

Thatcher's Children

Trevor Griffiths

Thatcher's Children was first performed at the Old Vic, Bristol on 19 May 1993. Giles Thomas played Wayne Richards, one of a small group of schoolmates in Yorkshire who wanted to be a policeman. This excerpt is from the beginning of Act Two, as Constable Wayne waits to testify at a trial of miners arrested at Orgreave. The complete text appears in Volume II of Theatre Plays by Trevor Griffiths (Spokesman, £15).

Wayne, in summer uniform, smokes a fag and chews gum in a corridor. Sounds of trial in nearby courtroom.

WAYNE: (*Out*) You won't want to know about Orgreave Coking Plant, will you? No no. A squeamish people, we are. We act ashamed of some of our greatest triumphs. Well let me tell you, the war was won because the battle of Orgreave was won. And Orgreave was won because the High Command – I don't mean policemen either, I mean Upstairs – because the High Command decided that's where we'd stand and fight, got it? (*Deliberately.*) By any means necessary. That was the words used. Nearly five thousand of us mustered down there, from all over the place, I'd no idea where some of 'em came from, Hampshire, where's Hampshire ...? Two hundred horses, a hundred dogs, four hundred long shields, five hundred short shields, protective gear from visored helmets to steel-cap boots, oh yes, planned and executed with military precision, we 'ad a hundred and fifty paras in unmarked police boiler suits, two buses filled with fuckin' CS gas, that's how serious they were Upstairs ... We were there to beat the shit out of 'em that day an' by God that's what we did. Hey, I watched one o' the mounted boys chase a gang o' pickets into the fuckin' Asda down the village, followed 'em inside ... (*Laughs*) An' the fuckin' Met, oh boy, my mate Mark saw the boys from the Met charging down the High Street smashin' in every car windscreen with an NUM sticker,

hundreds of 'em, with a couple o' lads followin' up with a little printed card for the wiper, Mark showed me one: 'Congratulations. You have met the Met.' There's pride, is it. The really comical thing is, the poor bastard pickets 'adn't come for a bundle at all, they thought it was gonna be business as usual, you know, shove an' heave when the lorries moved the coke out an' a bit of a laugh ... Most of 'em were in T-shirts 'n' daps, you know, trainers ... Didn't know what hit 'em. We followed through, too. Oh yes. We had men scourin' the hospitals all night, draggin' the wounded out 'n' bangin' 'em up, we did. An' a brand new charge to throw at the buggers too, them we arrested: riot. Carries a life sentence, see. Exemplary. Upstairs again. Oh yes. (*His name's called. He drops the fag, treads it out.*) We've been months stitchin' this lot up – I didn't write a fuckin' word o' my statement, I don't think anybody did, 's all bin taken care of, see ... (*Points: Upstairs, Grins. His name's called again.*) A riot, eh?

He saunters forward to the witness box. Chews on as he takes the oath.

DEFENCE COUNSEL: (*Off*) ... I appear for the defendant Ian Clayton. Now, Constable Richards, since you have made your Statement to this Court as Arresting Officer all those many months ago – you have a copy of your statement ...?

WAYNE: Yep.

COUNSEL: (*Off*) ... As I say, since last ... December, when you signed your Statement of Evidence, we have had the good fortune to learn of the existence of a continuous video record of the day's events taken by the Police Authorities themselves. And the court in its wisdom has allowed the defence to have the whole of that recording admitted as evidence in this trial. Now, what I'd like to do, Constable Richards, as I have done with your colleagues from the Assistant Chief Constable down, is to take you through your sworn statement, step by step, in the light of what the objective police record of those same events has to tell us ...

A monitor throws garish light on Wayne's face. He turns a little to stare at it.

COUNSEL: (*Off*) Are you chewing gum, Constable?

WAYNE: I am. (*Takes it out.*) Musta forgot it.

COUNSEL'S VOICE: (*Off, on the fade*) You'll see, top right corner, the time code. We'll begin at 12 noon, the time at which, according to your statement, the short shields moved out to clear the men on the bridge ...

WAYNE: (*Out again: screen still bright*) Can you imagine? We've got the buggers stitched up fair 'n' square 'n' then we let 'em see a police recording of what actually went *down* ...? Dear God, what a cock-up eh? ...Dear dear dear ...



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Junior Thurcrofters at Rotherham