

Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination

The official launch of the boycott campaign took place last Monday - See back page for report

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Constitutional crisis looms Life, love, sex and royalty

Our favourite soap opera - the Royals - has lived up once again. A Channel Five documentary, *Camilla*, got the ball rolling at the beginning of the month. This was followed by Camilla Parker-Bowles' 'official' 50th birthday celebrations at Prince Charles' own Highgrove residence. Then there was Princess Diana's 'scandalous' holiday trip with Mohamed Al-Fayed in St Tropez.

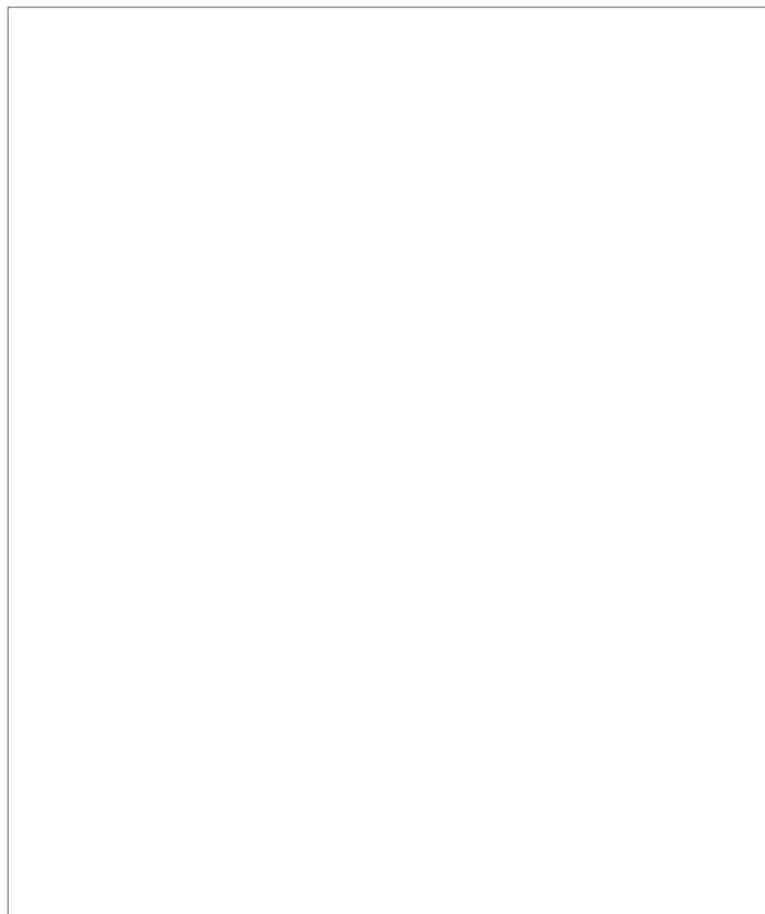
All this royal activity has unleashed intense speculation about the future of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles, and the monarchy in general. To the full-time royal-watchers, the Highgrove celebration, which cost an estimated £35,000, was a particularly significant event. The 'monarchologists' saw this as the Charles/Camilla relationship being given a more formal status. Perhaps we are being buttered up for the future 'good news'.

Whatever the case, it is undoubtedly true that Camilla is enjoying a high public profile at the moment. It even seems that she has been partially rehabilitated in terms of public opinion. A recent *Daily Mirror* opinion poll showed that 68% supported the idea of the couple getting married, although opposition remained to her becoming queen. Not bad ratings for the 'wicked' woman who ruined the fairy-tale romance of Charles and Di.

There has been much talk of a so-called morganatic marriage - ie, Camilla would become Charles' 'official' mistress, in other words. Unsurprisingly, this peculiarly aristocratic arrangement has not gone down too well with some sections of the establishment - particularly hardliners within the Church of England. Well, it is hardly an example for the plebs to follow.

How can a self-confessed adulterer become king? - 'He's not fit,' moan our defenders of morality. However, looking back on the past record of kings and monarchs, he seems eminently suited to the post. Henry VIII had a distinctly

Make the establishment's difficulty our opportunity



Camilla Parker-Bowles: another Mrs Simpson?

dodgy attitude towards women and those Hanoverians certainly had some very funny habits indeed.

The Church of England is certainly

presented with a dilemma. Its rules quite clearly decree that divorcees are not allowed to remarry in church (though in practice this theological inconvenience

has been increasingly ignored). They also outlaw the 'sin' of adultery. The fact that the adulterous divorcee in question is also lined up to become the next head of the church can only rub salt into the wound of the moralistic hardliners. Will they rebel and give Charlie his marching orders?

All the recent media hooaha masks a serious constitutional question - what is going to happen when the present queen dies? This must be giving a headache to the defenders of the monarchy and the British establishment, as the current constitutional status quo hits stormy waters.

The revolutionary left would be suffering from myopia if it failed to realise that the Charles and Camilla romance has the potential to produce profound difficulties for the ruling class, even initiate a mini-crisis. *The Guardian* described the budding situation as "potentially the most serious constitutional crisis since the abdication of Edward VIII" (July 18). Let us hope so, and let us hope communists and democrats will use this situation to make effective and hard hitting republican propaganda. To miss such an opportunity would be criminal - though you can guarantee that is exactly what some left publications will do. Too busy concentrating on the 'real issues', you see.

You can also guarantee that the establishment is working overtime *now* in order to dampen down any potential discord or constitutional meltdown. Apparently, anxious Whitehall bureaucrats are already scuttling around making contingency plans - making sure that the Blair government knows how to handle such an eventuality, if and when it arises. They certainly treat the royal gossip seriously, and make plans accordingly.

Inevitably, all this speculation is causing splits and tensions among establishment figures, and the bourgeoisie as a whole. Rev John Hawthorne, the vicar of Tetbury, Gloucestershire (Charles is believed to have worshipped regularly

there) has denounced the idea of Charles remarrying and remaining head of the Church of England: "I do not see how he could be Defender of the Faith of a church whose laws, rules and teachings he is ignoring, being an adulterer, perhaps unrepentant. And certainly if he married Mrs Parker-Bowles he would be an unrepentant adulterer."

Of course, the reverend has logic - and constitutional law - on his side. One of the only ways out, of course, is to have the rules specifically rewritten just to please him - or have them quietly ignored altogether. But this also would be a dangerous path for the church, and would expose its hypocrisy to the world.

Once more we get a little glimpse into the perverted, alienated and unnatural world of the monarchy. Those unfortunate enough to be born into it are virtually doomed to an unproductive, useless life - where even the most normal, everyday activity becomes an enormous obstacle. Diana Spencer was virtually crucified by the rightwing press for taking her children to the Harrison Ford film, *The devil's own*. Her 'crime' was to take them to a film designated 'parental guidance' and - much worse - to see a film about an IRA man on the run. They must be cut off from reality - even Hollywood's version of reality.

The reverend Hawthorne remarked about the royals, "Of course, we want to be nice to them as people." In a sense, this is the communist attitude. But what we mean by being "nice" is to divest them utterly of all their wealth and privilege - accumulated over centuries of robbery and plunder of the masses - and make them into productive citizens; to integrate them into society.

I am sure Prince Charles would make a great landscape gardener and Diana would make an excellent sports attendant at your local leisure centre. Let us do them a favour and ensure that they have a chance to find their real vocation in life ●

Eddie Ford.

Partynotes

Work, commitment and guts

This is the last 'Party Notes' column before the end of this year's Summer Offensive, so we should make some general points about this year's campaign and what it illustrates about our organisation at the moment.

I will concentrate primarily on the negative here, but it is worthwhile starting with some positive feedback to comrades. When the final amounts are clawed in, this year's campaign looks set to be one of our best, with - I estimate - something like £21,000 raised towards our ambitious target of £25,000.

This is a very impressive achievement and all comrades are to be congratulated on their work, commitment and guts. In a period still characterised by retreat and excuse-making, the core cadre of this Party continue to show their fighting mettle in our annual SO. I am intensely proud of what we have collectively achieved this year and all comrades should feel the same.

Our weaknesses must be addressed, however. Essentially, we are hampered by what could be characterised as a low level of Party mobilisation. Comrades influenced by this paper are of course busy people. They work in a variety of different arenas, including the Socialist Labour Party and the Scottish Socialist Alliance. Too frequently however, we find that the sleepy work tempo of these types of social democratic formations tend to start to set the pace for our own people.

Of course, this is only a tendency, not an absolute law. Yet it certainly has a noticeable effect in terms of the amount of energy comrades put into events that are expressly 'Party' - over the past few months, this column has noted a certain fraying in our discipline, an organisational softness creeping in at all levels.

Frequently, this expresses itself in the low-key approach we take to our events and campaigns: we consistently under-mobilise, and this year's SO is no exception despite the relatively high levels of participation by our periphery. This problem manifests itself organisationally, but must have deeper roots. Organisation is simply "the form of mediation between theory and practice" (Lukacs, 'Towards a methodology of the problem of organisation' in *History and class consciousness* London 1971, p299). Thus - while we must beware of over-dramatising them - these weaknesses do at root express political problems of some sort.

Growth is an important part of the answer to this, but how? This organisation quite correctly rejects the sects' approach of building their organisations first and foremost, as if the movement of the working class actually existed only as a recruitment pool for these groups. Our method is to grow organically with the actual movement of the class - a notion that is deeply instilled in all our comrades.

The negative side of this correct approach is that sometimes we can be criminally negligent about building our organisation in the here and now. The SO is a good example of this.

