

World Cup chauvinism

Rioting England fans have set back Labour's 'Cool Britannia' project

Blair's hopes of laying hold of any British success in the World Cup and embracing it as part of his 'Cool Britannia' consensus were jolted last weekend.

The images of violent England supporters - beamed not only to Britain, but all around the world - were not exactly helpful to the picture he wants to paint. He sees Britain taking a lead in promoting bourgeois rationality throughout the world, and particularly within the European Union. In this scenario the population is united behind a rejuvenated modern state, with New Labour at its very centre.

National chauvinism is at the heart of Blair's schema - a respectable chauvinism, under the firm control of the ruling class. Thus violence perpetrated in 'Britain's interest' is certainly not ruled out (the belligerent statements from foreign secretary Robin Cook over Kosovo bear witness to that). But it must be organised by and channelled through the state, not left to break out spontaneously on the streets.

Blair views the World Cup as an opportunity to cohere this chauvinist consensus using the culture of the masses. While the Scotland team is not neglected, the focus of government attention - as well as its hopes for a British victory - is on the footballing prowess of the England 22.

With perfect timing, the Labour leader used the occasion of the queen's birthday honours list to make a "nakedly populist gesture" (*The Daily Telegraph* June 13). England's 1966 hat-trick hero, Geoff Hurst, was knighted, and the 1998 captain, Alan Shearer, described this as "brilliant news". Coach Glenn Hoddle was sure it would be "an inspiration for the whole team". The *Telegraph* reported a spokesperson for the prime minister as saying: "It will give active encouragement to Messrs Shearer, Owen and Sheringham to get a hat trick in this World Cup." After a slight pause he remembered the Scotland team too: "And to Gallagher and Durie," he added.

A British success would not only be exploited to give a further boost to the government's fortunes in the short term; it would be used to symbolise Blair's New Britain itself. The vision of Alan Shearer lifting the World Cup aloft next month may be a dream shared by millions of

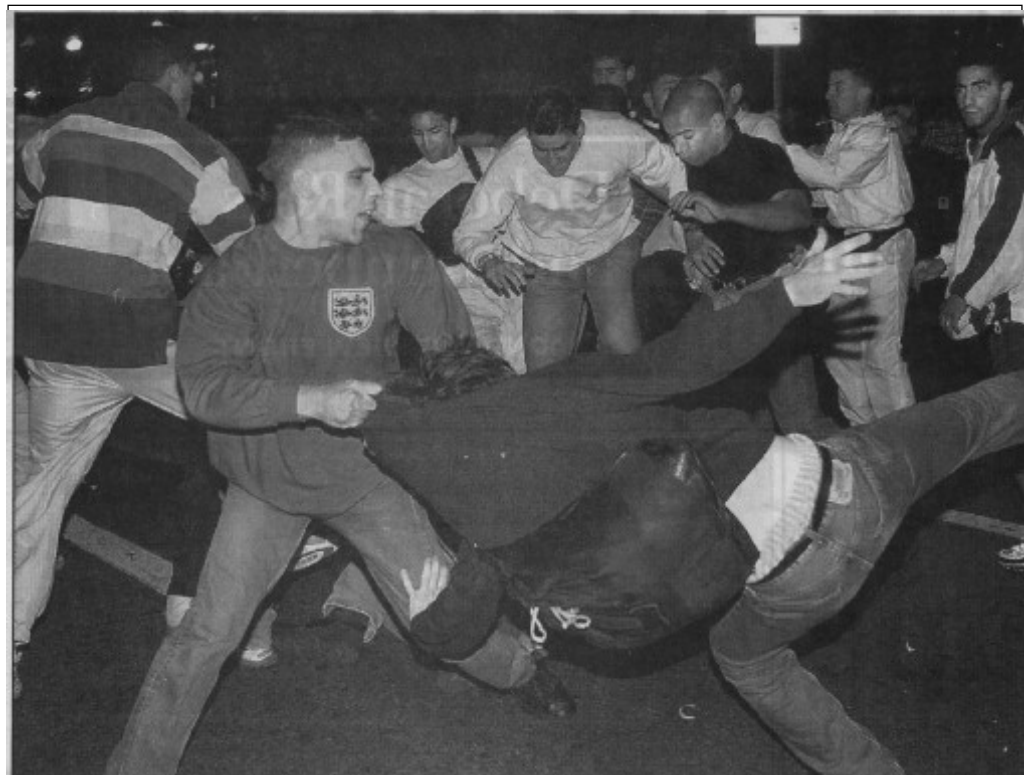
England supporters. But it is the fervent hope of the government too. Peter Mandelson is no doubt fantasising about the media images of the prime minister alongside the victorious players. The message would be one of a team of selfless Englishmen - black and white - combining in a common effort for the good of their country.

Preparing the ground, Blair was at pains to let it be known that he was following the fortunes of the England team every step of the way. A little matter of the EU summit at Cardiff could not be allowed to infringe too much on his duty as a patriotic football fan. He ensured that the media were informed he was being 'updated' every 15 minutes on the progress of England's opening match against Tunisia last Monday during his deliberations with other EU leaders.

Despite England's win, the behaviour of the fans in Marseilles have cast a shadow over the whole Blairite scheme. Minor skirmishes could have been ignored, but a full-scale riot was quite another matter. Government ministers were furious. Sports minister Tony Banks said: "What we have seen and heard so far involves drunken, brain-dead louts who seem determined to disgrace both the English team and their country."

What makes it worse for the likes of Banks is that the violent supporters not only sport the full England regalia, including the supposedly proud and dignified 'three lions' emblem, but openly espouse ultra-nationalistic pro-British sentiments. Having been drinking Guinness all week at a Marseilles Irish pub, by Sunday a group of fans - fired up by alcohol, together with the impending battle on the pitch - were attempting to burn the Irish flag hanging outside. "No surrender to the IRA," they chanted.

A "former" BNP-supporting football thug attempted to explain the mentality of the violent fans on a Radio 5 phone-in earlier this week. "I am proud of our flag," he said, "yet I see the achievements of this country being put down. Italy and France wave their flags, so why can't we wave ours?" While supporters of rightwing groups probably make up just a small minority of the rioters, there is more sympathy for their outlook from among the 'ordinary' football fans than many would care to admit. The fanaticism of the terraces provides an emotive breeding



ground for reactionary ideologies.

More than a dozen British police from the National Criminal Intelligence Service's football unit were in Marseilles to assist their French colleagues. Several 'category C' supporters - allegedly travelling to France with the sole purpose of "causing trouble" - were picked out by the NCIS and arrested by the French authorities. Assistant chief constable Tim Hollis, who heads the British police presence, said: "We know they don't like being locked in foreign jails. They should be imprisoned, at least until the World Cup ends."

The French interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, threatened "emergency expulsion measures" and was fully backed up by the British government.

But some commentators were going even further. According to *The Independent*, "It is now time to impose the ultimate sanction: we should withdraw from the World Cup and spare France any more violence and the nation any more shame" (editorial, June 16). It added: "In the long run the most fruitful approach may be to strangle the jingoism at birth by abolishing the England team."

Just when readers are beginning to wonder how the editorial writer can be so divorced from

reality, they come across the concluding sentence: "If fans really are dedicated to the sport rather than a warped sense of nationalism, then they should thrill to the sight of Bulgaria playing Nigeria no less than that of England taking on Romania."

Blair's government is rather more in touch with the real world than *The Independent's* editorial writer. The performance of Bulgarians or Nigerians, irrespective of their skill, is not what grips the millions of English supporters - or, for that matter, the Scots, French or Tunisians. It is the exploits of 'our' boys - the partisan desire to come good at the expense of others - that is the very essence of World Cup fever.

The entire bourgeois establishment, including *The Independent*, nurtures the national chauvinism of which the football riots are just the most extreme expression. They all hope for British glory rather than "any more shame". And in this lies the paradox. Precisely because this inward-looking ideology, by its very nature, is directed against outsiders, it is liable to give rise to the most abject jingoism again and again.

The gulf between the establishment and the Marseilles thugs is not so wide as it would at first appear ●

Jim Blackstock

Quiet down below

As Scottish Militant Labour members gather for this Saturday's meeting of the Scottish Socialist Alliance in Glasgow, news reaches us that the Pakistan section of the Committee for a Workers International - the Socialist Party's international group of co-thinkers - has caught a mutated form of the 'Scottish disease'. Regular readers of the *Weekly Worker* will remember that Farooq Tariq of the CWI's Pakistan organisation was the only international luminary to offer "full support to Scottish comrades" in their drive to liquidate into a nationalist-inclined Scottish Socialist Party (*Members Bulletin* No28, April 1998). Now this group - a relatively successful component of the CWI - is proposing measures that distance it from the international executive committee and weaken the hold of the SP over it. Also, we understand that the Pakistan organisation is now being wooed by other forces, with Australia's Democratic Socialist Party at the front of the pack.

The guiding ethos of leading comrades from Pakistan appears to be to give Peter Taaffe a pain in the arse, rather than consistency of principle. It is hard to tell yet what the precise content of the Pakistan position is, but one thing is certain. Comrade Taaffe's organisation is facing a genuine crisis of fragmentation. Even if the group manages to survive this difficult phase relatively intact, its project has suffered real - perhaps fatal - damage.

Yet, it is difficult to see evidence of seriousness of the problems besetting SP in the response of most of its members. Ostensibly, the SP executive committee and the leadership of Scottish Militant Labour are embroiled in a very important battle. The SP's *Members Bulletin* is full of exchanges between the two organisations as SML prepares to liquidate itself into the left of Scottish nationalism and the SP leadership attempts to salvage something from the wreckage.

It is quite remarkable then how little this battle seems to be troubling most members of the two organisations. At the moment, the struggle is between the respective ECs. The membership are passive spectators - if they are taking much notice at all. The number of rank and file comrades contributing to this life-or-death battle has been minuscule. The vast bulk of the exchange has been between the leaderships in London and Glasgow and the various fraternal international organisations that have been solicited for opinions. As for its reflection in the pages of *The Socialist*, *Socialism Today* or *Scottish Socialist Voice*, this has been non-existent.

Given this, it really makes me smile to recall Taaffe's thoughts on why his organisation should dump the harsh phrase 'democratic centralism' to protect the delicate sensibilities of the "new generation". In the light of the collapse of Stalinism, this fresh layer rejected anything that "smacked of 'authoritarianism' and which gave the appearance of being undemocratic" and were characterised by being ready "to discuss ideas" (*Members Bulletin* No28, April 1998). Not that they would have many "ideas" to get their thinking gear around if they had to rely on the open publications of SML or SP, of course ...

