

Our Capitalist Unions

IT is ironic that in the very season when more massive action is being planned by trade unionists than we have seen for years we should also be treated to the spectacle of vicious in-fighting in both the trades union movement and the Labour Party itself.

In-fighting which, it must be said, has nothing to do with the 'emancipation of the masses' but everything to do with either the seizure of the consolidation of leadership, the protection of the institutions of 'The Labour Movement', and the presentation of a 'respectable' face to the electorate in time for the next election.

Not that the massive action itself should not be seen as part of the in-fighting as well, for the right wings of the Party and the unions are very conscious that they have to maintain a credibility in the face of working class suffering that will pull the carpet from under the Militant Tendency and show that the old party that everybody knew and loved and voted for in their millions in the past can still get up and scare the pants off the Tories—without being 'extreme' or unBritish or Marxist or anything horrible like that.

It is in fact extraordinary that the Tories should have chosen (if in fact they did choose) to stand their monetarist ground on the issue of pay for the health workers. For if there is one section of the working class that it absolutely gilt-edged in the eyes of the public it must be the nurses. There is even a TV series called 'Angels' about behind-the-scenes life in our hospitals, which, thankfully, shows that some nurses are not all that angelic in every way. But doesn't that make them more human and, thus, even more lovable?

But Mrs Thatcher and her foul Mr Fowler, Health Minister for the Upper Classes, are so besotted by their own monetarism and their devotion to duty up to and beyond the deaths of others, that they couldn't really believe that the nurses could strike and still retain the sympathy of the public. Like Ted Heath in choosing to do battle with the miners, with their enormous industrial muscle, they have made a serious tactical blunder which may well cost them very dear. Not only are their actions politicising a section

of workers who have in the past been remarkable for putting dedication before pay (The Royal College of Nursing is now considering removing the 'no strike' clause from their rule book!) but they have provided the centre and right of the trade union movement with a prime opportunity to DEFY THE LAW with a tremendous weight of public opinion in secret and sly sympathy with them.

The law is of course that one recently introduced by the Conservatives which tries to ban, by making unlawful, secondary picketing or industrial action in support of somebody else's industrial action. In other words, solidarity.

We must not go overboard, however, in admiration for the new-found courage of Len Murray and Co, for they are very careful, in all their public announcements, to make clear that they are not directing their members to come out on September 22nd, (not like they would direct them to go back to work in an unofficial strike, for instance) but that they are simply asking for gestures, in sympathy, according to individuals' inclinations or abilities or degree of militancy—whoop, sorry!

HEY! HOW ABOUT
SMASHING THE
THE STATE
NEXT WEDNESDAY?



If the Labour Party does not screw every possible ounce of advantage out of this situation, then it certainly does not deserve to get back to Downing Street come the next election. Mr Fowler has categorically (for the second time) said there is absolutely no more money for the health workers. If he is forced to yield, there will be only one honest way out for him: into the woods with a shot-gun. But we feel he does not have the moral fibre for that.

On the other hand, the terrible railwaymen, everybody's villains a few weeks back, could stop work for an hour in the middle of the day and hardly anybody would notice. All public transport could stop; tanker drivers take an extra hour for lunch; power workers throw the switches; miners leave the coalface an hour early; teachers cut lessons, tailors cut less cloth, bakers bake a loaf or two less, car builders build one car less, bricklayers leave out an hour's courses—all gestures from workers to show their contempt for the Government's mean policies, and all to no avail.

If Mr Leonard Murray and his new-found (?) mate Mr Frank Chapple, next Chairman of the TUC and right-wing convert from the Communist Party, really want to show their contempt for Tory policies, they would call a general strike of indeterminate length to stop once and for all the concept that a government can dictate standards of living to working people—especially those as economically weak but as morally strong as health workers.

But the fact is that they do not have contempt for government policies, because they are in the same game themselves: the game of controlling the workers in the national interest and the continuance of the capitalist system, with, at best, a few rough edges rubbed off.

