

# RED RAG

## *Organising the left in Exeter*

This newsletter has come about due to a meeting of lefties in Exeter in October. More meetings and newsletters are planned and hopefully some activity too! Anybody on the left is invited to attempt to join this highly centralised and disciplined revolutionary organisation! (Joke). Come to the next meeting if you want to speak, organise or listen. No previous experience probably an advantage! People with meeting phobias also very welcome. Any help with producing this rag gratefully accepted. Address for letters, articles etc see page 3.

### *Why should the left vote for Labour?*

*By Ed Pitman, a member of Exeter Labour Party*

It's more than staggering that, at this crucial time, anyone on the Left should choose not to vote for the Labour Party.

This issue is quite clear. Vote for Labour in Exeter or Dr Adrian Rogers will goose step to Westminster with a legitimate mandate to argue for his extremist policies.

Frankly, this is a vomit inducing prospect which all of us on the left must join together to prevent.

All talk of 'defacing the ballot paper' in protest shows an alarming level of immaturity and is as politically useful as a broken pencil (completely pointless!). OK, so if everyone did it 'the system would change'. Yes, but into what and, realistically how many voters are going to troop in and scrawl 'fuck the system' onto their voting slips? - if you're not convinced may I suggest that you remove your head from your rectum, leave the university bar for a while and actually go and speak to the electorate.

### **NEXT MEETING**

**TUESDAY DECEMBER 3RD  
EXETER COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**ST DAVID'S HILL 7.30PM**

Nothing would please me more than to elect a government which would nationalise the banks and the land, end poverty, war and want and provide dignity in old age for all our people.

Regrettably there seems to be no sign of an uprising within the working class which is hardly surprising after having the feeling of utter hopelessness systematically impressed upon them during 17 years of the Tories.

Active Labour Party members should know, they actually campaign on the doorsteps every year at City and County Council elections.

There are those that lazily like to say that there is no difference between New Labour and the Tories. This is a completely stupid argument.

The next Labour

Government will introduce a minimum wage, release trapped funds from the sale of council houses, and use a windfall levy on the privatised utilities to get 250,000 under 25 year-olds off benefit and into work.

The Tory press used lies and deceit before the last general election to distort our argument, particularly over tax issues, and this has led to New Labour's extreme caution on making spending and policy pledges which may be unobtainable during a first term of office. Who knows what state the economy will be in just prior to the next general election? Isn't it stupid to ignore the power of the Tory propaganda machine?

Many choose to cynically hyper-analyse everything that Tony Blair and the Labour Party say, in the hope of finding evidence of some new perceived shift to the right. One thing remains blindingly clear and that is that Labour HAS to be better than the Tories, even for those on the far left. Just consider our radical agenda, around issues such as devolution and the abolition of the House of Lords.

Don't sit at home in protest, vote for Labour or face the prospect of Adrian Rogers as your MP, demeaning and degrading us with every parliamentary utterance - you have been warned.

NO 1 NOV/DEC 96

## VOTE LABOUR? VOTE SLP?

### NO TA!

NONE OF THE ABOVE!

BY TIM PRICE

There is nothing quite like the thrill of anticipation. No doubt the scattered bands of revolutionary socialists share with large numbers of the great British public that sensuous electric tingling sensation that hits 6 g spots simultaneously in those moments when the media makes us aware of the of the forthcoming choice between Blair and Major. Oh yes, there is nothing quite like the thrill of anticipation. Now there are only months in which to savour it. Soon like a firework exploding bright against a black night sky or a train disappearing into a tunnel the event will be over in a flash.

The choice of cheese or cheese has, thus far not stimulated much widespread nostalgia for hard left reformism or indeed, fascism. Being more interested in the 'left' I believe that my sense of the current massive lull in 'left' politics and class action is not just the result of my innate pessimism being tempered by the grey skies of autumn and my ageing body falling apart. My arrival at an understanding that reformist activity provides very little by the way of openings for revolutionary politics, and in fact has been counter productive to the socialist project is a double whammy in that it tends to make me view as a sad mockery many of my previous efforts and leaves me wide open to one too many pints of The Dogs Bollox as I dither about the way forward. This is underpinned by my belief that capitalism still has a great deal of life left in it. This analysis leaves me finding it difficult to act - whatever I do I am damned.