As the battle rumbles on above, the apathy below presents Taaffe with a problem. Given that he is confined to dealing with the leadership - who seem 100% set on the dissolution of the organisation in its present form - his options in this struggle are very limited. If he launches a hard campaign in Scotland and attempts to split SML, it is clear he will not be left with many people. Thus, at the moment, his tactic appears to be the same as any punch-drunk old bruiser past his prime: absorb as much initial punishment as your opponent wants to dish out, hoping he tires of hitting you in later rounds. At least then you have the chance to scrape a draw on points, if not an outright victory. Taaffe seems more concerned to retain some sort of relationship with whatever left nationalist formation evolves in Scotland than the fight for principle. The characteristic methodology of a narrow bureaucrat, in other words.

If he has the politics to fight SML's drift in the wake of Scottish nationalism, he has so far kept them to himself. The SP EC has been at pains to keep any discussion of substantive principle out of their dealings with the leadership of SML. If forces exist within SP and SML willing to fight against the nationalist infection of the movement, their first task must be to dump the trashy method of comrade Taaffe. The man is an opinion poll-chaser. He is the archetypal opportunist in that "his typical and characteristic trait is that he yields to the mood of the moment, he is unable to resist what is fashionable, he is politically short-sighted and spineless" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 11, Moscow 1977, p239).

Thus, his method cripples him. The most recent opinion poll in *The Scotsman* finds 52% of Scots in favour of independence. As I previously noted in the *Weekly Worker*, the "sickening truth" is that if the same survey were conducted on the left of the workers' movement it would reveal "an overwhelming majority for independence" too (April 23).

Those forces that would argue for unity would start from a minority position - a stance that appears to terrify comrade Taaffe. But principle comes first - the majority comes later. ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Volte-face?

Nick Long ('Broader or greener?' *Weekly Worker* June 11) appears to have done a volte-face on the matter of socialist organisations directly affiliating to socialist alliances and on automatic representation of such organisations on alliance committees. In the paper he presented to the Coventry meeting of the Network of English Socialist Alliances on March 21, comrade Long argued for a provisional national committee, upon which "socialist left parties in Britain (SWP, SP, CPB, etc) would be offered seats in proportionality to their membership", and that "affiliated parties and groups should be able to continue to exist within the alliance".

I would have thought that it was a safe assumption that what Nick was advocating for the national level of the alliance also held true for the regional level. However, he is now saying that he 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". He is advocating a London SA committee that is "a product of its constituent parts - borough socialist alliances".

Effectively, what Nick is now proposing is that the alliance concept should only apply at local level. Above this there would be a constituency-based delegate structure. Indeed, he is vague on whether affiliation would even exist at the autonomous local alliance level, referring only to "the plurality and diversity of local socialist alliances [being] reflected in each borough alliance having more than one delegate to the London-wide steering committee - perhaps two or three".

The only justification Nick can offer for his conversion is to point to his former organisation, the Socialist Labour Party, where "the experience of direct affiliation should serve as a reminder of the dangers". I think he is clutching at straws here. The experience he is obviously referring to is the hijacking of the SLP's second congress, in December 1997, by the 3,000 block vote of the North West, Cheshire and Cumbria Miners' Association. The problem there was not a consequence of direct affiliation, but that of the bureaucratic use of the anti-democratic block vote.

Nick's new model is no way to forge the unity of his previous target group, "the socialist left parties in Britain". Sadly, his politics have followed his individualistic and unprincipled exit from the "British socialist left" SLP and his drift into the "small but perfectly formed" Socialist Democracy group, which can only offer him the vista of localised "nuts and bolts" politics.

The problem we face is the political sectionalism that cripples the workers as a class. We need to create one united class party in opposition to the existing state. This is the only way to achieve socialism and this must be the project of the socialist alliances. Unity must be forged at all levels - crucially at the all-Britain level - in order to win the political clarification necessary for success.

John Pearson
Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance

Unthinkable

As one of the Socialist Alliance candidates for Lewisham in the local elections, I have to make a brief response to comrade Nick Long. The comrade writes: "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 draw in socialist greens and working class militants. It is significant that the first election gains for the greens were made in Hackney. An opportunity was missed, as voters were looking for a radical alternative to the corruption and cronyism of the Labour Party locally, but rejected the politics of the CPGB in Anne Murphy's candidature in North Defoe ward."

Such an interpretation does not hold

water. The plain fact of the matter is that comrade Long himself - also in Lewisham - only got a *handful* of votes more than comrade Murphy. If I really wanted to, I could argue that the voters of Rushy Green ward "rejected" the politics of the Socialist Democracy Group. All the Socialist Alliance candidates in London got more or less the same percentage of the 'protest' vote, regardless of their political affiliation. The greens' election results in Hackney are as "significant" - or not - as you want them to be. It is all down to the political 'spin' you want to put on things.

What has to be vigorously contested is the idea that the greens are somehow our 'natural' or 'automatic' allies. As comrade Murphy pointed out in the same issue of the *Weekly Worker*, the Green Party candidate for North Defoe, Chit Chong, is a pro-police reactionary. At the last meeting of Lewisham Socialist Alliance, a green representative unabashedly told me that the "optimum" population level for the United Kingdom was ... eight million. Any more than that posed a serious threat to "nature" - it just was not scientifically, economically and ecologically possible to sustain the current population level. So what is to be done with the other 50 million?

Surely comrade Long would agree that such views, to put it mildly, are problematic for those who consider themselves socialists? More fundamentally still, it must surely be unthinkable for the SAs, whether at a local or national level, to subordinate themselves to and chase after such reactionary political forces. Nevertheless, as comrade Murphy made clear, green groups and individuals who say they are socialists are welcome to join the SAs, but that does not mean a political non-aggression pact.

Danny Hamill
South London

Capitalism with parks

Lucky me! I'm living and working in an area where people are yearning for change. Reading Nick Long's article on the Socialist Alliances, one could really get the impression that Hackney is just waiting for our message, a message Anne Murphy as a candidate for the CPGB/Socialist Alliances failed to deliver.

'Anne, why did you do so badly, where there was such a ready audience?' he seems to ask. Comrade Long's only evidence is that two greens got elected as councillors. But the greens are not even trying to present themselves as a radical alternative. Just read their pro-small business programme. It does not mention the working class once or that it is necessary to get rid of the capitalist system. They want capitalism - only with parks.

As a member of Hackney SLP, I actively supported our candidates, distributed leaflets and canvassed. So I did talk to people. Believe me, they have lost their enthusiasm for Blair, but they are not yet "looking for a radical alternative". In the end they voted for New Labour. It is actually quite remarkable how little the people 'punished' the new government.

There were a few socialist candidates standing in Hackney. Peter Morton of the SLP did best. Not because he put more into his campaign. But because there is a certain Arthur Scargill in our party. And even he got only some 200 votes. How many did you get, comrade Long?

Tina Werkmann
Hackney

SML and Kautsky

In paragraph 61 of the document 'For a bold step forward', Alan McCombes castigates the Socialist Party executive committee for referring to organisations that "formally adhered to a socialist programme, even a Marxist programme, but do not by any means consistently base their activity on Marxist strategy and tac-

tics". Alan, who clearly wants to brush aside this remark, demands concrete examples of how this relates to the current strategy and tactics of the Scottish Socialist Alliance.

As Alan McCombes and Alan Green are aware, the SSA has had at least one individual on its national council, who has also been allowed to stand as a parliamentary candidate, whose attitude to our *Charter for socialist change* was exactly that of Eduard Bernstein (and of dozens of others) to the Erfurt Programme. The Erfurt Programme of the German SPD was taken to be a Marxist programme by no less a revolutionary than VI Lenin himself. Those, such as Rosa Luxemburg, who observed at close quarters the SPD leaders, tried to alert the international movement that they just paid lip service to the programme. Lenin accepted the reassurance of Karl Kautsky, the so-called 'pope of Marxism', that Rosa was being ultra-left and impatient, and that there was no problem.

It was only when he attempted to disprove Bukharin's 1915-16 articles claiming Marx and Engels were in favour of smashing the capitalist state (even a parliamentary republican state with universal suffrage!) that Lenin made a completely unexpected discovery. Far from being the 'pope of Marxism', Kautsky had all along been the anti-Marx. He had, over a period of decades, completely distorted the Marxist attitude towards the state. *State and revolution* was the indispensable by-product of Lenin's research into everything Marx and Engels wrote on the subject. Not only does Alan draw a veil over this episode, and ignore the book which has been the theoretical light for all genuine Marxists since the formation of the Third International; he even refuses to address the practical activities of the party which adhered to the Erfurt Programme, a programme Alan has explicitly praised as Marxist orthodoxy (paragraph 171).

It is embarrassing to have to inform Alan, but rather than emulate the Bolsheviks' strategy and tactics in the 1917 Russian Revolution, the leaders of the SPD crushed the German Revolution in 1918-19, and repeatedly as it re-erupted until finally extinguished in 1923.

Alan may or may not think that 'Trotskyists' like him and 'Stalinists' like Bill Bonnar (if you dislike this term, Bill, take it up with Alan) no longer differ on crucial issues of revolutionary strategy and tactics. If so, I suggest he reads Bill's letter on the Spanish revolution in *Red* (winter 1997-8). Does Alan or does he not agree with Bill that the Spanish Stalinists behaved in a thoroughly revolutionary manner? If he agrees with me that they did not, does he expect Bill to be converted to the CWI position within the next six months (maybe a year), this being what the SP EC considers a reasonable period for the transition of the SSA into a revolutionary Marxist Scottish Socialist Party?

I think we need to bring these debates out into the open despite the fact that I agree with Bill Bonnar that the SSA can not be rapidly transformed into a democratic centralist vanguard party. The model I would propose is the RSDLP. This should act as an umbrella organisation which can promote united fronts, electoral agreements and open democratic forums between the genuine anti-capitalist left. While this party cannot, in the short term, be transformed into a Leninist party, it has to permit all those who aspire to build such an organisation to work openly within it. They should be permitted full freedom to fight for their views.

Tom Delargy
Paisley

From **The Call**, paper of the British Socialist Party, June 13 1918

While our planet turns

The control of Russia by the workers has caused such a flutter among the champions of capitalism that they are barking now and biting among themselves about the best methods of conserving their interests in that country.