I am currently involved in induction courses with new comrades. Other comrades are about to start. In one of the courses I am involved in there is a section on the Communist Party, with a subheading on communist morality and culture. The readings for this section include a number of articles on the Summer Offensive, describing its key place in our organisational and political development.

Yet little effort has been made to make inductees' such as this - good comrades with real potential - actively learn our politics through personal participation in one of its high points of practical application, the annual Summer Offensive. Instead, they have been reduced to passive spectators. Thus the campaign - despite its success - has lacked the collectivity of previous years. It has been overly technical and individualised.

As an opportunity to recruit to the Party therefore, this year's campaign has not been a success. This is a real pity, as clearly the periphery is of much better quality than perhaps ever before.

Despite their generalised nature, many of the problems we currently face can be traced to ineffective central organisation, I believe. In my opinion, there is room for a reorganisation and new divisions of labour at Centre, but this is something for the Party as a whole to discuss and agree in the appropriate forum.

Let me close by congratulating my comrades once again on their achievement. We are building an organisation to be proud of, an organisation the working class will know it can trust and rely on. We are building a Communist Party worthy of the name again.

Mark Fischer
national organiser
fischer134@aol.com

The CPGB's London seminar series

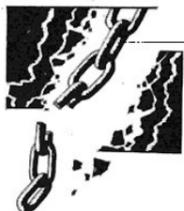
August 3: Leninism and the international in the 'Leninism' series, using Marcel Liebman's *Leninism under Lenin* as a study guide

August 10: Abstract labour in the series on 'Marx's theory of value', using II Rubin as a study guide

July 20: AJ Cook and syndicalism in the series on 'Revolutionary profiles'

Please note there will be no seminar on Sunday July 27

All seminars are in central London on Sunday at 5pm. Call for details



CPGB contradictions

The *Weekly Worker* of June 19 carried a report on the round-table discussions organised by the CPGB. I would regard the summary of the positions expressed by comrade Jack Conrad on behalf of the CPGB as a serious deviation from Marxist politics. In particular the statement that: "The working class does not exist politically, and has not done so for some time - it just exists in a limbo state as voting fodder for the bourgeoisie." Conrad then asserts that the vote for New Labour was qualitatively different to that for Clinton in the USA.

This is a somewhat wild assertion, perhaps based on Marx's distinction between a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself - however, not much use as a guide to concrete political action. The picture of a completely atomised working class that Conrad describes is close to a description of what existed in Italy under Mussolini, or in Chile under the military dictatorship. As a description of contemporary Britain it is next to useless, vastly exaggerating the success of the Tories in defeating the workers' movement. Furthermore, it entirely misses the issue of the political role of the bureaucracy of the labour movement.

The trade unions may have declined, but they are far from defeated. They may take strike action less often and be trammelled by anti-union laws, but they still have the capacity for action. The Blair leadership may have been successful in steam-rolling the opposition in the Labour Party, but as yet the link with the unions is unbroken and thousands of members of the party are uneasy with the Blair 'project'. The organisations of the working class clearly do exist, even if they are depleted and lacking in a coherent alternative.

For Labour to be an effective political instrument for the capitalist class in the coming decade it will be necessary for Blair to push ahead with his plans to transform the party. This will include proposals for state funding of political parties, PR and devolution. Blair would doubtless have preferred a smaller majority so that he could have moved closer to the Liberal Democrats. New Labour's huge majority in parliament makes this much more difficult and gives the Labour left (focused mainly around the Socialist Campaign Group) the possibility of much greater room for manoeuvre.

Forces to the left of Labour should be demanding that the lefts stand up and fight, even it means losing the Labour whip and having to go back to the electorate. Excuses about the need for Labour to move cautiously so that they can be re-elected in five years must be totally dismissed. Such an approach demands the application of the united front tactic to the Labour left, but not any subordination to their parliamentary politics.

It is easy for you to dismiss the arguments of the Socialist Party, since they have undergone an ultra-left drift since the 'open turn'. Peter Taaffe's post-election comments were indeed contradictory - lurching between this new position and the old line of Militant Tendency. In fact, the general election showed that the mass of the working class do not yet accept the arguments of the parties to the left of Labour. Whether Peter Taaffe, Arthur Scargill or Jack Conrad like it or not, workers on the whole *did* vote Labour. That is not to say that they accept every jot of Labour's policies - they clearly don't. Most people don't want further privatisation and want the rich to pay more taxes. But on the whole they don't see a credible alternative yet.

So how can that alternative be built? Well, *simply* arguing for the creation of a genuine communist party in a period of deep ideological schism and confusion is not the way forward. Something more is needed at the moment than a continuing debate among the various splinters of the revolutionary left, which threatens to become a permanent sectarian circus. I applaud your openness and the fact that you have got the likes of the SP and Workers Power group to debate in the same forum with you. However, I am not a fan of permanent factions. If groups are to fuse into something more substantial, they have to find a common basis programmatically.

Democratic centralism requires open debate, but it also means that debates and differences must, in the final analysis, be resolved by common action. If not, then inward-looking sectarianism and splits are inevitable.

Having a common programmatic agreement means that smaller issues in the class struggle are less likely to lead to divisions in the future. Unfortunately, Marxists in many countries have been all too willing to split over secondary tactical issues and unable to agree on the major programmatic ones. Looking at your 'What we fight for' column, I would say that you are still some way from elaborating such a programme.

I think Jack Conrad is right to say that we aren't interested in creating a centrist bodge-up like Communist Refoundation if we can avoid it. But as Lenin said in *Leftwing communism*, the closest approximation to a model for European countries was German revolutionary social democracy (ie, the pre-1914 edition). This was a fairly broad party which included both opportunists and revolutionaries. The fact that as a mass party it was basically healthy is shown by the fact that, after the period of disorientation created by the war, it was possible to build a mass Communist Party from the fusion between the Independent Social Democrats and the Spartacists.

The key point being to always distinguish between the mass influence of social democracy as a trend in the working class and the particular role of its leadership. The leaders of German social democracy carried out a bloody counterrevolution in January 1919. Based on their actions, it might have indeed been justifiable to categorise them as 'social fascists'. Yet, as Trotsky so rightly showed in the 1920s and 1930s, this ultra-left categorisation of social democracy was to contribute to one of the greatest defeats in working class history.

Similarly, to define the Labour Party as having qualitatively shifted to the right since Blair assumed the leadership ignores that Labour has been led in the past by the likes of Ramsay MacDonald and 'Sunny' Jim Callaghan - hardly raving Bolsheviks. Equally, it ignores the fact that it is still possible for a mass split to occur which would see the forces of the left attempting to claim the Labour tradition in competition with the Millbank mob. Such a mass split would be of considerably more significance than the SLP's rather premature one, although it could propel the Labour lefts and Scargill back into an alliance with each other. Whatever the outcome of the next five years, it is hard to imagine Labour coming out of it any more popular than they are at present.

The political conclusions from this are as follows:

1. It is extremely important for revolutionary socialist to focus their demands on Labour, and in particular leftwing MPs.
2. A united front approach to the Labour lefts around specific demands for practical action is essential.
3. The left must support the demand to keep the union link until such time as the Blairites break it. Any other position is ultra-leftist nonsense.
4. Trade unions in struggle must at all times seek to involve their local Labour MP and demand to know their position on that struggle. They should invite their Labour MP to union meetings, strike meetings, AGMs, etc, so that the membership can question them.
5. Trade union caucuses need to develop political alternatives to New Labour policies and challenge the assumptions of the TUC. Economic militancy alone won't win: we need an alternative socialist programme.
6. Those forces outside the Labour Party should prepare for the possibility of a large-scale split in the Labour Party over the *Party into power* document. Should Blair win on this issue, the position of the Campaign Group MPs will become intolerable and they may well begin to operate as a separate political caucus. There is also a possibility of regroupment with Scargill and the SLP. Such a party, while not being a revolutionary socialist party, would have an overwhelming political attraction to socialists left of Labour. It would be the duty of all socialists to join it and fight to make it an adequate instrument for the tasks ahead.

John Laurence
Wolverhampton



Note: Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed.

Arm-wrestling

The first Midlands region meeting of the SLP was held in Birmingham on Saturday June 28. Branches represented were Birmingham, Potteries, Derby, Leicester, Coventry and Wolverhampton. The main object was supposed to be to meet each other for the first time and discuss experiences from the general election. Going for a Balti meal together afterwards had even been suggested.

Bridget Bell from the Potteries branch is the only NEC member in the Midlands area, and she gave an NEC report focusing on the general election results and preparations for the annual conference. It soon became clear that what she assumed all the branches knew about, they did not. There was general concern that information is not getting from the NEC to the members.

A comrade from Birmingham then raised the question of the 'Message to members', some copies of which he circulated. He had attended the Campaign for a Democratic SLP meeting as a delegate from the Birmingham branch, only to be confronted by a picket of NEC members giving out this message. Bridget Bell replied that if it was a picket line, then he was a scab - a remark to which most comrades took exception.

By this time four Bullites - supporters of Roy Bull's *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* - from the Leicester branch had arrived, who set about raising the temperature one after another. Apparently anyone questioning the constitution is a renegade to the superb party leadership. Trotskyites are trying to introduce the whole of the transitional programme of the Fourth International (written in 1938!) into the SLP's policy document. Bureaucracy is necessary and people are making a fetish out of democracy. One of them said SLPers should have no time for factionalising outside of our branches, since our class is suffering out there in the council estates and we should be selling them papers. This comes from an actual member of a faction!

I thought I heard, 'The Vauxhall branch are running dogs of imperialism', and 'Arthur Scargill walks on water', but I may have been mistaken.

