

Nevertheless it has to be of interest to workers when governments treat their normal procedures with disdain. Thatcher, when speaking in France, claimed that it was not the French Revolution but the English one, that introduced democracy to the world. Yet, though the alleged gains, (whether of Cromwell or William of Orange,) are always described in official constitutional history, as the introduction of respect for the rule of law, and the limitation of governmental powers; she has persistently & flagrantly flouted the law, & identified the interests of the state with those of the governing party.

No doubt this belief in the rule of law has always been a myth; history is full of occasions when it has been flouted, but until now there has always been an attempt to ensure that the pretense is kept up. We need to know why government is prepared to dispense with these essentials of the democratic myth. The answer lies in the economic interests the government serves.

This government periodically claims to have rolled back the frontiers of socialism, & since the Labour Party occasionally pays lip service to socialism, & wouldn't like to admit that it has never moved in this direction, no one points out that there were never any such frontiers to roll back. The government is also said, both by friends and foes, to be a reversion to early nineteenth century capitalism; but that capitalism while rightly described as "production for profit not need" did still depend on production; and the then governments served definite productive needs. This does not.

Finance in our day has turned to asset-stripping. Because every big industry needs to be cushioned against hard times, most have possessions that are not listed in the accounts, on which share-owning is based. It follows that it is possible for groups of raiding financiers, with no interest in the survival of the industry, to buy up the business, resell the declared property & keep the undeclared parts. (Stripping the assets.) Thatcherism is this process reproduced at the state level; since the business is the state that cannot be sold off again, but its subsidiaries (& even things such as the T.S.B. which never belonged to the state,) can be sold off, the bulk going to financier friends, & the payments used to reduce the taxes of those same wealthy people.

Productive business makes its profits by paying workers less than their work produces, it is therefore quite literally parasitic on those workers; but asset-stripping makes its money by robbing those established businesses that were so parasitic. However asset-strippers need to know the business secrets of their potential victims, so the highly respectable & reputed financiers need to turn to industrial espionage & other similar semi-criminal acts. They do not, of course, do it themselves, they find people to do it under contract, & since - as everyone knows - the acts involved are criminal; the employers are careful not to know what is being done, so that they can disown it, if it comes out. The government made in their image acts in the same way.

Published by Wrekin Syndicalists,
College Farm House,
Wellington,
Telford TF1 1TR

LAW & HYPOCRISY

It cannot have escaped the notice of even the least political that we have a government whose watch-words are law & order. That when workers strike they are harangued about ignoring the law, (often a law conveniently just passed, for the very purpose of crippling industrial organizations, & it is interesting that when - as in the current example of the N.U.R. - the union observes the law so made, and appears to be winning, an howl goes up amongst government supporters for the law to be yet further changed.) The same tones of judicial superiority have been used against Greenham women and other protestors, though punctuated by lapses into vulgar abuse and hysterical hectoring.

Most will have noted that while the former Lord Chancellor used to declaim melodramatically that the Wilson's government's use of ministerial fiat, the parliamentary guillotine, & elevations to the House of Lords were taking us to an "elective dictatorship", he failed to notice anything dictatorial about the far more frequent use of such means by the government of which until recently he was a member. That he has only felt a need to protest when uncharacteristically, his successor in that government, decided to limit the perks of those who having eaten the requisite number of dinners at the Inns of Court, are duly qualified to decide matters of law.

It has equally not escaped the attention of many - though unfortunately not yet of all - that considering this vocal adherence to the system of Law & Order, the government is quite remarkably loath to resort to what has been for a long time a central factor in that law and order, in our much over-praised unwritten constitution. For years it has been normal, whenever the least measure of scandal is alleged about government ministers, or governments as a whole to appoint judicial investigations. More often than not these have served to cover up for the government of the day, but occasionally when abuses have been too blatant, it has been seen that the Establishment is best served by exposure & the forced resignation of the occasional minister.

