

International demonstration for jobs, services and democracy

Assemble 1.30pm, Cooper's Field (behind Cardiff Castle), Saturday June 13. March to Euro summit

Euro fightback

New strategy needed for working class in European Union

As leaders of the European Union gather for their summit in Cardiff, thousands of working class partisans are also making their voices felt. Opposing the attacks on workers embodied in the Maastricht criteria, demonstrators are demanding a fight to defend jobs, services and democracy.

They are standing on the shoulders of last year's outstanding European march for jobs, which saw workers from most EU countries joining forces to oppose their governments' schemes to eat into living standards. Hundreds of marchers and thousands of supporters converged on Amsterdam in June 1997 under the slogan, 'Single currency? Not at our expense!'

The Maastricht criteria stipulate that countries joining the European Monetary Union in the first wave must ensure that their own currencies are shored up so as not to drag down the euro. Central to this is the requirement that state borrowing must not exceed three percent of each country's gross domestic product. Not wishing to increase taxation, governments have looked to make big inroads into spending. But with unemployment high across Europe, this has

proved to be no easy task and has provoked working class opposition, particularly as it is welfare and services in the firing line.

Ironically the British economy - for the moment one of the strongest in the world - is well placed for entry. But, much as Blair and co would love to place themselves at the head of European convergence, they are still held back by the legacy of Thatcherite ultra-chauvinistic 'defence of the pound'. Having committed his government to a referendum before joining the single currency, Blair is patiently working to undo the ideological legacy of the Thatcher years. He knows that European capital really has no alternative but to push ahead. If capitalist Europe is to compete with the USA and Japan, its separate economies must move towards a closer integration - and monetary union is a central part of this.

Workers must build an alternative vision. Most demonstrators in Cardiff this weekend, like the Euromarchers last year, do not support the inane call to 'pull out of Europe'. This was a key position of the opportunists who used to lead the CPGB and their *British* road to 'socialism'.

Today it finds its echo in Arthur Scargill's SLP.

No, we have no preference for a life of wage slavery under British capital rather than at the hands of 'European' rulers. Nor do we see our job as defeating only the British state. We are international, not national, socialists. We cannot defeat capitalism in one country alone. Inasmuch as the capitalists organise a pan-European state so for workers it becomes the main enemy: not something to withdraw from but something to overthrow through united action.

Rather than looking to ally ourselves with the most backward elements of British capital who want to preserve their own narrow interests through turning back the clock, we must build working class links across the continent. European integration strengthens capital. But it has its progressive side, in that it creates the objective necessity for workers to come together too.

We must meet that necessity. In opposition to the European Union of bosses, workers must build EU-wide trade unions. In opposition to the European Union of unelected bureaucrats and commissioners, we must fight to maximise democracy within and across the EU - beginning with a constituent assembly of the EU. In opposition to a European Union of capital, we must fight for a Communist Party of the EU. We need to develop a new strategy, new slogans, to inspire the 350 millions who live in the European Union ●



Alan Fox Putting the message over

Morning Star AGM

CPB factional war rumbles on

Mary Rosser's long struggle to install her son-in-law, Paul Corry, as editor of the *Morning Star* has ended at last. Corry resigned as deputy editor on June 8, immediately after the Hicks-Rosser family dynasty suffered a four to one defeat at the hands of the shareholders of the People's Press Printing Society, the cooperative which owns the *Star*.

In all three parts of the PPPS annual general meeting - in Glasgow, Manchester and London - ageing 'official communists' of various hues had been sparked back to life momentarily on the back of the spirited five-week strike action of *Star* journalists against an outrageously bureaucratic and nepotistic management.

Attendance nearly trebled compared to 1997. Over 700 shareholders turned out, in the main to back the slate of five candidates put forward by the Committee to Save the *Morning Star* and the strikers. All were elected overwhelmingly, with the following votes: Ken Cameron (FBU leader) 573; Avtar Sadiq (president, Indian Workers Association GB; secretary, Association of Indian Communists) 556; Nicola Seyd (Camden Trades Council, GLATC, SERTUC, etc)

542; Ann Green (CPB executive) 536; Ken Thomas (RMT executive) 528. Nearest runner-up was Peter Pink with 134, followed by retiring committee members from the Rosser camp, Pat Hicks and John Thompson, with 132 and 129 votes respectively. Rosser loyalist on the CPB executive, Barney Crockett, brought up the rear with 125.

The newly elected five join Haylett and four other sitting management committee members who stood by him and the strikers - Carolyne Jones, Gareth Miles, Phil Davies and Alex Falconer MEP - against a minority of six Rosserites serving out the remainder of their three-year term of office: Joan Bellamy, Jim Friel, Terry Herbert, Anni Marjoram, Kumar Murshid and Francis Wilcox.

Rosser herself is not elected. She is appointed. The strikers and those who rallied to support them will be disappointed if the new PPPS business committee, to be decided at the first meeting of the changed management committee, does not sack her for causing the strike at the *Morning Star*. Haylett, however, lent her credibility by jointly moving a non-controversial rule change (the maximum individual shareholding was increased from

£10,000 to £20,000), by launching a £120,000 appeal in both their names and by calling for unity "on the basis of the results of this AGM".

Haylett, it should be remembered, is one of the leadership faction in the so-called Communist Party of Britain around new general secretary Robert Griffiths. A faction which seems intent on sweeping the *Star* dispute under the carpet and keeping future conflicts in the CPB from public view. That has been the history of 'official communism' - palace coups, disappearances and secret caucuses.

Motions for a readers and supporters groups newsletter, for the appointment of a circulation manager and for AGM voting figures to be published in the *Star* within seven days were easily carried. Karl Dallas's motion was heavily defeated because it blamed both sides equally for the strike.

At the London meeting time ran out before the pro-Rosserite legalistic motion from Joan Bellamy and Francis Wilcox could be debated, and it was voted down without a hearing. The significance of this motion seems to be that the directors of the *Morning Star* Cooperative Society (the major

subsidiary of the PPPS) are obliged by the Industrial and Provident Societies Act to look after the *separate* interests of the subsidiary or carry the can. As I suggested last week, this should be taken as a warning that the plug might be pulled. However, the management committee will surely now elect new directors of the subsidiary.

The key division amongst shareholders only came to the fore in the London meeting after veteran Dennis Birdseye attacked the old management's "double standards" in the strike. This provoked an unwise speech from ousted CPB general secretary Mike Hicks. He succeeded in reminding the majority why it was such a good idea to get rid of him. In management doublespeak, Hicks explained that "suspension on full pay does not equal guilt" - the strike to defend Haylett was unnecessary. The *Morning Star* management committee was not Murdoch, but a "workers' management, the elected management of a workers' cooperative". Those who opposed arbitration "must have had another agenda", he declared.

Clearly, there has been no recanting on the part of Mike Hicks, Mary

Rosser and their allies. They think they were right. That Griffiths, Haylett, Maybin and co have an anti-Labour Party, anti-*British Road to Socialism* "hidden agenda". So the factional war continues.

At the May meeting of the CPB executive committee four EC members were suspended - Mary Rosser; management committee members George Wake and Francis Wilcox; and North West CPB district secretary Peter Ritman. Their CPB membership will be reviewed at the mid-July EC meeting.

Haylett's tone in the PPPS AGM seems to indicate he would like to patch things up, in line with the psychology of most CPBers who, after all, would prefer to obtain socialism without struggle. Incidentally *Straight Left* supporters in the CPB are among those who favour strong disciplinary action to expunge the evil ones (they also fear openness). But among the former strikers it is noticeably the CPB members who least favour carrying the conflict to a final solution.

Either way the unity mobilised against the Hicks-Rosser clique can be expected to dissolve now that they have lost their power ●

Ian Farrell



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

Party notes

June aggregate

June's aggregate of the Communist Party considered three items.

First our work in the Socialist Alliances was reviewed at some length. As one Manchester comrade made clear, the Alliances provide a relatively important arena of intervention for our organisation, given the absence of genuinely mass developments in the class itself.

The Socialist Party - one of the major political opponents of any organisation committed to reforging a revolutionary party - has adopted a very distant relationship to the SAs, apart from in Coventry. This is a function of the crisis of fragmentation that is threatening to send their organisation into an oblivion-bound tailspin. Taaffe and the SP's central apparatus have plumped for a narrow, 'small mass party' perspective of self-development. Shortsightedly, they are not keen to see the growth and consolidation of a potential electoral rival, especially one that includes awkward customers such as us.

What else is in the SAs? A pretty motley bunch, really. Nevertheless, the form has potential even if the content is not all we would have wished at the moment. Essentially what we have to bear in mind when we review our work in these bodies are not the day-to-day vicissitudes of tussles with various small groups of refugees from social democracy and mainstream Trotskyism.

No, we must not forget the broader picture. One year plus into the Blair government it is clear that - despite the considerable political skill he has shown in government - the 'honeymoon' will not last forever. Developments in the world economy for example could provoke crisis. In the past, we have identified a political space created by the re-invention of Labour as a 'liberal-labour' party, a return to its origins. Politics, like nature, abhors such vacuums, and Blair was able to partially fill it as the head of a new government spearheading a package of radical reforms, especially in the sphere of the constitution.

Mass discontent with the Labour government could again tear open this space at the heart of British politics with a vengeance. The question is - what will fill it?

We do not estimate that our organisation - given where it is at the moment - is able to present itself as the answer. Real political life demands alliances, joint platforms and blocs. All such temporary formations we enter are for us subordinate to the central aim - forging a viable revolutionary alternative able to displace the Labour Party as the 'natural' party of the working class.

This longer-term aim does not however mean that we will adopt saintly aloofness from the rather more prosaic reality of the SAs as they exist today. We will engage energetically with the groups and individuals they contain, and the meeting reviewed the concrete plans for this. As one comrade emphasised, whatever the nature of our opponents, we are fighting over and over again in different forums the struggle for democracy in the workers' movement. This is a vital battle for the future.