The *Morning Post*, criticising a writer in *New Europe* who advocated a policy of keeping in with the Bolsheviks, says: "The *New Europe* has lately been so Bolshevik that that it has forgotten that up to last November it was anti-Bolshevik. Let us return to our former views and treat the Bolsheviks like the rascals they are."

Apparently this sort of talk is not welcomed by even the bourgeoisie in Russia. Referring to his own personal friends of the Russian middle classes, the *New Europe* writer says that they have a right to hate and abuse the Bolsheviks who have done them immeasurable wrong. "But," he continues, "I know not one of them who does not feel grateful to the *New Europe* for refusing to admit that it was the duty of a friendly country to heap with abuse those whom, however misguided, Russia had for the time being accepted as its rulers."

That the cause of the annoyance and impatience with the traducers of the Bolsheviks is not due however to any special regard for the safety of socialism can be seen from the following quotation: "It will be the worst possible service to our nearest friends in Russia if we go crusading to help them while they are in an insignificant minority. The moment for intervention is when sufficient moderates have been shed off from the revolutionary movement in its inevitable trend towards the extreme left, to make a sold basis - not for reaction - but for standing still."

It is the business of socialists to see to it that that moment for intervention never comes ●

KS

1918

Russian Revolution
this week 80 years ago

Independence fight Freedom for Kosovo!

Last Monday 68 fighter planes from 12 Nato countries flew within miles of the Yugoslav border. Worried by the threat to stability in the Balkans caused by a possible knock-on effect in Albania, Macedonia and Romania, imperialism wants to force Serbia to end its bloody onslaught against the Kosovar people.

Kosovo, with its overwhelmingly Albanian population, had autonomous status within Tito's Yugoslavia. However, this status was revoked in 1989 by Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, as bureaucratic socialism began to crumble. He declared Kosovo to be an integral part of Serbia, pointing to its historical heritage and ignoring the wishes of its present inhabitants.

Driven by brutal repression - not only of their right to self-determination, but also of their right to associate politically and even use their own language - Kosovars adopted many forms of resistance. Some hoped to win concessions by peaceful means and did not necessarily back those who took up arms. But as oppression has given way to full-scale assault, wiping out whole villages in a desperate bid by Serbia to regain control of its former province, virtually the entire Albanian population has been won over to the side of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

A large part of Kosovo is now under the effective control of the KLA, with the Serbs only holding a few metres either side of the main north-south road. The area around Malisevo is run completely by its forces.

Of course the prime concern of the imperialist powers is not at all the right of Kosovo to self-determination, but to stamp their own unchallenged authority on this area, as over the entire planet. The United States has won complete hegemony in shaping the post-USSR world, but as usual its most reliable ally is the UK. After Iran, Libya and Iraq, Serbia is just the latest 'rogue state' that needs to be brought to book.

With the US at the helm, Nato is threatening air strikes against Serbia - and not just against its positions in Kosovo. The USA is no longer particularly concerned with the niceties of gaining formal approval from the United Nations. Secretary of state Madeleine Albright stated that this was not necessary, as article 51 allowed states to defend themselves against "grave threats". The US has the effrontery to claim that the "risk of instability" constitutes such a threat to itself - although Britain and other Security Council members are said to be "uncomfortable about the legality" of this position.

Commenting on the possibility, under the New World Order, of a Nato strike without UN backing, *The Daily Telegraph* wrote: "In doing so, they will lack the sort of authorisation which has lain behind UN action to curb Saddam Hussein. They will be invading a sovereign state against the wish of its government ... Nothing better illustrates the change in alliance perspectives since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact adversary on the north German plain a decade ago" (editorial, June 13).

The *Telegraph* understands of course why the imperialist powers feel

compelled to act: "They fear that independence for Kosovo would encourage the disaffected ethnic Albanians of Macedonia to follow suit, thus creating a power vacuum at the heart of the Balkans." Nevertheless the paper considers that on balance, "Independence for the province should become western policy."

Communists also call for independence, but for very different reasons and from a very different perspective. Our concern is not imperialist "stability". We unconditionally support the right of all nations and nationalities to self-determination and back the armed revolutionary fight to achieve it. But we are not nationalists and in normal, peaceful circumstances advocate that the right to self-determination should be exercised in favour of a *voluntary* union.

However, in cases where violence and oppression have been so intense and national distrust so deep-rooted, as in Kosovo, it is clear that a complete break can be the only solution. Being for an independent Kosovo would lay the basis for cooperation between Kosovar and Serb workers on equal terms and bring about the possibility of united *class* action. Full rights for Serbs still living in Kosovo would have to form a part of this.

It should be noted that the situation is completely different from that in Bosnia, where Serb, Croat and muslim nationalists fought a reactionary war for domination and control - each at the expense of the other two groups (the largest group, the muslims, refusing to recognise the right of Serbs or Croats in Bosnia to self-determination).

Many Kosovars today are looking to imperialism to deliver them from

oppression, and even to force Serbia to concede independence. Last week hundreds of Albanians demonstrated in London, demanding that the UK and US launch a strike against Milosevic. But, despite the call of the *Telegraph*, Nato believes, as in Bosnia, that its interests would best be served through avoiding a further fracturing of the Yugoslav federation. According to *The Independent*, any strike against Serbia must have "well defined political objectives ... It must include some means of persuading the Kosovo Liberation Army to disarm [sic] and negotiate" (June 10). Nato limits the nature of the future settlement it hopes to impose to some undefined "new status" for Kosovo.

The same paper's correspondent in Kosovo, Robert Fisk, reported that the British minister of state for foreign affairs, Tony Lloyd, had given great comfort to the Serbs. Lloyd had reportedly announced in Pristina, the Serb-occupied Kosovar capital: "There is no military solution to the problems of Kosovo ... The future is meaningful negotiation - and meaningful negotiation within the Yugoslav federation" (June 12).

Nevertheless the threat of military action against Serbia is very real. After Monday's Nato 'exercises' foreign secretary Robin Cook warned: "President Milosevic ought to look very closely at what is happening just over his border and remember that all options are open."

Kosovars should not rely on imperialism and place no trust in Nato. Genuine self-determination can only be won through their own efforts - with the support of the world's working class ●

Peter Manson

Communist University '98

A week of intensive debate and discussion for all socialists and communists.

Includes specialist discussion groups on the Soviet Union and the fight for a mass party.

August 1-8, Brunel University, Uxbridge, West London - ten minutes from Uxbridge Tube. Residential (self-catering): £75. £25 deposit secures your place. Non-residential: £30 for the whole week or £5 per day at the door ●

Out now!

For comrades who want to better understand the history and nature of Soviet Stalinism ...

The fate of the Russian Revolution: lost texts of critical Marxism 608 pages, including reprints of long unavailable material, including by **Max Shachtman**, **Hal Draper**, **CLR James** and **James Burnham**, plus classic articles by Trotsky - with an introduction by Sean Matgamna, defending the Russian Revolution and reassessing the rise and nature of Stalinism.

The Fate of the Russian Revolution is only £16.99 (plus £3 p&p), available from Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to "AWL".

Seeing red *A festival of dissent*

Tickets: £8 or £5 (concessions). Box office: 0171-223 2223.
Part three: June 16-28
Made in England by Parv Bancil
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.

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: June 21 - 'State and society' in the series on Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution*.
For more details call 0181-459 7146.

Manchester: June 29 - 'Reaction today; revolution tomorrow'.
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 BCM Box 22, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS or ring Anne Murphy on 0973-231 620.

■ Southwark Socialist Alliance

Public meeting: 'Socialism - the way forward under Blair'.
Wednesday July 1, 7pm, Walmer Castle pub, Peckham Road, Peckham.
Speaker: Ian Page, former SP councillor, Lewisham.

■ Scottish Socialist Alliance

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

■ 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.

■ 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: Fuascailt, PO Box 3923, London NW5 1RA. Tel: 0181-985 8250 or 0956-919 871.

Where to get your Weekly Worker

■ London

Bookmarks Bloomsbury Street, WC1
Centerprise Bookshop 136-138 Kingsland High Street, E8 2NS
Compendium Books 234 Camden High Street, NW1 8QS
Housemans 5 Caledonian Road, N1 9DX
Index Books 10-12 Atlantic Road, SW9
New Beacon Books 76 Stroud Green Road, N4 3EN

■ Belfast

Just Books 7 Winetavern Street, BT1 1JQ

■ Cardiff

Rebecca Books 131 Crwys Road, CF2 4NH

■ Derby

Forum Bookshop 96 Abbey Street

■ Edinburgh

Word Power 43 West Nicolson Street, EH8

■ Glasgow

Fahrenheit 451 Virginia Street, G1

■ Liverpool

News from Nowhere 98 Bold Street, L1 4HY

■ Manchester

Frontline Books 1 Newton Street, M1 1HW

■ Southampton

October Books 4 Onslow Road, SO2 0JB

Journalist seeks information on major companies and public sector workplaces. Confidentiality assured. Tel/Fax: 0171-226 5025

Workers' unity, not

Peter Taaffe and Scottish Militant Labour are on the verge of divorce. But this is no private affair. Shamefully in the name of defending Marxism both sides want to break up the historically constituted working class in Britain along nationalist lines

Hidden away in the *Members Bulletin*, the Socialist Party and Scottish Militant Labour are conducting a furious and surely final internal polemic. The immediate issue is clear. The executive committee of SML is proposing to transform the Scottish Socialist Alliance into a "hybrid" or "transitional" Scottish Socialist Party. SML will itself be liquidated as a distinct public organisation. Membership, branches, press, financial resources and full-timers becoming those of the SSP. A loose Scottish Committee for a Workers International - meeting no more than monthly - is supposed to continue the political tradition of Peter Taaffe, Lynn Walsh and Mike Waddington. The comrades are not convinced. Hence the executive committee of the Socialist Party (in England and Wales) has condemned SML for "effectively proposing the dissolution of our Marxist tendency in Scotland" and retreating "from the programme and methods of Trotskyism" (*Members Bulletin* No29, May 1998).