Far be it from anarchists to advocate such judicial inquiries; but it is surely fair for us to ask why those who profess to believe in the norms of constitutional behaviour should suddenly refuse to play it by the rules. Can this not - to use their jargon - be regarded as prime facie evidence that they know there is too much scandal for any judicial commission to suppress. That even the most venal & bigotted Tory judge would have to allow evidence to be presented that once recorded fully would totally discredit the government; & that it would be seen that the government has very little evidence to produce in its own behalf?

For the various accusations that have been made, most of which under virtually any previous government since Stuart times would have been thought to have merited judicial inquiry, have not been lightly made. Nor are they made purely by those whom governments traditionally dismiss as anarchist trouble-makers,

cranks, madmen or subversives in the pay of foreign governments. To give just nine of the accusations commonly made:

Starting at the beginning of Thatcher's rise to power; we have now been told by at least four former members of the Security Services, as well as at least two acknowledged experts that within these services there was a plot during the Wilson Government, a deliberate attempt by the secret servicemen to destabilize the Government. That secrets were leaked. That stories were falsified and leaked as if they were secrets. That government money was given to opponents of the government. That the telephones and houses of government Ministers and their supporters were illegally bugged (& probably burgled) & evidence was forged to suggest that such Ministers were corrupt or engaged in treasonable communication with foreign powers.

Though - as yet - there is only evidence that this was done under the Wilson Government, enough things have been said to imply that they were also done under Callaghan (although he was personally close to the security services) & even possibly Heath. It is certain that Airey Neave who was to be the campaign manager for the Thatcher faction against Heath was privy to these happenings. In British law, to know of treasonable acts and not report these is to be complicit in treason. That would be particularly the case for someone who like Airey Neave had been a responsible member of the security services and was then a member parliament, well known to the Shadow Cabinet.

Thatcherism being primarily a movement for crushing trade union organization, it is not surprising that Bristol port-workers were denounced for refusing to load armaments & helicopters on a ship bound for the Argentine; or refit a warship for that country; they were undemocratic and unpatriotic for refusing, & were losing Britain valuable trade. A month or so later the Argentines invaded the Falklands and Thatcher who had until then praised this fellow monetarist regime and denied that it was dictatorial, suddenly discovered that it was "fascist", & so denounced anyone who did not want to dash to war for fascist sympathies.

The United Nations Organization was preparing to intervene, but that would have prevented her taking the glory, so she vetoed the settlement, & ignored the offer of an U.N. force. Then other South American countries had negotiated & had persuaded the Argentines to agree to withdraw. That could not be allowed & so the Belgrano was sunk; as far as can be ascertained it was 150 miles from the exclusion zone and sailing away from it, the Belgrano was nevertheless portrayed as a threat to British shipping; deliberate lies about its position being told in the House of Commons. When Civil Servants drew attention to this breach of parliamentary democracy it was they that were denounced & indeed prosecuted as undemocratic.

In June 1983 there was a major fire at the Donnington Ordnance depot, asbestos of which the roof of an hangar was made burnt with the contents of the hangar, the flames were visible for miles and the smoke covered everything, the fire fighters were kept in the dark (because it was an official secret) what was in the hangar and consequently needlessly risked life & limb and may have been

slower than they would otherwise have been; and the remains (asbestos ash flakes up to four or five inches square in many cases,) were scattered over the surrounding towns and countryside; on that occasion covering, fairly densely, an area eight miles in length & up to two miles across. (The base did generously offer compensation to local farmers who had live stock, but those with standing crops were not given anything, so the farmers harvested & sold oats, barley, soft fruit & green vegetables, all affected by asbestos.)

The base produced the usual public reasons; - someone had been smoking, (unlikely, in order to ensure against this the base gives its workers very generous breaks outside their place when they want to smoke, so much so that non-smokers feel discriminated against and are apt to pretend to be smokers so as to be able to go for the occasional stroll in the boss's time,) there had been an electrical fault (again unlikely only a fortnight before expert electricians had checked the whole system and replaced anything slightly suspect,) & (of course) there were rumours of a strange long-haired girl being seen in the area, (no doubt having previously seduced guards at two or three gates to gain entry!) - there were Ministry of Defence investigators sent down, and their presence was publicised to the locals, but base workers say that they had left by the beginning of September.