Criticism was offered of aspects of our method by a comrade from the Revolutionary Democratic Group who participated in the meeting as an observer. In essence he characterised our approach as 'pool hopping'. Now that the 'sharks' in the Socialist Labour Party had driven so much of the left out of that little pond, we were trying to splash around in the SA. The only way to assess the progress being made, he said, was through using the criterion of the fight for programme - where were we now in the fight to make the call for a federal republic a hegemonic demand of the entire workers' movement?

Responding, a number of comrades emphasised that we do not fetishise any one demand in our programmatic arsenal - no matter how important - and divorce it from our central political task. The 'thing' is not the federal republic *per se*: the thing is whether it is fought for in a revolutionary way. Without a Communist Party, in other words, any aspect of our minimum programme can be pursued. But the thing is to realise it in a revolutionary, not a reformist way. Thus, the key link to be grasped in this period is the Party question and it is our progress in *this* fight that should be our benchmark.

The meeting went on to adopt a Party security document after a brief, largely technical, discussion and to offer criticisms and suggestions for this year's Summer Offensive fundraising campaign.

Finally a brief report was given of the organisation of this year's Communist University. We are looking forward to a week of stimulating debate with a range of left groups and individuals.

Already confirmed as outside speakers are the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, the Revolutionary Democratic Group and the International Bolshevik Tendency, as well as Hillel Ticktin, István Mészáros, Robin Blackburn and Hugh Kerr ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Communist University '98

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Inanity

I was amused by the reply of Paul Flowers to my review of Phil Cohen's *Children of the revolution* (Letters, May 21). There appears to be some confusion on his part as to my reasoning for 'having a go' at the Trotskyite journal *Revolutionary History*. As far as I am concerned, anything published by the communist movement is fair game for the application of critical, dialectical thought. Does the editorial board of *Revolutionary History* consider itself exempt from this? One would hope not.

The remainder of Paul's contribution is most disappointing, consisting as it does of attempts to paint me into the 'revisionist' camp of CPGB historiography. In fact the piece in question was initially animated by a concern to overcome the instrumentalism of both Trotskyite and revisionist interpretations. Extricating the British Party from a complex web of international alignments, alongside the denial of the local dynamism which similarly activated the CPGB, merely represents the abstracted flip-sides of the same, dialectical, coin.

Paul eschews the charge of 'Trotskyist orthodoxy', interpreting this as a caricature whereby the CPGB obeyed Moscow "to the last dot and comma". This misses the point of my critique, concerned as it was to scrutinise the manner in which Bruce Robinson *organised* material based on the CPGB's 'autonomy' from the USSR around a schematic, Trotskyite pole. Flowers appears to be similarly addicted to this methodological inanity, casually remarking that "the peculiarities of the CPGB during the Stalin era were merely matters of interpretation of the line sent down from Moscow". Excuse me for being picky here, but what exactly is meant by "interpretation"?

One could argue that the practice of Pollitt, Campbell and Horner during the 'third period' *remoulded* the Comintern line in favour of participation inside the so-called 'social-fascist' trade unions, with Pollitt and Campbell in particular being adept at squaring this with the ideological needs of the 'third period'. Judging from the published arguments of Flowers and Robinson, they wish to submerge such "interpretation" into the more traditional instrumentalist narrative of subordination. Therefore Robinson can blandly suggest that "the 'relative autonomy' of which so much has been made was ... of limited importance, or non-existent" (*Revolutionary History* Vol 6, No2-3, p260).

As for Paul's parting shot concerning Arthur Horner, the point is not whether functionaries like Dutt and Pollitt would have launched a public 'Free Arthur' campaign if Horner had been imprisoned inside the Soviet Union (of course, this would be unlikely - although dear old Harry may have had a few private qualms). I was simply arguing that even Stalin would have some reservations about liquidating one of the CPGB's leading trade unionists, particularly in the era of popular frontism. Admitting this is confessing the British Party's ability to produce and sustain a clutch of organic proletarian leaders - something that Flowers simply cannot do.

Phil Watson
Liverpool

Lost marbles

Who the hell is GA Shanks, and why do you print his letters? The one in the *Weekly Worker* May 28 takes some beating. I never expected to read such a mishmash of anti-Marxist drivel in the pages of your paper.

Doesn't every Marxist understand that the spinelessness of the Russian bourgeoisie was determined not by

genetic or cultural factors, but by economic ones? Marx had already explained the cowardice of the bourgeoisie as soon as it became clear that it contributed to the defeat of their own revolutions across Europe in 1848. He noted that, to the extent they fought the rotten aristocratic regimes of absolutism above them, they only roused the masses below them (principally their wage slaves) into a struggle against all property. In complete contrast to the Russian bourgeoisie (and notwithstanding crude 'third worldist' ideas of there being a labour aristocracy), the British working class has nothing to lose but its chains. Objectively, it has an interest (as indeed does all of humanity) in taking power. The fact it has not yet grasped this reality does not stop it being true.

Genuine Marxists (those who set themselves the task not just of interpreting the world, but of changing it), cannot merely assert this fact. In the words of Marx, some ideas (specifically, revolutionary socialist ideas) become a material force when, and only insofar as, they grip the masses. It is equally true that, to slightly paraphrase the *Theses on Feuerbach*, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. It will, in other words, require a British October to verify Leninism in this country. This is precisely why those who consciously oppose Leninism will have to be excluded from any communist rapprochement process - whether sponsored by the CPGB or anyone else. Why?

Ever since the strikingly different outcomes of the Russian Revolution and the many other revolutions which broke out at the end of World War I, it has been impossible to be a genuine Marxist without being, simultaneously, a Leninist. This was ABC for Leon Trotsky for the last two decades of his life, and has been a defining feature of Trotskyism ever since. A revision is, however, now taking place. Alan McCombes, *Scottish Socialist Voice* editor, has forgotten his ABCs. GA Shanks will, I guess, welcome the amnesia which is spreading like a contagion throughout SML. It is, however, an incontestable fact that the working class will never take power in the absence of a democratic centralist vanguard party built years in advance of the revolution, built through painstaking intervention in the day-to-day class struggle.

One fact which has not escaped the comrade's notice (well done, GA) is that the working class in Britain today does not possess revolutionary class consciousness. But neither did the workers in Russia in the depth of the downturns in their class struggles. Nor indeed did they at the time they began the 1905 and the 1917 revolutions! Being an idealist rather than a Marxist, the comrade fails to grasp where this consciousness came from. It was only in the process of coming to terms with their own revolutionary practical activity that the workers achieved this consciousness.

Leninists, dialectical materialists - as distinct from Stalinists, mechanical materialists - appreciate that there was nothing automatic about this process. Had Lenin not built the Bolshevik Party in the 15 years prior to the 1917 revolution, this opportunity would have gone the way of the 1905 Great Dress Rehearsal. The reformist and centrist leaders of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries would have derailed this revolution, just as their counterparts went on to derail the German revolution the following year, and dozens of others this century. No matter how unpopular this fact is with the comrade, and regardless of how unpopular it becomes within the Scottish section of the CWI, nothing they say or do will alter the reality.

Incidentally, does the comrade believe his own rhetoric about the "truth being whatever the majority believes"? When he boasts about being an absolute relativist, does he understand what he is saying? Does he imagine, for instance, that when the majority held the world to be flat, it really was flat? Has the comrade lost all his marbles?

Given his bizarre identification of the British working class with the Russian bourgeoisie, perhaps he has.

Tom Delargy
Paisley

Brazilian repression

On May 20 a workers' demonstration was savagely repressed in Brasilia. Over 20 people were injured and a teacher lost his sight. The attack was organised by the Cardoso 'social democratic' national government and by the Workers Party (PT) local government led by Cristóvam Buarque.

Cardoso is implementing a most reactionary programme against the workers and landless peasants in alliance with rightwing forces aligned with the former dictatorship. The PT, instead of defending the workers and peasants, is acting as a supporter of Cardoso's offensive against many sections of the people. Immediately after this incident the Brazilian mass media launched a campaign against the far left. TV Globo and the daily newspapers *O Globo*, *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, *Jornal do Brasil* and *Folha da Tarde* are denouncing the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), the LBI (Internationalist Bolshevik League) and Causa Operaria. This propaganda offensive is attempting to prepare the ground for a witch hunt against all organisations that claim to defend Trotskyism against the PT's rightwing evolution.

The Brazilian military police had a record of annihilation of the left during the military era, and today of killing hundreds of street children and of participating in the recent assassination of landless leaders in Para and other parts of Brazil. Now they are targeting the independent left.

We call on the international left and trade union movement to defend the Brazilian far left against repression.

John Stone
LCMRCI

Barbaric relic

Could you please explain to me what is meant by 'democratic' communism? So far as I have always understood my communist theory, democracy is a form of rule, a structural type of society for its administration. Democracy presumes a type of bureaucracy, whether it be capitalist or socialist. The former state machine must be smashed to liberate the forces of revolution so as to create working class democracy: ie, the dictatorship of the proletariat - yes, a dictatorship which, the stronger and more powerful it is, represents the highest expression of working class democracy.

My understanding of a communist system is where the state, including the democratic form, has withered away and with it all forms of class and external bureaucracy; where the people communally organise their own affairs in harmony and to the common good, through mutual discussion and voluntary agreement. Democracy would be a barbaric relic to such a community.

Tom Cowan
London

From **The Call**, paper of the British Socialist Party, June 6 1918

Bucking the issue

The government is still unable or unwilling to find a solution of the intolerable situation it has itself created in Ireland. Meanwhile the press and the politicians are concerning themselves very much just now with a proposal for federal home rule for the whole of the United Kingdom.

On its merits this is a proposal we would support. A scheme which places executive powers over local questions in the hands of the citizens of that locality is far more democratic than the present centralised bureaucracy. In its early days the BSP had on its programme a demand for home rule for London.

The sinister aspect of the present discussion however is that it is avowedly advanced as a solution to the Irish question, and is clearly designed to sidetrack the whole issue. Home rule for Ireland has nothing in common with a scheme that simply aims for the decentralisation of government.

The Irish question is a nationalist question, while the demand for greater autonomy for England, Scotland and Wales, assuming that it is voiced to any extent, is not. It may be urged that the English, Welsh and Scots are as different in race as the Irish are from the rest, but the fact that these differences hardly affect our national life today proves that the national barriers between peoples are largely artificial.