The executive committee of SPEW is suggesting two alternatives. Option one - SML simply transforms itself into the SSP. Other forces from the SSA are then invited to join. For Taaffe and his comrades this has a dual advantage. The new organisation would be led by what he imagines to be co-thinkers. It would also be affiliated to his Committee for a Workers International. Therefore in the last analysis Taaffe exercises control. Option two - a broad SSP. A renamed SML would operate within it as an open faction affiliated to the CWI ... and would again therefore in the last analysis be under Taaffe's control (or, as Lynn Walsh reportedly put it, "under the close supervision of the international leadership" - *Members Bulletin* No28, April 1998).

None of this remotely appeals to Alan McCombes, Tommy Sheridan and Phil Stott. The comrades seriously believe themselves to be standing on the threshold of the big time - MSPs, splitting the Scottish Labour Party, winning Scottish trade unions, etc. If only they can ride the tiger of nationalism. Of course in the short term a small price has to be paid. "London-based leaders" must be distanced, and perhaps ditched altogether, in order to assuage Scottish "attitudes" and "prejudices". That explains why in their 'Proposals on a Scottish Committee for a Workers International within the SSP' they refuse point blank to insist that the new SSP should affiliate to any foreign 'party' or 'international'. Their residual SCWI 'club' would for the moment be the "affiliated section" of the CWI. It would also "retain formal links with the Socialist Party in England and Wales" through "representation on the Socialist Party national committee and national conference". However, to ensure that no control is exercised from London, SPEW would only "be invited to participate in discussions" in Scotland (*Member Bulletin* No29, May 1998).

Evidently we have a classic power struggle. Of the two sides there can be no doubt that it is SML which has proved the more devious, skilful and ambitious. At least in terms of manoeuvre. It was in Scotland that the old

Militant Tendency made its first 'open turn'. Having gained a real degree of mass support through the success of the anti-poll tax movement they went on in 1992 to gain some respectable votes in Glasgow. SML leaders now think they could have made a breakthrough. The 'open turn' was belated. In late 1989 and early 1990, when the anti-poll tax movement was at its height, they had to be "persuaded by the intervention of the British EC not to stand candidates against Labour in selected areas" (*Members Bulletin* No29, May 1998). They have no intention of being cheated again. So SML has, step by careful step, moved itself away from Taaffe and SPEW. For example, SML had a mere token presence at SPEW's last congress - Alan McCombes did not bother attending.

SML not only operates under a name now denounced by comrade Taaffe - he says that the word 'militant' is associated in the popular mind with Islamic fundamentalism and other "sinister connotations" - but crucially it has been plying a divergent course (*Members Bulletin* No17, May 1996). Where Taaffe relaunched Militant Labour as the SP on the basis of building a "small mass party", in Scotland McCombes and co have set their sights on a much broader project. They put their energies into the SSA and in due course transforming it into a party "embracing into its ranks socialists who do not necessarily regard themselves as revolutionaries, Trotskyites or even Marxists" (*Members Bulletin* No29, May 1998).

To serve that goal SML has effectively silenced Taaffe. It began publication of a carnivorous *Scottish Socialist Voice*. Nowadays *The Socialist* and *Socialism Today* are endangered species in Scotland. Publicly therefore Taaffe has no vehicle to disseminate his views or challenge others. SML's leadership has also tried to ensure that Taaffe has no influence over its own ranks. The *Members Bulletin* is restricted to a tiny circle in Scotland. Indeed Mike Waddington, its editor, complains that Scotland reported zero sales for No26, zero for No27 and a mere four for No28. In order to follow the debate, he says, SML members have had to rely on "the *Weekly Worker*" and the "net" (*Members Bulletin* No29, May 1998).

As a result Taaffe is in no position technically to appeal to the SML rank and file over the heads of its leadership. He cannot organise an effective mass rebellion. The comrade is reduced to a long-range exchange of documents between leaderships. So this is a polemical war of one executive committee against another. Of course SML tops have dug themselves in well not only technically, but politically - being set on a nationalist course, they only need to win in Scotland. It is Taaffe who is exposed both at home and abroad - Farooq Tariq, head of the Pakistan organisation, has already rebelled against Taaffe and declared that "the comrades in Scotland are correct" (*Members Bulletin* No28, April 1998).

SML's EC defends itself by attacking. It accuses Taaffe before his entire cadre of pursuing a sectarian and unsuccessful course. Of putting his narrow interests and failed method above the potential in Scotland. Taaffe

has no "clearly worked out strategy for building mass revolutionary parties". By implication he is mired in "mechanical formal logic" and therefore has an inability to grasp the need for a new turn in Scotland (*Members Bulletin* No29, May 1998).

Comrade Taaffe is, as I have suggested, very vulnerable. Once he projected himself as a high priest of strategy and Marxist theory. The growth of Militant Tendency in the Labour Party during the 1980s was supposedly proof of a historically inevitable evolutionary process to which everything had to be sacrificed (the left turn by the trade union bureaucracy in the wake of the debacle of the 1975-79 Wilson-Callaghan government and the changed climate that brought about within the Labour Party were the real causes). Taaffe has in fact proved himself woefully inadequate as any sort of Marxist. It was not so long ago that he was assuring his followers that talk of "capitalist restoration" in eastern Europe and the USSR was a "chimera" (*Militant* July 21 1989). That Gorbachev's "coming to power signalled the beginning of the political revolution" and that we were entering the "red 1990s" (*Militant* January 19 1990). He was unable to distinguish a period of reaction from a period of revolution.

Following Neil Kinnock's witch hunt, the fortunes of Taaffe's organisation rapidly waned. Membership slumped from some 8,000 to below 700 today. Maintaining the overblown Hepscott Road apparatus is enormously costly and has caused deep resentment, not least from the much depleted Merseyside region. In the attempt to survive comrade Taaffe desperately turned to the 'social movements' he once condemned as diversions. Gay, feminist and black politics have proved no solution. On the contrary they have engendered centrifugal stresses and strains as the parts adapted themselves chameleon-like to their surroundings. The Labour Party gave Militant a dull coherence. Outside its committee room world Taaffe's tailist method leads to fragmentation. Panther UK broke away amid rancorous accusations of white domination. Gay and women's questions are already the exclusive domain of ghettoised sections. Even on the terrain of elections, success only highlights Taaffe's methodological inadequacy. The May 7 1998 local elections in England saw SPEW lose all sitting councillors. In contrast Dave Nellist got himself elected - but he is publicly aligned with the Socialist Alliances and therefore an implicit opponent of Taaffe's 'small mass party' strategy.

Needless to say, it is over Scotland where the tailist method of Taaffeism has most thoroughly exposed itself. Here is a kingdom where over the last 20 years or thereabouts a powerful national movement has developed (latest opinion polls show 52% support independence). The Scottish National Party eyes next May's elections to the Edinburgh parliament with relish. "The independence process is underway," boast SNP strategists (*The Guardian* June 6 1998).

Instead of fighting nationalism SML and SPEW bow before it. Gone are the days when Militant meekly echoed the Labourite call for "Scottish

devolution": ie, a reformed constitutional monarchy. For a short intermediate period SML committed itself - along with the SSA - to a "federal" republic of England, Scotland and Wales (*SSA Policy papers '97* Glasgow 1997, p4). That did not stop SML rallying behind Tony Blair's monarchical Scottish parliament and voting 'yes, yes' in the September 11 1997 rigged referendum. Yet so seductive is the pull of nationalism, so programmatically adrift is SML, that it has now abandoned the cause of working class unity. Its leadership is nowadays committed to securing Scottish independence and the nationalist break-up of the United Kingdom.

Naturally this has gone hand in hand with adopting ahistorical and divisive mythology. Tommy Sheridan writes of Scotland suffering for 300 years as "little more than a colonial outpost" (*Scottish Socialist Voice* June 30 1997). Scotland is put in the same oppressed camp as Ireland, Africa and India. The role of Scotland as an integral part of British imperialism is swept under the carpet.

Comrade Taaffe acquiesces to this nationalist opportunism. Thus we read in SPEW's 'In defence of the revolutionary party' the following dire confession: "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" (*Members Bulletin* No29, May 1998). Taaffe also concedes that SML should constitute an independent organisation within his CWI simply on the basis of pro-nationalist opinion polls (the dye was cast in April 1996 when he specifically linked the "relationship between the Scottish and British organisation" to the level of "national consciousness" *Members Bulletin* No16). The principle of organising one democratic centralist working class party in order to overthrow the existing bourgeois state does not enter the poor man's head - so eager is he to appease SML.

However, when SML proposes to take the next nationalist step and further loosen its links with London, albeit in the form of the CWI, Taaffe strenuously objects. Of course, he merely rails against symptoms. The comrade has no principled answers - he is after all part of the problem. What SML is doing is perfectly consistent with the method of chasing and adapting to existing consciousness - taken to a fine art by Taaffe himself. (His comrades in Wales are incidentally beginning their own 'Scottish turn' and rejecting the "traditional concept we have long held of an all-British road to socialism" - R Davies *Members Bulletin* No28, April 1998.)

In what is a desperate bid to stop the break-up of his own little bureaucratic empire, comrade Taaffe berates SML with the 'revolutionary party' and the 'revolutionary programme'. He says SML is abandoning the revolutionary party by liquidating itself into an SSP - which will be based initially on the minimalist platform of the SSA. Comrade Taaffe, you are a hypocrite. Your whole tradition is one of mirrors and double-speak, where reformism is called revolutionism and where socialism is equated with parliamentary legislation and nationalisation, not working class self-liberation (Taaffe actually bans public use of the term 'revolution').

Though it is claimed otherwise, in private neither SPEW nor its predecessors have a revolutionary programme. Whatever the subjective intentions of

those who wrote *Militant: what we stand for* and the Socialist Party's founding *Manifesto*, they are indistinguishable from the revolutionary-reformist programmes of 'official communism': ie, for factional reasons what is reformist is said to be revolutionary. In point of fact, just like the various versions and editions of the *British road to socialism*, the programmatic logic of SPEW is counterrevolutionary (for our critique of revolutionary-reformism see J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991).

Taaffe says that the SCWI 'club' will not be a 'revolutionary party'. He is quite right. But not because of the absence of weekly meetings, a regular press and full-time functionaries. Organisations are defined by their programmes - their aims and strategic methods. A revolutionary Marxist party - ie, a Communist Party, to use the scientific term - is the voluntary union of its members at the highest level of organisation around a revolutionary programme. It is the programme that makes an organisation revolutionary - the programme and the means of carrying it out forming a dialectical whole.