Nonetheless the current political climate is one that may well provide some space for revolutionary socialist propaganda. It's not that I really hanker for the lost days of hyperactivity, but the frustration of almost total inactivity feeds my pessimism. And, of course whilst it is not always better to do something rather than nothing the very least that needs to be done is continuous propagation of the revolutionary socialist project. The media describes mass apathy as the result of an apparent narrowing of the range of differences between the bourgeois parties and the loss of all pretence of a better world for all in the face of the current victory of the capitalist class. This 'apathy' is actually an alienation from bourgeois democracy which for so long has successfully legitimised capitalist exploitation.

In a way this apathy amongst a large section of the working class is potentially more healthy for revolutionary politics than a period of more traditional activity. Capitalism's drive for profits involves a range of approaches from the most crude forms of exploitation to the more sophisticated use of rationalisations. In Britain the rhetoric of capitalism being fair and reasonable has had a great deal of success being underpinned by notions of power through the vote, (just remember how hard our ancestors had to fight to get it!). But all of this is now wearing somewhat thin. It appears that a large section of potential young voters have not bought the deal and rock bands are being drafted in to tempt them to experience orgasm in the voting booth. Then there are many older people who have not had wealth trickling down on to them for whom a trip to the polling station holds no promise of delight. On top of this all the parliamentary sieaze, cash for questions, dodgy dealings and huge pay rises for MPs has undermined respect for bourgeois democracy as it operates in this country. All of this might provide fertile ground.

I suspect that 2 ideas may hold sway for such folk:

1. That it ain't gonna make fuck all difference who they vote for.
2. That the system is stacked in favour of helping the rich to enrich themselves.

Revolutionary socialists need to use the opportunity to reify these ideas.

To do so will not necessarily bring the day revolution forward from December 2137 by more than an hour or two but it might well help to build the necessary consciousness amongst the class more effectively than much of the crap that many of us have engaged in in the past in the name of socialism.

I would like to suggest that in the run up to the general election a publicity campaign needs to be waged to get people to actively abstain rather than merely do nothing. People need to be encouraged to retain their right to vote but then spoil their papers. The basic logic for this is that the mass spoiling of papers will show that people care but reject what is offered. To stay away from the polling station allows the politicians and media to blame 'apathy' which is never defined as more than some general malaise - as though it were an illness or stupid idleness. This very much suits them and suggests there is no threat to the status quo. Thousands of spoiled papers might not worry the ruling class much, millions might. If the campaign takes off there will be plenty of opportunities to explain how little power people actually have with a once every five year vote as their only weapon. Who knows what opportunities will be made available to organisers of such a campaign. But even if the results are limited, the opportunity for anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois democracy propaganda is terrific: stickers, fly posters and graffiti can proclaim 'Don't waste your vote - spoil your paper', 'Pay me and I might vote', 'Don't vote for the rich - let 'em know you're not happy with a spoiled paper' and other such snappy

slogans. If nothing else slogan creation will be a joyful activity that we can all join in with.

If the campaign takes off the question will have to be faced of how big is it? It may be possible to collate the numbers of spoilt papers as some sort of indicator. It may stimulate a new political climate. It may do little more than get many of us whackos talking to each other and even other class members.

The campaign should not try to create illusions. It will attempt to feed off people's alienation and will do little more than blow a slightly thought out raspberry at bourgeois democracy and help further to alienate people from reformism. I feel sure that many people feel that they don't know what to do about their powerlessness and without succumbing to reformism, I think that in this case active abstentionism is better than doing nothing at all: What do you say?

## CONTACT ADDRESS

THE FLYING POST, PO BOX 185, EXETER, EX4 4EW

WE CAN BE CONTACTED HERE AS CAN;

**EXETER CLAIMANTS - FIGHT THE JSA!**

**EXETER AFA - FIGHT THE FASCISTS!**

### *CLEVER CLOGS?*

Capital is itself contradiction in action, since it makes an effort to reduce labour time to the minimum, while at the same time establishing labour time as the sole measurement and source of wealth.