Despite requests for a public inquiry that was all, until four years later when extracts of an internal report were published. It was said that there were recommendations to make the hangars safer for the future. Just after this, the base announced triumphantly that it was opening a new hangar. That, by a curious coincidence, it had planned to build this before the fire & that it had from the beginning intended to site the new hangar where the old burnt down one had been. (So the fire had been very convenient.) Private Eye incidentally published an allegation that arms that had been illegally sold overseas, (there was a trial for this,) had come from Donnington, being sold to the dealers by base staff.

About six months after this new hangar was built another hangar burnt down. It emerged that none of the safety measures that the Inquiry had recommended had been implemented, the reason for which the base said was that it had intended to pull this one down; for it appeared by another extraordinary coincidence that the base had been planning for some time to replace this hangar too by one of the new model hangars. (Given that the hangars were at the opposite sides of a large base, at least a mile apart, the element of coincidence is even greater.) Fortunately for those of us who live in the area, this time the ash did not fall so densely, (it had rained the first time,) but fell over a far wider area, stretching the forty miles to the Welsh border & to the South Shropshire hills.

Once again there was no public inquiry. This time there were all sorts of allegations that they knew that it was sabotage. The Media was also told that it was sub-judice and that it was therefore illegal for the radio to broadcast or the papers to print letters from the public, or the resolutions of the many local societies that demanded a public inquiry. So we are left to wait until they next decide to install an ultra modern hangar, knowing that if any ordinary citizen twice had the coincidence of a building (s)he intended to pull down & replace on his/her land, burning down by coincidence, & either the lives of firemen were endangered or property was damaged, that citizen would certainly be prosecuted as a common nuisance and would probably be suspected of arson.

The next year there was a large enquiry before the building of a new nuclear power station. Thatcherism had (indeed has) a considerable ideological investment in nuclear power. To start with you cannot have Uranium & Plutonium (used for the fission stage of nuclear weaponry) in large quantities, unless you have nuclear power stations, & cold warrior attitudes are central to Tory Right Wing attitudes. But equally important was the fact that the Government was about to launch a major struggle against the miners' union, (the initial plan for which figured in the Tory Party conference document of 1978, a plan so vicious that like Mein Kampf no one believed it was serious and people were surprised when one after another its clauses were put into effect.) Nor was the government the only body with an interest in ensuring that the Sizewell Inquiry did not produce a condemnation of the nuclear power industry. Westinghouse, the firm that made that particular model power station, was in trouble after accidents in the USA; no one there was interested in buying its products.

Just who did what, - or who "retained" whom, - it is hard to say, what is certain that both MI5 & Westinghouse put out to private contractors the job of keeping a watch on protestors. Some, possibly all, the firms retained by M.I.5 were - as such firms go - highly reputable; but just as M.I.5 hires private firms to do its dirty work, so those private firms sub-contract to smaller ones the work they don't wish to own. So they & Westinghouse called in some not so reputable firms, most of which were run by people who had occasionally broken the law in their line of business; (there was moreover at least one firm involved whose principal had a criminal record not connected with detective or other surveillance work.)

It was obvious that such sub-contracting firms would cut corners. It was obvious that many had records of using violence. It was obvious that since they were being asked to watch protestors, they would be likely to tap 'phones or bug houses in illegal ways. All the evidence is that neither M.I.5, nor Westinghouse, nor the principal surveying agencies, thought it necessary to exercise any controls, to put limits on the degree to which the law was transgressed.

The government may or may not have believed its own pet libels - that all nuclear protestors are in the pay of sinister foreign powers, not motivated at all by genuine dislike of the bomb, but merely trying to handicap the West's competitive efforts. (It is arguable that if the Tories actually believed this nonsense they would be more dangerous than if they do it because lying comes naturally. A crook would draw back from world destroying nuclear war, a mad(wol)man mightn't.) Whatever they did or did not believe, they did not merely wish to watch, for there was nothing worth watching. The main point of the exercise was to frighten protestors. So the fact that some of their agents were likely to use rough stuff was all to the good.