The division in modern society is not on the lines of nationality, but of class. The Irish people will discover this eventually when they have secured home rule. But we know the futility of endeavouring to make this clear to a people who are subjected to what they are firmly convinced is "foreign" domination.

For that reason international socialists insist on the right of self-determination for all nations. That right must be conceded in Ireland too ●

1918

Russian Revolution
this week 80 years ago

Prisoners out but RUC stays Irish consensus

The government's bill providing for the release of Irish prisoners was published last week. As expected, it fudged the principal question that is at present the focus of divisions over the peace process not only within unionism, but also between New Labour and the Tories.

Under the terms of the bill prisoners will be entitled to release within two years, provided they are not judged by Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam to be "a danger to the public" and are not supporters of a "terrorist organisation". The term "terrorist organisation" is defined as a group engaged in, promoting or encouraging violence, and not "maintaining a complete and unequivocal ceasefire". Clearly the military wings of parties signed up to the Mitchell principles will no longer be considered "terrorist" according to this definition - a move which led to speculation that the grounds for continuing the legal ban on the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries was being undercut and their legalisation would have to follow.

Ulster Unionist Party MP Jeffrey Donaldson said: "I am very concerned that the definition of a terrorist organisation set out here will lead to the IRA, the UDA and the UVF no longer being proscribed organisations. You would then have terrorist groups still fully armed, but no longer regarded as illegal."

Donaldson's reference to "fully armed" groups alludes to the clause in the bill which requires that parties linked to paramilitaries have to be "cooperating fully" with the arms decommissioning body. There is no *specific* requirement for any weapons to be handed in before prisoners are released. This is precisely the nature of the fudge. Neither the IRA nor Sinn Féin has yet stated that *any* weapons will be surrendered to the state.

SF president Gerry Adams commented that the legislation did not "add any new preconditions" for the release of political prisoners, but UUP leader David Trimble was also satisfied. He declared that "cooperating fully" clearly meant that arms had to be handed in. The *Daily Telegraph*, contrasting the tough phrasing of the bill with the absence of a specific decommissioning requirement, commented: "If the language was meant to provide a fig leaf for the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, against his unionist critics, it is scant cover indeed" (June 6).

Trimble's "unionist critics" include not only Donaldson, who called for a 'no' vote in the May 22 referendum and was consequently prevented from being nominated for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections, but, more importantly, the Democratic Unionist Party of Ian Paisley. Whereas both Trimble and Adams pretended to be fully satisfied with the conditions attached to the release of prisoners, Paisley, who also had a private meeting with Blair prior to the bill's publication, ranted on about a Blair sell-out and threatened to "nail his hide to the wall" over decommissioning.

The *Daily Telegraph* editorial was equally scathing of the government's



McGuinness and Adams: committed to respectable bourgeois politics

failure to enforce IRA disarmament: "Mere cooperation with the decommissioning body is not enough," it stated. "Prisoners should be released only if weapons have been handed in to that independent entity. No 'peace' accord will endure, or be worthwhile, if clandestine criminal conspiracies are permitted to hold on to weaponry - and become a state within a state" (June 6).

But the *Telegraph* continues to ignore the plain facts of the situation. The IRA has not been defeated and cannot be forcibly disarmed. However much its editorial bemoans "criminal" activities, the state, through its proposals on prisoner release, has been forced to recognise a simple truth: IRA fighters are soldiers and prisoners of war, and can no longer be treated as criminals in practice. Nevertheless SF/IRA have clearly ended their armed resistance to the British occupation of the Six Counties. In exchange the main demand which they have insisted must be conceded under the imperialist-driven peace process is that their comrades are released.

Despite the fact that we are likely to see only a symbolic surrender of arms, there is virtually no possibility that this IRA will ever resume a full-scale offensive with the aim of driving out British imperialism. The New World Order after the collapse of the Soviet Union has just about ruled that out. Adams and McGuinness are now committed to respectable bourgeois politics. They are not the first Irish freedom fighters to have trodden this path. It is a path littered with buried weaponry that has simply been left to rust.

Yet even the *Telegraph* has retreated in the face of the unremitting logic of the peace process. It does not call for *all* weapons to be handed in. Similarly, the Conservative Party demands only that decommissioning be "underway" before prisoners are freed. The government is keen to push through the prisoner release bill by the end of the month and the opposition could theoretically prevent it from meeting its deadline. But following Mowlam's "reassurances" to the shadow cabinet sub-committee on Northern Ireland at a meeting last week, it is highly unlikely that the

Tories will refuse to cooperate.

In order to retain this cooperation and to shore up the position of the pro-agreement unionists, Blair made two announcements last week. The first concerned the two Scots Guardsmen, James Fisher and Mark Wright, who are serving a life sentence for the murder of an 18 year-old catholic in Belfast. He told the Commons that Mowlam is to review their case "as quickly as possible", which no doubt foresees a speedy release. The message is clear: the ending of hostilities means the freeing of *all* prisoners from both sides.

The second announcement came in a Belfast speech, when he assured unionists that the Royal Ulster Constabulary would not be disbanded. The commission set up under the terms of the British-Irish Agreement to review Northern Ireland policing requirements will be chaired by Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong. It is supposed to conduct an open-ended examination of police structures, but Blair's announcement certainly pre-empts its findings. The RUC is almost exclusively protestant and is viewed in the nationalist/republican community as an instrument of loyalist oppression.

Nevertheless changes in its practice and structure will have to be made if Blair is to achieve the consensus he seeks. But for the moment the overwhelming priority is to ensure the defeat of the anti-agreement unionists in the June 25 elections to the assembly. Blair is desperate that Trimble holds off Paisley's challenge and at the very least wins more seats than the DUP. Sinn Féin shares this desire, even going so far as to say that its supporters may give their lower preferences to the UUP in the single transferable electoral system - in order to keep out anti-agreement loyalists. SF understands that Blair needs to pull the ground from under Paisley's feet.

Adams and McGuinness intend to complete their transformation into mainstream bourgeois politicians. They have their eye not only on short-term power-brokering in the Six Counties, but on staking their claim to a future major role on an all-Ireland basis ●

Jim Blackstock

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: June 14 - The 'dictatorship of the people' in the series on Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution*.

For more details call 0181-459 7146.

Manchester: June 15 - The labour theory of value.

For more details call 0161-798 6417.

■ Party wills

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

■ London Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact Box 22, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS or ring Anne Murphy on 0973-231 620.

■ Scottish Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact PO Box 980, Glasgow G14 9QQ.

■ SSA conference

Glasgow City Halls, Albion Street, June 20, 10am - 4pm

CPGB fringe meeting 'Against separatism, for workers unity'. Opening speaker: Jack Conrad. Room 8 in the lunch break.

■ Welsh Socialist Alliance

Cardiff rally - A socialist alternative to New Labour in Wales

6pm, Saturday June 13 - after the international demonstration.

South Riverside Community Development Centre, Brunel Street, Riverside, Cardiff. Main speaker - Hugh Kerr MEP.

■ Hillingdon hospital workers fight on

The Hillingdon strikers in west London, deserted by Unison, still need your support. Send donations urgently, payable to Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign, c/o 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Middlesex UB8 1JD.

■ Irish political prisoners campaign

Downing Street picket - first Sunday of every month, 12 noon to 1.30pm. Release the prisoners! For more details contact: Fuascait, PO Box 3923, London NW5 1RA. Tel: 0181-985 8250 or 0956-919 871.

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Capitulation to nationalism

This *Members Bulletin* document, 'In defence of the revolutionary party', is the Socialist Party EC's reply to Scottish Militant Labour's proposals to liquidate itself into a Scottish Socialist Party. Having gone along with SML's national socialist trajectory, the SP now objects to the consequences of an "independent socialist Scotland". The result is a travesty of Marxism

1. None of the arguments put forward in the SML Executive's 'For a bold step forward' (or in further documents which we have just received) convince us that what the SML EC comrades are advocating for perspectives, programme and strategy in relation to their proposal for a new Scottish Socialist Party will assure the continued strengthening of the forces of Marxism in Scotland or effectively prepare the way for the development of a mass revolutionary party. Nor, in our view, will their proposals assure the development of an effective section of the CWI [Committee for a Workers International] in Scotland. This is why we are writing 'In defence of the revolutionary party'.

7. We recognise the outstanding achievements of comrades in Scotland, both through Militant and SML, and we also recognise the tremendous potential for Marxism which will open up in Scotland over the next few years. We believe that the call for an independent socialist Scotland can position the forces of Marxism at the forefront of the struggle for self-determination, linking the fight for independence with the fight for a socialist transformation of society. However, we will only strengthen the forces of Marxism and prepare the way for a mass revolutionary party on the basis of programme, perspectives and strategy which will measure up to the complex processes which will unfold. For reasons which we explain in this and other documents, we believe the proposals being put forward by the SML Executive Committee are in serious danger of throwing away past gains and especially throwing away the enormous gains that can potentially be made in the next period. Our criticisms of the SML EC's proposals are not "entirely negative", as they claim. In our letter of April 2 ('Clarifications of proposals for an SSP'), we proposed two alternative strategic options: Option 1 - the relaunch of SML as the Scottish Socialist Party, drawing in SSA members and new forces; and Option 2 - a relaunch of the Scottish Socialist Alliance as a Scottish Socialist Party, with SML (under a new name) becoming a component of the new formation. Our letter explains the strategic and tactical factors which, in our opinion, would apply to the two options. Our main concern is the need to conserve the core of Marxist cadres we have built up over a long period of time and to adopt strategy and tactics which will allow us to strengthen the forces and mass influence of revolutionary Marxism. We believe that the SML EC are making a serious mistake in rejecting both these options in favour of a "hybrid" strategy.