Most comrades were totally bemused or angered by their hectoring, confrontational style. Even an honest reporting or accounting of the election campaign and attempts to learn lessons was impossible, since who could compete with the magnificent achievements of the Leicester branch? They saw the meeting as an arm-wrestling and witch hunting exercise, not as a sharing and learning process among comrades.

No doubt they reported the meeting as a success: for the formation of an SLP Midlands region it was a disaster.

Jan King
Midlands

Marxism betrayed

I am a current supporter of your Party, but unfortunately I was a previous member of the Communist Party of Britain. With friends still in contact with the CPB I was recently able to read their May edition of the so-called *Communist News*. Whilst reading it I had great satisfaction knowing that I am no longer a member of their party.

They still ludicrously believe in the Labour Party and they still actually somehow believe that the left has some sort of influence within it. The CPB has become a very weak party with no right to call themselves communists. Their centralist views are deluded.

Why cannot every leftwing group be as true to communism like the CPGB? But just like the CPB, many parties of the left around the world have betrayed their Marxist past.

Ray Hancock
Berkshire

Impressionistic and confused sect

John Stone of the Liaison Committee of Militants for a Revolutionary Communist International renews his criticism of Socialist Labour Action

In the *Weekly Worker* (July 3) you published my article, 'Socialist Labour Action: don't finger oppositionists', under the headline, 'Socialist Labour's Blairites'. This title is misleading because Socialist Labour Action defines itself as an "open faction in sympathy with Workers Power", an organisation that is against Blair.

The problem of these comrades is not in opposing 'Blairism', but their extreme contradictions based on their sect's ambitions. I will try to illustrate my point.

Workers Power calls only for a Labour vote - even against the left - and claims to be building a faction inside the Labour Party. However, WP is not working inside Labour at all. They were completely absent in the struggle of the Labour left (including Scargill) against the abolition of clause four, the attacks on the union links and the nomination of Blair as the new leader.

At the last conference of Labour's Socialist Campaign Group, which was held immediately after the general election with the aim of coordinating the struggle of all the left against Blair's attacks, the LCMRCI participated, along with the comrades from the Workers Internationalist League. Nevertheless, WP completely ignored that event and did not even send a paper-seller.

WP decided to promote a faction inside the Socialist Labour Party. This tactic could be valid if you consider that it is possible to influence it and if you adopt a more considered attitude towards its rank and file. That means making a united front with the SLP through offering critical electoral support. In relation to the SLP, Workers Power was literally all over the place. In different articles the LCMRCI and the *Weekly*

Worker have showed how WP made many incredible U-turns. First, they welcomed Scargill's party and called for a revolutionary SLP. A few weeks later they said that the SLP is a "Stalinist sect" which could not be influenced. In May 1996, they were impressed by the SLP's founding congress and wrote that it was possible to win the SLP's soul for the revolution. Its youth organisation, Revolution, applied to join and a significant number of former WP cadres appeared in the SLP.

In the months before the election WP supporters could be seen trying to defend simultaneously completely contra-

dictory positions in relation to the SLP. A WP member could sell a paper (*Workers Power*) which characterised the SLP as a "Stalinist sect", while at the same time promoting a journal (*Trotskyist International*) which characterised the SLP as a positive phenomenon that should be encouraged in its revolutionary development.

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In South Wales SLA comrades travelled to Newport to support Scargill's candidacy, while WP published the only leaflet on the left calling on Welsh workers not to vote for the leader of the min-

istry. A few months later, during the general election, an SLA comrade openly said that he would vote against the same candidate and in favour of Labour.

Inside the SLP, the SLA comrades were always against real united fronts against the right and the witch hunt. They spoke at some meetings, but avoided any involvement on joint committees. They were commissioned by the SLP Left Network to produce a broad internal bulletin, but they arrived at the next meeting with the first issue of their own journal, *Socialist Labour Action*,

which is only open to sympathisers of WP. They boycotted the founding conference of the SLP Revolutionary Platform.

In another meeting of the Left Network they opposed a revolutionary programme drafted by SLP revolutionary Trotskyists on the grounds that this was not an important issue. However, some weeks later they produced their own 'manifesto', which was a mixture of valid positions and nonsensical calls for a European constituent assembly. Now the SLA is portraying itself as a group of people that do not hide their positions, while in reality they are simply provoking their own expulsion.

However, when they joined the SLP they claimed to have broken with WP, despite never making a single criticism of WP's line against their new party. Initially they claimed to be champions of party building, but now they say that Scargill and all the SLP leadership are Stalinist and counterrevolutionary, and should be expelled from the party. This is nonsense. It is true that there are Stalinist tendencies inside the SLP, but the battle is not finished.

Workers Power gave a special section to Kirstie Paton, who claimed to speak on behalf of "Vauxhall SLP". They simply do not care what the opinion of the Vauxhall branch is. Several resolutions were passed in that branch criticising Kirstie's behaviour. Some of them were wrong. However, in one recent meeting the branch decided to dissociate itself from her remarks in *Workers Power*. The branch did not attack her because of her sympathies with another group, but for her political position in solidarity with an organisation that campaigned against the Vauxhall dissident SLP candidate. Nobody supported Kirstie in Vauxhall, but, despite her incredible isolation, WP insisted on a course of provocation towards that branch.

WP is raising the flag of democracy. However, its own internal regime is no better than Scargill's. SLA mouths democracy inside the SLP, but they supported the crushing by the WP

leadership of all their comrades in the third world for opposing its line in the Bosnian war. The dissidents were expelled without right of appeal.

Now WP is helping the witch hunt. SLA publishes leaflets fingering SLP oppositionists as supporters of other groups inside the party. In a party which explicitly forbids its members to be supporters of other organisations, this means that they are effectively inviting Scargill to expel these comrades.

Socialist Labour Action are not Blairites. They are simply a confused sect. Workers Power is a group which is not led by principles, but by short-term, sectarian ambition. The same erratic and impressionistic attitude that they adopted towards the SLP they have displayed over every single important issue.

Workers Power gives no positive advice to the SLP left. It only wants to provoke a split ●

action

■ CPGB E-mail

Please note the CPGB E-mail address has been changed to CPGB1@aol.com

■ Blair's rigged referendum and Scotland's right to self-determination

In this pamphlet, Jack Conrad offers a serious critique of the Scottish Socialist Alliance's decision to support the call for a double 'yes' vote in the referendum. He makes it clear why the Alliance's leadership, in the form of Scottish Militant Labour, is unable to take up the challenge to lead the working class away from reformism towards revolutionary politics around the national question in Scotland. With an introduction by Mary Ward. Available from the CPGB for £1.50 inc p&xp

■ Committee for Genuine Self-Determination

To get involved, write to 40 Osborne Street, Glasgow, G1 5QN, or call 0141-552 5872. <http://www.duntone.demon.co.uk/cgsd/>

■ Scottish Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact PO Box 980, Glasgow G14 9QQ or ring 0141-552 6773

■ CPGB Scotland

For details of CPGB activity in Scotland, contact PO Box 6773, Dundee DD1 1YL, or call 01382 203805

■ Party wills

The CPGB now has forms available for you to include the Party and the struggle for communism in your will. Write for details.

Alan Fox

Let he who is without sin ...

Simon Harvey reported last week that Socialist Labour Party members in south-east London are actively cooperating with the Socialist Party (see 'Blow against sectarianism' *Weekly Worker* July 17).

SLP national executive member Terry Dunn, who is contesting the Churchdown ward in this week's council by-election in Lewisham, states in his election address: "If elected, I will be working with other socialists" - specifically the SLP's Tony Link and Ian Page of the Socialist Party, both councillors who have defected from New Labour. Many London comrades have been supporting the campaign, including vice-president Patrick Sikorski, not usually known for his championing of left unity.

While the SLP leadership is pushing Terry Dunn's campaign, it is leaving the Socialist Party a clear run in the Uxbridge parliamentary by-election, where Julie Leonard is the SP's candidate (see Simon Harvey's 'Our party and

elections', p7).

The Socialist (July 11) reports that its comrades are backing the SLP in a council by-election in Bristol in return for Socialist Labour's endorsement of the SP's own candidate for a Swindon seat in May. We hear that the SP had also agreed not to contest a seat in the Swansea ward of West Cross in order to back the SLP's candidate. Unfortunately however, no SLP nomination was submitted and neither was the SP informed of the fact in time to enter the fray itself.

The Socialist's July 11 article, written by the SP's national organiser, Mike Waddington, also reports Arthur Scargill's reply to the letter sent to him by Swindon SLP members and endorsed by others, mainly in the west of England (see *Weekly Worker* June 12 for the text of the letter and *Weekly Worker* July 3 for Scargill's response).

The Swindon comrades had raised several points concerning inner-party democracy, but the SLP acting general

secretary retorted that the letter "clearly aims at undermining the democratically agreed structure and policies of the Socialist Labour Party", adding that "this party will not tolerate 'internecine warfare' and 'factionalism'".

Comrade Waddington comments: "This attitude of taking criticism as an attack on the party itself will not make the SLP any more attractive and raises questions over its future." Very true.

Unfortunately however, it is an attitude that is not entirely absent from the Socialist Party itself. A few weeks ago we reported the resignation of Nick Wrack from the editorship of *Militant* (see *Weekly Worker* June 26 for comrade Wrack's letter). He describes how he was ostracised by the organisation's general secretary, Peter Taaffe, after he circulated a document calling for Militant Labour's name to be changed to 'Militant Socialist Party' in preference to the change touted by most of the leadership: ie, 'Socialist Party'.

