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flux



*A magazine of
libertarian socialism*

STITCH-UP CITY

*Issue 6
75p*

Great Art of our Time Number 269:



Mrs Munch Bemoans the
Tomato Sauce Stains on the Wall.....

flux

*A Magazine of Libertarian Socialism
Issue 6
May 1993*

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Editorial

“Lock ‘em up!” That’s the latest solution to juvenile crime by the powers that be. Not the most original of ideas, admittedly, but there’s one big difference with these repackaged borstals - they’re privatised!

At first sight the general public’s response to juvenile crime appears self-contradictory. On the one hand, there is widespread cynicism about policing methods, especially when it comes to securing convictions - as Andrew Green recounts in this issue. But on the other hand, we get a general, uncritical yell for ‘justice’, most grotesquely shown by the attempted lynching of two ten year old boys accused of Jamie Bulger’s murder.

In fact, this isn’t such a great contradiction when we realise how threatening juvenile crime is. Threatening, that is, to the illusion of domesticated bliss. In a society in which work is more and more skillless, boring and insecure, we are increasingly turning to consumption to give meaning to our lives. Our houses have become more important to us, our cars give us mobility and the means of temporary escape, as do TVs, videos, all the comforting gadgetry. Opportunistic break-ins and TWOC-ings shatter these individual havens from a grimy world. We can’t help taking it so personally.

Domestic security firms flourish. Meanwhile, the state uses these fears to justify increasingly overt control and intimidatory policing. It even gets us to police ourselves, from Neighbourhood Watch, to Pub Watch, to Card Watch. Neighbourhood Watch encapsulates the right-wing solution to crime. Its not-so-hidden agenda is to make us blame each other and ourselves (“Why oh why didn’t I install laser beam triggered alarms to my inner city bedsit?”). Meanwhile we are distracted from looking at the role of capitalism or the state in all this.

But give the right its due. At least its solution connects with working class fears of losing hard-earned belongings, and justified anger at anti-social crime. Contrast this to much of the left, who when not completely capitulating to the right-wing agenda, pretends nothing’s really happened.

What the left should be calling for is regeneration of these alienated, broken communities. Not the GLC or Derek Hatton way, in which local organisations come to depend, precariously, on local government handouts (see both ‘The Judy Greenaway Interview’ and ‘Pole-emic’). Instead we should be struggling to rebuild community solidarity, from the anger that already exists at long mistreatment and neglect. It is partly in the communities, we might add, that the ‘New Social Movements’ (see this issue) have both arisen, and made the most impact. The left cannot afford to say that the working class estates are less important than the dwindling shop floors.

This isn’t to say that things aren’t happening on the industrial front. From miners to rail workers to the Timex dispute, strikes and pickets are taking hold with widespread support. Even ‘middle class radicalism’ (see this issue for a plea to take it seriously) has reared its head again, as teachers prepare to boycott school testing.

Which all goes to show, as far as socialism is concerned, that you can’t keep a good idea down.

The FLUX Collective
May 1993

STITCH-UP CITY

OR

from the City of Fear

When Scott Tomlinson's car was surrounded by armed men, onlookers thought he was being robbed. Scott thought they were going to kill him. He drove off, knocking two of them over. The armed men were members of a Greater Manchester police specialist squad, the Tactical Firearms unit, and they were attempting to make an arrest in their own inimitable way. The crime? The Drugs Squad had found drugs and firearms in a house belonging to Scott's sister. She hadn't lived there for three months: and the police knew that Scott hadn't been there during this period, because they'd had the place under surveillance (or so they claimed, in order to obtain a search warrant - later, when the defence wanted to call Detective Sergeant Paul Boone who was supposed to have been carrying out the surveillance, he said he hadn't been watching the place after all). The evidence against Scott? He had a key to the house, and two fingerprints of his were on a carrier bag found there - along with many other people's prints. How could they construct a case on such little evidence? we wondered. He explained: his reckless driving was represented as an indication of guilt. Scott received an eleven year sentence for possession of drugs and firearms.

Violent ambushes are just one tactic of the GMP. Combine them with a plot to have the victim in possession of a gun, and you can conjure serious crimes out of the air, such as "conspiracy to rob" and "possession of a firearm with intent...". Jerry McCarthy was short of money, so for £60 he agreed to deliver a sawn-off shotgun to a pub car park where Allan Bretherton was waiting for him. Unknown to him, Bretherton was a police informer and agent provocateur. The Firearms Unit was lying in wait: they rammed the car he was driving and smashed its windows with clubs. It was his employer's BMW. DC John Fox of

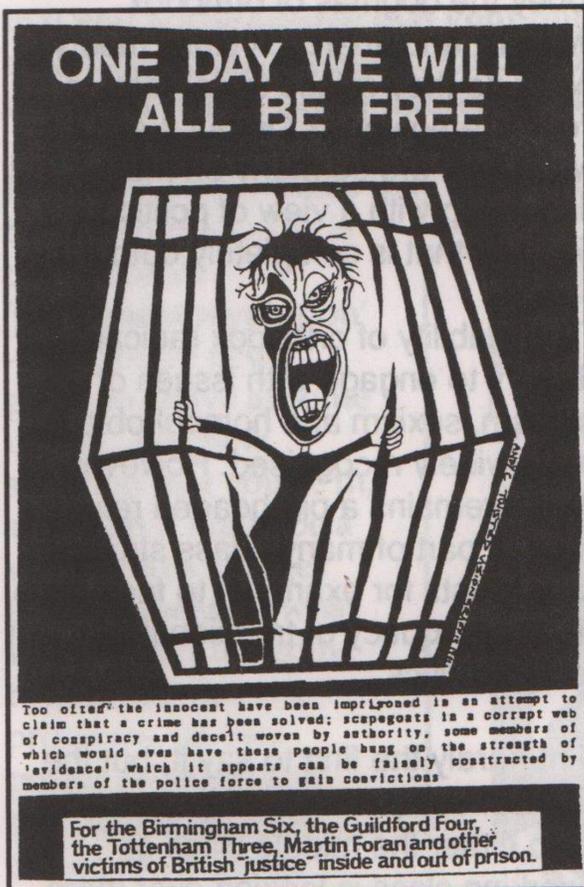
the Serious Crimes Squad was there to charge Jerry with conspiracy to rob. Bretherton was in the car park and in the police station where they took Jerry. Although well known to the police, Bretherton wasn't charged with conspiracy, and wasn't available to appear as a witness at Jerry's trial. DS Kevin Ryan questioned him. Jerry was sent down for nine years. We have been told by several people that there are other cases almost identical to Jerry's, involving Allan Bretherton - that of Harold Love being mentioned often.