33. The question has been raised implicitly in the SML EC document and explicitly in some of the discussions: Is it still possible, in this post-Stalinist period, to build a revolutionary party of the type envisaged by Lenin and Trotsky? The collapse of the Stalinist regimes not only discredited the Stalinist caricature of the 'socialist society', but also discredited the grotesque totalitarian caricature of the revolutionary party. For instance, the concept of 'democratic centralism',

which in the hands of the ruling bureaucracy became in reality 'bureaucratic centralism', which turned the party into an instrument of totalitarian rule, means that the term can no longer be used. We still defend the essential features of democratic centralism, but it is now better to use the term, 'democratic unity', emphasising that the democratic rights of members must be safeguarded at all times. (see 'Short thesis on the revolutionary party' by Peter Taaffe, *Members Bulletin* April 28 1998).

34. 'For a bold step forward' itself poses the question: "What is a revolutionary party in the present era?" But nowhere does it explicitly address this issue (though the SML EC's subsequent proposals make it clear that they are advocating a broad party rather than a revolutionary party). Clearly, it is not a question of whether or not the party includes the term 'revolutionary' in its name, at least in the context of Britain in the present period. Under present conditions, as we have explained elsewhere, it would be a mistake to use the name 'revolutionary' or to advocate 'revolution' in our programme as opposed to advocating 'a socialist transformation of society'. This is an issue of presentation, not of political substance. However, the Scottish document states that "we believe there are fundamental differences of approach" involved in this debate. We would ask the Scottish comrades: is this a difference about the possibility in this period of constructing a revolutionary party based on democratic centralism? During the debate at the SML conference in Glasgow on March 28-29, it was raised that, since the collapse of Stalinism, it was no longer possible to build a revolutionary party of the type envisaged in the past. Does the SML Executive take this position?

45. As we have made clear in our letter ('Clarification of proposals for a Scottish Socialist Party', April 2), we are not opposed in principle to "the unification of existing forces of the Scottish Socialist Alliance (and, as far as possible, other socialist forces) into a more tightly-knit and cohesive party structure. What we do say, however, is that we have to be clear on the character of such a new formation. In our view, the strategy being proposed by the Scottish Executive (that is, the transformation of the SSA into a new Scottish Socialist Party, with SML merging into it) would produce a broad organisation, not a revolutionary party. Nothing in the SML EC's 'For a bold step forward' convinces us otherwise.

46. The comrades are arguing that the new formation they are proposing would be "a hybrid organisation containing elements of a revolutionary party and elements of 'some broad formation'." But, in our view, the new formation would only become a revolutionary party if the "elements of a revolutionary party" within it constituted a politically cohesive, organised Marxist tendency actively working to win the other elements to the project of building a revolutionary party, on the basis of support for a Marxist programme, commitment to building a party based on the principles of democratic unity, and affiliation to our In-

ternational. This would be viable only as a short-term strategy, as was the case with the US Trotskyists merging with the Musteite AWP [American Workers Party]. Cannon and Trotsky did not set out to build a new "hybrid" or "transitional" party. Their overriding aim was to transform the new formation into a revolutionary party as quickly as possible. They adopted the strategy because they believed that it could be carried through to success in a short period.

47. The SML EC's document, however, says that there would be a "drawing together of our existing internal organisation and the SSA": that is, the merging of our revolutionary forces with broader elements. Moreover, this is clearly not envisaged as a short-term strategy. The SML EC comrades accept that "we are still in a preparatory period rather than a revolutionary period. Consequently, the construction of a party of socialist revolution will be a more protracted process." Such a hybridisation, with the effective dissolution of our organisation into a broader, "transitional" organisation, would inevitably result in a qualitative dilution of our revolutionary tendency.

55. It is not feasible, in our view, to envisage the construction of a "hybrid" or "transitional" party, combining features of a revolutionary party with those of a broader party, over a prolonged period of time. A revolutionary party has a number of essential features. There is room for flexibility of organisational form. But if the essential political features of our organisation are diluted by being merged into a broader formation then that new formation will not have the character of a revolutionary party. It is not a question of the comrades' intentions, or of their combined knowledge and experience: it is a question of the political logic of what they are proposing.

56. The essential features of a revolutionary party, in our view, are the following: it must be based on a revolutionary programme; it has to be organised on the genuine principles of democratic centralism, reformulated as democratic unity; it has to combine active (non-sectarian) involvement in the class struggle with the development of Marxist cadres to form the revolutionary core of the party; and it has to be an integral part of an international revolutionary party, currently the CWI. Depending on the conditions it operates under, a revolutionary party may be a separate organisation or it may be a distinct 'open' organisation within a broader formation. Another variant is that of a distinct 'entryist' tendency within a mass social democratic or Stalinist party, a tactic followed under various conditions in the past but generally not applicable in this period.

57. The Scottish EC, however, is arguing that SML should be merged with the SSA, that the entire apparatus, paper, etc of SML should be handed over to the new SSP ('Initial proposals', para 22), and that SML branches will be merged into SSA branches - and they are arguing that the new formation will still be a revolutionary party. They say that the majority position of the existing SML leadership

and its "150 years' collective experience of the Marxist movement" will prevent any dilution of the SSP's revolutionary character. Moreover, they argue that "a core of experienced and tested Marxist activists will be capable of influencing and guiding the broad membership of this new party..."

61. The argument of the SML EC is that the programme of the SSA is a revolutionary programme, that the SSA programme will be adopted by the new SSP and therefore the new SSP will be a revolutionary party. We do not accept this logic. Even if it can be assumed that the new SSP, involving new forces, will virtually automatically accept the SSA programme, that in itself will not guarantee the revolutionary character of the new party. A transitional programme drawn up for one conjuncture (as we have explained in our letter, 'Clarification of proposals for a Scottish Socialist Party', April 2, para 15) does not constitute the full programme of the revolutionary party, which is a body of ideas and the accumulated experience of the Trotskyist movement. This is not a question of seeking to erect ideological walls for potential new recruits to jump over. But it is necessary to recognise that winning broad, new forces to a transitional programme is not the same as winning their adherence to the programme of Trotskyism.

80. If the new SSP is conceived as a revolutionary party (a transformation of SML, drawing in SSA and other forces), then part of the process should be comrades campaigning for immediate affiliation to the CWI. If a decision on affiliation had to be left for a short period after the founding conference, for say six months or a year, to allow time to convince the whole membership, nothing would be wrong with that, provided the aim was affiliation in a short period of time.

81. If, however, the strategy adopted is to transform the SSA into a new SSP, which, in our view, would unavoidably be a broader party, then we would have to maintain a CWI organisation within the new formation. In the SML EC's second document, the comrades say more definitely that one option would be "forming within a SSP an organised formation (whether it be called a tendency, a platform, a society or whatever) which would be part of the CWI, which would promote the ideas, literature, etc of the CWI, which would ensure the continuation of at least the existing level of financial support for the CWI and which would organise meetings, etc with CWI speakers." This goes a bit further than the formulations in the 'Initial proposals' document, but, in our view, are still totally inadequate. Nevertheless, we would emphasise the need for a CWI group to have its own democratic structure, regular branch meetings, its own resources, full-timers, a members' bulletin and a public journal. It should actively recruit to the CWI group and campaign within the SSP for SSP affiliation to CWI.

96. The most disturbing argument put forward against calling for immediate CWI affiliation, however, is the following: "At this stage, the CWI does not possess the authority in Scotland that SML possesses; nor does the Socialist Party. For a layer of activists who work closely with SML there remains a residue of suspicion of London-based political leaders. This in turn partly reflects attitudes and, in some cases perhaps, even prejudices - linked to the national question - which extend into all sections of society in Scotland."

97. The first question to ask is: why does the CWI not possess the authority in Scotland that SML possesses, when SML is part of the CWI and should, as part of its work, be building the influence of CWI?

101. We believe that the Socialist Party (and previously Militant and Militant Labour), along with the International Executive of CWI, which frequently discussed Scotland, has consistently adopted a sensitive attitude to the national question in Scotland. In the 1970s we supported the call for devolution, demanding a Scottish assembly with real economic and social powers, against many on the left (including some within our own ranks) who opposed this as a concession to nationalism - which did not prevent some of them later switching to a nationalist position. In 1991-92 we argued strongly in favour of the Scottish Turn against opposition within our own ranks. This was a strategic reorientation towards an independent organisation, SML. The tactical turn recognised the special position in Scotland, especially the militant mood of the Scottish working class, reflecting both the intensified social crisis and the growing demand for autonomy or independence for Scotland. The leadership of Militant Labour took the initiative of proposing that SML should be an autonomous unit within the all-British organisation.

102. We have continually discussed the national question with the Executive of SML. In recent months there has been a discussion within SML and the Socialist Party, and we both agree that developments now pose the need for us to raise the demand for an independent socialist Scotland. The EC of the Socialist Party, however, has raised several points which we consider are insufficiently developed in SML's material. Briefly they are as follows: despite the currently growing support for independence, the mood of workers and other strata can fluctuate as events develop, and perspectives have to take account of this. Under the Blair government, British capitalism has conceded a Scottish parliament, but the British ruling class will ruthlessly resist steps towards independence, and it would be a mistake to assume that independence will be achieved in the next few years. While we have to fight for independence, linking it to a policy for the socialist transformation of society, we have to warn workers of the severe limitations of independence under capitalism and combat inevitable illusions. We will be at the forefront of the struggle for self-determination, while at the same time combating nationalism and any national prejudices within the workers' movement.

103. It is imperative, because of the national question, for the leadership of both CWI and the Socialist Party to show great sensitivity to national sensitivities in Scotland. On the other hand, we believe it is vital for comrades in Scotland, while fighting for an appropriate programme for self-determination, to fight against nationalism and national prejudices ●

The full text of this document is available for £1 from the CPGB address

Hatching a conspiracy

Every Sunday until June 28 there is an explosive happening of music, poetry, film and performance at the Battersea Arts Centre running under the title 'Conspiracy'. But, say its organisers, this is only the beginning. They want to create a new counter-culture, a theatre fit for the 21st century. Jack Conrad spoke to one of its founders and main movers **Tam Dean Burn**

How did 'Conspiracy' come about and where do you envisage it going?

First I would like to say that I'm really pleased to get my thoughts into print. Coherence is vital in an area at present characterised by chaos. The establishment dominates the arts not least because we lack a coherent alternative. The more people that can be fired and given direction through a dialogue with revolutionary Marxism, the more dangerous we become.

