

# Scottish Socialist Alliance takes nationalist road Appeal to members

On June 20 1998 the Scottish Socialist Alliance took a fateful step. The 50-strong annual conference voted to dump the previous commitment to a "federal" republic. By an overwhelming majority it agreed to commit the organisation to campaign for "an independent socialist Scotland" (motion one). Around this nationalist locus the SSA will almost certainly become the Scottish Socialist Party "by the early autumn" (motion four).

Naturally the change was presented to SSA members in the language of pseudo-internationalism. Alan McCombes, leader of Scottish Militant Labour, used all the hand-me-down phrases along with the familiar caveats and get-out clauses. "Ultimately, only the worldwide victory of socialism can bring about international collaboration." It is "not possible to build and sustain an oasis of socialism in the middle of a worldwide capitalist desert". "Even the most industrially advanced countries of the world would be unable to survive indefinitely as isolated outposts of socialism, shut off in permanent quarantine from the rest of the world." "The struggle for socialism internationally will not erupt simultaneously." Because of "differing traditions and conditions it will tend to evolve in a more fragmented and disjointed manner" (my emphasis 'For an independent socialist Scotland' *Pre-conference discussion papers*).

The programme and its antecedents are unmistakable. From Joseph Pilsudski to Joseph Stalin, we have heard it all before. It is the old refrain of socialism in one country - in this case Scotland. Like his predecessors comrade McCombes resorts to the notoriously misused "law of uneven development". The implicit assumption is that Scotland stands in the vanguard of the class struggle, if not at the epicentre of the world revolution. This being the case, Scotland should not wait for the backward English (there can be no doubt that the defeats suffered by the working class over the last 20 years provide fertile ground for inertia, pessimism and resignation). Nor should Scottish workers fight to overthrow the existing state. Quite the reverse. Midwife McCombes wants to preside over the birth of a new class state. Scotland should break-away from the United Kingdom. Once free from the body of England and the restraints of Westminster, the Scots will rapidly embrace socialism. Or so it is believed. True, a socialist Scotland could not "survive indefinitely in isolation". But the presumption is that its splendid achievement "inspires others to follow the example".

If by some fluke comrade McCombes became chief minister in Edinburgh as a result of a post-independence parliamentary revolution, the result would certainly be the opposite of what he intends. The capitalist state exists nationally and territorially. Yet, capitalism as a mode of production is fundamentally a global system of exploitation. Capitalism can be abolished within the borders of one country using a despotic state. Yet Marx and Engels explicitly warned against such experiments with "local communism" or national socialism. Foresight that in many ways augured the tragic history of the 20th century.

Stalin's USSR, Mao's China, Hoxha's Albania and Castro's Cuba prove that a national post-capitalism is perfectly feasible. However, they also prove that the consequences in terms of humanity are disastrous. Partial negations do not create something superior, more dynamic and more sustainable than capitalism. Instead of being an "oasis" attractive to others, they become giant prison camps where workers are subject to a modern state-slavery.

Of course being backward and to some extent peripheral, the USSR, China, etc, could temporarily develop the productive forces and wealth available to the state by means of universal statism and forced mobilisation of resources and labour power. That is hardly the case with Scotland. It is not only an advanced country in terms of industry and socioeconomic sophistication. It is thoroughly integrated into and reliant on the world market. The sweeping nationalisation advocated by McCombes and his comrades would not be an advance. Nor would it even revive the social democratic achievements of the 1950s and 60s he so fondly admires.

General state ownership would be woefully regressive. The very notion of a Scottish steel, car, oil, computer or shipbuilding industry is a reactionary utopia. Such industries operate nowadays on a global scale and according to a global division of labour. Instead of breaking them apart - which would surely mean ruination - the historic task of the working class is to fully socialise them. Only by bringing capital, where it exists as a system, under social control can the workers - necessarily as a world class - really free themselves.

Equally bankrupt is the *method* underlying the SSA/SSP. It is opportunist in an almost chemically pure form. Abandoning struggle - albeit reformist - within the UK state in favour of advocating a break-up and separation of Scotland is justified in terms of swimming *with* the tide of popular opinion. Latest polls show a small

majority favouring independence. It is one thing to advocate self-determination for Scotland. It is another matter entirely to advocate independence. The former is a democratic demand. The latter is nationalism.