The prime task of communists is uniting the working class for the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state (that is what our minimum programme is designed to achieve). Only in exceptional circumstances does that involve breaking up an existing state. The key to revolution in Britain is not, as the SWP and the like say, organising in the workplace - trade union consciousness develops spontaneously. No, the key is raising the workers to the level of a political class, a class that has answers for all social questions, a class that champions the fight for democracy (that is why theory is so vital). Here lies the fundamental demarcation between Leninism and economism or strikism.

When it comes to Scotland, that means winning the workers across the whole of Britain to fight for self-determination. That implies something more than wanting a Scottish parliament "with real powers to take measures in the interests of working class people", as SPEW's founding document limits itself to (*Manifesto '97* p27). Scotland's people ought to have, as a matter of principle, the right to freely decide their own future up to and including full independence. That is why the CPGB counterposed the demand for a parliament with "full powers" - ie, full constitutional powers - to Blair's Edinburgh sop (J Conrad *Blair's rigged referendum and Scotland right to self-determination* London 1997, p10).

What direction things take in Scotland will at the end of the day be decided by what happens in Wales and above all in England. If the working class movement in England fails to champion Scotland's right to self-determination, separatist ideas will continue to grow in attractiveness (and justification). The abolition of *involuntary* union and the securing of voluntary union is only possible if the workers of England side in a *revolutionary* manner with Scotland (and Wales). Hence working class unity is bound up with the struggle against the undemocratic UK state and constitution.

SML is not committed as a programmatic minimum to overthrowing the existing monarchical state, but merely to weakening it. Phil Stott elaborated this *minimal* perspective in a landmark article ('Falling apart' *Scottish Socialist Voice* February 7 1997). He began by detailing the popular backing in

national socialism

Scotland for constitutional change. Though his figures are somewhat confused no one doubts that "since 1987 support for independence has risen steadily" (*ibid*). Nevertheless comrade Stott mechanically extrapolates along that psychological line to an "inevitable" break-up of Britain. The only thing uncertain in the comrade's mind is the exact route.

SML is very excited about the prospect of independence. Too excited. The changed post-general election political climate leaves the forces of "pro-market nationalism" and "democratic socialism" facing each other in an almost Darwinian battle for supremacy. Or so says Stott and his SML comrades. Against an SNP parliament "completely under the thumb of Brussels" SML advocates "a parliament with wide-ranging powers over the economy". Powers that SML seems to equate with introducing "a socialist Scotland".

SML's "socialist Scotland" would mean a £6-an-hour minimum wage, a 35-hour week, the building of 100,000 homes, the restoration of benefits to 16 and 17 year-olds and the "rebuilding of our disintegrating public services": ie, the sort of minimum or immediate reforms we should be fighting for now, under the existing state and the existing capitalist system. SML's "socialist Scotland" would also mean "a huge redistribution of wealth" from the rich to the poor, from big business to the working class - again something we should be fighting for now as a minimum programmatic demand.

Nationalism and Marxism are antithetical. Nationalism considers nations and national cultures positively. National differences between people are viewed as essentially healthy and something to be sustained into the distant future. Left nationalists give this 'principle' a national socialist gloss. The road to socialism is seen through the prism of the nation.

Marxism considers nations and national distinctions negatively. We want to create conditions whereby nationalism, nations, nationality and the nation state all wither away. Marxists oppose every form of nationalist ideology, whether this is represented by an established state or those forces striving to create a new state through a breakaway.

Needless to say SML does not defend the Marxist point of view. It positively promotes a Scottish national road to socialism (which comes via a bourgeois parliament and introduces nothing more than minimal social democratic reforms, leaving by its own admission wage labour and hence the capital-labour relationship intact). Its socialism is national, statist and bureaucratic: ie, it is objectively anti-working class and thus anti-socialist.

Instead of working class unity against the existing UK state SML seeks a breakaway Scotland; presumably leaving the workers in England and Wales to overthrow it. SML therefore has a programme to *weaken*, not to *smash* the UK state. To facilitate that paltry aim SML has decoupled itself from Taaffe's organisation. More importantly in terms of the future it calls for an end to the historic unity of the working class in Britain. The TUC and its affiliates are unlikely to survive intact the creation of an independent class state in Scotland. Hence, as capital becomes increasingly global, SML irresponsibly tries to divide the forces of the working class.

It is essential not to conflate all nationalisms as equally reactionary. The nationalism of an established capitalist state is inherently conservative.

Fascism, the most degenerate form of bourgeois nationalism, is counter-revolutionary and thoroughly undemocratic. But petty bourgeois nationalism may contain a revolutionary democratic *content*. Communists support that content unconditionally. At the same time it is vital not to abandon or water down criticism of petty bourgeois nationalism or advocacy of an independent working class approach to the national question.

The relative decline of British imperialism has laid the basis for a new Scottish nationalism (certainly not the revival of a mythical nationhood going back to Kenneth MacAlpine or Macbeth). From the mid-19th century onwards being Scottish was potentially at least to share in the "lucrative" booty of the British empire (L Colly *Britons* London 1992, p373). Now it means cuts, insecurity and a denial of rights. As the ruling class turns inwards in the drive to increase the rate of exploitation and thus shore up world economic competitiveness, the old identification in Scotland with the state has been replaced by an alienation from it. Blair's constitutional revolution from above has done nothing to reverse that trend yet.

Given the perceived absence of a viable socialist alternative, bourgeois petty nationalism comes to the fore. In the form of the SNP it promises to secure for Scotland a better position in the world economic pecking order through the formation of a new, independent Scottish state within the European Union.

The masses in Scotland certainly view themselves as disadvantaged within the UK. Not only opinion polls tell us that. Every election, every grievance, every strike is coloured by the national question. And no SWP attempts to economically explain away the national question by listing the 'primacy' of all-Britain "issues like health, education, welfare and union rights" - will make the Scots forget their "Scottishness" nor the undemocratic denial of their right to self-determination within the UK (*Socialist Worker* June 13 1998).

We consider ourselves obliged to criticise those such as the SWP, Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the SLP who downplay, avoid or dismiss the national question in Scotland by appealing for the "unity of the Scottish, English and Welsh workers" around routine trade union demands and "true socialism" (C Bambery *Scotland: the socialist answer* London 1997, p16). Such organisations are in effect English chauvinists. Their socialist rhetoric is not internationalism. It is nothing but preaching submission: ie, the other side of the coin peddled by Tony Blair and Donald Dewar.

Wherever a national question exists, Marxists approach it from the principle of democracy and internationalism. We seek at all times to build the maximum unity and ever closer relations between nationalities, especially the working class. The working class has no interest in any delay in solving the national question, and has everything to gain from an immediate settlement of disputes. Communists therefore seek an immediate solution. We denounce any and every delay or procrastination as reactionary.

That is why in 1997 we did our utmost to expose the undemocratic Edinburgh parliament through the Campaign for Genuine Self-Determination. The parliament has limited tax-raising powers but no power over the constitution. MSPs cannot decide to make Scotland independent. The whole thing was a calculated sop, a

prophylactic designed to strengthen Labourism and preserve the UK constitutional monarchy system.

We support the right of nations to self-determination up to and including forming an independent state. Communists are for peaceful and democratic secession as opposed to any kind of coercive or violent maintenance of unity. The use of force to maintain unity - for example in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1998 - is an admission that the state's territory has divided into oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike SMP and SPEW the CPGB unconditionally defended the right of the oppressed to take up arms to win democratic rights from the oppressor. That is why we said: For the IRA, against the British army!

Supporting the right of self-determination does not mean communists desire separation. On the contrary, advocacy of separation is something exceptional. For example, between Ireland and England/Britain there is a whole history of violence and brutal oppression. Hence we demand the unconditional withdrawal of Britain and the reunification of Ireland. Significantly SML does not. The comrades support the British-Irish Agreement which legitimises the undemocratic division of the island - they urged a 'yes' vote in the May 22 referendum. This is true to form. When the British army was sent in by the Labour government on August 14 1969 *Militant* refused to demand its immediate and unconditional withdrawal. Those who called for 'troops out' were denounced as "attorneys of the Provos" (*Bulletin* November-December 1979).

Separation only becomes a communist demand if unity is imposed by force. The relationship between England and Scotland has not primarily been characterised by violence. At least since the 1707 Act of Union. It should not be forgotten that 1745 - the heroic last stand of Scotland, according to nationalist fable - was more a "Scottish civil war" (M Lynch *Scotland* London 1992, p338). The Young Pretender wanted to re-establish the Stewart dynasty over the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. He rallied a number of catholic clan chiefs in the highlands, but was opposed by other sections of Scottish society - most notably the presbyterian clergy, lawyers and the large southern burghs.

Our policy is decided on the basis of historical conditions and circumstances in each case. Communists in general favour voluntary unity and the biggest possible states as providing the best conditions for coming together and the merger of peoples. Under present circumstances there would be nothing remotely progressive about a Scottish army, a customs post at Gretna Green and the splitting of the historically bonded peoples.

Yet the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is constitutionally the unity of hereditary crowns, not the voluntary union of free peoples. Sovereignty formally lies with the monarch, not the people. Formally self-determination for Scotland and Wales does not and cannot exist under our present constitutional system. The 1707 Act of Union, which merged the two parliaments of England (and Wales) and Scotland, had no popular mandate. The rich and powerful decided. Democracy was entirely within their fief. It suited their interests for Scotland to be part of a centralised British state - massive bribery helped no end. Not surprisingly

there was a *quid pro quo*. For example in 1712 Scottish MPs in Westminster voted unanimously to repeal the Act of Union. They were swamped by English MPs. Given the huge disparity between the populations of England on the one side and Scotland and Wales on the other, the UK must be dominated by the English (who have no problem with self-determination). It is the peoples of Scotland and Wales who cannot freely determine their own future. With or without Blair's Edinburgh parliament and Cardiff assembly, they must go cap in hand to Westminster. Hence there exists within the UK monarchical system an inherent democratic deficit.

We want to create the best conditions for the closest unity of the people of Britain. The CPGB therefore stands for the immediate abolition of the monarchy and the abolition of the acts of union. We communists seek to mobilise the working class of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in a political struggle for a federal republic and a united Ireland. (As Marx, Engels and Lenin argued, a federal republic in the British Isles would represent a step forward from the constitutional monarchy - it is not, I stress, some universal principle.) A democratic and *transitional* aim. The federal republic establishes the voluntary union of the peoples of Great Britain. If this is achieved, as we intend, using proletarian methods, it is also means the revolutionary destruction of the constitutional monarchy: ie, official Britain. And thus the realisation of our minimum programme. The federal republic therefore is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the *first condition* for the social emancipation of the working class.