The initial step has been our contribution to the Red Room's season, 'Seeing red', at Battersea Arts Centre. Lisa Goldman - its artistic director - asked me to compere and programme a Sunday night event which would complement the season. The idea was to have something spontaneous that would draw in others - rather than the usual theatre audience. That sparked a coming together of people with whom I'd previously collaborated - like Lisa. Over the years we've gone our separate ways. I'm really glad for the opportunity to do something with them now.

The 'Seeing red' season is extraordinarily ambitious for the people at the heart of it, not least because it is seen as the tentative beginning of new political theatre - a recognition of absence. Obviously to develop a theatre for the 21st century we must rethink both in terms of form and content.

I've been operating in theatre for 15 years professionally and have been through all sorts of cultural and political upheavals and turning points. But I've always been trying to find a way of creating a theatre that would fundamentally stimulate me and the people I live amongst. Rather than merely doing theatre as a job before an audience with whom I have no relationship whatsoever. That is what they teach you to accept at drama

college - like it or lump it.

In theatre there is a rigid separation between writers, actors and the audience. There is also a gulf between those who go to the theatre, including 'Seeing red', and those who don't. There must be a solution and, as Ewan McColl told me just before he died, "art is about solutions". We have a draft manifesto for a 'Theatre of the New School'. The idea is not only to provoke discussion about how we make a theatre fit for the 21st century. The idea is to begin to do it in practice.

What happens after June 28?

We have developed a relationship with a venue in Brick Lane. It offers the opportunity for us to do the type of work not allowed in traditional theatre companies - unless we are willing to accept their agenda, which is not only ghettoised, but pretty dull. This place in the East End hasn't got any of those institutional barriers.

We are also seeking public subsidy. Such grants have been used to segregate and control artists. Little is available for cross-arts work. There are however sympathetic elements, including within the London Arts Board, who recognise the problem. But the real point is to think beyond the normal notion of public subsidy.

They say that those who pay the piper call the tune. Hasn't the establishment been extremely successful in targeting, flattering and incorporating artistic talent? There is also divide and rule. Instead of oppositional artists uniting against the system, don't oppositional artists end up competing one against all in order to gain state finance?

We don't intend to rely on state finance. There are areas of popular culture, culture that has come from below,

that have rapidly grown while public subsidy has steadily evaporated. The dominant force here is club culture. Today it operates not just on a national, but an international scale. Naturally, success carries the constant danger of being commodified. There is a continuous struggle. At one extreme stands the underground, oppositional, camp. At the other extreme there are companies with an eye on fat profits who are muscling in. That contradiction is true with every new creative art form.

But the fact that it has been able to go from something that started with a few hundred people in this country to something of global proportions is proof that dynamism comes from below. Here is a mass terrain where we can operate. We need to both learn from it and provide direction. Counter-culture can ride as well as buck the market system. We can't afford to be purists. Whatever means are available to us - state subsidy included - must be used in order to create the sort of work that is needed. But to be free from the actuality or possibility of official or unofficial censorship we have to have a mass base and be commercially viable.

No one can deny that we live in a money economy. But if a counter-culture becomes a commercial success isn't it inevitable that some clever entrepreneur or faceless corporation takes over? Under these circumstances doesn't opposition become its opposite - sanitised and divorced?

Some of it might. But that does not mean all of it will. 'Alternative' comedians in the 1980s suddenly became important figures. They were often consciously political. They stood against the old fashioned racist and sexist crap that once passed for comedy. They were naturally anti-Thatcher. Now those who have stayed true to themselves are openly anti-Blair.

There are some who are making enormous profits out of club culture. But that does not stop new energy coming from below and constantly transforming the scene. The free party system takes place outside the directly commodity sphere and attracts thousands every weekend in London alone. Acid house has been tremendously vibrant but has reached its limitations. Many are looking for something more; a few are beginning to seriously think about politics.

Inevitably club or acid house counter-culture has a political edge. People party all night at illegal venues and take illegal substances. The full force of the law has been directed against them - drugs raids, riot police and helicopter searchlights - turning perfectly innocent enjoyment into an act of rebellion. But is the change you detect a generational thing - people simply getting older and becoming tired with hedonism - or is there something more to it?

There is more. There has been a breaking down of the generational gap. The

30 and even 40-somethings mix with teenagers and those in their 20s. There is also a new mood of anger. That is really what our project is designed to key into and articulate.

If you are West End club owner counter-culture is a nuisance. Perhaps a direct threat. But isn't club culture inherently containable? The object is to have fun. What I've seen at 'Conspiracy' is fun and experimental, but it is not simply about getting out of your head. It's about using your head. Isn't that less containable?

That's true. And even if we are used for profit, we will maintain our freedom to say what we want, when we want. If that means planting our flag elsewhere, so be it. The closest example I can think of is Irvin Welsh - someone I've worked with a lot. Writers like him have not been absorbed. What Irvin has been able to do is to operate in a commercial way. Yet at the same time he has maintained a principled position at the forefront of the new school of writing. His latest book, for instance, exposes the forces of law and order in a way that we have never seen on TV or film - which usually glamourises the police.

He's been through similar cultural and political experiences to me - punk, the 1984-85 miners' strike, acid house, the Liverpool dockers, etc. Irvin recognises the burning need for class politics but that over the last 20 years workers have gone from one defeat to another. Artists must have a great inner strength to maintain their integrity in such a period. Both when they are showered with praise and cash and when they are slagged off, when they try and snuff you out. Which is what they are trying to do with Irvin just now.

I would also add that there are some progressive entrepreneurs. Quiet a few I've come across through club culture have in the past been leftwing activists. They drifted out due to the period of reaction and the sense of isolation. Some of them are saying, 'Yes, we are going to use the market.' They do not fool themselves that the market can be beaten from within. But it is possible to retain integrity.

I don't deny what you are saying. After all, if you look at what you could call my counter-culture - ie, Bolshevik history - they had a number of fellow travellers who were successful business people. They also had artists around them - Maxim Gorky being the most outstanding. But it is nevertheless essential to recognise the pitfalls. Surely an inherent danger with your project is that nine out of 10 of the best talents will simply be snatched away and made into 'stars'. Some individuals might be able to withstand the

pressure, like Irvine Welsh, but they are the exception.

It depends on what is on offer. At the moment there is very little or nothing in terms of an organised, socially significant alternative in society. So there is nothing that we can align ourselves with. Artists like Bertolt Brecht, Paul Robeson and Ewan McColl never sold out to the ruling class. In part because there existed the perception that the world communist movement counterbalanced bourgeois society and its values. However illusory, there is no such alternative today.

What about the Socialist Workers Party and other such leftwing organisations?

The SWP is a sect and a philistine sect at that. It defines the working class in the narrowest possible way. Instead of fighting to make the workers into a leading class through having answers for all sections of society - a class which champions democracy - the SWP sees the question of class purely in terms of strikes and the workplace. For them working class politics is trade union politics. Such economism is why the SWP has no serious orientation towards culture. Indeed it has a certain distrust or contempt for culture. A friend of mine - a former SWP member - has a framed article from *Socialist Worker* on their wall. The headline runs: "Is Irvine Welsh anti-working class?"

There is so much conservatism on the left. There is no healthy relationship between left sects like the SWP, Socialist Party, etc and artists. Gerry Healy's WRP used to recruit actors. But it used them in the most irresponsible and wasteful fashion - the revolution was supposedly just round the corner. Either that or it cynically wheeled them on and off at rallies. That was a road to nowhere.

What sort of relationship do you see between oppositional artists and building a genuine mass working class party?

At present oppositional artists lack confidence. That is natural. People do not believe that we can win battles through collective action. People don't enter struggle because they don't believe they can win. For objective and subjective reasons the situation is bound to change. When it does, artists will test the programmes and political strategies of the left in practice.

I've got every confidence in the project to reforge Communist Party of Great Britain. Those around the *Weekly Worker* have over the years proved themselves right on all the main issues and have been willing and able at crucial moments to throw off routine methods of work and dare to take a lead. They did it in the miners' Great Strike and the Gulf War. I am sure they will do it in the future. Though I am not at present an organised revolutionary I am convinced that the outlook of the *Weekly Worker* provides the best way forward ●

Summer Offensive '98

Do the right thing

Comrades directly involved in producing the *Weekly Worker* raised a magnificent £583 in week five of the CPGB's eight-week Summer Offensive fundraising campaign, bringing them up to 40% of the £3,900 they have pledged collectively.

This beats the £430 in from the Party printshop comrades - a pretty good figure for a below average week, bringing them to the 52% mark. But even that falls short of what is needed, as only three weeks remain until the June 29 deadline to meet our overall target of £20,000. So far we total £6,036 in, just 30% of what is needed. Pledges still only amount to £14,100, leaving £5,900 to find. Most of this will depend on steeled campaigners pulling out the stops

and beating their original pledges by around 50%. That would do the trick.

Readers who appreciate the *Weekly Worker's* invaluable role in fighting for a culture of Partyism to unite revolutionaries (presently divided into sects of co-thinkers) should do the right thing and throw their own weight into the campaign. We have no Moscow gold, comrades. No one will build our Party for us.

On July 11 comrades, family and friends will come together to celebrate the achievements of the 15th Summer Offensive at a prize-giving dinner in London. Seats are £20 or £50 solidarity price. Cheques to CPGB, please ●

Stan Kelsey

Seeing red A festival of dissent

Part two: May 26-June 14

The Mandelson files by Paul Sirret
The big idea by Helen Kelly
On the couch with Enoch by Tanika Gupta
The (bogus) people's poem by Kay Adshead

Part three: June 16-28

Made in England by Parv Bancel
The ballad of Bony Lairt by Roney Fraser-Munro
Thanks mum by David Eldridge
Stick stack stock by Dona Daley
Slow drift by Rebecca Prichard

Les événements by James Macdonald

Red Room Conspiracy

An evening of art, entertainment and agit prop introduced by Tam Dean Burn.
Sundays 8pm. Tickets: £4 or £2 (concessions).

Venue: Battersea Art Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11.

Tuesdays-Saturdays 7.30pm; Sundays 5.30pm and 8pm.