This is the creative side of police work. You don't need crimes, just a little help from villains in return for favours, like bail instead of a remand in custody, or a word from the prosecution to the judge so they'll get shorter sentences. You can get convictions against anyone - even fellow police officers. When they came to stitching up PC Ged Corley, it wasn't so easy to find villains who'd make up stories about crimes they'd committed with him. Many refused, but in the end they found a few, including Brian Sands, George Allen and Paul Ramsey. Then there was a problem that Corley wasn't available to commit the armed robberies for which they wanted to frame him, since he was on duty at the time, so the "master criminal" Corley was invented, the brains behind



the "Corley Gang". He was sent down for 17 years, but released on bail even before his successful appeal was heard: he sued the GMP, settled for £235,000, and now drives a green Rolls Royce round Manchester, "to show them" (his former colleagues). Sands, Ramsey and co are doing time for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, and Chief Superintendent Arthur Roberts, Inspector Peter Jackson and DS Kevin Ryan (see above) have been charged with the same offence.

As Sharon Raghip once said, "It's



not just rotten apples, it's whole orchards." The routine of malpractice is established through its successes. When they nicked George Allen for robbery of the Jackson's Boat pub, he cashed in on the favour he'd done them by helping to stitch up Corley. In return for a light sentence and leaving his two accomplices out of the frame, Allen names as his accomplices two men he'd met casually, Robert Hall and Mick Royle. Allen brought forward his two mistresses as witnesses, and for their part police contributed a statement extracted from an ex-girlfriend of Hall, and the case thus cobbled together was enough to send the two men down for ten years.

Creative policing makes for better clear-up rates: if the suspects don't expect to be arrested, they're easy to catch, and they don't have any defence prepared; better still, invent the crime and it's instantly cleared up. If someone dies, it must be murder - even if at first it was obviously an accident (as when Ian Marriot inhaled hydrofluoric acid fumes, a tragedy now compounded by the 20-year sentence given Mark Taylor for this "murder") or self defence (as when Darren Southward fought back against his mother's violent ex-lover, and was persuaded to plead guilty to murder because he was told - falsely - that his mother, also charged, would be freed if he took all the blame: Darren is in for life).

Such victims as these populate the fictional underworld that the GMP create and bring before the courts and the gullible media reporters who wait for the ready-made news packaged for them by their friends in the CID. But is there not, then, a criminal underworld operating in Manchester? Armed robberies take place, and the violence generated by the criminalisation of drug use (for example) is now notorious in some areas of Manchester. Those who commit such anti-social acts may be part of an underworld, but it's not the same underworld as that represented to the courts and the public by the GMP. It's an underworld on whose fringes the police operate, working with grasses and agents provocateurs like Allen and Bretherton, so they know about the underworld - they are aware that people like those mentioned above are not part of it.

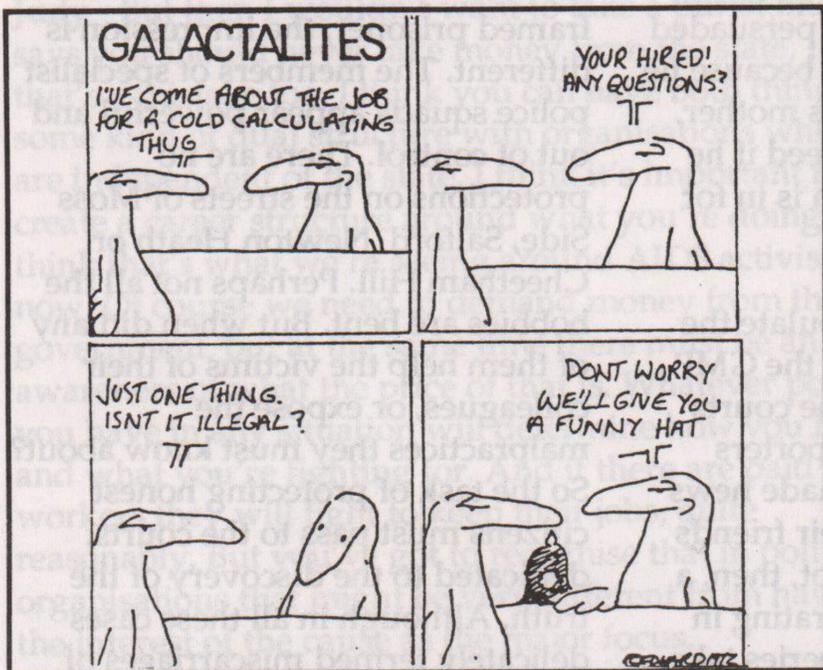
Four of them - Scott Tomlinson, Jerry McCarthy, Michael Royle and Mark Taylor - were listed in 110 cases of possible miscarriages of justice in *The Guardian* on 16 July 1992. *Conviction* supplied information on these and other cases from the Manchester area for that dossier. Mike Royle's appeal was successful, but we had additional cases for the revised list published on 11 November, and more letters

from prisoners from the Manchester area coming in. *Conviction* is a very small voluntary organisation, and it only helps prisoners who say they have been framed for serious crimes, with sentences of six years or more. All cases come to us unsolicited: we dare not invite prisoners to seek our help - there are far too many framed prisoners in British gaols. So perhaps this self-selected clutch of cases tell us nothing about the operation of the criminal justice system in Manchester in general.