The end of capitalism, after all, would mean the end of the need for trades unions, necessary only in a class-divided society where there is an employing class (private or state) and thus divided interests necessitating mediators between employers and employed. This is the role of the unions: mediators, trusted by the bosses as

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responsible, right-thinking and law abiding, no less than by the workers, sold on the concept of obedience and the necessity for bosses.

It is not surprising therefore to find trades unions structured just like capitalist firms, with a ladder of success up which the ambitious official can climb, paying himself, with the approval of his fellow climbers, salaries far in advance of the wages of the workers he is paid to represent and with a safe pension at the end of his days—a pension made safe by investing the funds in capitalist stocks and shares. How can you expect TU leaders to fight a system out of which they do so well?

Of course you can't, any more than you can expect politicians to fight effectively against the system which offers them position, privilege and fame which, once achieved, opens doors on to the boardrooms of capitalist companies where the idea of workers' control leaves them all rolling on the floor with laughter.

It is the myth at the back of all socialist parties that, once *their* members have achieved power they will operate it in the interests of everybody else except themselves. Generations of backsliders in the Labour Party have not convinced the members of the Militant Tendency that their selected front-runners will not be the same in their turn. To get to the top you have to have what it takes to succeed in a centralised set-up, by which time you are convinced that you know better than anybody else what is good for them. At the best you become paternalistic, at the worst dictatorial.

The issue of syndicalism must be raised in this argument—as it is being, coincidentally, in our pages—since it presents the only alternative to unionism which can be logically linked with anarchism, and representing anarchist ideas applied to the industrial scene.

We must always be careful to draw the distinction between that—which must be accurately described as anarcho-syndicalism—and 'straight' syndicalism, which is factually a form of industrial unionism: a higher form of unionism in that it brings together all workers in any one industry rather than the fragmentary *trades* structure of the reformist unions we know today. Unification in industrial unions, however, can work, as it does in Germany today, for the convenience of the bosses, where these are allowed to exist.

It is only when syndicalists are guided by anarchist aims and principles that the purely structural benefits of that form of industrial organisation can be used for revolutionary ends. Those who argue that involvement in the day-to-day struggle will inevitably whittle away revolutionary consciousness had better, first, examine their own consciences about how many times they have marched with others against a particular war, against particular weapons, or—assuming we will be march-

Over-the-Top Cops Lose 2-1

'Passive demonstrators being panicked? Isn't that a contradiction in terms?'

'I think black flags in themselves are threatening, the pirate Jolly Roger is black, isn't it? Well, it always is in pantomime, with a skull and crossbones too, yes, it's very threatening, isn't it?'

'Don't these peace marchers go to Aldermaston, or somewhere, these days?'

THESE pearls of wisdom, incisive comment and informed opinion, etc, etc, were uttered by one of those bastards... sorry... bastions of justice and fair play, a stipendiary magistrate (full time and paid for it). If it wasn't for the fact that an idiot like that has the power to wreck lives with a nod and a wave of the hand (a magistrate can imprison for 6 months and/or fine you £2,000), hysterical laughter would be the only sane response.

3 of those arrested on June 6th during the Oxford St march found themselves in front of this right-thinking citizen on Tuesday (14th Sept) this week. That is, when he finally turned up, having been stuck somewhere south of Croydon (our thanks to the railworkers for their attempt to ensure justice by losing the berk permanently, nice try).

First up was Mark on a charge of threatening behaviour. After a fine catalogue of imaginative storytelling by Special Patrol Group officers Adams and Osborne, remarkable only for the lack of preparation in comparing stories beforehand, a quite convincing performance by the accused and several interruptions by the Magi we came to the moment of truth (whatever that is): guilty or not guilty? Off went the Magi rambling on and everywhere finally declaring that Mark was '96% guilty but unfortunately that wasn't enough.' Acquitted. Exit two pissed off SPG and several happy friends. One down, two to go. Actually, the one sane comment by the Magi came during this trial. On being told by Adams that Mark had 'radical literature in a carrier bag' the wise one declared 'nothing illegal in that. Mind you, you got the feeling that he added the afterthought 'more's the pity', but to think that would be an awful thought indeed. On with the circus.