Tickets: £8 or £5 (concessions). Box office: 0171-223 2223.

The struggle for human freedom is universal or it is nothing. Under capitalism, as Engels writes, "a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class - the proletariat - cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class - the bourgeoisie - without at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from *all* exploitation, oppression, class distinctions, and class struggles" (my emphasis - 'Preface to 1888 English edition' *Communist manifesto* New York 1964, p51).

In other words, the fight for democracy and socialism occur "at the same time" and are one and the same - a viewpoint famously expounded in VI Lenin's *What is to be done?*

There is another entirely different conception. One which reduces the fight for socialism down to a straightforward, pugilistic contest at the workplace between the 'boss' and the 'workers' - with perhaps a bit of politics thrown in now and again. One which just cannot imagine the working class becoming the ruling class in society. From this narrow economic perspective, "society at large" is either ignored or treated as a rude intruder into the 'class struggle'. Quite logically, some advocates of this profoundly non-Marxist notion of 'class struggle' end up accommodating to and reproducing some of the most backward and bigoted values of bourgeois society.

The most extreme and distasteful example available to us so far of this trend can be found in the shape of Socialist Labour Party member Roy Bull - ex-Workers Revolutionary Party, defeated candidate for the post of SLP vice-president, editor of the homophobic and Trotskyite-hating *Economic and Philosophical Science Review*, and regular contributor to the wildly eclectic but deadly dull *Socialist News*. In the latest issue of the latter (May-June) Bull "offers his view of the drugs crisis" - they happen to coincide with those of would-be labour dictator Arthur Scargill.

After reading Bull's article, you almost have to wonder why the ruling class needs its own state when we have 'communists' like him and his tiny band of not-so merry sociopathic followers in the *EPSR* appearing so keen to police the working class and make sure the masses do not get out of hand. Fundamentally, Bull's approach to the "drugs crisis" is a straight 'left' copy of the most reactionary bourgeois - ie, authoritarian and prescriptive. Add this to his 'more Tiananmen Squares, please', and his weirdo, auto-erotic, anti-gay, anti-Trot-

Around the left

No politics please, we're Bullites



EPSR editor Royston Bull

skyite rantings in *EPSR*, and you have a 'socialism' which stands in direct opposition to human liberation.

Thus Bull writes: "The campaign to legalise alternative means of intoxication other than alcohol claims to be about progressive human rights. But the history of class society shows that a proven method of pacifying the masses has been to inebriate them. The right to get high as a 'challenge to capitalist law and order' looks different when it is seen as playing into capitalism's hands" (May-June). The masses, according to this frustrated JV Stalin, are merely passive spectators, whose only function is to act as a stage army and provide the backdrop to the Bullites' dark fantasies of what they imagine a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' should look like.

People take drugs because they like it - for whatever reasons. This has been true since human history began. It is only in a perverse and irrational society driven by the need for *social control* that one potentially dangerous drug, alcohol, is permitted - indeed is

feted and celebrated by the advertisers and popular culture - while other less dangerous drugs are banned and its users criminalised. Television, West End musicals, pop music, Hollywood films, religion, etc, can also have the effect of "pacifying the masses", but nobody is suggesting that they be banned. But then again, you cannot take anything for granted with the *EPSR* ...

Hypocritically, Bull admits: "Deliberately, consciously choosing intoxication from time to time can be great enjoyment and has played a delightful and not dishonourable role in human culture since time began. Dependency on relaxing stimulation can be harmless, but self-deception about routine dependency - whether on *drugs or alcohol* - is a fool's game that helps to distract people from seeing the bankrupt nature of the system which surrounds them" (my emphasis). Yes, Roy. But the *drug* alcohol is legal. Cannabis, however, remains illegal. As part of the 'war against drugs' the state has accrued to itself a whole raft of oppressive and anti-democratic powers - some or all of which can be used against us at any time. Yet none of this appears to bother Bull. (The fact that he enjoys a pint or two, or three or four, is of course totally irrelevant.)

The irony is that it is becoming obvious to some sections of the bourgeoisie that the 'war against drugs' is irrational, unwinnable and very costly. Last week thousands of influential international figures - ranging from judges, clerics, former drug squad officers to former prime ministers and former presidents - signed an open letter aimed to coincide with the UN general assembly special session on drugs, which starts in New York this week. "We believe that the global war on drugs is now causing more harm than drug abuse itself," states the letter. The drugs industry - and the war against it - has "distorted economic

markets and moral values", it adds, calling for a total reappraisal of the anti-drugs laws.

The editor of *EPSR* is not impressed. When explaining why the taking of cannabis, LSD, ecstasy, etc should remain a criminal activity, Bull relapses into shameless ultra-economism: "This isn't a question of backing the British government on its drugs laws; the capitalist system is rotten, and deserves no support at all. *But it cannot be tinkered with; it must be overthrown*, and the 'legalisation' issue is a huge diversion" (my emphasis).

Presumably, seeing how the capitalist system "cannot be tinkered with", the fight to abolish the House of Lords must also be a "diversion". So too must be the call for a federal republic and the abolition of the constitutional monarchy. The call for a united Ireland and the withdrawal of British troops must also be a foolish "diversion". The struggle for a decent minimum wage, as opposed to the proposed sub-minimum wage of £3.60 an hour, must be a "diversion" from the 'class struggle'. Wages are just wages, right? It's all exploitation. Waste of time doing anything. Read *EPSR* instead.

Poking through all this nonsense is Bull's top-down bureaucratic socialism, which views the masses with suspicion - if not fear and loathing. Give them the freedom to consume alcohol or smoke a joint and they will inevitably 'abuse' it by becoming sad losers, junkies, addicts and alcoholics. Thank god there is the state - bourgeois, 'socialist' or otherwise - to keep them sober and level-headed. And rejoice at the fact that the steely-eyed and beefy proletarians in the *EPSR* will never allow themselves to be diverted from the course of pure revolution. (On the back page of *Socialist News EPSR* Dave Roberts treats us to an enthusiastic little report on Sean Kirkpatrick of Leicester SLP and his London Marathon run, which in-

cluded "months of punishing training plus pints and pints of Guinness".)

Therefore, legalisation of drugs could only unleash chaos and dissolution. Bull asks: "Is there any reason why drug addiction wouldn't rapidly escalate and overtake alcoholism - bad enough already - among the young?" Absolutely no reason at all - if the young were sufficiently alienated from society. Communists fight to change society, not persecute those who are on the receiving end of state oppression and official hypocrisy. As our vision of socialism is self-emancipatory and democratic, we have no morbid fear of drugs being freely available. We aim to socialise drug-taking, as we do all other aspects of human existence, from the sexual to the cultural. If under our future 'workers' state' a large section of the population were becoming addicted to drugs - whether it be alcohol or heroin - this would only prove that there was something seriously wrong: with the new state, not with the people.

The *political* struggle to legalise drugs is all part of the battle for human freedom. Bull fails to realise this. Dourly, he warns: "But, given the worldwide record of drug-induced damage that imperialism has inflicted on individuals and nations, who can recommend regular intoxication as a way of fighting the capitalist system? ... The 'liberty' to do something which in no way challenges economic, political and social controls is a false freedom - meaningless under capitalism."

Communists fight for human freedom *now* - we do not postpone that struggle until some abstract and reified future. Means determine ends. By fighting in the here and now against all forms of oppression and discrimination, we make our own future. That makes socialism *something worth fighting for* - rather than leaving it as a utopian ideal or a bureaucratic state nightmare ●

Don Preston

Manchester Alliance in trouble

There is now little doubt that the new course set upon by the Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance is to paddle itself up a sectarian backwater as fast and as far as it can get. The GMSA annual conference last month was stage-managed to get the result of excluding the Communist Party from active participation. It ended the previous system of automatic representation on the steering committee for each affiliated organisation. The manager of this farce, John Nicholson, used a charade of voting and democracy to reduce discussion to one minute and refuse to let candidates speak on their nominations. By the end of the meeting he was reduced to screaming "shut up" at those who raised objections (see *Weekly Worker* May 21 for a full report). Now the clique organised round Nicholson hopes to build a CPGB-free zone.

The GMSA 'Europe' meeting on Thursday June 4 provided confirmation. The organiser, Chris Jones, could only organise a whimper.

Originally the meeting was organised by the GMSA as a debate between different platforms on the issue of European integration. John Pearson from the Campaign for a Democratic SLP was nominated to provide an internationalist position for the debate. Jones, who takes exception to comrade Pearson's support for the *Weekly Worker* however, insisted that the platform was already too full to allow any more speakers on it. Incidentally all of Jones' proposed speakers would be sympathetic to his own little-England brand of 'internationalism'. At the thinly attended GMSA steering committee meeting which discussed this point, Jones' attack on debate and diversity was supported by Mark Caterall

of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and Noel Pine of the Socialist Party of England and Wales. Then voting three to two, with Steve Riley of the CPGB joining comrade Pearson, the previously agreed GMSA agenda of a debate on Europe was set aside in favour of merging it with a rally to build for the Cardiff demo.

Having triumphed in the committee, the 'joint meeting' organiser was determined to have all the speakers from the rally and none from the debate. And this is where Jones came unstuck. One after another his promised speakers dropped out. (He had promised a big name, MEP Michael Hindley, to be joined by a Green Party spokesperson and a fraternal comrade of Socialist Outlook from Germany.)

On the evening before the meeting with not a speaker in sight, a desperate call was made for Mark Caterall to

step in. Comrade Mark did what he could at short notice. But why did Jones not call the one person who had been prepared to speak all along: last year's GMSA committee member, paid up individual member and representative of affiliated organisation, comrade John Pearson? To which question, for the ears of the assembled comrades he replied: "You're surprised that I didn't ask John. Well, I'm surprised that you're surprised."

Comrades may wonder at the flippancy of this GMSA committee member who recently pledged himself to building a democratic inclusive organisation with a non-sectarian way of working, yet does not want to see a left opponent on the platform. These crass sectarian antics have shown up the committee and embarrassed the GMSA as a whole. John Nicholson who said little all evening, left the building with a face like a smacked

arse.