So Scotland's constitutional status is not only a matter for the Scots. It is a democratic question that must see the whole of the working class in Britain united around a correct strategy. Only by mastering the gamut of social contradictions can the workers raise themselves from the economic, trade unionist struggles of a slave class to that of a political and potential ruling class.

There are those leftwingers who dogmatically absolve themselves from what they wrongly describe as the 'bourgeois' task of ending the monarchy and winning a republic in Britain. They say the only answer is socialism (why not communism?). Naturally this pose is never applied by the likes of these to wage and other economic demands. When it comes to trade union politics, they do not turn up their noses with haughty references to the maximum demand for the abolition of the system of wage slavery - which, like the call for communism, is quite correct in terms of propaganda. In rejecting the communist minimum programme these types at one at the same time make maximalist gestures while practising the *capitalist* politics of the working class.

Through their own self-activity the workers become organised, strong, confident and full of initiative. Through experience they also become convinced that it is impossible to transform society without first conquering political power. Hence for Marxists the demand for Scottish self-determination is primarily about the struggle it can engender. At every stage we stress the cardinal importance of working class self-activity. So while the CPGB fights for reforms, we always seek to do so using the most revolutionary means the situation al-

lows. Only in this way can the workers be made ready for state power.

Once Scottish self-determination is considered in itself as a reformist means to "transform Scotland into a modern socialist democracy" and not as a demand to prepare the working class for revolution, there exists a slippery slope. The adherents of socialist reformism arrive at what are for them the most unexpected results. Rosa Luxemburg was spot on when she argued that if the fight for reforms are "made an end in themselves", then such a fight "not only does not lead to the final goal of socialism, but moves precisely in the opposite direction". As soon as "immediate results" become the prime objective, the "clear-cut, irreconcilable point of view, which has meaning only insofar as it proposes to win power, will be found more and more inconvenient". The "direct consequences", Luxemburg said, will be a policy of adaptation, a policy of "political trading" and an "attitude of diffident, diplomatic conciliation" (R Luxemburg *Reform or revolution* New York 1978, p31).

Adaptation, conciliation and diffident diplomacy have already begun in earnest. Both Taaffe and SML have traded a federal republic for a 'realistic' royalist sop. Both Taaffe and SML have dropped the fight for working class unity in favour of the popularity of nationalism.

SML as an organisation combines the politics of reformism with the nationalist 'principle' of autonomy from their 'co-thinkers' in SPEW. By so doing SML's leaders have unwittingly placed themselves not in the tradition of their claimed mentors, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, but Joseph Pilsudski and his Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*).

Pilsudski was the leading figure of the PSP. Formed in 1892, it adopted his socialist-nationalist programme for the reconstitution of an independent Poland out of the German, Austria-Hungarian and Russian empires (which had between them all but partitioned it out of existence at the 1815 Congress of Vienna). Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski split with the PSP in 1893 over this SML-type perspective.

Their Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania wanted to join with Lenin, Martov, Plekhanov, Trotsky and others in Russia committed to the overthrow of the tsarist state in *one* party (that came about in 1906). Pilsudski, in contrast, wanted the independence of Poland and the independence of the PSP from the Russian "imperialist" revolutionaries (JK Pilsudski *Memories of a revolutionary* London 1931, p22). Lenin consequently was loath to regard the PSP as a "genuine" socialist party (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 6, Moscow 1977, p458). Quite right too.

By its very nature neither SML nor other such national socialists are able to grasp the fact that to advocate self-determination does not stand in contradiction to advocating unity - within one party against the existing state. To advocate the revolutionary unity of the workers is to take the lead in the struggle against oppression in all its forms. Our fight for a federal republic is the best way to ensure the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination and at the same time the best way of securing the closest unity of workers against our common enemy. The CPGB consciously follows the road of Luxemburg and Lenin - the road of democracy, unity and revolution ●

Jack Conrad

For inclusion

Martin Ralph of the International Socialist League joins the debate on Socialist Alliances

Some of the points raised by John Pearson ('Manchester SA collapses' *Weekly Worker* May 21) are important in relation to how a revolutionary working class leadership can develop in this country and what lessons can be learnt from the recent period for developing a new workers' party in Britain.

Any party or alliance which seeks to be a representative party of the working class must allow full rights to tendencies. There is an important experience which the International Workers League had in Brazil in helping to build the PT (Workers Party) and later the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party). We have material on these experiences in English.

In dealing with the problems of the Socialist Alliance in Manchester Pearson does not give the full story, or give a historic background, or exactly what he thinks should be done now and only some points can be taken up in this article.

He uses a certain amount of invective such as his comment on the 'independents': "tired and oh so worldly-wise cynics, condemned the utter futility of socialists trying to create an independent working class electoral challenge". It is no wonder that Pearson finds it difficult to win support from independents when he lumps the whole lot together - his comment seems to be based on 'Look what they did to me!'

The International Socialist League only attended the last one and a half hours of the alliance conference because we had supported the Tameside careworkers' demonstration on that day.

Pearson does say that we voted for the lost amendment which maintained the original basis of the Socialist Alliance: that all political tendencies inside the Socialist Alliance have a right to be represented on the committee. Clearly the original basis of the Socialist Alliance was removed.

A fact which Pearson misses out is that after that the ISL voted for the CPGB and the CDSLP comrades to be included in the committee as well as ourselves. It became clear that the committee would be restricted to 12 and that the comrades of the CPGB would be excluded. In the process the Socialist Party were given three places on the committee; surely this is against Dave Nellist's idea of an 80%-20% process. There is not one organisation that is involved that has more than 10 active comrades.

The comrades of the CPGB remained in the Alliance conference and participated in the new election process. They lost the vote but they participated in the process, as we did.

The ISL comrade on the new committee moved at the next meeting that one comrade of the CPGB be brought onto the committee - he was in a minority of one but he and the ISL will continue to fight to reverse the anti-democratic decision.

How does this state of affairs come about? The Socialist Party and others have treated the Socialist Alliance as a left discussion group and the Alliance has not turned out to any great extent to intervene in the working class and has not built in the working class. It helped set up the dockworkers' support group which worked for two years, but did

not work directly in it; and it is a similar story, with some exceptions, elsewhere.

Last November the CPGB rejected an alliance with the ISL - based on the fact that we had some joint work in the working class (the dockworkers' struggle) and that we had some common understanding of history (the Russian Revolution). A possible political basis for the rejection of such an alliance emerged later when the CPGB made two positions clear: the boycott of the Irish referendum and a position of neutrality on the European Union expressed in an article by Pearson. Both positions we think are anti-Marxist and anti-internationalist and come from the pressure of British exceptionalism. These are positions to the right of some of the people you are opposing in the Socialist Alliance.

But there are further problems in discussion with the CPGB as expressed in writing and discussions with the Manchester comrades: that a future communist party would be non-ideological and that your analysis on Trotsky's positions is that it was purely anti-Stalinist and therefore, because Stalinism is dead, that Trotskyism and Trotsky's positions are dead but at the same time it is thought that a communist party can be rebuilt with Trotskyist tendencies! Those within the Trotskyist movement who hold similar positions are moving away from international proletarian positions.

We sent you our programmatic documents on the development of an international liaison committee in November last year because the Manchester comrades said they wanted a programmatic discussion; although the CPGB did not reply, you should be familiar with our approach to political alliances: that it is possible to develop principled national and international political liaisons based on programmatic discussions and common work. The work of the liaison committee began to bear fruit in May in an international conference held in Moscow. The meeting brought together Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, South African, Turkish and IWL representatives. The new international coordinating committee is based on the fact that all political tendencies have the right to a place on the committee, and each political tendency has one vote. There is agreement on the need for a proletarian revolutionary international and we adopted a declaration. We voted, amongst other things, to develop the campaign for Russian workers - many thousands are now on strike.

One further point. We invite you to consider supporting our candidates for the Brazilian presidential elections to be held in October as part of the process which you support in Britain of standing candidates which fight for the independence of the working class. The LIT is standing a union and workers' leader for president and a landless peasants' leader as vice-president. They are standing against Lula (leader of the PT) because Lula has become a Blairite and his vice-president is a large landowner and against the landless workers. Our candidates are beginning to receive international support, but not from the Socialist Party (CWI), or the United Secretariat ●

Simon Harvey of the SLP

Youth section stillborn

On June 6, the Socialist Labour youth section was set up. If young people come together inside our party to try to develop their own strength that is to be welcomed. Many of New Labour's attacks affect young people in particular: the introduction of tuition fees, the *de facto* abolition of student grants or the exemption of young people from the already pathetically inadequate proposed minimum wage of £3.60.

Of course, this was not the first attempt to establish a youth section. Immediately after the formation of the SLP in 1996 a number of comrades began working towards a founding conference for the section under the leadership of Tony Savvas. Comrade Savvas, former treasurer of East London SWP, resigned from the SLP within months. Disgusted at the anti-communist witch hunt initiated by the leadership and feverishly pursued by Brian Heron's Fourth International Supporters Caucus, instead of fighting within the party, comrade Savvas preferred to rejoin the slightly less bureaucratic SWP.

At that time, a committee of 10 was set up under the eagle-eyed stewardship of comrade Heron. At its initial meetings he stated that the youth section would be "organisationally independent from the SLP" with its own constitution. But when the comrades actually turned up with a draft constitution in preparation for the founding conference, it was not at all to the leadership's liking. They were especially opposed to the proposal permitting the affiliation of other socialist youth organisations.

The draft constitution also proposed that any person under 30 years should be able to join. The relatively dynamic youth section was effectively dismantled when comrade Heron reported that Arthur Scargill said it would not be a good idea to have 12 year-old schoolchildren and 29 year-old adults together in one organisation, "given the current anti-paedophile atmosphere".

Using this ridiculous argument, the leadership decided that the age range should be 16-25 years. The real reason for effectively beheading this committee (only three were under 25) was that it contained a majority of revolutionaries. The plans for a founding conference at the end of 1996 were cancelled.