It is this and this only that makes sense of Hilda Murrell's murder & Penny Goodman's disappearance. The police story is so absurd, has so many contradictions and flat inaccuracies, & is backed by such care to suppress news, which - if they believed their own story - they'd be only too glad to publish, that that can be ignored. But if someone in M.I.5 had really believed that two elderly peaceniks in the Welsh borderlands were a threat to the security of the state, they could no doubt have arranged realistic seeming accidents. Not only do people die every day on the streets, but people fall over cliffs such as the one at the quarry near Hilda's cottage at Llanymynech.

But the fact is that the state was not embarrassed that there was something obviously fishy about Hilda Murrell's murder. It was not embarrassed that everyone knew that there were large numbers of people who had volunteered as witnesses but had not been interviewed. It didn't mind denying the police authority the right to see the internal police report on the case, (a thing which did not even happen in the Stalker case,) because it was quite glad that people were speculating about a state murder. That served its purpose - as did every new suspicious circumstance & evidence published - in that it all helped to frighten other potential protestors.

The Government does, certainly, seem to have tried a little black propaganda, on the occasion, seeing Hilda Murrell's nephew was digging into the matter, noting the coincidence that before he left the navy he would have known much about the Belgrano's sinking, & having Tam Dalyell breathing down their necks, & trying to unearth the dirt about the Falklands, they got someone to inform Dalyell that the murder was to prevent a leak from Rob Green, (Hilda's nephew, a former naval Commander.) Had the latter fallen into the trap of then revealing military secrets, it would have been easy to discredit both him & Dalyell in popular opinion.

The Stalker case, which is the next on the list, is perhaps more crude & yet puzzling. The forces in Northern Ireland, laid a trap, killed some apparently innocent Catholic youth, but were caught by their own trap, since enough was tape-recorded to prove that the youth were unarmed & probably unaware of the fact that they were near an IRA arms' cache. The only remarkable thing (to anyone who knows anything of Northern Ireland since 1922) is that anyone objected to it being hushed up. There were enough doubts expressed that it was thought that the usual whitewash was inadequate and that they wanted a seemingly fair investigation before consigning the matter to oblivion. Amazingly they appointed a catholic to do the investigation which immediately alerted the Ulster Constabulary who set about obstructing the investigation at all levels & in all ways.

When the investigator refused to be intimidated or obstructed, it was necessary to use stronger tactics. They set about discrediting the investigator on his home ground. Ironically the worst thing that they could find was that he was very friendly with the local Tory Party chairman. For obvious reasons they couldn't actually say that this alone was enough evidence to suggest dishonesty, but as they didn't really bother to produce any other evidence one might well gather it from what they said. The Tory Chairman in question has not been prosecuted for any offence, though he has to bring libel actions after Press reports that seemed to suggest that he was known to be corrupt. If he had been known to the police as dishonest, then others besides Stalker had imprudently been associated with him.

It is a government, as we have said, that pays fullsome lip service to governmental propriety. When civil servants, disgusted by misdeeds, have dared publish them, there have been long lectures (& court cases) about the duty of confidentiality. When sources near the government have allowed papers to reach the Media, the lectures have read out that the Media are undemocratic & unpatriotic in publishing the material. But when a squabble in the Cabinet blew up

about the future ownership of a major company with considerable military connections; (whether the disagreement was motivated primarily by differing views as to which international allies we ought to have or whether the real reason was purely the financial interests of the contending parties hardly matters;) the actions of the Prime Minister's entourage were very different. Learning that the Attorney General had given an opinion on one side - the side that the Prime Minister happened to endorse - even though this opinion was a legal one that it was improper to use for political purposes, it was leaked by the Prime Minister's personal staff in order to discredit her "errant" Cabinet colleague.

Though there was a clear leak this vigorous opponent of leaks did not see it necessary on this occasion to sack (let alone prosecute) the leaker. Though there was a clear breach of constitutional custom there was no attempt to hold an inquiry into what had happened.

One day the police detaining three men for something quite different found they had forged police warrant cards. Further investigation and raids at their homes revealed that they had several hundred secret official documents, some genuine, some forged. Moreover it was found that they had been involved in a bombing incident aimed at the Anti-Apartheid movement, that they had probably taken part in other arson and bombing attempts, that they were connected with the people who had invaded the Seychelles, and all the while they had been involved in acts of petit dishonesty. A fairly large series of criminal acts, & indeed the police were rumoured to have had to make a selection from over a 1,000 indictments to bring before the magistrates.