But when you enter the world of the framed prisoner, the impression is different. The members of specialist police squads appear powerful and out of control. There are no protections on the streets of Moss Side, Salford, Newton Heath or Cheetham Hill. Perhaps not all the bobbies are bent. But when did any of them help the victims of their colleagues, or expose the malpractices they must know about? So the task of protecting honest citizens must pass to the courts, dedicated to the discovery of the truth. Although in all these cases delicately termed miscarriages of justice, the evidence is minimal, inadequate and tainted, it's upheld by the courts, and presented in such a way that juries are convinced that the people in the dock are villains, underworld characters who live by



crime, who actually committed the crimes that are being described to them by respectable police officers, barristers and judges. The explanation of how this effect is achieved, again and again, and how all the supposed rights and protections of defendants are in practice turned against them, is too complex to explore here (and was competently explained in *Conviction* by Doreen McBarnet, published in 1981). But the effects are clear. (1) Police methods are approved: any conviction based on malpractice is a sign of encouragement to continue that malpractice. (2) The general public are reassured that the police are clearing up crime successfully. (3) The general public are told that the city in which they live is a frightening place and that their only protectors are the police. (4) Everyone is presented with the inescapable conclusion that crime and policing are necessary and unavoidable parts of everyday life. And (5): the working class is shown that its enemies are within its own ranks (virtually all victims of framing are working class, most victims of crime are working class) - that it can never be united as a class, divided as it is by the delinquency it breeds.



Victims of the criminal justice system - defendants found guilty - are needed for the continuous renewal of these effects. Powerless, they find only one set of allies: the lawyers paid for by a kindly state. And who comes when a suspect cries for help from the police station? In Manchester, it's very likely to be not a solicitor, but a legal

executive who is an ex-police officer. Perhaps they are already acting for grasses such as those who gave evidence against Corley and others. A solicitor's approval and encouragement, against Corley and others. A solicitor advised Darren Southward to plead guilty to a murder he hadn't committed on the morning his trial was due to start, giving him only a few minutes to decide whether to change his plea. In case after case we are told of barristers who ignore clients' instructions, failing to challenge police evidence, failing to call witnesses available to help the defence, calling defendants to the witness box when they don't want to be called, not calling defendants to the witness box when they do want to be called, not asking them the questions that defendants want to be asked, and giving the impression that they would prefer to be helping the prosecution. Barristers will do nothing that might upset their colleagues - prosecutors and judges. Lawyers prefer clients to plead guilty, so they can get on to the next case, and the next fee. There is no one left to help defendants. And that's why stitch-up city is such a frightening place.

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Public

Political identities are complex, contradictory and often disconcerting. People whose 'objective interests' might seem to lie in radical change are often sickeningly conservative. On the other hand revolutionary aspirations are sometimes expressed by individuals with a middle class background, a group who, according to orthodox radical theory, have an interest in maintaining the status-quo.

What's going on? Why don't people obey the dogmas of orthodox Marxist and anarchist class theory? Why do they refuse to conform to 'our' stereotypes? Or, put it another way, why are so many on the left still labouring with a view of political identity that is completely outdated?

The inability of orthodox radical theory to engage with issues of racism, sexism and homophobia is now widely recognised. However, there remains a pig-headed refusal on the part of many (class struggle anarchists for example) to face up to the inadequacy of traditional views of class politics.

I'm hardly the first to say it, but the idea of compartmentalising people into either the middle class or working class is looking ever more roopy. This neat dualism has been subverted in a multitude of ways. One of the most important has been the advent of welfare capitalism. Within welfare capitalism, or late capitalism, the state co-ordinates and intervenes in the 'free market'. It pays and manages, for example, those items of social expenditure which are necessary for the reproduction of capitalism yet have grown too expensive and complex to be left to the business sector, things like education and training. [As any astute tory knows, if the welfare sector was abolished British capitalism would collapse, a fact of economic and political life that explains why it is no smaller today than it was in 1979]. The result of all this intervention is to massively

Sector Radicalism. It Exists!....

increase the size of the education and welfare sectors, a process that promotes social mobility and destabilizes class allegiances and identities.

And yet, instead of looking critically at these shifting political identities, a sizeable and dominant portion of the libertarian left has decided it prefers to live in a bizarre fantasy of its own creation, a world in which the 'authentic' political identity of the various classes is viewed as objective and eternal, rather than as a constantly changeable social creation.

Dream on. Working and middle class politics as they actually exist, here in 1993, don't even approximate to the desperate fantasies of many of today's ultra-radicals. And nor have they for some time.

The mismatch between the ideal and the reality is so transparent, the talk about objective, 'authentic' interests, so obviously wishful, that some libertarians seem to have decided that the best policy is to dispense with a plausible theory of class politics altogether. For groups such as Class War class has become an aesthetic issue: the working class are portrayed as a bunch of Sid James clones, engaged in some endless Carry on Class Violence farce, good natured morons who like nothing more than a biff up with the bill.

This all too familiar cliché has entertained diner guests in the home counties for hundreds of years. Now, however, it's being recycled into a supposedly affirmative aesthetic of extremism - it is a transparently playful and self-conscious caricature, a fiction

that works on the level of fiction, but is completely removed from the important task of developing useful or plausible representations of class identity.