Almost two years later, it has now taken place. Comrades who attended the June 6 meeting at Conway Hall inform me that only nine young people were present. However, our leadership was very much overrepresented: Brian Heron, Pat Sikorski, Imran Khan and Bob Crow were there. Along with ex-Vauxhall SLP witch hunter and Tony Goss ally Guy Smallman (who attended in his capacity as London youth officer). They not only observed the meeting. They actively 'corrected' the 'children' whenever they felt discussion was moving in the wrong direction. In the end it was they who dominated the whole meeting.

A draft youth resolution was discussed which called for action to be taken over a number of issues: to set up regional SLP youth organisations and college and school groups; to



Right-hand man: Bob Crow sat in at the founding conference

establish a regular newsletter; to organise actions against Welfare to Work; and form links with other socialist youth organisations, human rights groups, anti-racist campaigns and environmentalists.

There was some controversy over the last point concerning environmental campaigns. The originally proposed resolution stated that the SLP should form links with them "with a view to identify the SLP Youth Section as an integral part of the environment movement". Some comrades argued that we should not subordinate our party to these organisations, and one member said that they very often represent semi-fascist views and are not seeking to overthrow capitalism at all.

Brian Heron made sure things were put back onto the correct path. He made clear his own red-green views and successfully intimidated the majority. The resolution, as amended, now reads: "To form links with environmentalists and environment campaigns with a view to developing a leading role in the environment movement."

One comrade, Tina, from Hackney SLP, argued that there are also other allies for the SLP. Socialists are coming together in the Socialist Alliances. Her amendment to include a call for links with the Socialist Alliances evoked panic amongst the four watchdogs. Especially when Daniel, newly elected secretary of the section, stated that in his opinion Socialist Alliances were included in "other socialist groups". Therefore they should be approached.

We have not had any official SLP comment on the Socialist Alliances. So I think it is worthwhile reporting the arguments - even though they were expressed at a meeting designed for party members who are under 25. Comrade Heron, who supposedly also functioned as the minutes-taker, pitched in. He insisted that Socialist Alliances are not included in the

'other socialist groups' category.

Pat Sikorski liked "the radicalism" of many single-issue environmental campaigns, presumably in his own mind an argument against the Socialist Alliances. Comrade Guy Smallman (at 26 years only allowed to 'observe') was more explicit about his hostility towards the Socialist Alliances. He ridiculed them as "talking shops". Apparently they spend all their time discussing if Lenin or Trotsky was right on this or that. He said the Alliances were full of organisations who had tried to destroy the SLP. Amazingly, he claimed they were "sectarians" who refused to talk to other organisations - so let us not talk to them!

Afterwards Bob Crow gave the young comrades a pep talk. As a wise trade union functionary, he said the widest possible debate was always desirable. But now people must subordinate their views to unity in action. Of course, there has been no wide or free debate. The secretary and the chair of the section were directly appointed by our party's youth network six months ago, which itself was directly appointed by the SLP leadership last year. The meeting loyally 're-elected' them. So we now have a Scargillite-Stalinist committee of six. Harpal Brar's son, Ranjeet, is student officer and has two other Red Youth/Lalkar supporters to rely on.

Comrade Heron, a Trotskyite, praised the conference as "an historic moment", second in importance to the foundation of the SLP itself. The reality is that our youth section was stillborn. It is completely and utterly controlled by a greying Brian Heron - no 'radicalism' will be allowed nor is likely to show. An autonomous youth section would almost inevitably be a dynamic force, but also a nuisance for the leadership. It would however provide a cauldron for the training of future leaders.

This will surely not happen. Brian Heron announced that he is going to attend every meeting ●

Around the left Don't rock the boat

We are most definitely not living in the 'red 1990s', contrary to the confident prediction of Militant Labour/Socialist Party in 1990. In this period of reaction - the big freeze of working class politics - communists welcome any development which creates forward movement. Anything that gives us an opportunity to intervene with our programmatic perspectives. To do otherwise would be to condemn ourselves to impotency and sectism. Marxism is a guide to action, not a dogma or speculative ideology.

We did not moralistically condemn the Socialist Labour Party on the grounds that it was "premature", and fought from day one to influence it in a positive direction - and still do. We actively participate in and struggle to shape the political contours of the Socialist Alliances. The internecine warfare between the 'English' SP and Scottish Militant Labour/proto-Scottish Socialist Party has received the full glare of publicity in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*. Now we welcome the 'shock' decision of the Socialist Workers Party to stand in the forthcoming elections to the Scottish assembly, thus breaking from its longstanding auto-Labourism.

This is not the case with Workers Power. Its response to the SWP's 'new turn' is indifferent, if not hostile. Just as we saw with its confused, but essentially horrified reaction to the newly born SLP, the comrades in WP seem to prefer the ideological *ancien régime* which prevails amongst the revolutionary left to any bold initiative. To this end, WP is fond of quoting 'orthodoxy' in order to prop up its 'don't rock the boat' conservatism.

We see this propensity in the latest issue of *Workers Power* in an unsigned article entitled, 'Where do they stand?' It sententiously states: "Workers Power believes there is nothing in principle wrong [sic] with revolutionaries standing for parliament or any other bourgeois elected body. But the reasons why revolutionaries stand for parliament should be clear. We do so to use the election and, if possible parliament or council itself, as a platform for revolutionary propaganda. There is no parliamentary road to socialism in Scotland or anywhere else.

"The reformists do believe in the parliamentary road. The problem for the SWP is that they *don't have a clear analysis of reformism*, let alone a means by which to challenge it, especially at the polls where it is at its strongest" (my emphasis, June).

The words 'kettle', 'pot' and 'black' come to mind. In abstract, WP may have "a clear analysis of reformism". But in reality, WP has far more in common politically with the SWP than it would like to admit. The new realities - and hence understanding - of the period ushered in by the collapse of 'official communism' and the rapid de-Labourisation of Labour under Tony Blair have unsettled and disorientated WP just as much as the SWP. After all, WP is firmly convinced that Blair's decisive victory last May in the general election represented "a major shift to the left in Britain" (*Workers Power* April). This is a viewpoint identical to that of the SWP's. We have been told both by the SWP and WP to 'vote Labour' at every election - even if they do have their own separate and different reasons for doing so. WP's derives from its economicist Trotskyism; the SWP's from its Cliffite economism. The theoretical overlap between these two organisations is large (hardly sur-

prising - WP began as a split from the SWP).

Workers Power goes on to comment that in the hands of the SWP, the slogan 'socialism from below' has been translated into "ritual calls to vote Labour at election time, combined with a studious abstention from any election work". Very true, no doubt. Then again, when has WP done any *real* election work, "studious" or otherwise? Its "election work" has consisted overwhelmingly of "ritual" front page headlines saying, 'Vote Labour' - just like the SWP in fact. Even when that meant backing the ex-Tory MP Alan Howarth against Arthur Scargill.

For all its hard 'revolutionary orthodoxy' WP actually exposes its soft reformist underbelly. Explaining how the SWP is against a "party programme", our faceless author writes: "As long as you can keep out of electoral tactics a programme can be represented as trying to impose an 'unnatural' (and usually 'too far advanced') blueprint on the spontaneous struggles in the workplace. But in elections, the first thing workers want to know is what you stand for. Platitudes about the socialist future will not suffice: workers want to know *what you plan to do* if elected" (my emphasis).

In the usual bourgeois-electoral sense, communist do not promise to "do" anything. We do not see ourselves sitting in Westminster or Whitehall juggling with interest rates or experimenting with tax changes. We use elections - local, national and European - to make *communist* propaganda, the central message being that human liberation can only come from the revolutionary *self-activity* of the masses. Or is WP suggesting that communists and socialists should not stand in elections until they are in a position to "do" something? Is there a sort of electoral 'critical mass' that we have to reach before we stand at all?

Well, yes, this appears to be the message. The SWP "suggests that when and where the Labour vote is shaky the SWP may not stand because the key task is still to get rid of (or keep out) the Tories. But a sizeable revolutionary party would not use the relative health of the reformists' vote as a criteria for standing. It would actually go out and challenge the reformists for leadership of the working class - at the polls, as in other spheres of class struggle." WP is talking tough ... when gazing into a *future* Britain where there is a "sizeable revolutionary party" (an enlarged WP?) to challenge Labour. But in the dismal here and now the tough-talking WP says ... vote New Labour. Apparently we should stake all our hopes on Labour dissidents, who "will become more vociferous and much more organised over the next period" and "will over the next two years position themselves to the left of Blair in such a way as to take advantage of the first serious crack in the alliance between Blair and the unions" (*Workers Power* April). Naturally, this raises the serious and important question of whether WP in the Scottish elections will call for a Labour vote *against* SML/SSP, CPGB, SLP or SWP candidates.

The article seems to answer this question: "Even if a large section of the organised vanguard of the working class is prepared to break electorally from Labour - and that is not the case at present - the problem remains what to do about the majority

of workers' allegiance to Labour. The united front tactic, in which revolutionaries call for a Labour vote and organise to put demands on Labour, remains the key to breaking [sic] workers from Labour under present conditions".

Only a dogma-encrusted sect could call a vote for the ever right-moving New Labour an example of the "united front tactic", let alone "breaking" workers from Labour. Tony Blair's project is to transform Labour into a British version of the US Democrats - and he is undoubtedly on the road to success. To give electoral support to Blair's New Labour is in essence no different from 'critically' backing Bill Clinton or Paddy Ashdown. WP's electoral pro-Labourism seem to be based on a peculiarly timeless interpretation of VI Lenin's *Leftwing communism*, with a sprinkling of Leon Trotsky added.

The article concludes: "Now that the SWP is committed to standing for the Scottish parliament, it will have to deal not only with Scottish nationalism, but also with the remnants [sic] of SML and the SSA. Will it make an electoral pact with these already established centrist and left reformist forces or add its name to the growing

list of fringe candidates? And will it transfer votes to Labour or tell workers not to vote Labour? And how will all this aid the building of a revolutionary party?"

All this agonising about the SWP's possible opportunism or sectarianism misses the point. As we have emphasised in the *Weekly Worker*, for communists the real significance in the electoral 'new turn' lies in the fact that it *opens up the SWP to debate and political intersection* - the previously hermetically sealed political environment of the SWP is now vulnerable to 'alien' intrusion. The SWP central committee decision may have been motivated by nothing more than opportunism. Perhaps this is a move to the right for the SWP. Then again perhaps not. But this is an entirely different question and at the end of the day only time - and the effectiveness of communist intervention - will tell.