Scotland ought to have as a matter of principle the right to freely decide its own future. But that does not mean communists are indifferent to the way that right is exercised. On the contrary we are very partisan. The CPGB is for the closest possible voluntary unity of people in general and the workers in particular. That is why we single-mindedly fight to organise the workers in Britain into one party against the common enemy - the UK state. Our programme calls for the abolition of the UK state and a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales and the reunification of Ireland. Carrying this through using proletarian methods, as we intend - workers' councils, etc, - would see not the reform of official Britain, but its death. The precondition of working class self-liberation.

Comrade McCombes claims that if support for an independent Scotland "represented a backward, rightwing trend in society, an isolationist or xenophobic development", then it should be resisted. But, he says, the "sections of society who favour independence are those who are generally more socialist-leaning, including a big majority of young people and low paid workers". Those who "intransigently oppose independence include the most rightwing, conservative sections of the population, in particular the Scottish ruling class of landowners, financiers and big business interests".

Poland before the 1905 Russian revolution provides a striking parallel - one that does nothing to sustain the national socialist conclusions of comrade McCombes and the SSA/SSP majority. For a century Poland had been a revolutionary nation. Divided by Prussia, Austria and Russia - which got the lion's share - the independence cause championed by the lesser aristocracy was undoubtedly progressive. Yet in the twilight of the 19th century, that changed. The lesser aristocracy disappeared as a revolutionary class. The bourgeoisie reconciled itself to integration with tsarist Russia. Despite the fact that the mass of peasants and the "socialist-leaning" working class remained committed to independence, there was a brave minority which dared swim *against* the stream. Rosa Luxemburg, Julian Marchlewski and a small leftwing faction broke from the newly formed Polish Socialist Party - an affiliated section of the Socialist International - because in 1893 it adopted the pro-independence programme of Pilsudski.

Though economically and politically Poland was in advance of Russia, their split - the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania - declared for the unity of all workers throughout the tsarist empire against the tsarist empire (they found an ally in Lenin who, while demanding the right of self-determination for Poland, quite consistently also called for unity). The SDKPiL joined the RSDLP of Lenin, Martov, Trotsky and Plekhanov in 1906.

Of course in the storm of 1905 Pilsudski and the PSP fought guns in hand as one would expect from those committed to nationalist-revolution. The programme of SSA/SSP, however, combines nationalism not with revolution, but reformism. Comrade McCombes holds that the SSA's *Charter for a socialist Scotland* is a "full-blooded socialist programme". The truth is rather more prosaic. As a united front around immediate or limited issues the SSA *Charter* is acceptable. As a "full-blooded socialist programme" it is lamentable. The *Charter* is essentially no different from the Labour Party's 1918 clause four and will be used in the same way. There can be no doubt about it. The leadership of SSA/SSP intends to put forward for the May 1999 Scottish election a platform that can be realistically achieved within the parameters of the Edinburgh parliament.

Inevitably the SSA/SSP will end up tailing the SNP and its big business agenda, just as SML in a previous manifestation once tailed Labourism. Independence is seen as a necessary stage before socialism can be realised, almost exactly as putting Labour into office was seen as a necessary stage. In the run-up to the May 1997 general election *Scottish Socialist Voice* painted the SNP in a reddish hue and suggested that a vote for Alec Salmond's candidates would be tactically astute in constituencies where the SNP was the main force against the Tories.

Organisation loyally follows politics. The proposed SSP will be social democratic in terms of structure - trade union affiliates, lesbian and gay networks, and "respect for different shades of opinion" (as we have seen in practice already, that means rightist, not leftist opinion). Allan Green, SSA secretary, parades the PDS in Germany as his model. Reforging a Leninist CPGB is for him not "relevant to the needs of the 21st century". Bill Bonnar, a co-editor of the SSA's journal *Red* is another self-appointed attorney for the 'third way', which is neither "revolutionary in the sense that it envisages the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order, nor reformist in the sense of reforms

which stabilise and protect capitalism" (*Red* No4, summer 1998). In other words comrade Bonnar's much vaunted 'third way' is a common or garden left reformist schema to use the awesome power of a beneficent state to bring emancipation from above.