Edging towards an imperialist peace

Less than a week after David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, described talk of a new ceasefire as "wishful thinking", the IRA gave its expected positive reply to Sinn Fein's 'request' to call a truce. Despite all the delays, the obstacles and the hold-ups, the 'peace' process remains in place.

In the aftermath of the collapse of 'communism' in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and the removal of the only effective counterbalance to imperialism's global domination, national liberation movements the world over have been forced to sue for peace. In Ireland too freedom fighters gave up all hope of driving the British occupying forces out of the Six Counties, instead seeking to reach an accommodation which would allow them to end their resistance with honour intact.

Clearly the IRA has not surrendered - it remains undefeated. It will not permanently renounce armed struggle until it has wrung significant concessions out of the British state.

Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, announced in his statement calling for a ceasefire last week that the party would remain "guided by our aim of a united Ireland. We will be seeking an end to British rule in Ireland ..." Significantly however, the statement added: "We will

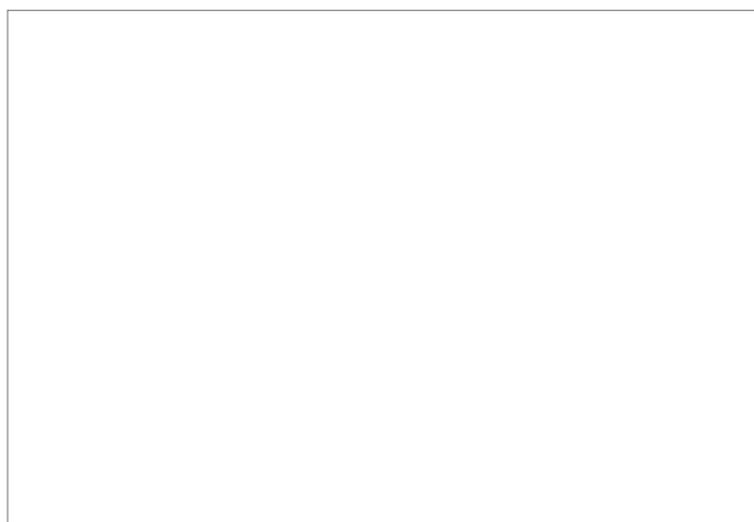
be encouraging the Irish government and others to do likewise."

The "others" referred to include primarily the US government of course. A united Ireland brokered by Bill Clinton and magnanimously handed down by imperialism would be quite a different thing from one imposed on it through a military victory or a revolutionary uprising. It would guarantee that reaction would prevail, just as it did when an orderly transition to home rule was negotiated in 1922 and anti-imperialists defeated.

But Sinn Fein has lowered its sights. Its "aim" of a united Ireland - however that is achieved - is for the future. As for today, "In any agreed political settlement the political allegiance of northern nationalists must be given expression and effect." This vague formulation can be taken to mean that SF would settle for some kind of all-Ireland institution under British hegemony.

The organisation implied in its statement that it had received "assurances" from the British government that negotiations would be open-ended and without preconditions, and that they would be "enhanced by specified confidence building measures ... including the issue of prisoners".

It made clear that it would not sign



Gerry Adams and friend: peace on whose terms?

up to any settlement that did not encompass "a speedy demilitarisation of the entire situation, including the release of all those who have been imprisoned as a result of the conflict".

The government responded immediately to the IRA announcement of a renewed ceasefire by stating that it must last at least six weeks and must be seen to be genuine "by word and deed", after which Sinn Fein would be allowed into the all-party talks due to resume after the summer recess on September 15. SF delegates were immediately permitted to enter Stormont in order to set up offices in preparation for the full negotiations.

This certainly provides a sharp contrast to John Major's inaction in response to the first IRA ceasefire called in August 1994. He demanded a guarantee that it was "permanent" and took no meaningful steps to prevent a resumption of armed resistance, which eventually resulted in the Canary Wharf bomb 18 months later. Despite the huge damage done to the British establishment - both materially and morally - we described that explosion as a "peace bomb".

The purpose was to force Major's hand, not resume a full-scale offensive. But the Tories' slender majority, depending on the votes of unionist MPs, meant that no significant steps could be taken before the general election. The Labour Party's more rapid response does not mean that Blair is any less devoted

to British imperialism than John Major - he backed the Tories every step of the way over Ireland when he was in opposition. It simply means that public opinion - in Britain as well as amongst the protestant population in the Six Counties - is now better prepared for the projected transformation of SF/IRA from 'terrorists' pure and simple to pragmatic negotiators.

Of course SF's entry into Stormont met with a predictable reaction from hardline unionists. The tiny UK Unionist Party immediately walked out, while Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party stayed away and announced it would never take part in negotiations with "men of violence".

The DUP constitutes itself as the intransigent voice of loyalism - a permanent opposition to the Ulster Unionists, but never seriously challenging its domination of mainstream unionism. The 'peace' process can proceed without the DUP, but no settlement can be reached without either the UUP or SF. That is why the government pulled out all the stops to persuade Trimble - himself previously considered an extreme hardliner - to stay on board.

The big sticking point for the mainstream unionists was of course over the question of 'decommissioning'. In 1994 Major insisted that the IRA must at least start to hand over its weapons before it could enter talks, but the Mitchell Commission proposed that the surrender of

arms should proceed in parallel with negotiations.

However, as *The Independent* put it, "The unionists have to accept that the disarmament question is a red herring. It is abhorrent that the IRA holds guns and Semtex. But terrorist organisations through history have rarely handed in their weapons. If peace is negotiated, the weapons usually rust and rot away" (July 21). That is particularly true of Ireland, where yesterday's 'terrorists' have often been miraculously transformed into 'respectable' politicians.

Furthermore, as the *Daily Telegraph* regretfully points out, "It is now clear that the government has no plan to enforce the handing in of the IRA's formidable armoury" (July 19). How could there be such a plan while the IRA remains undefeated? John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party was correct when he reminded journalists that "the IRA could hand in a thousand guns on Monday and buy a thousand more on Tuesday".

In contrast to the agonising of Trimble and the froth of the DUP, the smaller working class-based unionist groups associated with the loyalist paramilitaries, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party, retained their equanimity: "It's a decommissioning of the minds that we require," said David Ervine of the PUP, who spoke of "flushing out" the IRA - through negotiations of course, not through armed raids.

The *Daily Telegraph* remarked that allowing SF into talks while the IRA remains armed is like "holding a gun at the heads of the constitutional parties" (July 19). However, that does not carry much weight with the PUP and the UDP - they themselves are armed to the teeth. But the most heavily armed forces of all are those of the British occupying troops. The state will not of course be required to decommission a single weapon.

Despite past and future setbacks, the 'peace' process is continuing to edge forward. The British strategy remains one of marginalising both the intransigent republicans and the hardline unionists. As Martin McGuinness, SF's chief negotiator said, "You can see that David Trimble and the unionist parties do not want to go to the negotiating table, but go to the negotiating table they will." ●

Jim Blackstock

From *The Call*, paper of the British Socialist Party, July 19 1917

John Maclean's release

Our Scottish correspondent writes:

I heard the remark from several prominent Glasgow socialists that the reception to John Maclean last week was among the most inspiring meetings they had ever attended ...

Among the numerous messages of congratulations and encouragement the following telegram from the Russian Workmen's and Soldiers' Convention was read:

"Hon Maclean, London, England - Convention of All-Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies send their greetings to the brave fighter for the International, comrade Maclean, and express their hopes that the new rise of international solidarity will bring him liberty."

... The dominant note of all the speeches was a plea for socialist unity. Moxton declared with emphasis that he would not spend one ounce of energy or one moment of his time in petty quarrels within the socialist movement. The time had come to present a united front to the enemy - capitalism ... The presentation to Maclean, his wife and two children was made in the name of the subscribers by comrade EC Fairchild, who remarked in the course of an eloquent speech that they should all feel proud in the sense of possession of such an indomitable fighter as John Maclean ...

Words of mine cannot describe the tremendous enthusiasm with which Maclean was greeted when he rose to speak. The revolutionary fervour which always characterised his speeches was displayed with increased vigour.

He attacked the insidious methods by which the Scottish prison authorities seek to weaken and destroy the physique of those who are handed over to their tender mercies. He indicated how in his own particular case by special attention to himself he succeeded in a measure in eluding their nefarious designs. He contended that in many cases the treatment meted out to conscientious objectors was having the effect of unhooking their minds.

Maclean, with his wife and family, has gone for a holiday to the south of England, and to cheer him on his way and to hasten his recovery to health, the military authorities have sent him a notice, calling him up for the 25th of this month. Could downright insolence go further?

Here is a man, sentenced to three years' penal servitude for expressing his antagonism to conscription. He serves 15 months, and when his health is in danger of complete breakdown, the government release him. Who is blundering now, in view of the fact that Maclean is only getting a little more than a week to recuperate? ●

1917

80 years since the Russian Revolution

Anti-democratic insult

If you thought that Blair's 'parish council' parliament for Scotland was bad enough, try reading *A voice for Wales*. This is the title of the white paper published on Tuesday by Ron Davies, the Welsh secretary. Frankly, his proposals are an anti-democratic insult.

Ron Davies described the devolution on offer in *A voice for Wales* as necessary "to bring decisions closer to the people, to open up government, to reform parliament and to increase individual rights". The white paper itself even claims that devolution will "liberate the energy of the Welsh people to make a real difference". Nothing could be further from the truth. Davies's white paper deprives the Welsh people of any democratic voice and aims to firmly

embed them within the UK state.

Unlike Blair's sop parliament in Scotland, the new 60-member Welsh assembly, to be created in 1999, will have no powers whatsoever. No tax-raising or primary legislative powers - period. This quasi-assembly will have a massive £7 million budget at its disposal and the role of Welsh secretary will be retained, so sovereignty remains located in Westminster. As the Welsh secretary reassured us, Wales would remain "firmly part of the United Kingdom".

To call what is on offer a sop is being too generous to the Blair government - it is less than a sop. To accept such a "bureaucratic talking shop" (as Michael Ancram, the Tory constitutional spokesman described it) is to tug your

forelock and become a slave.

Naturally, Plaid Cymru welcomed Davies' proposals - "critically", of course. *The Guardian*, echoing the line of Socialist Party, Wales (and the SWP?), said that *A voice for Wales* "is to be welcomed as the step forward towards the modernisation of the British state". However, even this, the most Blairite of Blairite newspapers, was slightly troubled by how "timid", "unconvincing" and "limited" Davies' proposals were, and how such an assembly would be "powerless" (editorial, July 23).

All revolutionaries and genuine democrats should treat this white paper with contempt and organise an active boycott of Davies's "powerless" assembly ●

Paul Greenaway

Around the left

Helpful advice

It's gratifying to know that the *Weekly Worker* is becoming an authoritative source of information on the SLP. Indeed, virtually no article on the SLP these days is complete without some reference, whether explicitly or implicitly, to the *Weekly Worker*. Just as our predecessor, *The Leninist*, was the only reliable source of information on the secret faction warfare simmering away within the old CPGB, so it is with the *Weekly Worker* today.

It has to be said that this is quite a development - and a very healthy one as well. The old sectarian divisions are, glacier-like, beginning to melt away. Most left publications used to studiously ignore our very existence, despite the fact that these very same groups came into regular physical-material contact with CPGB members and supporters. Perhaps it is because we do not conform to the neat, schematic division of the workers' movement into either 'Stalinist' or 'Trotskyite'. Or perhaps they were too busy. How things have moved on.

This time it is *Workers' Liberty* which has paid its regards to the *Weekly Worker*, in an article unimaginatively entitled, 'Whither Scargill's party?' Of course, the most interesting thing about the article is not so much that it draws heavily on the analysis developed by the *Weekly Worker* - though that helps, of course - but the light it sheds on the Alliance for Workers' Liberty attitude towards the Socialist Labour Party. A distinctly confused and untheorised attitude, for sure.

The AWL's approach is still characterised by a doctrinaire detachment - hence it calls the SLP election results "terrible". Agreed, they were not spectacularly good. But then again, under the circumstances they were not grounds for suicide either. We also see the AWL's hankering for ideological and political purity, a dislike of the messiness of reality. Thus, "First the SLP has never been clear on what kind of organisation it is. Does it aim to be a mass movement of the working class, organising and fighting to win reforms from the bosses - a workers' party based on trade union affiliation, a refoundation of the Labour Party? ... Or is the Socialist Labour Party a revolutionary socialist party?" (July 1997).

Does the SLP have to fit into a neat category before the AWL will support it, get involved in it? If so, it will wait for ever, as real life does not tend to throw up the politically 'pure' formations it is seeking. Also, the above is quite a curious formulation. You get the distinct impression that the SLP would be OK by the AWL if it was, or became, "a refoundation of the Labour Party", but not so good if it was a "revolutionary socialist party". But then again, if you believe that a mass, centrist halfway house is a historically preordained necessity, it starts to make perfect sense.

The article proceeds to catalogue the sins of the SLP - and the fact that they have been lifted from the *Weekly Worker* does not diminish their essential correctness. Correctly, comrade Helen Rate points to the disastrous "lack of respect for basic democratic norms" and how it cannot "by any democratic working class standard be reasonable to summarily 'void' whole branches and expel members by the unchallengeable dictates of the leadership against which the poor 'voidees' have no right of appeal or redress".

Interestingly, in a comment on the SLP 'constitution', comrade Rate recalls: "The constitution was designed to stop 'alien' groups from invading the SLP and to block off any legal comeback from such groups. Ironically, Scargill used to argue against similar tactics when Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock used them against the left in the Labour Party." Scargill has indeed turned into his historical opposite, and comrade Rate is right to say, "Democracy in the SLP is only for those who agree with Arthur Scargill" - at the moment.

The AWL's 'remedy' is a hopeless muddle, of course, based as it is on a strictly moralistic criterion: "Right now the SLP is not a fit vehicle to organise the refounding of the labour movement. The idea that it is an alternative to the Labour Party is a puerile fantasy." But if you want a really feeble "puerile fantasy", look no further than the AWL. Heads-down and depressed, it informs us: "If in the end there is split in the movement, if we have to move towards founding a new Labour Representation Committee, it would be a step backwards - but we will engage in that task with as much vigour as we can muster" (my emphasis). What inspiring stuff. The AWL is prepared to take a "step backwards" with their hypothetical LRC but held aloof from the very real left break from Labour which the SLP represented - in that sense a step forward. Abstractions are obviously more inviting to the AWL than the real class struggle.

The article ends up telling SLP members "to rethink what the SLP is and what it has set out to do. They must also wake up to what it has become." It even urges SLP members to "help" the AWL in "preserving the Labour-trade union link".

Not very helpful, AWL comrades. Those militants and comrades who made the brave decision to leave the Labour bosom are advised to return to Blair's party - not that he would have them of course.

Thanks a lot for the advice, but no thanks - and keep on reading very carefully the *Weekly Worker*. You could do with some advice yourselves, comrades ●

Don Preston

What about the rural workers?

July 1997, Hyde Park: proletarians on the march?

Danny Hammill goes into paroxysms of outrage over fox-hunting in his article ostensibly arguing for the humanisation of our environment (*Weekly Worker* July 17). Unfortunately, while giving a reasonable assessment of the large demonstration by country-dwellers the previous Thursday, he loses sight of one key element of life in the countryside: the role and situation of rural proletarians.

Now, while agricultural and other workers in the countryside may be a small part of the working class, which lives largely in an urban environment in Britain, it is nonetheless one component part. This is no mere sociological or demographic fact either, since workers in the countryside have taken industrial action in the past and have become class conscious partisans.

Whatever the motivations of the majority at the pro-foxhunting demonstration, the majority of those living in the countryside have different priorities. Lack of public transport, high house prices because of petty-bourgeois incomers (the bourgeoisie has always had country residences), poor health service provision, and low-paid jobs are among the prime concerns of rural workers. The "misty, mysterious world of hay wains and thatched cottages" is indeed a city-dwellers' wet dream, not the reality of the countryside's majority.

Cruelty is not implicit in country life, despite the implications in Danny's article. Those workers who tend beasts - stockmen, dairymen, shepherds, and all the others - are not in the main brutal in their treatment of them, and not just for economic reasons. Indeed, even that small minority of rural workers engaged in raising and preservation of game also have a duty toward the animals in their care which precludes maltreatment. What whippers-in and hunt masters do when culling their hounds (the "beagle holocaust") is hardly reason to condemn rural workers *en masse*.

Why is a state ban on fox-hunting necessary? Of course, like all pursuits and sports, including football and cricket, this too is a minority interest; but whereas most do not involve harming other creatures, angling, shooting, and hunting do. "Humanising our environment" must indeed, if we consider such practices to have a deleterious effect on humans engaged in them, include their eventual cessation. However, the moot point is whether these activities should be legally prohibited or socially disapproved

in order to achieve this purpose. There is no comparison, as Danny suggests, with the prohibition of the vile practice of female circumcision or the historical employment of child labour, since there are physical and irreversible effects directly on human beings in these cases. In the case of physical effects on animals in field sports, and the suffering premised by opponents, this is an altogether different matter, since the only acceptable basis for opposition by communists must be the effect of this supposed brutalisation on those taking part, as well as any environmental adversity that can be adduced.

It is at least arguable that the course of action which communists should favour is that of the withering away of the *desire* for 'blood sports' - which may well parallel the withering away of the state we struggle toward. This approach suggests an altogether different policy toward fox-hunting on our part, one which does not require legislation, but on the contrary a change in attitude of those participating in it. Just because the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill is flavour of the New Labour month is no reason to jump on its bandwagon.

It is not a question of a 'ban nothing' stance. It is a question of not caving in to unthinking 'animal rights' populism. Let us not forget that, as *Searchlight* readers will

know, British fascist groups and parties have some involvement in 'animal rights' organisations, so perhaps it was not surprising that at the Hyde Park pro-hunting demonstration there was, according to Danny, "not a BNP type in sight either". Bizarre ideas about 'animal rights' and misapprehensions about how humans should behave toward other creatures have infected political life for some years, comprising an element filling the vacuum left by the collapse of class politics.

Whilst Danny is perfectly correct to state that, "We need to have answers for *all* the questions facing society, not brush aside the 'inconvenient' ones ..." he then proceeds to fall into the same trap himself. In his sweeping discourse on the wrongs wrought in the countryside there is a complete misapprehension of its class make-up, which ignores the presence of a section of the working class. Is this because he discounts completely the rural worker in terms of consciousness or her/his role in preparing for the revolution? Or that rural workers *per se* will overwhelmingly and inevitably fall in with the class enemy come the crunch? If so, his view of its role is not unlike that taken toward the lumpen proletariat and is an idea totally petty bourgeois in its r-revolutionism. I think we should be told more of this ideological development ●

Tom Ball

fighting fund

As comrades set off for Communist University '97 we have just one more week to reach the Summer Offensive target of £25,000. This money is urgently needed for pressing political tasks.