Unlike the SWP though, WP's dogmas and political practice seem frozen. The world changes, WP remains the same. "There is nothing in principle wrong with revolutionaries standing for parliament," says WP ... so long as you never do anything about challenging New Labour ●

Don Preston

Summer Offensive '98

No maximum

Another good week's fundraising by comrades at the *Weekly Worker* offices brought in £499, almost half the £1,009 raised in week six of the CPGB's two-month Summer Offensive fundraising drive. And £156 of this came from one comrade assisting with commercial jobs at the Party's printshop. Time is running out, though, with two weeks to go and only £7,045 in - just 35% of our £20,000 target by June 29.

Pledges still stand at £14,100, but a number of individuals have indicated that they will be increasing their individual pledges when they have successfully surpassed their initial targets. As the figures show, a 50% increase in pledges is needed to break the target.

We can be proud that the fight for money by our comrades puts in the shade the "£12,000 appeal by July" of the so-called Communist Party of Britain, which has only achieved £4,000 (*Morning Star* June 13). It does after all have a more numerous paper membership. Not for nothing do we call our fundraising campaign an 'offensive'. The CPB 'appeal' is an easy-going affair. Where they only give spare cash, we raise the money to do what is necessary - the difference between the dead husk of 'official communism', and the virulent seed of the future.

Speaking of dead husks, this column has gained a curious mention in *Open Polemic Prospect* No6 (April-May 1998). Readers may recall that the Open Polemic faction left the CPGB in the spring of 1996 rather than face our 13th Summer Offensive. Claiming "one law for the

OP comrades and another law for those who do not have differences with the CPGB's 'leadership' faction", they want to believe now that they were treated unfairly. In fact it was their claim for special treatment which was rejected. The principle of equality was upheld.

As everyone who has participated in a Summer Offensive knows, our minimum membership pledge is set by majority vote. This was done in 1996. The OP faction voted in favour of the figure they are complaining about. It turned out subsequently that privately they wanted special dispensation to raise 50% less than the minimum. The OP comrades were not "disciplined" into accepting our minimum, as they allege. They voted for it. Nor would they have been expelled for not achieving their pledge. They "withdrew" from membership, purging themselves before the event.

Our two "low earning comrades" with "modest initial targets" cited in *OP Prospect* were, of course, not members, and not required to meet the agreed minimum pledge - sympathisers and supporters should follow their example and give whatever they can. On the other hand, the "initial cautious targets" of the Party printshop comrades were actually above the minimum, and only "cautious" in my opinion in relation to the much greater sums I am encouraging them, and others, to fight to raise.

We have a world to win, comrades - the Offensive has no maximum ●

Stan Kelsey

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.

I want to be a **Communist Party Supporter**. Send me details. ☐

I wish to subscribe to the **Weekly Worker**. ☐

WW subscription £ _____

Donation £ _____

Cheques and postal orders should be in sterling.

	6 m	1 yr	Institutions
Britain & Ireland	£15	£30	£55
Europe	£20	£40	£70
Rest of World	£28	£55	£80

Special offer to new subscribers:
3 months for £5.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL _____

Return to: CPGB, BCM Box 928,
London WC1N 3XX.
Tel: 0181-459 7146 Fax: 0181-830 1639.
CPGB1@aol.com

For a centralised republic

The framework of bourgeois politics in Australia was shaken last weekend as the ultra-rightwing One Nation party of federal MP Pauline Hanson took some nine seats out of 89 in elections to the Queensland state parliament. With final figures awaited, One Nation won 22% of the vote, making it the third force in Queensland politics behind the incumbent conservative coalition of the Liberal and National parties, which received 27.4%, and the Labor Party with 39.2%.

Since the 1960s, Queensland has been the equivalent of Bavaria or the Deep South in terms of Australian politics. For 26 years a minority National Party ruled through blatant gerrymandering under an eccentric rightwing premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. Yet from the late 1930s up to the 1950s, Queensland was the 'Red North'. The state parliament is unicameral, the upper house having been abolished by a leftwing Labor government. The Queensland parliament contained Australia's sole Communist Party MP, Fred Paterson, elected for two terms from 1944. The formation of the Australian Labor Party emerged from the heroic shearers' strike of 1891, which was based in Queensland and had a distinct republican colouring. The 'sheep shearers' republic' was defeated, and ALP born.

Pauline Hanson entered the political limelight during the 1996 federal election when she was expelled from the Liberal Party for extremist statements, only to stand as an independent and take the until then safe Labor seat of Oxley in Queensland. In her maiden speech to parliament, she stated she was only representing the white people of her electorate and claimed that Aboriginal people were given extravagant privileges unavailable to 'white Australians'. Hanson has been a worryingly prominent figure ever since.

One Nation was formed last year and the Queensland poll was its first electoral contest. This success has already led to ambitious talk of holding the balance of power after the forthcoming federal elections.

The party went to the electorate on an anti-immigration and anti-Aborigine xenophobic platform. Although it has been ridiculed by many as the 'one notion party', it also favours capital punishment, trade protectionism, rural subsidies and the abolition of all arts funding. A key policy is the family unit. One Nation says: "It is essential to restore the integrity and authority of the traditional family unit and all government policies must encourage family unity and stability." Ironically, Hanson is a single mother.

The rag-bag collection of new One Nation MPs include a former policeman who wants more police powers and a referendum on capital punishment. Also elected were a professional Santa Claus who wants more discipline in schools and a former army signaller who wants to abolish all native title.

Just who will form the Queensland government is unclear and counting



Hanson's new One Nation wants to deny the oppression of Aborigines

is expected to continue into next week. Labor, with 44 confirmed seats, seems likely to form a minority administration with the support of a centre-left independent - although it could yet win one of the two undecided seats to give in an overall majority. The coalition, with around 35 seats, would be prepared to form a minority government with the support of One Nation and an independent.

Amidst controversy before the election, former Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser condemned the Queensland Liberals' decision to direct their preferences to One Nation. The overtly racist party took five seats from Labor on Liberal preferences. Australia has an optional preferential electoral system with compulsory voting.

One Nation's success points to a clear vacuum in Australian politics and a dissatisfaction with the mainstream amongst the rural poor and farmers as well as some traditional blue collar Labor supporters. For the left in Australia, which remains on the fringes of politics, Hanson's success should sound alarm bells and prompt a rethink on programmatic perspectives.

The Queensland poll has occurred in the run-up to a federal election which will almost certainly be fought around issues such as Aboriginal

land rights, industrial relations in the aftermath of the wharfies' victory and the impending referendum on Australia becoming a republic. The conservative federal Liberal-National government can constitutionally dissolve both houses of parliament at any time after its Native Title Amendment Act was rejected by the upper house, the Senate.

This situation is crying out for the left to construct an alternative beyond mere protest politics and the rallying of support for this or that well-deserving cause. Pivotal to this must be the building of a mass workers' party - a party committed to a coherent programme able to provide concrete answers, not just point to the problems within the system. An immediate test for the left will be its reaction to One Nation.

While fawning electoral support for the Labor Party is limited to the trade union bureaucracy and British-clone sects like Workers Power and the International Socialists, there exists nevertheless a lesser-of-two-evils mentality in many sections of the workers' movement.

The debate around the constitution provides the Australian left with an opportunity to pose a break from Labor. Up until now it has relegated the republican question to just one more issue on the checklist. Bemoan-

ing the debate's domination by bourgeois pundits, the left - from the 'official' Communist Party of Australia to the dull economic Cliffite ISO and the self-styled 'green' Democratic Socialist Party - have all paid lip service to the constitutional debate while missing the main point.

One Nation's rise shows the importance of forging a programme of militant working-class republicanism. The fact that the republican debate is dominated by the chattering classes and their paymasters is not evidence of its irrelevance. On the contrary it points to the failure of the left to offer its own alternative as to how society is ruled. Opinion polls now show a clear majority in favour of Australia becoming a republic. However, the masses are far from enthused. A 1,000-year old monarchy on the other side of the planet holds little relevance for a population which is now one of the most multi-ethnic and diverse of any country. Yet Australia's archaic constitution, which only came into effect with the federation of six British colonies on January 1 1901, ensures that an overall majority in a referendum is no guarantee of constitutional change. Not only is such a majority required, but a majority must be obtained in four of the six states making up the Commonwealth. This will be no simple task. 'State

rights' has been a recurrent theme of reactionaries ever since federation.

The most recent and emotive example of this has been around the struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights. The Labor Party, under former Australian Council of Trade Unions leader Bob Hawke, came to power in 1983 on a platform which included a commitment to legislate for national land rights. This was scuppered in 1983, primarily under pressure from the powerful Western Australian mining lobby. The 'right' of Western Australia was cited then too, leading to Labor's capitulation. Hawke did however overrule the state government of Tasmania over the flooding of the then World Heritage-nominated Franklin River, which the hydroelectric industry was keen to dam. This environmentally motivated decision to block the scheme caused a furore amongst reactionaries and conservatives who claimed that constitutionally enshrined state rights were being trammelled.

Now in the current debate over republicanism, 'state rights' has again reared its head. Even if the bourgeois Australian Republican Movement's minimalist constitutional amendment is accepted, states will retain their right to maintain links with the crown. A majority 'no' vote is far from unlikely in the less cosmopolitan and backward states of Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania. These states make up less than five million out of a total population of over 18 million in Australia as a whole. Yet if they return even the most slender of 'no' majorities, the republican proposal will fall, irrespective of the size of the overall 'yes' majority across Australia. It is thoroughly anti-democratic that a redneck, monarchist minority can stifle the will of the majority. Pauline Hanson points to the political strength that this reactionary minority can exert under the federal constitutional monarchy. Under such conditions, it is even more urgent for communists to be raising the issue of the nature of the republic.

After their recent magnificent victory a call for a 'wharfies' republic' has a certain resonance. Yet in the aftermath of One Nation's success, communists should raise the banner for a *centralised* republic. The states and territories must be abolished. The republican majority is not opposed to multiracial immigration, favours reconciliation with Aborigines and supported the wharfies. The progressive and democratic aspirations of the majority cannot be held to ransom by a reactionary, bigoted minority. They need to be channelled into a revolutionary struggle against the state under the leadership of the working class.

With a democratic revolution emerging just to the north, the Indonesian masses can act as an inspiration and example to revolutionary-minded activists in Australia. A revolutionary struggle for a centralised republic in Australia must be connected to the rising confidence of the masses in southeast Asia ●

Marcus Larsen