The SSA's conversion to unashamed nationalism, the proposal to establish a reformist-nationalist SSP in the autumn, is not an advance for the working class. Neither in Scotland. Nor Britain. Nor the world. It is a setback both for the part and the whole. A body of fine activists has swapped British left reformism for Scottish nationalism. The project for an all-Britain Socialist Alliance has seen an important section close itself as a united front. The door to the SWP and the SLP has been locked and bolted in Scotland. The frail English and Welsh Socialist Alliances are now alone. Of no less consequence, SML has *de facto* divorced itself from Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party. That was what SML members voted for at the June 20 conference. The impatience, the urgency driving the decision to transform the SSA into the SSP is not the May 1999 Edinburgh parliament elections - as maintained. It is the death wish of SML. Its leadership is eager, not to say desperate, to liquidate SML as a public organisation in favour of life at the top of a "hybrid" or "transitional" reformist-nationalist SSP. The only opposition within SML ranks was a mealy-mouthed worry about timing from the likes of Colin Fox. Needless to say, the final stand of Taaffeism came to naught and passed almost unnoticed.

Those in the SSA committed to the revolutionary overthrow, not the national weakening, of the UK state can give no support to the proposed SSP. They cannot agree to nor accept a reformist-nationalist programme as the basis of joint activity, not least because the SSP will not be a party in terms of being the advanced *part* of the working class. In form and content it will be a reformist-nationalist sect.

The interregnum between the June 20 conference and the autumn launch of the SSP must be used for propaganda and agitation against the reformist-nationalist course and for *preparing* the ground for a *principled split*. The fight is not over. But it would be foolish to imagine that a pro-workers' unity majority can be won by autumn or that everything should be staked on winning one within the narrow confines of the SSP. That would in itself be a form of liquidationism. The key lies with Marxist theory and the perspective of reforging an all-Britain Leninist party ●

Jack Conrad



# Party notes

## Assessing Trotsky

The most recent meeting of the Provisional Central Committee of our Party discussed a set of brief notes that I produced entitled 'Trotsky and Trotskyism'. Comrades broadly concurred with most of the points, although some differences of nuance or interpretation were raised, but not explored.

The purpose of these sketchy notes is to provide a 'gateway' to open discussions with various Trotskyist organisations. Of course, if these comrades had been reading our press with less dogmatic eyes, they would have easily been able to glean the attitude of our Party majority to this great revolutionary and his contradictory heritage. Sadly, it has been our experience that most comrades from this background have a characteristically sterile approach to politics and have attempted to shoe-horn us into a conveniently empty 'left Stalinist' gap in their world view.

Most recently for example, it was comrade Dave Osler - currently in residence in the Socialist Democracy Group - who demanded we cut the equivocation and "produce a formalised set of theses on Trotskyism ...". This would save the messy business of trying to "nail the *Weekly Worker's* jelly to the ceiling" (*Weekly Worker* April 9).

Given that this comrade had just breezily admitted in the same article that "for most of the last 17 years I publicly supported the view that the USSR was a degenerated workers' state [surely a defining position of Trotskyism - MF] while privately having ... reached a bureaucratic collectivist position", readers would be forgiven for thinking that in truth it was 'wobbly Osler' who had the theoretical firming-up to do.

In a similar vein, the International Bolshevik Tendency told readers of its obscure 1917 journal (No18 - undated) that we had "avoided grappling with the record of Trotsky's Left Opposition ...". In reply, we listed the avenues through which we had been exploring the question - including reminders of refused requests for an open debate with the IBT itself. We had to conclude that this organisation was "simply misleading its readership in the most crude and cynical way" (*Weekly Worker* October 10 1996). Our substantial polemic was never replied to.

Perhaps this is the political DNA. My document 'Trotsky and Trotskyism' notes that the doctrinaire method employed by most contemporary Trotskyists has led them to decide our politics before we had opened our mouths. This is something we contrast with the approach of Trotsky himself:

"... to the very end of his life, Trotsky's thought revealed dynamic tensions within itself and development. This is true despite a certain degeneration of his thought conditioned by the intense pressure of Stalinism and his personal isolation. It is entirely possible that - given the developmental logic of his thought before his assassination - Trotsky would have been able to resolve the contradictions in his analysis positively, to critique and outgrow his conditional category of 'degenerated workers' state'."

"Trotsky's followers subsequently froze his method and these provisional categories into dogma ... Trotskyism thus emerged - in contrast to the method of Trotsky at his best - as sterile sectarianism" ('Trotsky and Trotskyism').

We have found that, when confronted with the reality of our organisation, the majority of Trotskyist comrades have chosen not to engage critically with our real ideas. Instead, they have seen the name 'Communist Party of Great Britain', took note of the fact that this organisation evolved out of the 'official' world movement and then simply assumed our politics. