably proud' of the advances that they have made in education and health care since the revolution and he rails against the US led economic embargo of the island. A member of the Cuban National Assembly tells Tommy that 'socialism' has indeed provided plenty for his people: "I guarantee that every Cuban eats every day. Not as much as I would like, but every day, three times a day... Every Cuban has free health care cover, from the cradle to the grave. Every Cuban is educated free... Can you say the same for your country, or Europe, or America?"

The 1.7 million visitors to Cuba last year are hailed as virtual revolutionary heroes because, consciously or unconsciously, they broke the US embargo to bring much needed foreign currency to the country. Sheridan recommends that his fellow Scots should do likewise and take a holiday to this 'socialist' fantasy island. The Cuban government must have been very appreciative of Tommy's efforts on behalf of their burgeoning tourist industry.

No mention of Gary Glitter or the fact that Cuba, along with Thailand and the Philippines is now regarded as one of the prime "sex tourist" economies of the Third World. No mention either of the lack of free trade unions, political parties, free elections, or the repression by the regime of minorities such as gays.

The latter a somewhat strange omission from the leader of a party that saw itself as the champion of gay rights during the recent debate on the proposed repeal of Section 28 in Scotland. But the SSP's flirtation with the Cuban regime is not only confined to their leader.

At their national conference earlier this year, it was the mother of the bridegroom who proposed a motion of support for "socialist" Cuba. Coincidentally, a representative of the Cuban Government happened to be present when she did so. "Besides condemning the US blockade against Cuba, the motion referred to the country as "socialist" and saluted its "tremendous social advances". If this were not questionable enough, comrade Sheridan - substituting for her son - defended the lack of trade union and other freedoms in Cuba on the basis of their claimed absence in Britain".

Ma Sheridan then cut loose: "Perhaps the Cuban people don't want pluralism! Perhaps they don't want free trade unions!" she chuntered

Evidently appalled, a *Weekly Worker* reporter commented: "The wording of the motion and the enthusiasm of comrade Sheridan, certainly had me wondering whether or not the SSP leadership, or key sections of it, had entered into some secret diplomatic internationalist pact with the Cuban government." As this "truly awful speech" was straight out of the mother of the horse's mouth, it is certainly one explanation. Another is that "socialism" and, presumably, "socialists" know exactly what is good for the working class, even if they are sometimes too stupid to understand the benefits of 'socialism' for themselves. As Tommy himself boldly puts its:

"Cuba remains a burning flame of inspiration to socialists around the world."

How much would - or did - the Cuban government have to pay for propaganda like this? Certainly more than the cost of a free honeymoon, I'd guess.

Something We Said!

Red Action gave what was for some, a controversial presentation on anti-racism and the white working class, arguing that official anti-racism is a mask for liberal hostility to the poor, and how the ideas of multiculturalism are used to set different groups within the working class against each other.

Weekly Worker comments on address to Communist University 2000, 24.8.00.

Working class areas, especially those ravaged by drugs, poverty, and a whole myriad of social problems, end up having to cater for people many of whom have even more social problems. They haven't got barristers chairing the local residents association, nor have the time to create fictitious problems when confronted with so many real ones

...[Government] must take a lead in ensuring that refugees and immigrants are given fair opportunities and that they are housed according to the facilities available not according to the ease with which the well-heeled cappuccino mob can secure a NIMBY decision."

Republican News responds to successful High Court challenge by middle class residents in the South of Ireland against a reception centre for asylum seekers being placed in their area.

I have argued that the military campaign was necessary and, equally, now I would argue that it is no longer necessary ...Until the Brighton attack we were not being taken seriously by the British political establishment. We were trapped in the acceptable level of violence and it is important that the only way we could have lost this war was to be trapped in indefinitely fighting it. 'Brighton Bomber' Patrick Magee, *Daily Telegraph*, 28.8.00.

He never expected a heterosexual couple to be drinking in a gay pub with gay friends. The fact that the people he killed belonged to such a group is not as some commentators have suggested, proof that we live in far more harmonious and tolerant society than Copeland believed. If Copeland is a product of that same society how can this possibly be? ...He's the face of the future and in one form or another he'll be back.

Maureen Freely, *The Independent*, 3.7.00.