Naturally Anti-Apartheid and others awaited the court case with some interest & were somewhat astonished when authorities stepped in first causing the case to be adjourned for no apparent good reason, and then suddenly deporting the three in a way that meant they did not have to stand trial. The Home Secretary - with amazing effrontery pretended that he thought that those who objected to this interference with the courts, were supporters of the three and he said he could not imagine why they objected to these people being expelled from the country. Though he must have known as well as anyone else that the objections were to the suppression of facts by preventing a court case.

When the news that three IRA activists had been shot in Gibraltar was first broadcast in Britain, a little while after the actual event, there were two additional reports. There were eye-witness accounts by people whom BBC Radio reporters had easily located, which made it quite clear that the shootings were sudden, without warning, & without any evidence that those shot had made any gesture suggesting they were armed and likely to use guns. There was also a flat report, repeated several times over the next few broadcasts, given by the relevant government minister that the IRA people were armed, that they had a car-bomb with them, that they started to fire.

The Radio which initially gave the eye-witness accounts, then omitted these for a time. The ministerial account was repeated ad nauseam, while the Minister coupled this with allegations that those who gave any other account were thereby trying to prejudice the judicial process of the Inquest. When tele-

vision carried a report on the case, much of the British Press was fed a series of lies about witnesses. (One witness, it is true, did change his evidence.) It was claimed that these witnesses - including a retired English officer - were motivated solely by Spanish nationalistic dislike of British rule in Gibraltar. The Inquest Coroner was similarly defamed in the British Press.

Naturally there was no judicial inquiry, while British Ministers claimed, where there statements were too demonstrably false that they had merely been misled, there was a continued effort to denounce anyone who gave a story that conflicted with the Ministerial accounts, and to pretend that these latter wished to pervert the course of justice.

I am not attempting here to examine all the crimes of the Government, the injustice of the Poll Tax, the damage to the National Health, the easing of already too lax rules against the destruction of the environment; or the similar lessening of safety regulations in industry or commerce, (the latter leading to disasters at Zeebrugge, Kings Cross, Clapham Junction & elsewhere;) these are outside my present terms of reference. So it might be thought ridiculous that I mention in the same breath as the murder of Hilda Murrell the intra-business shenanigans over the control of an helicopter firm. But Toryism being by definition linked to big business, the Westland scandal was an interesting revelation of the way Thatcherism has taken the Tory Party.

Similarly the Harrods scandal. No one could possibly pretend that Lorrho, & Tiny Rowland are anything but well known big capitalist business, (so much so that Heath described the firm as the unacceptable face of capitalism.) But it is a form of big business that trades primarily with former colonial countries in Africa, & needs to maintain good relations with the governments of these, a necessity which means that from a specifically British capitalist viewpoint it sometimes steps out of line, and so is suspect in the Tory Party.

That the Monopolies' Commission refused to allow Lorrho to buy Harrods (probably a matter of concern only to very wealthy shoppers,) may well have been to the good. But certainly it is true that the government ministry that referred that attempted purchase to the Commission then failed to observe the same diligence when new buyers came on the scene. An internal governmental report (which the Minister concerned has not merely not released, but acted to suppress publication of a leaked copy) has since shown (in the words of the Minister himself,) that there were clearly criminal acts in the take-over of Harrods. But though it has been several years, no criminal proceedings have been started, & though roughly every two months, government official sources allow themselves to be quoted (off the record,) that publication of this report is imminent, regularly the two months pass & there is another such quote but no publication.

No anarchist would suggest that this covert illegal action is unprecedented in the annals of government. What is new is the brazen way that government flatly denies that anyone has the right to question its acts or demand an inquiry. Equally no anarchist would suggest that such an Inquiry, whether parliamentary or judicial, is all that is needed. [The Law exists to maintain a class system & both judges & parliamentarians are beneficiaries of the system; so that even the most leftist Labour parliamentarian acts to retain injustices.]