Crude portrayals of class identity also have a damaging effect on our understanding of the middle class. Middle class radicalism has never been properly addressed or understood within revolutionary theory. Instead simplistic, moralistic stereotypes have been conjured up. The middle class, it has been argued, cannot be trusted. A few odd-balls may see the light and 'come over' to the 'other side' but the 'real' nature of their kind is quite different and predetermined: to control and manipulate the working class and otherwise do the bidding of the bosses.

I want to suggest an alternative way of looking at the middle class. This isn't just a theoretical parlour game or an exercise in personal self-vindication. Understanding the nature of modern political identities is vital for the development of libertarian left politics. If we carry on taking a contemptuous and/or crude view of the middle class (and this often works out as self-loathing and self-rejection, both useless and indulgent activities) we risk placing ourselves at the mercy of a deeply misleading view of modern political process, one that will be unable to lead the movement out of its present ghetto.

I'd suggest that a more plausible and useful way of looking at class is to stress that it is fractured and that its constituent groups can have very different, indeed contradictory, political interests and histories. The tension between those professionals in the business, 'free-market' sector (managers etc.) and those in the public sector (including students) is the most important of these fractures. The former group has an

entrenched commitment to capitalism and the reproduction of the status-quo. The politics of those connected to the public sector is, however, more ambiguous; it is often open to anti-capitalism ambitions.

Of course, this commitment, like the welfare state itself, is contradictory. Welfare professionals can be egalitarian and democratic one moment (the teacher tells us we are all equal; the social worker forms an anti-racist group etc.), authoritarian and reactionary the next (the teacher tells us to sit down, shut up, and conform). Yet despite this tension there remains a potentially powerful subversive tendency amongst the public sector middle class, a tendency that has manifested itself in the enormous support students, teachers, social workers etc. have given over the years to numerous radical struggles (from anarchism to anti-sexism, from the SWP to anti-racism).

The receptivity of this group to left ideas (of all kinds) is neither coincidental nor unimportant. Non-market values are built into the moral structure of the public sector. Equality of opportunity and public service are considered almost sacred values by public professionals and many of the students whom they influence, values which remain in a constant state of tension with our amoral, 'free market' society. Thus, although there are hundreds of ways the welfare state serves the reproduction of capitalism (for example, by attempting to create a trained and disciplined population), it also contains the seeds of an alternative, oppositional consciousness.

I'm not arguing here that the public professions are more radical than the working class. Neither am I saying that they're not plenty - perhaps the majority - of individuals within this group whose grasp of the political connotations of their work is virtually nil. What I am suggesting is that that isn't the end of the story; for

.....Honest!!

alongside the conservatism another tendency exists, a tendency towards radicalism, a tendency that is rooted, not in do-gooding altruism, but in the moral contradictions that wend their way through the heart of public provision in a capitalist state.

For those who may be tempted to agree but think that I'm describing a marginal phenomenon, of little importance compared to the potential might of the working class, I'd simply point to postwar history. Alongside (and often in advance of) other groups, students and other middle class oppositionals have fermented many of the most important 'revolutionary' moments of our era (in the West at least). From Paris 1968 to Prague 1989, it has been the spawn of the universities, of the art colleges, and other such public institutions who have produced some of the most trenchant and radical opposition to the authoritarian state.

This doesn't mean, of course, that public sector radicalism is somehow superior to the radicalism of other groups. What it does mean is that we need to stop being embarrassed about non-working class radicalism and start using its incredible potential to our advantage. If we are serious about libertarian change then we have got to start taking every potential site of radical consciousness seriously.

Alastair Bonnett

Shameless self-promotion: I've written about these issues in a lot more detail in **Radicalism, Anti-racism and Representation** (Routledge), a book which is due out October 1993, surely the ideal christmas or birthday gift for that difficult-to-buy-for relative or friend!

BACK ISSUES

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"Hypnotised by the overtly fascist, we become less aware of those fascist moments which have become part of the web and weave of everyday ("democratic" capitalist) life. Missing all this fascism is seen as the unacceptable bogey on the fringes, and anti-fascism becomes simply a defence of liberal democracy"

This was the view of Flux contributor Andy McLure, in his article in Flux 5 about the Left and fascism. But what exactly did he mean, fascist moments? Here's an example.

It's common to hear lefties dismiss the tabloid press as fascist. Understandable as this might be it isn't accurate, for the simple reason that the Sun, Mail, Star, Today etc. are very clearly Tory papers. Nationalist, bigoted and reactionary, the cotton wool in the ears of England's dreaming, the political stance of these papers is Conservative.

In stark contrast to Conservatism, fascism has historically combined elements of overt populist state socialism with explicit and unashamed nationalism and racism. Today, openly fascist groups such as the BNP use three key themes to communicate their ideology.

Firstly, they lean heavily upon elements of populist socialism, such as mistrust of politicians and bureaucracy and hatred of the rich. Secondly, they take up people's genuine interest in their own communities, but move it away from its roots in their shared experience, offering instead pseudo-scientific explanations based upon racial identity. Thirdly, they proclaim liberal values of self-determination and racial tolerance, although not to argue for mutual aid and self-help: instead, these values are made to support calls for the repatriation of "non-whites" and the withdrawal of (already pitiful) overseas aid - as the only way to guarantee the peaceful co-existence of cultures.

You could pick up any issue of the BNP's paper "The Nationalist" and see all three of these themes. They sit in clear contrast to the popular Conservatism of papers such as the "Sun": the "Sun" is obviously anti-bureaucracy rather than anti-capitalist, and irrational rather than superficially rational in its racism. And to varying degrees the same goes for the other tabloids, which are all very clearly Conservative rather than fascist - with one striking exception.

The exception is a paper not usually thought to have any political agenda beyond the continued objectification of women; a paper that, apart from knee-jerk reactions to its daily fare of bare breasts and telesex lines, has been largely ignored by the Left. The exception is the "Sport".

