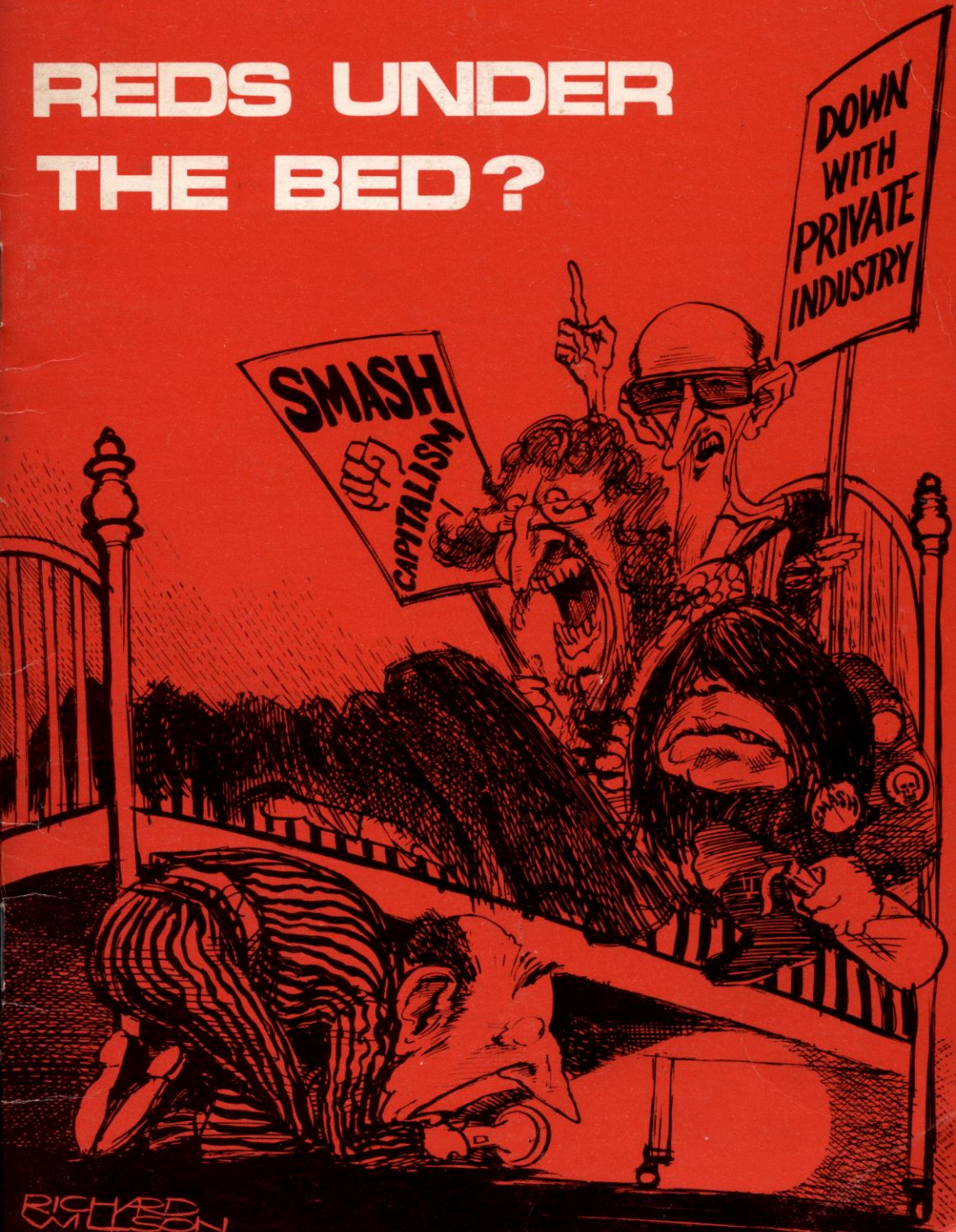


REDS UNDER THE BED?



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REDS UNDER THE BED?

An Aims of Industry publication

**Lenin: Left-wing Communism:
an Infantile Disorder**

“We must be able to ... resort to all sorts of stratagems, artifices, illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuges, only so as to get into the trade unions to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work within them at all costs.”

REDS UNDER THE BED?