The GMSA cannot succeed in this manner. Its way of working must include all partisans of the working class. Revolutionaries and democrats on the committee must now see that the exclusivist changes pushed through at the May annual conference were a mistake.

By far the most important initiative of the evening came from CPGB, CDSLP, SLP and independent comrades with the call for a unified left platform against the Labour Party in the forthcoming European elections. Unsurprisingly, this was not taken up by John Nicholson or by the AWL, SO or SP comrades - all members of the GMSA steering committee. It remains to be seen whether the GMSA will honour its previous commitments to stand candidates in next year's campaign ●

Steve Riley

Simon Harvey of the SLP

United Campaign

The oh-so-sincere whingeing continues from some sections of the Blair-loyal union bureaucracy around union recognition and the sub-minimum wage recommendation. Their hollow protests make it ever more clear that Morris, Monks and their ilk are completely unwillingly and utterly incapable of challenging the anti-working class policies of this Labour government.

However, as they play out their charade, space is opening up for the emergence of forces which are willing to fight for more than Gordon Brown says New Labour can afford. Whether we see a reborn rank and file workers' movement or the re-emergence of a left trade union bureaucracy is an open-ended matter.

Obviously the leadership of the SLP had an eye on the latter with the timely launch of the Reclaim our Rights campaign to "repeal the anti-trade union laws". However, ROR is being formed on the basis of relatively inclusive principles - unlike the SLP. Needless to say that inclusivity is not about building a cross-sectional rank and file movement. Even so, the campaign warrants support in so far as it can be a catalyst to building a militant movement in the trade unions.

There are developments to report around ROR. It has given birth to the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws. Not exactly sexy, but there you go. The United Campaign "incorporates" ROR and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's Free

Trade Unions Campaign. Further evidence of a deal between the SLP and AWL. This is "in cooperation" with the CWU campaign and the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. That real life has forced the LCDTU to cooperate is good and perhaps reflects recent leadership changes within the so-called Communist Party of Britain.

Despite its apparent broad, non-sectarian scope, the current framework for the United Campaign excludes affiliation from any existing militant minority group in the unions like the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Unison or the Socialist Caucus of the PCS union (formerly the CPSA). At the delegate recall conference of ROR on April 18, Arthur Scargill defended their exclusion, claiming that the campaign should not involve itself with the "internal affairs" of unions.

Another development likely to impact upon the shaping of the United Campaign comes from the SWP. Its leadership now all but admits the fact that its membership will not magically grow under Blair as a result of the supposed 'crisis of expectations' (30,000 was the target for the first year). That reality is forcing changes upon Britain's largest left sect. The SWP is already set to contest elections for the first time since the 1970s. Now it appears that it is positioning itself to join the United Campaign. This can only be a positive thing - not least because it opens up the SWP.

The SWP has organised a series of rallies under the banner of 'Full union rights now'. My initial instincts were that, true to form, the SWP was attempting to set up a rival campaign in order to seal off and inoculate its membership from other left ideas. However, speakers at its rallies include the NUJ president and general secretary. The NUJ is nationally affiliated to the United Campaign. Bob Crow, SLP NEC member and the chair of the United Campaign, is a listed speaker at the Manchester rally on June 11.

This indicates the SWP is likely to come on board the United Campaign, albeit through an artificially created front. The United Campaign explicitly excludes affiliation from political parties. Yet, behind the scenes, the forces of the SWP and the AWL are playing their traditional role - rallying behind the left wing of the trade union bureaucracy.

Le Pen fan

Ringling around after last month's local elections, I spoke to comrade Dave Barber of Lewisham SLP, one of our candidates for the Ladywell ward. Like many others, he was relatively pleased with the 200 votes (around 10%) he won on May 7.

Comrade Barber told me the SLP was preferable to the old 'official' CPGB, of which he was a member since demobilisation in 1945, because our party is prepared to fight Labour. However, he explained that he does have differences.

One of these, he said, was over the question of immigration. Expecting him to make a call for open borders instead of our current policy of opposing only 'racist' immigration laws, I was taken aback when he expressed the oppo-

.....
 "Le Pen's National Front has made electoral gains through having a 'sane immigration policy'"

site viewpoint.

Comrade Barber told me: "We can't win our own people through having a policy of having everyone move in. The country is too small." The comrade pointed to France, where Le Pen's National Front has made electoral gains through having a "sane immigration policy". He added: "Le Pen only has one sword in his armoury, but what a mighty sword that is." He assured me he was not a "racist". He merely believed that people should stay in "their own" country.

Calls for a "sane immigration policy" were also the basis of the opportunist and cynically dishonest arguments used by Brian Heron (Fourth International Supporters Caucus and London SLP president) at the SLP's founding conference in 1996.

Of course, as any party of the working class is born and grows, all manner of people with all sorts of unusual and even downright reactionary ideas will join. That one candidate has racist views which are out of step with not only socialist thought, but mainstream bourgeois society, is not really the main question.

The point is that the SLP has a closed culture of avoiding differences and pursuing dull 'common sense' campaigns. Such a culture allows backward ideas such as those held by Barber to survive, if not flourish.

His anti-immigrant ideas clearly existed while he was an 'official communist'. The old CPGB's culture was also anti-debate and its reliance on the national socialist *British road to socialism* could only reinforce such reactionary views. That the SLP's programme is a variant of the *BRS* can only compound the problem.

This 'dumbing down' approach is clearly seen in our party paper, *Socialist News*. Bland articles and reports and a lack of open debate is the order of the day. Any opposition articles, even if uncontroversial, are excluded.

One ludicrous example has recently been drawn to my attention. Chris Erswell of Sale and Wythenshawe CSLP submitted an article reporting the election of SLP member Dave Toomer to the national executive of the National Union of Journalists. Good news, you would think. Pretty safe too. But no, it was excluded on the grounds of not being newsworthy enough.

The fact that comrade Erswell has been an open agitator for SLP democracy and revolutionary politics would not have anything to do with it, would it? And what about comrade Toomer? He is an ex-Militant member. Just can't trust those Trots, can you, Arthur?

But a culture that allows an admirer of Le Pen to represent the SLP in an election - that's just fine ●

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.

North West union rights campaign

Unity and criticism

Around 80 people attended the North West regional launch rally of the United Campaign for Repeal of Anti-Trade Union Laws in Manchester on June 3 1998.

The meeting was opened by Socialist Labour Party member Alec McFadden. He explained that the name change was intended to underline the equal partnership of the three organisations which had merged following the March 28 Reclaim Our Rights conference. He stressed that the campaign would be non-sectarian.

SLP national executive committee member, and joint secretary of United Campaign, John Hendy QC, informed the meeting that nine unions at national level, and 150 other trade union bodies, had affiliated. A national recall delegate conference will take place on July 4 to start planning the activities of the campaign. It had already been agreed however that there will be a major national demonstration on May 15 1999.

The other joint secretary, Lol Duffy, of Liverpool Unison and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty-backed Free Trade Unions Campaign, stressed his view that the campaign must be one which *wins in the TUC*. An immediate aim should be to secure a commitment from this autumn's TUC congress to lead the May 1999 demonstration and the fight to defeat the anti-union laws. A question from the floor to comrade Duffy, as to what would

happen to the campaign if it did not win in the congress, was not answered. Alec McFadden came back in to emphasise: "This organisation is not intended to be an alternative TUC. It is working within the TUC."

Speakers from two disputes addressed the meeting. Shirley Winter, of the Magnet Women's Support Group described eloquently the struggle that had been conducted by the Magnet strikers and their families.

Pat Buxton appealed for support on behalf of the 250 Tameside care workers who had been sacked that very day after two months of strike action against pay cuts. She was backed up by her Unison branch secretary, Socialist Party member Noel Pine, who spoke of the strikers' defiance of anti-union laws.

But then a speaker from the Tameside Unemployed Workers Alliance stated that he had a criticism to make of the leadership of this dispute. Unemployed workers and students had initiated an occupation of the offices of a staffing agency which was supplying scabs and, as pre-arranged, had sent a mini-bus in order to transport strikers to the action. The bus had returned empty. Comrade Pine had allegedly told strikers that their participation in such an activity was inadvisable. It might lead to their victimisation after a return to work.

At the mention of the word 'criticism', murmurs of disapproval rum-

bled in those areas of the hall which were most noticeably occupied by members of the Fourth International Supporters Caucus. To his credit, the chair, comrade McFadden, intervened. "This campaign is a unity project," he stated, "and as such, criticism must be allowed. The way to fight sectarianism is through unity in action."

Indeed all who wanted to speak were given the facility to do so. The campaign has the potential to grow into something substantial and, if it is to become a genuine working class mass movement, then the space for the fullest of debate and comradely criticism will be a vital factor.

Despite this the Socialist Workers Party did not provide any speakers. The SWP has organised a 'Union rights now' rally in Manchester, on June 11, with the sponsorship of a number of local union branches. The publicity for this event, with its official TUC speakers, indicates that it is to focus on union recruitment activity and union recognition drives.

Ostensibly the SWP would appear to be offering its services as a TUC recruiting sergeant. The importance of getting the SWP on board was however acknowledged by Alec McFadden, who urged those present to attend the SWP-sponsored event in order to press for one united union rights campaign ●

John Pearson

Broader or greener?

Nick Long, the coordinator of Lewisham Socialist Alliance and a member of the Socialist Democracy Group, responds to the CPGB's John Bridge (see *Weekly Worker* May 28)

John Bridge is correct in stating that the London Socialist Alliance is at a crossroads. Following the London SA election meeting on May 3 it has become clear to a majority of activists supporting the SA project that, following the local elections, the London ad-hoc committee needs to be urgently put on a delegated formal footing if it is going to be able to tackle the immediate political task it faces and be taken seriously by other political forces on the left. Our performance in the May local elections has clearly demonstrated that if we are going to make a credible impact across London we need to pull in more supporters and orientate our political approach to the trade union movement and organisations of the working class, seeking to fracture the dwindling socialists from the LP and draw in socialist greens and working class militants. It is significant that the first election gains for the greens in London were made in Hackney. An opportunity was missed, as voters were looking for a radical alternative to the corruption and cronyism of the LP locally, but rejected the politics of the CPGB in Anne Murphy's candidature in North Defoe ward. The future orientation of the London SA needs to be resolved urgently and is in danger of collapse unless wider political forces can be drawn into the orbit of the London alliance.

