

DUTCH COURAGE AND TORY CANT

Various Tory MPs are declaiming about the inadequacy of Dutch justice, following the freeing, on appeal, of alleged IRA activists after the murder of visiting Australians. These MPs do not even question that the evidence had originally been contradictory and unsatisfactory, but they feel that the Dutch courts should therefore have ensured that there was other evidence, which would have ensured a satisfactory conviction.

So soon after the Maguire, Birmingham Six and Guildford Four cases, this has a sinister ring. If the MPs concerned do not mean that "scientific" evidence should have been manufactured, or confessions extracted (as they were by the British police in the 70s) they would have been wise to express themselves more carefully. For that is the clear implication of their words.

Of course the murders were vile; even the IRA agrees, though it excuses them by saying that they were a mistake. Anarchists, though opposing the Six Counties statelet and having some sympathy, despite its statist nature, with the essentials of Irish Republicanism, reject this excuse. We criticise a method of struggle which depends on such murders.

But even so the methods used against the IRA, to say nothing of the reign of terror in Northern Ireland before the IRA's revival in 1969 (and Ulster Unionists, up to and including the last Speaker of Stormont, used to boast openly of having taken part in lynchings meant to terrorise Catholics into staying away from the polls or emigrating) was yet more vile.

Politicians in this country evince a high moral tone when they talk about the crimes of the IRA. They do not criticise the patent injustice of people falsely imprisoned for long years because they are accused of being in the IRA; indeed they expect the Dutch to apologize for not convicting alleged murderers, evidence or no evidence.