The cutie in column 3 is modelling a t-shirt advertised in a recent issue of the "Sunday Sport", as part of their "Buy British Goods" campaign. The shirt's slogan (*British by Birth, English by the Grace of God*) expresses mythical nationalist sentiments and a vague sense of threatened identity, above a St. George-on-his

-charger logo that the BNP themselves might have supplied. But the Sport's nationalism doesn't end with t-shirts and tits: here's the beginning of a recent front-page story that appeared under the headline "YOU FAT LAZY SODS":

ARAB bullyboys planning to flog a Brit half to death for calling them lazy bastards are whingeing Wogs who cannot even fight their own wars.

But just who DO these Saudi towelheads think they are?

The MOMENT that they're in lumber they come yelling for help from us, the Americans, the French, anybody to do their dirty

*** Turn to Page 2**

Sport 7/12/92

Alongside such rabid and racist nationalism, the Sport regularly indulges in bash-the-rich and anti-Tory monologues; the item quoted above ends by criticising the Conservative government for doing nothing to help a "Brit" in trouble abroad. The Sport was always opposed to the poll tax, and has published features on such topics as the plight of homeless people and the impossibility of living on benefit - features that would be more at home in the Daily Mirror. In the Sport, vicious nationalism (NA) and populist socialism (ZI) sit side by side.

Wrap this up in a mixture of visual and explicit textual titillation ("he slipped his finger deep inside me, another, then a third .. then he plunged his tongue deep inside and I squealed with delight" - you get the flavour even without being told the gender of both actors) and you get a heady brew.

The regular appearance of the Sport is, in a lowbrow kind of way, one of those fascist moments that Andy McLure referred to. Far from being harmless fun, or an appropriate target only for humorously-challenged feminists, the Sport is the nearest thing we have to a mass-circulation fascist daily.

This might sound extreme. But the whole point of showing how the Sport (unlike other tabloid papers) promotes a fascist ideology is not to emphasise the difference between it and the other tabloids. The point is to show this, and at the same time to realise the similarities and continuities.

This is important because fascism - as represented by groups such as the BNP - is only one expression of a complex economic and socio-cultural phenomenon. In Germany and Italy in the 1930's, forces integral to capitalism were concentrated and combined and the result was overt, swastika-waving fascism. Today in Britain the same forces are still present, but the BNP is only their most blatant expression - and not necessarily the most dangerous one.

I sometimes think about fascism, its myths and horrors, and ask myself how it could ever gain a foothold. Then I remember a Labour Party activist who once told me that he often reads the Sport, and that "its far better than the Sun because at least its left wing" - and I get a glimpse..

FASCIST Moments



Every issue of the Sport reweaves the colourful, irrational threads of modern fascism. You may object that "no-one takes it seriously" (though look at the UDM's "Buy British Coal" campaign). But the Sport's effect is more subtle and insidious than blatant propaganda, and so not being taken seriously might make its political message both easier to swallow and harder to notice.

Clearly, no-one reads the Sport to find out what's happening in politics today. But neither do people read it critically - and there lies the danger. Effective propaganda need not be true: it simply needs to be repeated many times, and to have a surface veneer of credibility. Draped lazily around the tits and bums, woven softly into the soft porn, the Sport gives its readers myriad examples of nationalism and socialism being quietly stitched together as a part of the fabric of everyday life.

Given this, the recent disclosure that David Sullivan, publisher of the Sport and owner of a massive porn empire is now the richest man in Britain, should be very disturbing news indeed.

Duncan Farley

p O L e - e M i C

The Other - Militant - Labour Party.

Whilst the Labour Party slip and slide and slide where they've always slid, Militant Labour are now well and truly 'out of the closet'. They were launched as an independent organisation following an internal split, which saw the departure of their erstwhile guru Ted Grant, and a number of pilot schemes. These included Leslie Mahmood's 'Real Labour' candidacy in the 1991 Walton bi-election, the launch of Scottish Militant Labour last year and Dave Nellist and Terry Fields standing against official Labour Party candidates in the last General Election.

In the Walton bi-election Mahmood won over 2,500 votes - which is not a discreditable amount for an independent candidate. However, in the following General Election she called on 'Real Labour' supporters to vote for the Kinnockite Peter Kilfoyle. This highlights the key dilemma for Militant. Are they a temporarily exiled opposition to the Labour Party establishment, still set on capturing the Labour movement machine as it is? Or, do they see themselves as an independent political force in their own right?

This dilemma was again apparent at their launch press conference, when Peter Taaffe said that although Militant Labour would mount an electoral challenge to the official Labour Party, they would pick their areas very carefully, to avoid the Tories slipping through on a split vote. Hardly an electoral threat!

As it stands, Militant want it both ways: to plough their own furrow ('reaching the voters Labour cannot reach' - especially 'Youth') whilst keeping open the avenues back into the Labour Party.

However equivocal Militant are in their attitude to the Labour Party, their jumping ship in this way must affect the debate on the possibility of a political life outside the Labour Party. This has to be a good thing.

In the meantime, "Militant Labour will be where all workers are prepared to fight. (They) will be prepared to organise and provide the necessary leadership." (Militant, April 2nd 1993).

This begs the question. What kind of leadership and organisation are Militant generously offering to provide?

Militant's 'credibility' rests on two events above all. Firstly, their claimed leadership of the Poll Tax Campaign and their control of Liverpool City Council in the mid-80's.

One of Militant's main election slogans is 'Who led (or as one wag had it 'Who bled') the Poll tax Campaign?'. Those of us who saw first hand Militant's tactics in that campaign - packing meetings with dubiously credentialed delegates, manufacturing paper organisations, dominating local groups and federations, their sheer hostility to independent initiatives such as the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign - can be in no doubt as to the kind of leadership Militant offer.