Nobody who lives in Britain can have failed to notice that life seems to get nastier each year.

It is not that as a nation we are lacking in material things. Despite the ravages of world inflation, the British people have had the highest real advance in living standards in their history during the past two years. If possessions make for happiness, then we have had our biggest spending spree ever on cars, colour televisions, freezers, boats, caravans and other "goodies" since 1971.

What is making life progressively more unpleasant is the ever-growing certainty that none of us will be able to go about the normal business of living for long without some damaging interruption due to conflict in one or other of our big industries.

Each winter brings the nightmare that industry will grind to a halt, homes will be blacked out and old people will freeze because coal is not being mined or electricity is not being generated. Commuters know that yet again they will wait for trains that do not run because drivers are once more working to rule.

Millions of ordinary men and women who want nothing more than to get on with the job will find themselves marched in and out of work or bidden to ban desirable overtime over some obscure grievance or manifestly inflationary pay claim. If they object they will be pressurised in the sacred name of solidarity.

Worse still, they may be physically intimidated from carrying on their work. Anyone who thinks this cannot happen in Britain need only consider the way girl clerks were jostled and spat upon during the miners' strike in 1972, or how building workers were driven off sites by coachloads of flying pickets during summer the same year.

The most disquieting and sinister feature of this deterioration in our way of life is that the scale of disruption, and the damage

and hardship it causes, is increasing. The ordinary citizen can be forgiven for asking whether Britain will be a country worth living in in a few years from now.

It is a sensible and serious question, and the answer is a grim one. It is simply this. Unless the people of Britain face up to the real cause of the disputes that are now regularly disrupting the life of the nation, then much that we value in life, including democracy itself, is in danger of disappearing.

NO ACT OF GOD

The miners' overtime ban and the rail drivers' work to rule are not acts of God. Nor are the fatuous political arguments about whether the Government is seeking confrontations relevant.

If we want to know the true cause of the miners' deliberately crippling overtime ban we do not have to take the word of politicians, or the allegedly Tory press, or even of the National Coal Board. We can take the word of Mr. Frank Smith, a member of the national executive of the National Union of Mineworkers, and a union official for 28 years. On January 6, 1974, Mr. Smith told Michael Dove, of the *Sunday Express*: "This dispute was Communist inspired, and wider, more political issues have become involved." On Independent Television News the same evening Mr. Smith repeated his statement that the Communists and their fellow travellers on the mineworkers' executive had engineered the dispute and were intent on prolonging it.

This revelation may have surprised and shocked many viewers, particularly those who have tended to sympathise with the miners' pay claim because of the unpleasant and dangerous job the men do underground.

NATION'S DESPERATE CRISIS

Every politician, every industrial relations specialist, every labour correspondent had been well aware all through the summer and autumn that there were 11 men on the miners' 27-strong

executive determined to make trouble for the nation if they possibly could. The Government knew it. Far from seeking a confrontation, they specially tailored Stage 3 so that the miners could have a much larger rise than any other group of workers.

The 11 consist of six communists and five members of the "Labour Left". Undisputed leader of this dedicated band is Michael McGahey, vice president and Scottish president of the union, a member of the Communist Party national executive and of its inner cabinet, the political committee (politbureau would be the Russian term). The other Communists are Bill McLean, from Scotland, Joe Whelan, from Nottinghamshire, Jack Collins, from the Kent coalfield, Peter Tait, from Yorkshire, and Dai Francis, from South Wales. Lawrence Daly, the union general secretary, is an ex Communist and usually regarded as a "hardliner".

Since 1971 five Marxists of the Labour Left have been elected to the national executive. Their leader is Arthur Scargill from Barnsley, who achieved fame, or maybe notoriety, by leading the violent attack on the Saltley coke depot during the 1972 miners' strike. The other four are Owen Briscoe, from Doncaster, Peter Heathfield, from North Derbyshire, Emlyn Williams, from South Wales, and Eric Clarke, from Scotland.

THE WELL-KNOWN TECHNIQUE

How, it may be asked, can 11 men, maybe with the help of Mr Daly, dominate a 27 man executive? The basic answer is that a united determined minority will always beat a disorganised majority, especially in trade union matters, where it is often difficult for the moderates to decide where legitimate militancy ends and political extremism begins.