Karl Marx - Grundrisse

In a society based upon exploitation, the highest moral is that of the social revolution. All methods are good which raise the class-consciousness of the the workers, their trust in their own forces, their readiness for self-sacrifice in the struggle.

Leon Trotsky - Transitional Programme

## CONFERENCE

### *Revolutionary Socialist Network*

# EXPLORING STRUGGLES AGAINST CAPITAL AND STATE

7TH DECEMBER 1996

QUEEN'S WALK COMMUNITY CENTRE

NOTTINGHAM

10.30 - 6.00

SESSION ONE - ZAPATISTAS VS NEOLIBERALISM - report back on a conference - Andrew Flood  
SESSION TWO - MAKING AND UNMAKING ALLIANCES OF RESISTANCE - Job Seekers Allowance - Jon O'Neill; Contemporary workplace struggles - open forum discussion

SESSION THREE - ORGANISING AS REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS - SLP - Dave Spencer; In and against the State - Tony Taylor

\* CRECHE

\* CRASH SPACE

\* FOOD

\* MORE DETAILS FROM RSN, C/O 180 MANSFIELD RD, NOTTINGHAM, NG1 3HH

\* OR CONTACT US AT ABOVE ADDRESS

## 10 years ago .... From the AFA archives

Dr Rogers, the prospective Tory parliamentary candidate for Exeter, is notorious for his bigotry - an AFA researcher decided to dig through the files.

In an interview given to the Exeter Leader freebie newspaper in Dec 1986 the good doctor really excelled himself. Apparently AIDS is a virus "that attacks the weakness in our society" and "we should be looking to isolate these people", we should "contain them in hospitals or communities" i.e. concentration camps, and "we should be closing down gay clubs, gay contact magazines and gay shops".

Later in 1989 Dr Rogers called for the boycott of an Exeter bookshop which had dared to put on a display of gay literature to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Stonewall. Those who perceive Exeter as a tolerant place should be mindful that Dr Rogers actually succeeded in getting the manager of Fagins bookshop sacked. In the context of this controversy Dr Rogers wrote that he considered "homosexuality as a God-condemned, sterile, and disease-ridden occupation". He went on to attack Barts Tavern for having a Gay Club and claimed that the law had never intended "to allow homosexuality to be promoted in any public way, and the fact that ...[Barts] ... does so will I hope be noticed by your readers".

Some readers took this to heart. This letter was published on 27th July 1989, 3 weeks later on the 19th August about a dozen NF supporters attacked Barts Tavern with clubs and CS gas. The NF may have attacked Barts regardless of Dr Rogers outbursts but when the Tory Right and the media indulge in bigoted or racist populism it is not long before their hard line supporters convert it into racist or homophobic violence. Interestingly the NF (or National Democrats) have recently stated that they believe Dr Rogers is in the wrong party and should be with them.

Dave P

### ***LIVERPOOL DOCKERS NEED SUPPORT***

#### **STILL ON STRIKE AFTER 14 MONTHS**

THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS HAVE BEEN ON STRIKE SINCE SEPTEMBER 1995. 500 OF THEM WERE SACKED AFTER REFUSING TO CROSS A PICKET LINE. THEIR STRUGGLE FOR REINSTATEMENT CONTINUES. THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL SUPPORT FROM THEIR UNION THE T&G, BUT UNOFFICIAL SUPPORT HAS BEEN HIGH ESPECIALLY FROM DOCKERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. SUPPORT GROUPS HAVE SPRUNG UP ALL AROUND BRITAIN AND THE DOCKERS ALSO HAVE THEIR OWN PAPER 'THE DOCKERS CHARTER'.

DOCKERS CHARTER - 50P (20P UNWAGED) - ADD POSTAGE

AVAILABLE FROM LIVERPOOL DOCKERS SHOP STEWARDS' COMMITTEE, C/O 19 SCORTON STREET, LIVERPOOL L6 4AS

DONATIONS ALSO NEEDED

CONTACT RED RAG FOR MORE DETAILS.