Perhaps the most telling moment of all was Militant's Steve Nally offering to 'name names' after the Trafalgar Square riot. This was an act of sheer panic by an organisation who feared that they had lost control of a movement. Better to collaborate with the police force, than have an independent movement!

Militant's control of Liverpool Council is equally instructive. Derek Hatton (OK, not part of the gang now but a definite Militant suit at the time) said on taking office:

"Not only are we going to change Liverpool, we are going to prove what Militant is all about. The revolution starts here..." They certainly proved what Militant were all about. But whose revolution were they starting?

Like the Labour Party they have just left, Militant operated within a distinctly reformist vein. In their attitude to the capitalist state there is little difference between the Militant and the Official wings of the Labour Party. Hatton said, "The plan was straight forward. We had taken office. Now we would bring the train to a standstill. Everything had to stop. Then we would re-route the engine and the whole council train onto our track. Those who wanted to stay on board could do so, but anyone who objected to the route we were taking would have to go." In those heady early days Hatton thought he was in Crewe. He may as well have been.

Like Militant's 'leadership' of the Poll Tax Campaign, their 'revolutionary' control of the council house is the stuff of myth and distortion.

The voluble promise of 5,000 council houses never happened. The pay roll was crudely manipulated to give 'jobs for the boys' (Militant only discovered sexual politics in the last couple of years). Notably, there was the Militant placeman from London, Sam Bond, appointed to advise the council on race issues in the city (no local black people available?) and the 'Red Guard' security force, who in the final days locked the revolutionary councillors out of their own council house.

By bringing local union stewards into the council decision making process, Militant tried to create a passive stage army of the council workforce. Their deeply cynical attitude to their own workers came to a head when, trying to force the government to bail them out in 1985, they decided to issue 31,000 redundancy notices. So much for their revolutionary conquest of (local) state power!

Although they said they wouldn't really issue the notices, this act of brinkmanship fractured the alliance between Militant and key local union people. In an atmosphere of loud recrimination the fight for jobs and services in Liverpool collapsed. Hatton went onto to other things and Alan Bleasdale had a field day.

Militant Labour represent an extremely odd amalgam. Hardline rhetoric couples with town hall boss politics. A reformist belief in Parliamentary change (the Socialist revolution equals an Enabling Act to nationalise the top 200 companies) mixes in with the worst elements of Leninist arrogance.

The slipping, sliding, modernising Labour Party may have left the Militant little room for manoeuvre inside. Outside, their elitist, 'revolutionary' reformism offers nothing we haven't seen before.

John French

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New Social Movements

Old certainties are threatened by New Social Movements. Marx and Engels critiqued the "true socialists" (1) of the 19th century whilst their loyal contemporaries bemoan the 1980's emergence of post-material (2) interests and struggles. What this article attempts to do is debate the growth of movements which do not exhibit class struggle in a conventional sense and to examine the potential of such organisation. I want to look at the appeal of political action which deviates from the smoke filled meeting rooms whilst at the same time I have wished to point out the strategic holes and theoretical deficiencies in stripping the economics from political understanding and behaviour.

'Marxists'

Marxists do not like the denial of class conflict which often goes on in non-Marxist circles. To most Marxists class relations are the most fundamental and significant characteristics of capitalist society. To change society, therefore, its economic base must be radically transformed. And the agents of such a process are the historically portentous working class. The strategy is clear and the strategists ready and waiting. Or so they will be - in time. Crudely put.

Stereotypically, people who become involved in New Social Movements are not concerned with the harsh

In this article *Carolyn Willow* examines topical debates around New Social Movements and class struggle. In arguing for a wider definition of materialism, she puts the everyday person in their broader social environment and recognises how resistance can take many forms.

realities of capital and economic exploitation. Their battles are with patriarchy, racism, homophobia and the oppression of disabled people for example. They have no analysis of the significance of class in determining social relations and their aims are one dimensional and partial. This is a misconception but one which is promulgated both within and outside of such movements. The means of protest, sites of struggle and internal organisational structures of these groups often appear so different from traditional class based campaigns that assumptions are made that class conflict has no place in the heads of the participants involved. The person attending a trade union meeting is automatically imagined to have some awareness of her or his class position and the role of the working class in usurping the power of the bosses. Yet the lesbian or gay bloke marching through London at Pride is seen as incapable of thinking about anything but gay

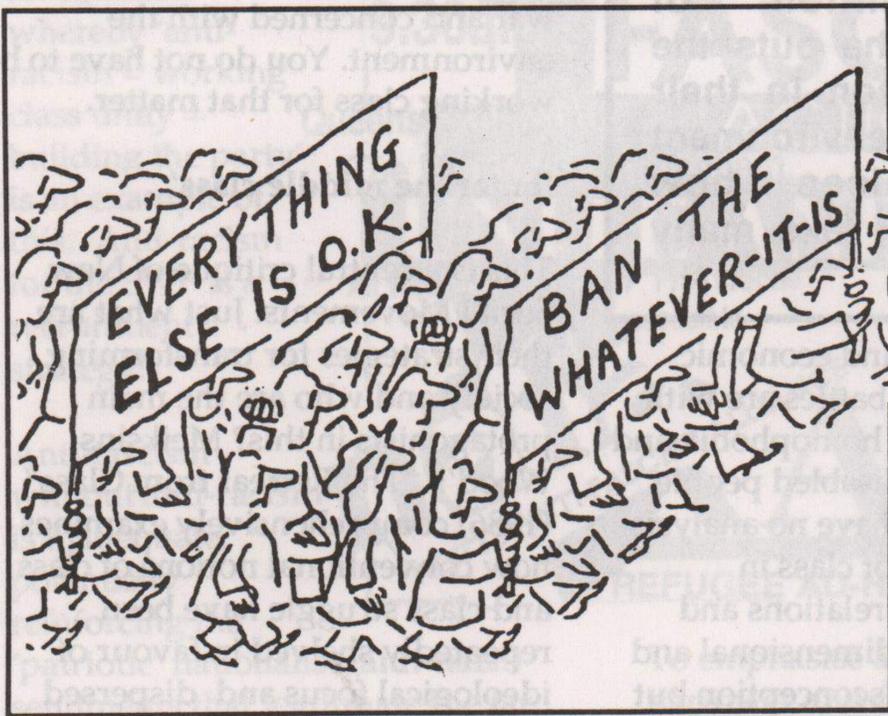
oppression and insular lifestylism. Actions to counter capitalism have a certain feel to them and do not include sitting in circles at meetings, jolliness and recycling carrier bags. Of course you do not have to be anti capitalist to be pro women, against war and concerned with the environment. You do not have to be working class for that matter.