In addition, there are some established techniques regularly used by the extreme left to put pressure on moderates. One of them is to ensure that branch meetings, which are usually sparsely attended, and mostly by left sympathisers, keep passing motions demanding militant action. As these flood into the executive, they are claimed to be "evidence" that the membership supports the hard line.

Another strategy, used by McGahey with the miners, was to persuade the annual conference to commit the union to some large and specified pay claim. By the time a union has several extremists on its executive, this is not difficult to arrange, for a high proportion of the jobs at branch level will have been infiltrated by Communists and fellow travellers, and they will form a substantial proportion of the conference delegates. Once some specific claim has been adopted by conference, the extremists on the executive can always insist that pursuit of the full amount is official union policy, and acceptance of any lower offer, however generous, is "betrayal". Once McGahey and his supporters had manoeuvred the conference into accepting a "planted" rank-and-file motion for the £8.71 to £12.71 claim, they had a major weapon to keep moderates on the executive firmly militant.

There are many other means by which Communists and other extremists, while numerically outnumbered, can push unions into following their "line". They are masters of points of order and of wearisome prolongation of discussion till the opposition gives in from sheer fatigue. They will usually work much harder than moderates, stomping around branches and trying to whip up emotions on their chosen issues—and Communists are carefully trained by their party in mob oratory.

If it suits their book, they will deliberately try to destroy moderate union officials. They may start whispering campaigns about their integrity or personal life. They may try to overwork them to the point of breakdown, bombarding them with every kind of petty grievance, demanding reports on every conceivable subject, instructing them to liaise with all kinds of improbable organisations, and electing them as representatives to every tedious committee they can think of.

If the moderate official can survive all this, his lot is still unenviable. The extremists will force him into constant battle for the loyalty of members. When we hear of normally responsible union leaders speaking or behaving with unusual militancy, they are more often than not simply trying to protect themselves from being outflanked in members' eyes by zealous competitors on the left.

It is important to understand how the Communists, fellow travellers and other extremists work, if only because it sheds light on how (at most) some 75,000 people can manipulate

Britain's 11 million trade unionists and hold the whole nation to ransom.

THE REASON WHY

What it is even more important to understand is why these people work with such tireless dedication, and often with massive self-sacrifice, to cause industrial troubles.

The reason, it need hardly be said, is not passionate concern that the miners or the train drivers should get a few shillings extra beer money. Your friendly neighbourhood Communist will certainly produce long emotive speeches in support of any claim or other cause, but that is only incidental.

What he is really after is power for himself and his party, and through it, the imposition of his political philosophy on Britain. That philosophy, of course, involves the destruction of the market economy (always referred to as "the capitalist system"). It would also involve, although the Communists would deny this, the destruction of trade unionism as it is known in any free country. The Iron Curtain countries, where trade unions are simply tools for central government domination of workers, all too clearly reveal the fate awaiting Britain's trade unions if the Communists ever achieve the power they seek. That power is, quite simply, effective government of Britain.

This may sound a highly improbable ambition for a party whose membership is only 30,000, and which is consistently drubbed whenever it puts up candidates in parliamentary or local elections. Even if the Trotskyists and Maoists and anarchists, and the Communists' allies and dupes in the Labour Party, are added in, they would amount to only a tiny fraction of the electorate.

Unfortunately, there is no comfort in such arithmetic. The Communists are not seriously seeking power through representation in Parliament. They are pursuing an easier and more sinister road to power.

Their strategy is breathtakingly audacious—and totally undemocratic. It is simply to gain control of the main trade unions and through them to control the Labour Party.

There is nothing fanciful about this strategy. At the Labour

Party conference (theoretically the party's supreme policy making body) 88 per cent of the votes are cast by trade union leaders. Twelve members of the party's 24 strong National Executive Committee are directly elected by the trade unions, and five more by the union-dominated conference. In addition, four fifths of the party's central funds come from the trade unions.

Whoever controls the larger trade unions automatically exercises massive power over the Labour Party. It is not absolute power, for substantial authority in the party, particularly when it is in office, lies with the Parliamentary Committee consisting of MPs duly elected through the ballot box.