The next two cases saw that fine comedy duo Batley and Mahoney, pride of

ing in September 22nd—for particular wage claims, while in our hearts and minds we comprehensively condemn the fundamental causes of all wars, all weapons and the wages system in toto.

Anarchists involved in industry (and there must be some!) know full well that the trades unions are a sell-out. What is the alternative? If it is not ANARCHO-syndicalism, what is it?

PS

Unit 3, SPG, engage in that witty patter that, if they had an ounce of personality between them, would place them last in any talent contest. Here we saw that use of the English language that belies any accusation of 'thick-headed cops'. A group of marchers became 'a stampeding herd, sweeping down across the width of the road', later this 'herd' became '50 or so running in single file like Indians', (were the SPG cowboys then?), people were 'terrified, scared, shocked, threatened', flags were waved 'like scythes' words like 'aggressive, stampeding, rampaging, barged, attacked' were sprinkled liberally throughout the police evidence. In the words of Mahoney, the poor members of the public subjected to 'awful abuse' were 'sadly, in the wrong place at the wrong time.' The evil thug responsible for the 'onslaught' on the 'innocent' pedestrians was in fact a quiet, somewhat frail looking youth named Rik. Again the 'evidence' bore little resemblance to reality or logic. Not that the Magi minded, he was sure, no doubt because he managed to stay alert during the police evidence at least, this time. Guilty. Conditional discharge with £30 costs. One all and next please.

John was the 'scything flag-waver'. Again Batley and Mahoney gave 'evidence'. Whilst their literacy and use of descriptive terms were well up to the standard of the previous case their numeracy was somewhat lacking. 2 or 3 became 10 to 15, 5 yds became 15, one saw 4, the other 8 or 9. This did not deter the Magi. After hearing all the evidence he didn't believe anything the accused said, in fact, he was sure John was nothing but a troublemaker, but, unfortunately, the defence counsel had raised doubts about identification and the 'quality of observation', by the police. If the police hadn't 'exaggerated slightly' he would have no doubts at all. But, acquitted.

The one observation the magistrate kept making was how he 'couldn't believe the police would attack a peaceful march, the police are neutral, peace-keepers, they give up their Sundays, when I'm sure they would rather be gardening, to go on marches to protect us all.'

We should be happy that at least two friends managed acquittals, our commiserations to Rik, before this antediluvian relic, but that was only due to police ineptitude. To hope for better luck in the next batch of Oxford St 48 cases (due on 26th October at Wells St Magistrates, London) would be wildly optimistic. We would urge you to support the Defence Campaign to the best of your ability. It's going to be needed. As for the magistrate, one last quote from this prime candidate for compulsory euthanasia:

'Didn't they have black flags like that at Omdurman; those dervish types?'

BRIQUE LEFLIC

Regimental March

I saw the posters in 'News from Nowhere' in Liverpool. 'Workers' March against Racism', London to Brighton and picket the TUC, This sounded fine. Even the information that it was organised by the Revolutionary Communist Party wasn't too off-putting. I didn't really know who they are and anyway they were only doing the organising, it was a *workers'* march. I didn't have the £30 but that was OK, I could work my passage, helping with stewarding, selling magazines, that sort of thing. Last Thursday, the 2nd, I went to Manchester and joined the minibus to London.

The journey took ages. When we arrived we were taken to an old theatre in Brick Lane. I didn't have a sleeping bag but one was found and we slept there on Friday night. On Saturday, we were got up very early and went to a rally in Itchy Park. There were about 200 people, mostly white. As a steward, I was put on anti-fascist watch. By this time I was beginning to feel a bit isolated. The whole thing was strictly organised, even regimented.