The *Weekly Worker* has recently been able to update its offices as a result of the Summer Offensive fund drive and you will be beginning to see the improvements in the paper, both in terms of print quality and, we hope the quality of articles, as more comrades are able to put more time into writing for the paper.

As you will see in this week's issue, the CPGB was at the centre of the launch of the Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination in Scotland last Monday. Thousands of posters and leaflets have already been delivered to the offices in 40 Osborne Street, Glasgow. But the campaign in Scotland needs much more financial help to ensure that we can make the most of the political space that has been opened up to us here.

Rush cheques to the CPGB address to coincide with the end of the extended Summer Offensive on July 31●

Linda Addison

The campaign for a genuine ballot?

In the *Weekly Worker* (March 6) we were told that a Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination was being set up on the following platform:

1. For genuine self-determination
2. For a multi-option referendum, including the right to vote for a sovereign Scottish parliament with full powers
3. No to Labour's narrow, rigged referendum

It was on the basis of my criticism of point 2 of this platform that the current debate began. There are two major criticisms of this platform. First, the campaign does not demand a sovereign parliament with full powers, but rather the right to vote for it in a referendum. It is a campaign for multi-options on the ballot paper, rather than a "narrow, rigged ballot" (point 3). It is a Campaign for a Genuine Ballot.

Second the platform identifies one demand which is given special emphasis. This is the sovereign Scottish parliament with full powers. We note that the word 'republic' does not appear on this platform. We note that a federal republic, which means a new voluntary union with England, is not mentioned even as an option.

Are we expected to believe that this is really a republican campaign, and that a sovereign parliament with full powers really means a democratic republic? Will the Scottish people understand that we meant to say 'republic', but that for some matter of diplomacy or clever tactics we decided to use six words when one would do the trick?

The RDG is in favour of a Campaign for a Genuine Republic rather than a Genuine Ballot. A republican boycott campaign fights for a republic by using the boycott tactic. Please note: we are calling for a republic, rather than a referendum for a republic. The CPGB seems to be calling for a boycott of this ballot in order to get a different ballot. This seems like a load of old ballots to me.

The platform is not derived from the revolutionary republican interests of the Scottish working class. It comes from a much narrower reason. It was written to catch Scottish Militant Labour (SML) and expose them for abandoning their own position. I have no problem with exposing the SML. But we must do so on the basis of the revolutionary republican interests of the working class, not the reformist politics of the SML theoreticians.

Let me begin my reply to Jack Conrad (*WW* July 10) by restating the argument in a different form and then dealing with his criticisms. I treat the slogan of 'a parliament with full powers' in the same way as 'Vote Labour with no illusions'. Of course you can have more radical versions, such as 'Vote Labour and build a fighting socialist alternative' or 'Vote Labour and reforge the communist party' or 'Vote Labour and start a world revolution'. Take your pick. It depends on how left sounding you want your 'Vote Labour' slogans to be.

The SWP thought that 'Vote Labour and build a fighting socialist alternative' was a bridge from Labourism to the SWP. The call for a Labour vote would not upset any pro-Labour workers and put the SWP 'on their side'. Then building a socialist alternative spelt out the next step for those disillusioned Labour workers. Look, you can join the SWP and still vote Labour!

Many communists, including the RDG and the CPGB, would see the

Dave Craig of the Revolutionary Democratic Group (faction of the SWP) continues the debate on the national question

'Vote Labour' slogan as a barrier, not a bridge. Therefore our task is to destroy the slogan. We must blow it up. We may even go the extreme of calling it the "most vile piece of stinking Labourism ever invented by so-called Marxists". Let the SWP call us 'ultra-lefts' and 'anarchists' and say that we are unreasonable. But they have a choice. They could say, 'You are right - it is a crap slogan. We will ditch it and in future we will oppose Labour by standing our own candidates or backing the SLP', etc.

It is my contention that a 'sovereign parliament with full powers' serves the same function and should be blown up in the same way. It is not a bridge to republicanism, but a barrier.

The demand for Scottish and Welsh parliaments has a long history going back to Gladstone. It appears under various guises as home rule, devolution and now Scottish and Welsh Assemblies. The liberal wing of the capitalist class wants to reform the constitutional monarchy. Today, Blair's New Labour urges us to vote Labour and support these parliaments.

The Labour left, SWP, Militant Labour (as was) and Workers Power are critical supporters of these reformist policies. They want us to vote Labour "with no illusions" and call for Scottish and Welsh assemblies with "more powers", "real powers" and "full powers". In practical, every-day politics, this bloc is left monarchist. They adopt a policy of critical support for devolution under the crown as easily as a duck takes to water. Will they vote 'yes, yes' or 'quack, quack'?

My attack on the left monarchist slogan is directed primarily against the Labour left, SML, SWP and Workers Power. These organisations have no tradition of republican struggle and are hostile to republicanism. They do not adopt revolutionary republican slogans.

Yet comrade Jack implies that it is only the CPGB that calls for a parliament with full powers. Consequently it is suggested that my attack is directed solely at the CPGB. Not true at all. For example in the *Weekly Worker* (December 12 1996) I wrote an article directed solely against Workers Power. They had abandoned their opposition to a Scottish Assembly in favour of a sovereign Scottish parliament. I said this was a step forward, but sharply criticised them for remaining in the monarchist camp. By the same token, someone who moves in the opposite direction, from a federal republic to a sovereign Scottish parliament, is taking a step backwards.

Jack is at pains to point out that "the CPGB is not suffering from 'reformism', stinking or otherwise". He reminds us that the CPGB is for the abolition of the monarchy and a federal republic: "Can comrade Craig deny our revolutionary republicanism? No, not if he has read and is honest."

I did not call the CPGB 'left monarchist'. I did say that 'a parliament with full powers' was a left monarchist slogan. When the revolutionary republican CPGB adopts such slogans, everybody, including the PCC, must be concerned. It does not mean the CPGB is now left monarchist. But there is a contradiction between a revolutionary

republican programme and left monarchist slogans. The CPGB is giving republican respectability to the left monarchist position.

The revolutionary republican CPGB now has a scratch. A scratch can become a sore that can turn into gangrene. It is out of concern for the health of revolutionary republicanism that I pointed out this scratch.

If comrade Jack really had a case it would be based on proving that 'a parliament with full powers' was a revolutionary republican slogan and not in contradiction to other republican slogans. Instead he spent too much time commenting on how old I am, how naive I am, how many years I have criticised the SWP, and whether I have grown wiser in my retirement, since "age does not necessarily bring wisdom". I am slightly disappointed that comrade Jack, for whom I have considerable respect, should waste time on this type of argument.

Of course if Jack could prove that 'a parliament with full powers' was a revolutionary republican slogan, he would need to tell the Labour left, SWP, SML and Workers Power that they, without realising it, were the vanguard of revolutionary republicanism. In truth, they don't give a fig about republicanism, revolutionary or otherwise. Then he would need to convince those like the RDG and RWI, who claim to be revolutionary republicans, that we too must adopt this slogan. Everybody, it seems, is marching out of step except the CPGB.

According to Jack, there are two Dave Craigs. Dave One (Dr Jekyll) says: "When SML supported the call for a democratic republic in Scotland and the renegotiation of a federal relationship with England and Wales, they took a major step in the right direction." Nice Dave praises SML.

Enter Dave Two. According to Jack, this Dave turns into nasty Mr Hyde. Apparently he dismisses "the SSA's slogans for 'a parliament with full powers', a 'democratic republic' and a 'federal relationship' as 'worse than Blair'" and goes on "to 'oppose' them 'totally and absolutely without any compromise whatsoever'." I would like to meet this Dave who says a federal republic is worse than Blair. I suggest he is a figment of Jack's imagination.

So that there is no ambiguity, let me restate the argument. The SML was (and still is) a Labourite and pro-devolutionist organisation. A devolved parliament with full powers is its real position. It therefore critically supports Blair's proposals. Recently the SML through the SSA has added on a new idea of a "democratic republic" and a "federal relationship". Quite likely these new ideas came from work done by the CPGB

Scottish comrades. Excellent.

The SML is still at heart in favour of Scottish devolution. The SML slogans of the past and of the future are vying with each other. So what do we do? We support and encourage the SML to fight for "a democratic republic" and "federal relationship". This is what I called for in my letter to the *Weekly Worker* (June 19) and is supported by comrade Jack.

At the same time we wage an all-out war against the old Labourite "vile stinking reformist" pro-devolution politics, which is holding the SML back. By destroying this old crap we might have half a chance of pulling SML into the future. This is exactly what I doing. The Dave Craig who slagged off the 'parliament with full powers' is not in contradiction to the Dave who wants the SSA to fight for the republican and federal part of its platform. Jack explains the approach taken by the CPGB. He says: "We critically support any step SML takes in the 'right direction'. We critically defend what has been gained. And again through criticism encourage further steps 'away from Labourism'. At the same time we fight against and denounce steps towards nationalism or back to Labourism."

This is exactly the approach I took. I supported SML's moves towards a federal republic and "denounced" a 'parliament with full powers' as "steps in the wrong direction" and "back to Labourism", or - if you prefer - "stinking reformism". Unfortunately the CPGB does not do what Jack claims. They support and encourage the moves towards a federal republic, but then they become the chief defenders of the rotten devolutionist slogans of the left monarchists. When I looked at the Menshevik slo-

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The revolutionary republican CPGB now has a scratch. A scratch can become a sore that can turn into gangrene. It is out of concern for the health of revolutionary republicanism that I pointed out this scratch'

.....

gan, 'a Duma with full powers', from 1906, I clearly and specifically rejected any nonsense about comparable situations between 1906 Russia and 1997 Scotland. The lessons I drew concerned *only* the nature of the slogan itself. Lenin argued that 'a Duma with full powers' was an ambiguous slogan, meaning one thing to republicans and something else to monarchists. The Mensheviks wanted to unite with the liberal monarchists and so this slogan could form the lowest common denominator. The ambiguous character of this monarcho-republican slogan remains true, regardless of the date on which it is used.