Massive influence in the unions does, however, give the Communists power to push the Labour Party into ever more extreme policies. This has already happened to the extent that any future Labour Government would come to power with commitments to wholesale nationalization of industry, the banks, building societies, and insurance companies which, if carried out, would leave Britain with a near approximation to the centrally planned economies east of the Iron Curtain.

THE SUPPORTING STRATEGY

Some comfort may be drawn, perhaps, from the fact that the more the Labour Party allows itself to be pushed into extremist policies, the less it is likely to achieve success at the polls. This, however, should give little solace, if only because a credible and acceptable alternative government is essential to democracy.

In addition, the Communists have a supporting strategy, which they are successfully pursuing here and now, to condition the electorate into acquiescing in extremist measures.

This strategy can be summarised. It is:

- To do everything possible through trade union action to discredit the capitalist system and show that it is "unworkable".
- To make Britain ungovernable unless the elected Government follows policies dictated by the trade unions.

To understand this strategy is to understand the true nature of the troubles which have impoverished Britain during the last few

years, and which have now plunged us into the most desperate economic crisis since the war

We do not have to make surmises about the reason for these events. The Communists themselves have supplied it. Mick McGahey, the miners' vice-president, has made it perfectly clear on several occasions that, for him, at least, the aim of the miners' action is to bring down the present Government, or, if that is not possible, to "smash" Stage 3 (which was, of course, enacted by Parliament).

The "making Britain ungovernable" strategy is being put into action every time a key industry vital to the life of the nation is brought to a halt in an engineered confrontation with the Government of the day. It is, in effect, a two-way bet for the Communists. If the Government gives in, the surrender will be treated as a victory for militant trade unionists, a demonstration of the effectiveness of Communist leadership, and a precedent for future militancy. If the Government resists, the ensuing hardship and loss will be interpreted as showing that "the system" is unworkable.

STRIKING AT ESSENTIALS

Making Britain ungovernable essentially consists of going for the nation's jugular vein with disruption in absolutely key industries. It is no accident that our major troubles in the last few years have been in electricity generation, coal, the docks, and rail transport—all activities essential to support industry and daily life. The Communist party has a national industrial organiser, Bert Ramelson, and an industrial committee who plot a disputes strategy aimed at doing maximum damage.

"Discrediting the system" has wider ramifications. In theory, it means that to the extremists all industrial troubles are "good", and large numbers of unnecessary disputes are provoked. This is normally done by waiting until there is a genuine grievance, and then committing rank-and-file members to militant action to get it redressed.

Communists, however, are selective on the issues they fight on. They want to be able to claim some kind of "victory" at the end

of the proceedings, and they do not want to alienate union members by involving them in too many inconclusive disputes. That is why Communist shop stewards often give the impression of being more moderate than non-political militant hotheads among the union membership. Employers may, indeed, regard them as good shop stewards, but nemesis is always round the corner. Once the "right" issue arrives, the Communist steward and his "cell" of Communist union members in the factory will move into action with deadly, disruptive efficiency.

The strategy of "discrediting the system" means that the Communists simply do not care about the current welfare of the working class they are supposed to support. To them, current prosperity can always be sacrificed to produce greater power for the party. The more impoverished Britain becomes, the more "the system" can be claimed to have failed. In particular, the Communists are cynically opposed to attempts to stem inflation. It was Lenin himself who said that the best way to destroy a society was to destroy its currency.

THE GROWING THREAT

Such, then, is the Communist strategy. It is chilling in its economic implications. It is even more chilling in its threat to democracy, to substitute the rule of a tiny minority through trade union power for the rule of an elected Parliament.

It is not a threat that can be dismissed as a minor nuisance or something that may never happen. It is increasingly successful now.

The scale of extremist activity has escalated during the past few years. There is no mystery about the reason. The infiltration of Communists and their allies into key posts in the unions, all the way from shop steward to national executive level, has increased dramatically.

As 1974 unfolds, two of Britain's major unions have moved closer to extremist control. In ASLEF, the train drivers' union, four new Marxist militants have joined Bill Ronksley, a Communist, and three Labour Left militants on the national executive.

The AUEW is Britain's second largest union, and it has the

power to cripple the engineering, motor and shipbuilding industries. Its general secretary is Hugh Scanlon, for 20 years a Communist and still an open Left sympathiser, publicly committed to the idea that trade unions should "change society". It is already the union most heavily infiltrated by Communists. Now, at the start of 1974, four more militant extremists have moved into key posts in the union hierarchy.