The outcome of the local election results and the recent decision of the SWP to contest elections make the tasks of building a mass alternative to the LP even harder. The narrow space that was open for socialists to gain a foothold has been closed down even further if, as many socialist believe, the electoral intervention of the SWP is likely to be driven by a sectarian desire to block any election breakthrough by the SP, SLP, SAs and greens. The SWP is likely to find the Euro elections in 1999 in London far more inviting than the Scottish parliament elections. Thirty-four percent of all SWP branches are based in London, only 6% in Scotland. The £10,000 needed to make a minimum election intervention in London would mean the 57 SWP branches in London raising only £175. The SWP has obviously only recently found a calculator!

The London SA faces a short period from now until March of next year, prior to the 1999 Euro elections, to thrash out an agreed founding statement, agree its essential principles and orientation, register as a political party, agree its policies and manifesto for the election, enter into discussions with others about the prospects for a joint slate, select and rank our candidates and seek to tackle the urgent task of placing the London Alliance on a limited financial footing, allowing it to fund its electoral intervention and pay the £5,000 deposit necessary to get our candidates' names onto the ballot paper.

If we miss the opportunity of making a limited electoral intervention, either independently or with others next year, the task of building a mass socialist alternative to the LP will be set back further. These are all huge tasks and need to be carried out in a fraternal and non-sectarian fashion. They cannot be carried out by members of an organisation with ongoing delusions in the ability of the SLP moving beyond anything more than a re-founded communist-Labour party (influential and significant as it is likely to become within a number of industrial trade unions). These tasks need to be driven by a London SA leadership that is clearly committed to its orientation, and not ambivalent about the need to give mass political expression to the work-

ing class as it becomes increasingly disillusioned with New Labour.

It would appear that the SP has resolved its political ambiguity towards the SA, and is likely to put more resources into building local alliances and into attending the proposed London-wide general meeting. The Movement for Socialism is also considering fuller involvement. Socialist Outlook and the AWL are also likely to give more support to building SAs. The Marxist Party and Socialist Movement have also been active in SAs in other parts of the country. Proposals to base the London-wide steering committee on a delegate basis from borough Socialist Alliances are being discussed and the general meeting will have an opportunity to discuss and debate these and no doubt other proposals to retain directly affiliated supportive groups. Personally I would place less emphasis on direct affiliation because it allows organisations off the hook of hard practical work in building local alliances and the luxury simply of political comment. The London SA committee needs to become a product of its constituent parts: borough socialist alliances and the representative to the national steering committee elected from the steering committee and accountable to it.

The plurality and diversity of local socialist alliances could be reflected in each borough alliance having more than one delegate to the London-wide steering committee - perhaps two or three. The London steering committee should however not be seen as a central committee. Its role should simply be one of coordinating and developing the tasks outlined above and involving local socialist alliances in London-wide events, fundraising, publicity and dissemination of information. The focus of political work needs to be centred within the autonomous borough SAs. The discussion of political orientation needs to take place locally in the face of local industrial struggles, practical work and campaigns.

The accountability of the vast majority of delegates to the steering committee should be open, not confined to closed political parties and tendencies. The experience of direct affiliation within the SLP should serve as a reminder of the dangers. Building local alliances would avoid the bureaucratic complexities of juggling the political balance of different constituent parties, groups, factions, campaigns and supportive journals.

The CPGB and Anne Murphy in particular have played an important initial role in helping to get the London SA committee off the ground. The move to formalise the London-wide committee is not part of some Manchester/London axis plot, merely the fruit of the hard work of comrades who have been working on the London ad-hoc committee and the need to address the urgent tasks we face. Developing an SA founded on its constituent parts would avoid any political horse trading and 'bureaucratic deals'.

The development of the SA in London is taking on a different character and need not mirror the structure in other cities. Supporters of political groups would have to prove themselves in political tasks and the nuts and bolts of building local alliances. It would appear that after more than two years of activity in Manchester a broad spectrum of socialists found the work, activity, methods of working and contribution of comrades from the CPGB wanting. From my experience of the CPGB within the SLP, the London ad-hoc committee and the Lewisham SA it is likely that the CPGB will continue to play a role within the SA.

LSA controversy

The London Socialist Alliance general meeting on July 5 will surely be important for the whole project. Convened to discuss the way ahead for the LSA, there will be three main motions. I will give a brief comment here on each.

The Socialist Party has put forward a motion which contains dangers if adopted. Essentially it seeks to reduce the momentum of the LSA to a snail's pace - calling for ad-hoc committee meetings to be held every two months instead of once a month. This, the motion asserts, will allow comrades to "concentrate on the borough alliances". But the SP's own experience demonstrates that this will not happen. Hillingdon Socialist Alliance, the only one in London led by the Socialist Party, did not meet for 18 months. As to resources, the SP only send one or two comrades to the ad-hoc committee. Rather than inventing spurious localist excuses in an effort to wind down the LSA, SP ought to give more commitment to the project. That would be very welcome, not least as we face up to the London Assembly and the European elections - the left has a real chance if we get our act together.

The second motion comes from Socialist Outlook, Socialist Democracy Group and Toby Abse. This seeks, among other things, to commit the LSA to green-left politics. But what are green-left politics? Do the comrades believe *all* green politics are progressive? While partisans of the working class have a clear interest in the environment, it does not mean that greens are our 'natural allies'. Indeed many green arguments are avowedly anti-worker and neo-Malthusian - people are supposedly the problem.

One example is Chit Chong, the Green Party candidate against whom I stood in Hackney in the May 7 local election. He is a member of the police liaison committee and calls for the racist Stoke Newington police to be tougher on crime. He advocated an eclectic petty bourgeois, small business programme, which made not one mention of the working class. Not that this is surprising, given the anti-technology and reactionary nature of many green thinkers.

Nevertheless green groups and individuals who say they are socialist are welcome to affiliate to the LSA. We need to win leftwing elements to a comprehensive working class programme, which not only safeguards the environment, but puts people first.

The motion submitted by the CPGB tackles LSA organisation. Against the election of a Blair-style mayor for London SA it proposes flexible democracy, whereby affiliated boroughs and organisations have the right to appoint and recall their own delegates - it is they who should elect LSA officers. The CPGB motion also deals with local roots. It argues there is "no contradiction between building and organising the Alliances in either a bottom-up or top-down manner. Borough SAs [should] have full autonomy to organise their own political campaigns and to implement LSA campaigns as they see fit."

Indeed the launch of LSA itself has triggered the creation and resurgence of alliances throughout London. But building locally does not mean just being concerned with local problems - it does not mean becoming localist. The events in Indonesia, for example, concern all thinking people in London. Indeed Hackney SA has taken the initiative to hold a public meeting on Indonesia on June 30, which will be the first of many throughout London.

The question of representation on the National Liaison Group has still not been resolved. The LSA ad-hoc committee agreed to select myself as the London representative on March 23 and reconfirmed that decision, after it was disputed by national convenor John Nicholson, on April 21. I have still not been able to gain information about, let alone an invitation to, national meetings. I have written

to comrade Nicholson, sent through copies of the minutes of meetings where the decision was made, and left messages on answering machines. Still no reply.

Therefore, despite the initial request of Dave Nellist of the Liaison Group for a representative from London, we are being blocked. London at the moment is surely the most important and active Socialist Alliance in England. We should - as a matter of basic democracy - be allowed to take part in the discussions leading up to the national conference in September. As it stands we are without a voice.

John Nicholson may not want me as the representative, but, in denying the decision of the committee, he is riding roughshod over all of us. I urge local alliances to adopt the motion below and send it to members of the National Liaison Group.

● Anne Murphy

This meeting of Socialist Alliance notes recent events in Manchester Socialist Alliance and reaffirms its commitment to the automatic representation of affiliated organisations on Socialist Alliance committees. Further we support the right of the London Socialist Alliance to select its own representative to the steering committee of the National Network of Socialist Alliances.

Please send copies of this motion to:

John Nicholson, 58 Langdale Road
Manchester M14 5PN

Dave Nellist, 33 Coundon Road
Coventry CV1 4AR

Pete McLaren, 32 The Green
Longlawford
Coventry CV23 9BL

Dave Church
36 Sneyd Hall Road
Bloxwich
Walsall WS3 2NJ

London Socialist Alliance
Box 22
136-138 Kingsland High Street
London E8 2NS

Motions to the LSA submitted by the CPGB

Motion 1

1. The London Socialist Alliance is a united front of socialists. It is open to affiliation from individuals, borough Socialist Alliances, trade union bodies, political and other working class organisations. The Alliance is committed to democratically agreed campaigns on any issue of relevance to furthering the cause of socialism.
2. The Socialist Alliances are not yet party organisations. The structure of the Alliances are based on inclusive not exclusive principles. Minority views are tolerated and given the opportunity to become the majority. The London Socialist Alliance shall hold general meetings to discuss the direction of the Alliance and debate political questions.
3. The London Socialist Alliance steering committee will provide overall political direction and administrative coordination. It will consist of:
 - One delegate per affiliated organisation.
 - One delegate per borough Socialist Alliance.
 - One delegate per other affiliate.
 - Steering committee meetings shall be open to non-voting attendance by

individual members. All members shall be instantly recallable and replaceable by affiliated bodies. The Steering committee shall elect its own officers who are instantly recallable and replaceable.

4. The London Socialist Alliance is committed to a principled orientation to socialists within the Labour Party and progressive political organisations not affiliated to the Socialist Alliance.

5. The London Socialist Alliance recognises no contradiction between building and organising the Alliances in either a bottom-up or top-down manner. Borough Socialist Alliances have full autonomy to organise their own political campaigns and to implement London Socialist Alliance campaigns as they see fit. In addition the London Socialist Alliance will build the Alliances through initiating its own campaigns and where appropriate following the lead of the National Network of Socialist Alliances.

Motion 2

The London Socialist Alliance is committed to building an all-Britain Socialist Alliance.