On Saturday night, there was a concert at the Fair Deal, Brixton. That was OK, although the organisation was everywhere as usual. If you left the hall, never mind the building, you couldn't get back in.

On Sunday, we set off for Brighton. This was to take three days, with camping in between. People marched from one place to another four abreast, with stewards to keep the ranks in order. We were given instructions about how to give a good impression and not upset people. Official song sheets were distributed. Dreadful, stilted slogans set to well known tunes. It included the Internationale, but the English to that is dreadful, stilted slogans as well. The tidy ranks set off and that night we reached Redhill. There was militaristic singing around campfires. A stewards meeting was held and people were issued with whistles and snooker cues. The Site was carefully patrolled. We were told to keep everybody in order 'for their own protection'. The paranoia and need for internal discipline was reinforced by the

fascist leaflets scattered on the road to the camping field. (I was struck by similarities, the fascist call was to build unity (national) by 'getting the blacks', the communists wanted unity (class) by 'getting the racists'). We even saw some fascists, perhaps a dozen of them. Later, a midnight alarm brought people out, waving their snooker cues, to run into a group of SPG, who were patrolling the boundaries.

I was becoming more of an outcast. This was relieved by meeting another anarchist. But I was certainly in official disfavour. I was summoned and reprimanded because 'very reliable sources' had reported me for 'speaking to the police'. Well, they could be better company than the endless rhetoric and slogans. I was also told off because other very reliable sources said I had been smoking dope. Hardly likely, I'm allergic to it and would have thrown up straightaway. . . The other anarchist was accused of 'backstabbing'. It seemed that little spies were everywhere. Nowhere was there any concern for individuals, the talk was all of 'the workers' and we were treated accordingly.

The enthusiasm of the marchers was coaxed with promises of hot showers at the end of the day. We weren't told that they had to be paid for. By this time I was sick. I have stomach trouble and it wasn't helped by the uninspiring food. To be fair, I suppose that the organisation was difficult, but these people do expect to organise a revolution, they have very firm views on that. Provision for vegetarians was particularly meagre.

On Tuesday morning, I was told I was to be thrown off the March. I had 'lowered morale by complaining'. I wasn't allowed to speak to anyone. A van was going back to London and I was put in it. They dumped me at Waterloo and gave me some money. Some food and a couple of Tube fares soon demolished a large part of that, and how was it to get back to Liverpool? I found my way to FREEDOM, where I found a welcome and somewhere to stay.

It's been an educational experience. I'm sure that its not just me. Other people were unhappy with the regimentation, the forced speed of the marching, the straight lines. I am convinced that the whole thing was a recruiting and publicity exercise for the RCP. For this greater end, the people, the 'masses' of the fetish were to be used. I am worried for other young people who get involved and brainwashed. Their hard people already have their blueprints for 'after the revolution'. When they have a conference called 'Preparing for Power', they mean it. Anarchists ('bourgeois liberals') have no place. I asked what a small community who are self sufficient, who minded their own business. 'It wouldn't be allowed'.

One thing that I particularly resent is that I wasn't allowed to speak to anyone to exchange addresses. If you see this, Tim, please write, c/o FREEDOM.

ANNA

IN BRIEF MORE ON PAGE 5!

WE know that the old slogan says that whoever you vote for the government gets in, but this is ridiculous. After the collapse of the 42nd Italian government since the war a new coalition has been put together. It contains exactly the same 27 people. These tireless public servants are helped by 57 under-secretaries. 56 of these are also to continue. The other one died last month.

ANOTHER old favourite is that if voting could change the system, they would make it illegal. However, due process must be carried out and this has caused problems in Brazil. The long awaited elections have had to be postponed again. The latest changes in the rules to prevent any chance of a defeat have delayed the printing of the ballot papers.

VELLERAT, Switzerland (pop 68) has declared its independence from the canton of Berne.