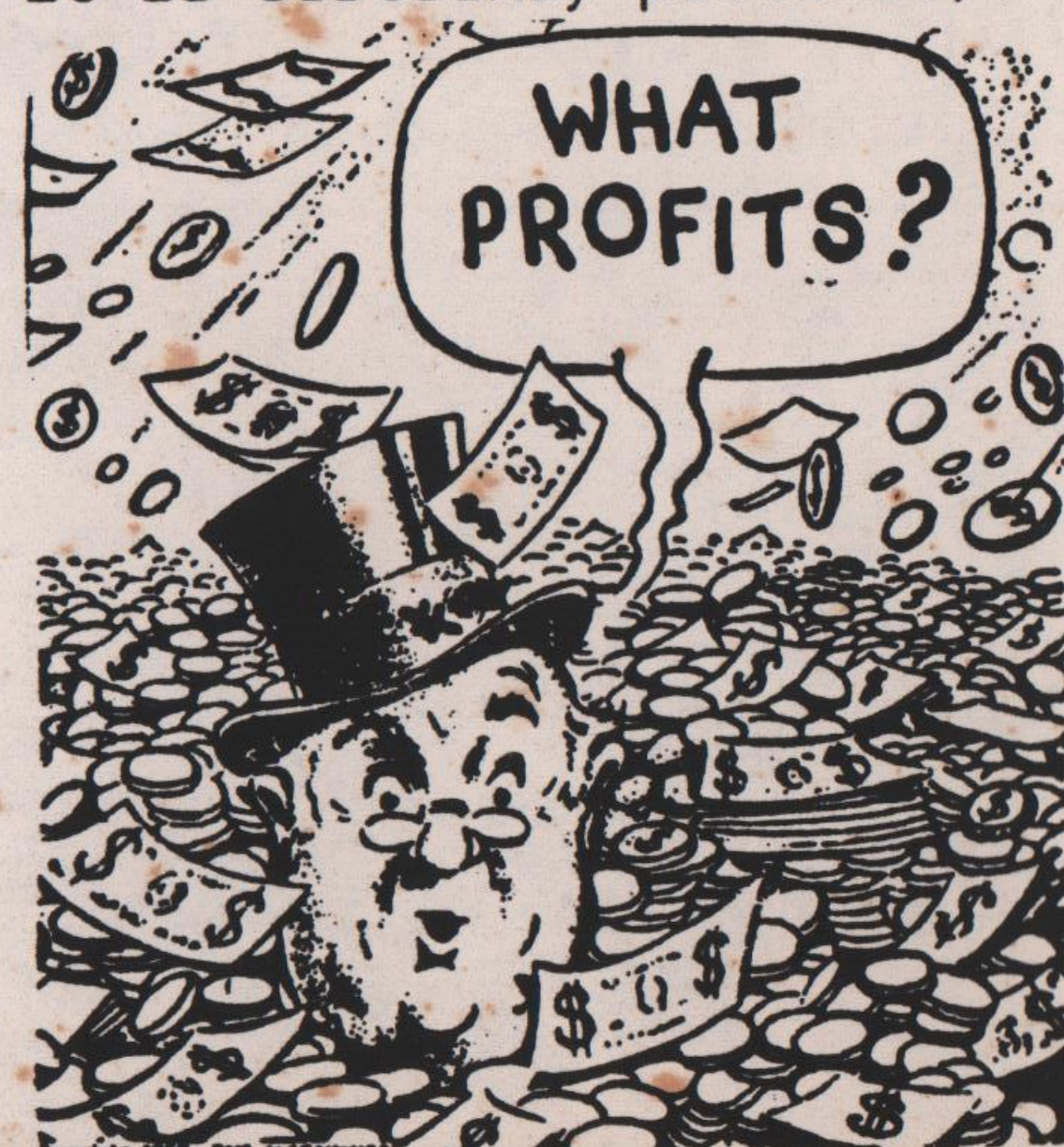
BCCI

BANK OF CROOKS & CONMEN INTERNATIONAL

In any representative list of 100 international commercial firms, about 98 will be engaged in morally reprehensible trade; and of the two remaining one is about to call in the receivers and the other exists only to provide a harmless occupation for a wealthy person with scruples.

Consequently the fuss as to the status of the Bank of England and Department of the Environment lists of approved firms is a storm in a teacup.

The BCCI has, it appears, links with a CIA-supported dictator who fell out with sponsors (just like Gadaffi and Saddam Hussein). Like many other CIA-funded people -- Cuban and Nicaraguan Contras, Khmer Rouge, Afghan Mujaheddin -- Noriega engaged in drug-running, with the full knowledge and support of the CIA; (it has yet to be proved that he persisted in this after breaking with America, but it is certainly possible).



Being an agent of the US government is hardly of itself evidence that BCCI was any worse than any other firm. It is the fact that local councillors, some of whom claim to be socialist, get involved in financial markets, that is immoral. Not the particular capitalist institution that they then back.

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Trades Councils FORGING THE WEAPON

On July 17th the TUC caved in with regard to its planned attack on Trades councils, due to pressure from scores of unions: a pressure emanating from the rank and file. Trades Council County Associations were unbanned, as was the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee (TCJCC).

It's nice to see Norman Willis get knocked back, but just how important is all this? The County Associations were generally dormant anyway, the National Conference held inside a TUC straightjacket, the TCJCC dominated by Stalinists devoid of any vision of just how much Trades Councils could achieve.

Without ambiguity, we syndicalists say it is time Trades Councils organised nationally. It's fine if fighting attitudes carry the day in for example Hull, Oxford or Bridgwater, but it's not enough. We need to link up our efforts ("forge the weapon") and work towards an effective, quick-reacting structure for our movement. We must aim to build, within the TUC, a National Federation of Trades Councils.

Such a Federation would complement the branch structure of unions, giving a local impetus and identity to trade unionism: not a breakaway -- that just isn't the British way -- but an improvement on what we have.

This is a big step but well overdue. Tom Mann was calling for the same thing in 1911. If Trades Councils can first liaise with each other and perhaps produce a modest bulletin it will be on the way.

The Trades Councils' National Conference held at the end of May in Manchester was important for those who seek such a maximisation of the Trades Councils' efficacy. Meeting in defiance of the TUC, for the first time a free and far-ranging debate was allowed. Delegates were able to make contact so we can break the isolation between different Trades Councils and exchange news of various struggles.

In some ways the outcome of the TUC attack on Trades Councils was not that important (though recognition is desirable for practical reasons) -- what matters most is that Trades Councils nationally should start to set their own agenda rather than merely reacting to threats from Willis and Co. They can be the cutting edge of the union movement, combative organisations grouping all workers in any locality. Some have already embarked on this path; in others the dead weight of Labourism and Stalinism still prevails.

28th SEPTEMBER -- NATIONAL TRADES COUNCILS ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

to be held in HULL

with workshops on international solidarity, strike support, propaganda, the way forward for trades councils.

Crèche and evening entertainment.

£5 per TC delegate.

Further information from the Secretary, Hull Trades Council, ~~Staple~~ ^{Reynolds} Hull.

JUGOSLAVIA A BLOODY MESS

- * "Slovenia is being menaced by a militaristic communist power."
- * "Croatia and Slovenia are being flooded with arms by Germany, which dreams of a Fourth Reich".

Two opinions which illustrate the volatile atmosphere of fear and hostility in the divided Federation of Yugoslavia. On one side, justified anxiety of those faced with domination by the powerful Serbian army and its elite old guard of Communist Party generals; on the other, still-vivid memories of some of World War II's most savage atrocities. Everywhere, nationalist, religious, linguistic differences.

Faced with this, what are syndicalists to think? Who are we to support? None of us would uphold the powerful, centralised Communist state -- on the other hand, the cry of "Hands off Slovenia and Croatia!" is not for us either: in the atmosphere of resurgent capitalism prevailing in Europe east of the old German Federal Republic, who would really benefit from the independence of Yugoslavia's two most highly industrialised areas? Would it really be the ordinary working-class people there?