Jack's reply completely misses the point. He says, "Needless to say, Russia

1905 is not Scotland 1997." From this (indisputable) observation he says, "Different times demand different slogans"; and later that, "If Scotland were in the grips of a revolutionary crisis then the slogan would have to be supplemented."

My argument has nothing to do with whether this slogan is applicable in revolutionary or non-revolutionary situations. Jack uses this as a straw person to dismiss the whole issue. If Jack was seriously interested in arguing against what I took from Lenin, he would have to consider whether a 'parliament with full powers' was ambiguous. He would have to explain what the different interpretations meant to the named organisations that used it today, and what workers might understand by it. Then of course he would need to justify why ambiguity was better than clarity.

Jack's final argument for a 'parliament with full powers' is a classic example of tailism. First he admits "a preference for the demand for a constituent assembly". Then he says: "But the Scottish masses have in their heads the idea of self-determination through some kind of parliament." The implication is that communists should adapt their slogans to the spontaneous consciousness of the masses. Why should the political preferences of a communist like Jack be less valid than the bourgeois consciousness of the man or woman in the street?

What would Jack say if I said I preferred the SLP, but that the masses want a Labour government? Therefore we should vote Labour. How about the idea, that since the masses want "some kind of parliament", the communists should clarify what type of parliament - a republican parliament or republican constituent assembly. Beginning from where the masses are, the party tries to take them in the correct direction, educating the movement about the republican programme and its significance for the class struggle.

However, we can end on a note of optimism. The new pamphlet written by Jack shows us the way forward. On page 13 we see reference to a "sovereign - ie, republican - parliament". On page 21 we hear about a "republican parliament with full powers" and on page 31 "a republican parliament with full constitutional powers". Later on the same page we hear of a "republican parliament". These formulations are surely acceptable to all who want political clarity.

Yet they prove my point. The words "ie, republican" are in effect an amendment proposed by Jack. Why does he feel the need to qualify the original slogan with this amendment? Answer, because the original was ambiguous and Jack needs to make clear what he really means. This point of agreement has nothing to do with 1906 or 1997.

We are entitled to ask whether Jack has persuaded the PCC to accept his amendment? Certainly the RDG would support Jack on this. Why doesn't Jack try to get his amendment added to the Campaign for Genuine Self Determination point two? A cynic might say because he does not want his pamphlet to be ambiguous, but he couldn't care less if the Campaign deceives the Scottish people. Or perhaps Jack has such little influence that he can amend his pamphlet, but do nothing to change the Campaign platform. I am sure this cannot be true. Unfortunately at the moment it just looks like it ●

Simon Harvey of the SLP

Our party and elections

This coming Thursday sees the first electoral test for Tony Blair's new Labour government. The death of Sir Michael Shersby a few days after May 1 left the north-west London constituency of Uxbridge vacant. The Conservative MP held the seat by just 724 votes.

Given the relatively high profile of the first by-election after a general election, I am surprised, and a bit disappointed, that Socialist Labour will not be contesting the seat, especially as we seem able to mobilise for the Churchdown ward by-election in the London borough of Lewisham. I am however pleased that the Socialist Party's intervention will ensure that a working class alternative will be posed.

The first by-election after the 1992 Conservative victory was held in Newbury. Though the Uxbridge poll will lack the same impact, Newbury '92 still points to a general importance of such parliamentary contests. Unlike Blair, Major lacked any real honeymoon period after April 1992: there was no change of government, no new administration being put to the test. If anything, the massive local shift from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats pointed to an electorate tired of the government, even in Tory heartland. The Lib-Dems won the seat although I recall the CPGB contested there too - the only working class voice in the campaign.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the Uxbridge poll will be important. This is not just any old by-election. If the Tories manage to defend their paltry majority, it could be seen as marking the end of Blair's honeymoon. If, as is most likely, the imposed Labour candidate, Andrew Slaughter, defeats local Tory businessman John Randall, it will be seen as a continuing endorsement of the Blair/Mandelson juggernaut. Caesar will have won a plebiscite.

As well as their obvious significance for bourgeois politics, by-elections also provide opportunities for the socialist politicians of the working class to take our message to a wide layer of people. Importantly, for new and still relatively small political forces such as our own SLP, it provides the opportunity to force our way onto the broader political map.

As well as the national political character, there are important local factors in the Uxbridge poll. Hillingdon hospital, famous for the long and bitter dispute, is located in the area; Uxbridge's proximity to Heathrow Airport accentuates the struggles against the Blairite BA boss, Bob Ayling; and, given the role of CPSA members in London in the SLP, the possibility of that union taking industrial action over plans to close Uxbridge benefits agency should increase the importance of the poll for socialists.

All this has not been lost on the Socialist Party. Its general election candidate, Julie Leonard, is standing once more. Comrade Leonard won 398 votes (one percent) on May 1. Three - yes, three - fascist groups will also contest the election.

However, the question remains: why no SLP candidate? Scargill's *Future strategy for the left* of November 1995

made it clear that 'his' SLP would "commit itself to fight every parliamentary seat" (page 8).

There was much wrangling in our party to get even as many as 64 candidates on May 1. Scargill used his own document, subtitled 'a discussion paper' by the author, to justify a bureaucratic method to achieve a goal which I for one supported, but argued should be achieved by different means.

For example Harpal Brar, editor of the Indian Workers Association's *Lalkar*, was effectively imposed as an SLP candidate on the local Ealing Southgate CSLP without having to dissolve his organisation to join our party. Katrina Howe, who maintains a vigil at Greenham Common despite the fact that the missiles have long moved elsewhere, became the Newbury candidate against the wishes of local members.

Comrades in the south-west of England, particularly those around Swindon branch, justifiably argued that our entire electoral strategy had been imposed on the party without a full and proper discussion.

Given Scargill's general election strategy of going for 100 candidates, getting a TV broadcast, positioning the party for potential state funding and aiming for the big time, I am surprised that, in the absence of local members nominating a candidate, one was not imposed.

It is unfortunate that SLP members, such as myself, are left to rely on informed speculation and rumour to work out why our party is not standing. My feeling is that, given a certain denouement, local dispersion and general inactivity after the election, Scargill and central office will be concentrating on maintaining a party centre, getting the next congress (whenever that is) stitched up and other central technical details (like paying our *Socialist News* bill). The delicate task of expelling members, branches and banning internal debate must also take up some time. Now that there is a London Regional Committee, it may be seen to fall to that body - with that visionary, Tony Goss, as election agent - to coordinate electoral work within Greater London.

The London Regional Committee is an odd agglomeration of Third Period Stalinists around *Lalkar* and the Stalin Society (not a joke), with those from the thuggish end of Labourism and assorted left Labourites under the presidency of Brian Heron, someone who considers himself a Trotskyist and supporter of the Mandeliste Fourth International.

If you will remember, those in the party around the Fourth Internationalist Supporters Caucus had argued against standing 100 candidates. Pat Sikorski proposed instead around six high-profile candidates, combined with a critical vote for Blair everywhere else. They have tended to argue for a build-up to standing in constituencies based on what I consider to be localism. This approach has led to the idea of 'advice surgeries' being put forward by the (bureaucratically constructed) majority at the London Regional Conference.

That such political forces are running

the London committee with Scargill's blessing makes sense of the concentration on the Churchdown by-election in Lewisham in preference to the Uxbridge by-election. Although there is a local SLP branch in Hillingdon in theory, it was constructed more as an escape pod for Hillingdon SLP councillor Terry Donlevy, ostensibly from the "crazy" West London branch, but now seemingly more from SLP activity itself.

Another possible explanation is a behind-the-scenes deal between the SLP and the Socialist Party. Such *de facto* socialist alliances existed in various parts of Britain during the general election, and some have developed, to a greater or lesser degree of success, for local government by-elections.

However, this does not appear to be the case. SP comrades campaigning in Uxbridge have told me they were biting their nails, wondering if an SLP candidate would be "parachuted in" at the last minute.

In terms of organising for elections, the SP is displaying its experience and organisational superiority in stealing a march on the SLP. We must make the unity of our forces the conscious task of the rank and file of both organisations.

It is excellent that there is only one candidate standing on a socialist platform in Uxbridge - in sharp contrast to the disunity displayed by the fascists. However, rather than leaving the question of working class unity to the vagaries of sectarian manoeuvre and behind-the-door dealing, such socialist alliances during elections (as a minimum) must become open, organised and accountable to the membership - and of course, in the long run, the working class.

■ SLP congress

I reported last week that the congress was again being put back. Well, from what I hear, odds are firming up for the weekend of December 13/14.

I also hear that the NEC is toying with the idea of pre-empting any discussion of party democracy, expulsions, constitutional change or an appeals procedure by placing consideration of a disciplinary procedure as first item on the agenda. Of course it will be narrowly

defined in order to allow any witch hunt to continue. By putting such an item at the front of the agenda, the NEC aims to remain in firm control. We must make sure this is not the case and that congress - though its composition will be bureaucratically determined - takes all action necessary to put the constitution up for debate.

Comrades who were at the first conference on May 4 last year will remember that the minority voting against the platform increased as the day went on. The first amendment on economic policy, which argued a more revolutionary and internationalist line, received around 10% support, as did Steve Freeman's attempt to have the debate on the UK constitution moved up the agenda.