One of the facts which simply must not be ignored is that there is a cascade effect once extremists infiltrate a union. Their first pre-occupation is to ease other extremists into other positions of influence, so that their control becomes progressively tighter.

One factor keeping Communists on their toes these days is the increased pressure from more extreme Leftist groups, such as the Trotskyists, Maoists and anarchists. Because many extremist younger people are contemptuous of the policies of the Soviet Union, they have turned from the official Communist Party to other extremist groups. They may dislike each other, but they do join forces often in industrial action. All groups have been united during the last two years over the idea of using such issues as the Industrial Relations Act and prices and incomes policy as excuses to overthrow the Government.

ROLLING BACK THE TIDE

Thus, unless action is taken to stem the tide, the scale of disruption Britain suffers will, if anything, increase. Equally, extremists will march on inexorably to their goals of making Britain ungovernable, except by a pliant Labour Party dominated by Communist controlled trade unions.

There is no single, easy action that can be taken to protect ourselves from this threat, but this does not mean we should continue the present policy of ignoring it.

The first, essential, need is that everyone should be aware of what is happening and of its seriousness. This means that many people in responsible positions will have to speak out, and keep on speaking out.

Politicians of all parties have a special responsibility to tell the electorate what is going on. They should name names and give

chapter and verse. If the British public is being made to suffer by political extremists, they have a right to know. If British workers are being used as dupes, they, too, have the right to know.

Industrialists also have a special responsibility. Mostly they keep quiet about the extent to which political extremism bedevils their industrial relations, fearing that exposure would be regarded as "provocation" by Communist shop stewards and lead to further troubles. Their employees, however, the vast majority of whom are responsible and moderate, have the right to know what is going on. When industrialists have no doubt that their employees are being manipulated for political reasons, they should say so. They should tell employees, they should tell the local and national press.

Many moderate trade union leaders, like Tom Jackson, of the Post Office Workers and Frank Chapple, of the electricians and plumbers, do an excellent and courageous job in warning the public, and their own members, about the extremist motivation of much that is now done in the name of trade unionism. It is vital that other moderates in the movement should add their voices to this swell of explanation and exposure. The survival of free trade unionism may well depend upon it.

UNION MEMBERS MUST PARTICIPATE

The people who mostly hold the key to countering the tide of extremists' control are Britain's 11 million ordinary trade unionists. It is in their name that the extremists operate.

There is no secret about the reason why Communists and their allies exercise so much power. It is because the great bulk of rank and file members do not bother to attend their union branch meetings, and take little interest in union affairs until they suddenly find themselves in the middle of a dispute. In the majority of cases union officials holding important positions are elected by a tiny minority.

This apathy leaves the political extremists with a clear field: they not only invariably attend branch meetings; they meet beforehand and decide how they can "rig" the meeting to override any moderate opposition. They are prepared to do the donkey work of running the branch, and most rank and file members do not want to be burdened with it.

As a result, many of the people who appear to speak for Britain's workers are political extremists. Their voice may be far from authentic, but their zeal and their members' apathy gives them the chance to claim to represent the views and feelings of "the silent majority". It also gives them the chance to distort or misrepresent what may be going on in negotiations --and in the Communist book lies and distortions are perfectly legitimate tactics. Thus the rank and file may be completely misled about employers' attitudes, just as employers may be completely misled about the feelings of their workers. This situation emphasises the need for employers to make sure that they communicate fully and frankly with their employees.

The overwhelming need, however, is for vigorous action to encourage the rank and file to participate in the affairs of their unions. Apart from fully exposing the extent and nature of the extremist conspiracy, it is a matter of great urgency that politicians of all parties, the media, employers, and moderate trade unionists, should do everything in their power to persuade the rank and file to take a more active part in the running of the unions.

It is ironic that so much attention is currently being devoted by employers, trade unions, and politicians to employee participation in the management of industry, when the prior need to secure greater participation in union affairs is largely going by default.

REMOVING THE CAUSES

Before the Communists and their allies can cause disruption, they must have some nucleus of grievance to work on. Once this exists, they are adept at every conceivable technique of exploitation of rank and file feelings.