They and their fellow workers in Serbia and the rest of Yugoslavia would without a doubt be the ones to suffer in any armed conflict. It would not be the

Communist leadership or the would-be Slovene/Croat rulers whose blood would spill.

Some less judicious writers in the press have talked of the unrest in Yugoslavia as like "the beginning of World War Three". Inspired by the memory of events in Sarajevo in 1914, which sparked off the Great War, this is plainly an exaggeration. Yet syndicalists would do well to remember not just the devastating scale and tragic futility of the slaughter in that conflict, but the more pertinent fact that as hostilities intensified, most of the organised workers' movements of Europe (and later the world) made a terrible mistake. Aligning themselves with the leaders of "their own countries" they sent millions of workers to kill each other on the battlefields, while the real enemy, the ruling, employing classes, laughed all the way to the bank.

If there are things worth killing and dying for, to prevent your neighbour speaking a different language or eating pork, to fill the pockets of factory owners and uniformed power-mongers are not among them. Freedom to wave one flag rather than another is no freedom at all unless you eliminate inequality and oppression. And that means fighting for your class, not your country.

this to gain a victory. International pressure on Michelin is needed. Individuals and organisations should write to Michelin, protesting and demanding reinstatement of all those sacked:

Michelin Fazenda Tres Pancadas
Rodovia Itubera -- Camamu Km 5
Caixa Postal 2, CEF 45442
Itubera, Brazil

It would also be a good idea to let Michelin businesses locally know how you feel on this issue, and urge any international contacts you, your group or TU may have to do the same.

Copies of protests, plus messages of support, should be sent to:
Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais de
Camamu

CEP 45444 Camamu,
Bahia, Brazil.



The rubber giant Michelin has sacked 45 workers at its plantation at Camamu in Brazil. The plantation was the site of a strike in April and May and many of those dismissed were leading activists. They have all been evicted from their houses on the plantation, leaving them no choice but to seek a home in the slums nearby.

Their union says the sackings are illegal and plans to take Michelin to court, but it will take more than

Looking Over Our Shoulders

As syndicalists -- particularly as syndicalists who, unlike some others, believe that revolution must be made by flesh-and-blood workers, rather than some idealised imaginary constructs -- we need to take on board and seriously consider the survey that showed that last year had the lowest number of working days lost through industrial action since 1935.

It is no use unfortunately, remembering nostalgically that 1936 was a year of very considerable activity which saw a revival of rank-and-file struggle persisting through the war. We cannot just put our faith in a similar reawakening.

Syndicalists believe that the crucial revolutionary struggle takes place at the point of production; that industrial action is the most important sphere in which people learn the facts about the nature of society; that strikes are not merely action and education but also propaganda, since each successful strike by example suggests greater militancy to other workers; finally that the effect of strikes demonstrates the necessity of more revolutionary organisation. All syndicalist work needs a context of spontaneous industrial militancy.

We therefore need to accept that the climate in which we are working is unfavourable. Why is it? Particularly why is it at a time when we have recently seen a successful mass revolt against the poll tax, with people prepared to go to prison rather than pay?

Government is able to impose pay settlements lower than inflation, while big businessmen award themselves increases of more than 50%. Unemployment is high, because workers are paid so little and it is well known that those on subsistence spend almost all of any pay increase, whereas the wealthy can afford to save and take the money out of circulation, yet the government can get away with repeating that the economy is about to bottom out, and that a minimum wage, far from lessening unemployment by putting money into circulation, would increase it. Perhaps turning back to 1935 gives us our clue. In 1926 the working class acted in a heroic way (albeit the TUC called off the fight and left the miners to struggle on alone) but were defeated. The ruling class were able to impose pay cuts all round and were unresisted. These cuts, by reducing consumption, caused deep slump; the resulting unemployment further demoralised workers. Only when they attained a socialist consciousness outside the industrial field (eg by resisting the growth of fascism) did industrial militancy revive.

There is hardly any need to point parallels. We see that militancy exists but largely not now in the industrial field. How do we bring it back? Or do we have to concede that those "class struggle anarchists" who have by and large abandoned the workplace as a sphere of activity have made the right choice? Must we merely wait for the wind of activity to change of its own accord?



DO YOU agree?
With EVERYTHING YOU READ IN SB!

NO? WE THOUGHT AS MUCH. SB doesn't pretend

to have all the answers, or be tuned-in to some infallible theory that explains everything if only you interpret it "correctly". But we do think it's worth expressing our views in order to exchange ideas and learn from one another. So if you've ever read something in SB you didn't agree with, what stopped you putting your own point of view? We welcome contributions and will print as many as we have space for.

OH, AND IF YOU DO AGREE WITH EVERYTHING WE WRITE, HOW ABOUT A SMALL DONATION?

Either way, our address is Syndicalist Bulletin 3 REYNOLDS ST. HULL.