'Enter the middle class'

This is a central critique of New Social Movements. Just what are their strategies for transforming society and who are the main protagonists in this? Meiksins Wood's "The Retreat from Class" (1986) comprehensively examines how conventional notions of class and class struggle have been repeatedly shelved in favour of ideological focus and dispersed struggles and identities. Concrete materialism is sacrificed to discourse and humanitarian objectives. And the working class are made redundant by their middle class contemporaries, who are best placed to engage in non material struggles. It is argued that working people on the one hand are over worried about the economic things in life - like feeding our kids and paying the rent - to have the time and energy to protest about the environment, to explore the intimacies of our psyches and to go on weekends to find ourselves. Conversely we are also not necessarily the (only) ones capable of transforming capitalism. Enter the

middle class.

The role of the intellectual vanguard is nothing new. What has increasingly developed, however, is the belief that the working class has persistently proved itself impotent in resisting capital. The Marxist belief that economics determines politics has been severely challenged and the argument put that working people have not exploited the contradictions of capitalism nor attacked its central flaws. A crisis of socialism itself follows, a crisis which suggests that we are in new times. And these new times are distinguished by variation, individual expression and disparate ways of organising. Exit the working class who are no longer reliable in forwarding the interests of the people.



'New Times?'

And so we return to the purpose and potential of New Social Movements. What are the hopes of those involved? It is unfair to regard all social movements as only being concerned with short-sighted goals. But it is fair to suggest that an anti-capitalist stance is crucial in any attempt to secure long-term change. It is untrue to state that the only resistance going on at the moment (and since the mid-1980's) is concerned with non-economic issues whilst it is true to say that economics are threaded throughout

most struggles apparently unassociated with class. Take squatting, hunt sabbing, pregnancy testing in Women's Centres, protesting at traffic pollution - it does not take an imaginative mind to link these with a struggle against capitalism too. As Raymond Williams (3) notes, "All significant social movements of the last thirty years have started outside the organised class interests and institutions. The peace movement, the ecology movement, the women's movement, solidarity with the third world, human rights agencies, campaigns against poverty and homelessness, campaigns against cultural poverty and distortion: all have this character, that they sprang from needs and perceptions which the interest-based organisations had no room or time for, or which they

had simply failed to notice.....there is not one of these issues which, followed through, fails to lead us into the central systems of the industrial-capitalist mode of production and among others its system of classes". The New Times(2) offered by Marxism Today is an unhelpful fait accompli and one which was

defeatist. To recognise that people have different political priorities at different points in their lives (some forced upon us, others voluntary) should not result in the complete abandonment of the socialist project. Rethinking is needed - to resign into some Rainbow coalition theory is negligent, if easier.

New Social Movements are not really so new. The Women's Movement, the Black Civil Rights Movement and the Gay Liberation Movement were all born in the fifties and sixties. In themselves these groups highlighted the failure of the Left (both reformist and

revolutionary) in capturing the hearts and minds of scores of women, black people and lesbians and gays for example. This is a significant point and one which requires continual consideration. What is it about the Left which makes it so unappealing to many? Why is there so much resistance to expressing these new interests? How is it that the means and methods of the Left are so often alienating and discouraging to those on the outside?

At the age of sixteen I set up, together with a bloke I knew (also about 16), a South Shields branch of Youth CND. We got a starting up donation from NATHFE and pestered our friends to join us in our fight against Cruise. At the same time the bloke who had helped set up the group continually pestered me to join Young Socialists. I stood my ground and repeatedly refused - my instinct warned me against it. It wasn't until many years later that I thought about why I had been so resistant to joining the YS. Basically it just sounded so boring. I had also imagined that the group would consist of blokes similar to the one who was hassling me to join. Straight, well read, into procedural motions and running meetings on time. With hindsight I regret not trying out YS - though it could be viewed a lucky escape (the bloke in question remains in South Shields and is a local Labour Councillor). I write this not to bore you with my life but to show some of the turn offs around left organisations. I was against Cruise and a proud feminist by the age of sixteen although I didn't call myself a socialist until much later. Yet economics had certainly affected my life more than nuclear weapons.

Why is this? Of course this is no original debate - the left has been at pains for decades to win back its natural supporters - those who, if it weren't for all these other distracting groups, would feel at home smashing capitalism. So theories have been adapted to accommodate black people, women, disabled people and lesbians and

CAPITALISM

TOGETHER WE'LL CRACK IT



gays for example. But people take offence to being tagged on and that is how it often feels. There is something very satisfying in joining in struggles with those to whom we feel real affinity. And it is fair to say that the ways in which we organise on the left can be very alienating to those uninitiated. And to those who want to enjoy and be creative whilst resisting and refusing.