By the end of the day, with debate developing around Ireland and immigration, the left vote on the floor increased, with the amendment calling for abolition of all immigration controls gaining around 40% support.

Speaking to a Fiscite ally at a urinal at the Calthorpe Arms after the conference, Pat Sikorski was heard to express relief, not just at his task in hand, but at having 'got away with it'.

With the forthcoming congress being a two-day affair, the last thing those chosen to shepherd the congress towards Arthur's desired result will want is the rank and file defining the debate around constitutional change and appeals procedure. Much easier to get it out of the way, under the leadership's terms, and let the left vent its spleen on other issues.

We must struggle to ensure that the congress really does act as the highest political body of our party and our membership.

■ Socialist News

It is possible that issue 7 of *Socialist News* could be delayed. Comrades may know that the company which prints our paper is East End Offset, the printing 'arm' of the Socialist Workers Party.

I hear that the manager of East End has put a notice up in the office stating that the next issue of *Socialist News* is not to be printed until we pay for the last edition. Gee, those Trotskyite wreckers are everywhere! ●

Note to subscribers

There will be no *Weekly Worker* next week, Thursday July 31. Communist University '97 is being held over seven days, beginning Saturday July 26. We return on Thursday August 7.

What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party's publications; contributes regularly to the Party's funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

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Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination launched

Democracy on the agenda in Scotland

“We believe the people of Scotland should show the same contempt for this rigged referendum as we showed for the poll tax.”

With these words Mary Ward, CPGB supporter and Scottish Socialist Alliance candidate for Dundee West in the general election, launched the Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination in Glasgow on Monday July 21.

She told the press conference: **“We live in historic times. All across Scotland there is a mood for change - there is a strong and real sense of national identity, coupled with a sense of grievance which exists due to the democratic deficit in Scotland.”**

“The hostility over rule from Westminster has intensified over recent years. In that time however, we have seen a number of examples of fight-back: the poll tax, which was imposed on Scotland first, and more recently campaigns against council cuts which have taken place throughout the country. It is the militancy of these struggles that we fight to emulate in this campaign.”

“Tony Blair knows there is a movement in Scotland. What he seeks to do is silence that movement by buying us off with a puppet parliament.”

Mary spelt out the aim of the campaign to fight for a parliament with full powers, for a democratic republic in Scotland. She emphasised that she, along with the CPGB, fought for a federal republic - the voluntary union of the peoples of Scotland, England and Wales. **“But that must be ultimately for the people to decide. For a Scottish parliament to be meaningful, it must have the power to decide Scotland’s relationship with the rest of Britain - up to and including independence.”**

In the lead-up to the general election and afterwards, Blair and his Labour cronies in Scotland have done everything they can to buy off the people’s democratic aspirations with the toothless talking shop that is their excuse for a parliament. The day of the press conference, the papers in Scotland unveiled the truth behind a report in *The Observer*, which claimed that Labour had conceded that parliament could vote on independence in order to win the support of the Scottish National Party.

Of course, no such power was on offer from a party so completely loyal to the undemocratic UK monarchical state as New Labour. Just another cynical backroom deal, hotly denied by the SNP and the Liberal Democrats, had been struck. The lucky, lucky representatives of a new Scottish ‘parliament’ will be able to debate and maybe even vote on whether they are in favour of independence, but wise old uncle Blair could not possibly allow them to actually enact the result of any vote. The Scottish people can discuss their future all they want, but they certainly cannot determine its outcome themselves: those decisions will remain firmly in the hands of Westminster.

Just as over all issues, such as the health service and education, Labour’s first few months in office have been a huge PR exercise in how to look radical without actually doing very much. How to present a face as the people’s friend while overseeing the removal of our basic rights of education, health and democracy, to name just a few.

It was the same with Scotland: **“Faced with this situation - the status quo or Labour’s sop - no real choice exists. We are being asked to consent to being ruled in an undemocratic way under the constitutional monarchy,”** Mary added.

The press in Scotland, reporting the conference, on the whole took a predictably cynical stance - apart from BBC Radio Scotland, which interviewed Mary and welcomed an intelligent opposition to the majority consensus (it was notable that Michael Ancram’s press relaunch of the Tories’ ‘no, no’ campaign on the same day received no interest at all). Opposition to Labour’s sop has over the past few months been quite successfully muted by the Labour and establishment machine. The memory of 1979, when the promise of a parliament was lost, has contributed to the reduced expectations of the Scottish people this time round.

The SNP is to announce its response to the white paper on Labour’s sop, which is published this Thursday (July 24), and how it will vote on the referendum, after its national council meeting on August 2. But it is now pretty much too well campaigned for a ‘yes, yes’ vote.

Scotland Forward, the organi-

sation set up under a blaze of ignominious glory to lead a high-profile campaign for a ‘yes, yes’ vote, has been invisible in the lead-up to the launch of the white paper. Its work is being carried out for it by the press in Scotland.

The left has gone on holiday. Scottish Militant Labour, having narrowly won a vote at the Scottish Socialist Alliance to join Scotland Forward, found this organisation - not unexpectedly - too rightwing, and its preferred tactic too class collaborationist for its members to throw themselves into. Now it is doing its best to ignore the run-up to the referendum. It is instead concentrating on campaigning around the minimum wage. As will the Socialist Workers Party, which has never tired of telling the Scottish people that the national question is irrelevant: they should stop worrying about politics and get back to bread and butter issues.

Under these conditions the Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination is a lone voice, vilified as Tory unionists’ or simply wreckers’. Mary responded: **“We are none of these. And we have had the courage to stand up and fight in another way.”** As the only campaign with the confidence to stand up and demand genuine democracy, it has received more interest on the street than in the press. Though many feel they have no option but to vote for the sop, they are quite well aware that it falls far short of what is needed. Many have a lot of sympathy for the campaign, if this has yet to be turned into active support.

Whilst the establishment hopes to end discussion on democracy in Scotland through Labour’s referendum, the campaign aims to ensure that this is merely the beginning: **“We believe that the debate must go on and that the time to fight for our democratic rights is now, not later,”**

Mary continued.

“Our call for an active boycott of the referendum aims to mobilise the mass of the people around the fight for genuine democracy. National aspirations need to be linked with social need. Our campaign is aimed at the working class of Scotland and the whole of the working class oppressed under the same UK state.” Representatives of the Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination in England were at the conference to answer questions from the bemused press, who wondered why on earth people in England would want to fight for a Scottish parliament.

This campaign goes to the heart of the absence of democracy under the constitution as exists today. The working class in England have as much interest in overturning that constitution through their own struggle for genuine democracy as the working class in Scotland.

Mary concluded her speech by saying: **“This is an important moment. Working class people must take up the fight for our democratic rights. We must fight this attempt to channel our aspirations into a meaningless gesture. After years of fighting for Scottish democracy for me to support a yes, yes’ under these conditions would be like giving in.”**

“We’ve not come this far to settle for an insult. And as someone who knows the Labour Party from the inside, I know the resistance that exists within the hierarchy towards democracy for Scotland.”

“Working class people can and must take the struggle for democracy into their own hands. This boycott campaign is not about sitting at home. Precisely the opposite. We must take the fight for democracy onto the streets.” ●

Helen Ellis

Westminster parliament maintains its rule

Rosie Kane, co-chair of the Scottish Socialist Alliance, gave the following speech in a personal capacity at the campaign launch. She was the SSA’s candidate in the election for Rutherglen and is a prominent anti-roads protester and environmentalist in Glasgow

Amidst the euphoria and relief of the general election there is a feeling that some sort of political revolution has taken place. And I honestly don’t think this is the case. Yes, things are different and, yes, the cruel Tory thumb has been lifted, but please let’s not be lulled into a false sense of security.

It seems to me that the referendum being offered by New Labour is a silencer. The two-question referendum was a clever election promise made in order to woo the Scottish electorate, who were fast becoming suspicious and disillusioned by Labour. Labour knew they had to come up with something and this is the crumb that they offered.

It worked, but now the Scottish people, in general,

have been conned by clever-mouthed politicians that they are on their way to some sort of independence. The referendum is now being rushed through with no time or media attention to discussion amongst people about what it means. That of course is no accident.

The devolution referendum is definitely being rushed through so fast so there will be little or no time for any real debate, no chance to explore other possibilities. All we are being offered is a referendum, but there are many different views in Scotland and certainly a desire for real choices. It is fundamentally undemocratic and the Labour Party is well aware of this.

As an environmentalist, I have a lot of questions to ask

about what real powers a devolved parliament would have and how it can make any difference in improving the environment in which we live. The issue of extending private finance for road building, shadow tolls and taxes for more road building is just one area in which the people of Scotland have no idea what role this so-called parliament will have.

The wider debate has been crushed in a disgusting manner. We, the Scottish public, should be given the opportunity to make an enlightened decision about the nation’s future.

If you equate Scotland to a household, then what we are being given is a little pocket money to go down to the local shop. What we want is the

ability to buy a washing machine, a mortgage or a car, if we so wish.

I want to see a ballot paper that reflects the many different views of the Scottish nation. That is not too much to ask. What are they afraid of? We are not killjoys, or a fly in the ointment, though I have no doubt that accusation will be levelled at us. We are being realistic. The Scottish people are, at last, being given a chance. So let’s take hold of it and make it a real chance.

The proposed referendum is rigged. It does not go nearly far enough. Under this scheme any gains made towards self-determination can be taken back again by Westminster which still determines the future of Scotland ●