One of the answers to the extremist advance is therefore intensified effort to remove and forestall causes of grievance. Already, of course, most employers work to this end, often in close collaboration with moderate and constructive trade unions.

Consideration needs to be given to ways in which this effort could be intensified. One field could be in more rapid progress

towards staff conditions for workers in industry. There is massive scope for employers and constructive unions to work together to set up better voluntary conciliation and arbitration machinery so that petty disputes can be promptly settled, and not turned into trials of strength by extremists. Whatever is being done should be fully and continuously publicised, as part of the overall aim of isolating the extremists from the majority they purport to represent.

Beyond this, there are excellent models in Europe, particularly in Scandinavia, for the top organisations in industry—the CBI and the TUC—to work together towards some form of “social contract” which would enhance Britain’s industrial efficiency and better satisfy the genuine aspirations of employees. Such collaboration could reduce the need for government intervention in industry, and thus lessen the opportunities for extremist-controlled unions to “take on” the Government of the day.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

There is little the Government can do, whatever its political complexion, directly to combat extremist activity in industry—apart, that is, from giving the public the full facts about extremist influence in damaging disputes.

Repressive legislation or McCarthy type investigations would not only harm legitimate trade union activity, they would predictably produce further grievances which extremists would exploit.

One measure which ought to be considered on an all party basis is revision of the current policy of paying social security benefits to the families of people on strike. This arrangement, which does not apply in any other European country, enables the extremists to call out employees on the basis that they have virtually nothing to lose by militancy, and everything to gain. Since it has virtually led to the disappearance of union strike pay, it has also cut away the ground from under the feet of moderate leaders who used to argue that union funds could not afford unwarranted strikes. The aim should not be to “starve out”

strikers. Loans should be available, on the basis of repayment by deductions from earnings when work is resumed.

The time has also come when we have really got to reclassify what we mean by work, by agreement between employers and trade unions. There should be reasonable flexibility, willingness to work reasonable overtime, freedom to carry out safety checks, and so on.

If, for example, a man refuses to drive a railway locomotive because there is a draught and no bunny girl in the cab, his conduct should be taken as strike action.

The trade unions have found it is a lot cheaper for them to have what are really strikes in all but name. It has got to be recognised that deliberate disruptions of this type are really strikes within the meaning of the word.

THE ROLE OF THE LABOUR PARTY

The institution at greatest risk is the Labour Party, which is threatened by ever-increasing control by extremists. There is no argument about this, it is freely and, indeed, gleefully admitted by the Communists. However, there is an urgent need for the threat to be made better known to the public. A major responsibility rests on moderates and genuine democrats in the party to follow the call of Mr Reg Prentice to "stand up and be counted". They need to do more than this: despite a natural reluctance to appear to criticise their traditional allies, if they wish to see their party survive as a genuine social-democratic entity they should be fully explicit about the threats the party faces.

THE PUBLIC'S ROLE

In the disputes which now so regularly tear Britain apart, the public seems to have little to do but stand helplessly aside and suffer hardship. Public opinion has little chance to influence

events, or even to form, because the facts about extremists' influence in specific disputes are not fully and authoritatively exposed.

The feeling that the public can do little but stand aside and suffer is not wholly true. If ordinary citizens really feel strongly about politically motivated disputes, they can put the union concerned to considerable embarrassment by keeping its switchboards swamped with protest calls. There are other possibilities, such as petitions, demonstrations and even "sit-ins" all liberally used by extremists to achieve their ends—by which the public could demonstrate its feelings at union headquarters and branches, and to ordinary rank and-file members.

Such tactics tend to be dismissed as somehow unfair and "un-British". The fact is, however, that the people who are attacking Britain see themselves as fighting a "war". And in a war, the attacked have to defend themselves and then counter-attack.

THE LETHAL EMBRACE

For too long, in fact, the extremists have moved towards control over Britain under a cloak of public apathy and ignorance. Attempts to expose what is going on have been met with bland little jokes about "seeing Reds under every bed".

The harsh fact is that the Reds are now in the beds, with a lethal embrace round Britain's crucial institutions, the trade unions. To ignore this is like hoping that cancer will go away if you don't say anything about it.

Like most cancers, the extremist conspiracy can be eradicated if taken in time. But time could be running out.

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