'Stitched Up Theories'

The point is that the left have tended to have theories and positions all stitched up and have been heavily reluctant to modify or to challenge their powerful stance. A recent event emphasised this to me. It happened at my local anti-fascist meeting where the gathering comprised mostly men and all white people bar one bloke. A discussion was prompted by the black bloke who presented strong arguments for black people organising separately from white people. Almost immediately the debate focused upon how not all black people have class consciousness and crass examples of how white people are oppressed too were cited. The implicit question was what to do with black people who are not anti-capitalist. Very interesting given that the main question should have been what do we do with socialists who are not anti-racist and socialist theory which inadequately addresses race. Being anti-racist doesn't just mean going on

demonstrations and shouting out slogans. White people need to really think about our own values, our beliefs and we need to examine how our view of the world excludes black people's histories and experiences. For those of us engaged in revolutionary politics it is necessary to ponder on our theories and to re-think in a non-defensive and panicked state. Racism and xenophobia are integral to our society - if we want a better society then these too need to be addressed.

Conversely theories and agendas can continue to deny the day to day experiences of real people. People's lives and interactions are very complex and our sites of conflict are different. When I'm afraid to walk around my own neighbourhood at night that fear is very real and the threat (from men) of violence is not something to be minimised. When I then go to meetings at work and I'm the only woman there I get irritated. Back home I might go to a political meeting which is dominated by white men and using the very same methods which the men at my workplace use. Yet these men are socialists, revolutionaries! I'm not saying that all men are bastards, what I am saying is that a failure to really get to grips with sexism (or any other oppression) shows and it saps the energies and motivations of those excluded. Interestingly at the above meeting there was much talk about certain (little in numbers) black people and women being

"bridges" between mainstream left campaigns and more separatist organisations. This is not good enough for me - I am a libertarian socialist and my notion of socialism does not affix race, gender and sexuality for example. They are integral to my theories and (hopefully) my practices. I want to be able to join with other socialists in large campaigns and to organise separately with women because I want to - not because I'm forced to. To accept the notion of bridges allows white men to sit around tables pontificating about the non-socialist consciousness of women or black people or lesbian and gays without importantly examining their own partial position. Racism, sexism and homophobia are too important to be left to guest speakers or special delegations.

'Widespread Dissent'

Political dissent can be expressed in a variety of ways - and people in this country are now protesting against a whole multitude of issues. We have disabled people blocking Telethon and roads with wheelchairs, we have lesbians and gays strutting through streets snogging and flaunting and we have men going into woods to reclaim their wildness. What needs to be considered, though, is whether or not all forms of dissent can be legitimately (or usefully) termed political. The personal is political was a powerful slogan used to draw

the connections between our (women's) day to day existence and wider structures, power relationships and patriarchy. This term is now excessively used to describe any individual act or way of behaving. Thus isolated actions like becoming a vegan or taking up knitting (if you are a bloke) have been proclaimed to be political ends in themselves. This is taking advantage of the concept. One can certainly describe the political motives behind drinking Barleycup instead of Nescafe but this, in itself, is not enough. And this is one of the criticisms levelled at those engaged in New Social Movements. That such involvement is not enough.

If one wants to transform society then the only sensible position to take is to be anti-capitalist. As a libertarian-socialist I am bound to argue that engagement in New Social Movements needs to be within a wider framework of engaging in a positive rejection of capitalism and all of its manifestations. This implies a recognition of the various ways and means of struggle and gives importance to resistance both in and outside of the workplace. At this point it would be useful to be somewhat critical of the term "New Social Movement". The essential problem with the term is that it is used to encapsulate everything from New Age Travellers to lesbian separatism to black nationalism. The only common denominator that I can find here is that none of these activities fit into the traditional way of (political) things. Their target is not (overtly) capitalism, so the theory goes. But there are links with capitalism (just as there are obvious non-correlations) and the struggles are hard, concrete material struggles. People do not choose to be black or female or disabled - we are born into a society where life is



Movements as great flourishing and energetic currents whilst describing class resistance as barren and drained. Some movements, for example the activism around HIV and AIDS and growing resistance of black people to racism continue to expand whilst the "Women's Movement" has lost its bite.

'Culture and Class'

going to be hard because we are women, black, disabled etc. The same is true if we are born into working class and poor families. Our resistance is fluid and will take different forms at different times. There is a kind of machismo association to class struggle and namby-pambiness associated with New Social Movements. This is dangerous and flawed. There is nothing squidgy about confronting racists or telling your male boss to fuck off.

'A flawed opposition'

The image of class resistance on one side and New Social Movements on the other is, of course, a simplistic generalisation. Methods and ideas in the one area have crawled their way into others. The current Women's Pit Camps outside threatened coal mines illustrate well how strategies used in the Women's Peace Movement have been transferred to traditional class resistance. There is a general acknowledgement on the left that meetings ought not to be dominated by white men and it is not (altogether) uncommon for meetings to have rotating chairs, child care facilities and an unspoken rule against butting in on women speaking. Although I'm impatient at the breadth of development, it has to be said that there has been some progress. Feminism has impacted socialism, as has black and gay and lesbian activism. Similarly it is misleading to represent New Social

The development of New Social Movements does not necessarily parallel the death of the working class. Class theory, however, has to be reconstructed. Many have argued that the proletariat as we once knew it has gone forever and cite electoral leanings and trade union membership/activity as indicators of this (4). It depends on how you see things - especially upon how you define class. If class is economically determined then the majority of us in this country are forced to sell our labour to survive. What we produce or offer to the labour market will be socially graded and some of us will have more power within the constraints of work than others but we are, nevertheless, all workers together. This is a neat theory and one which provides hope - but it is too simplistic. Cultural factors too need to be considered. Here stereotypes are used to locate whether we are working class or middle class - such a method often leads to the conclusion that we are all middle class now or that we are living in a classless society. The percentage of people owning their homes, cars, videos and contributing to private health care are all cited as evidence that the proletariat is an endangered species. Whilst this cultural emphasis conveniently bypasses the economic inequalities endemic in capitalism, so the pure class analysis ignores very real conflicts in the workers together proposition. And this returns us to a central critique of traditional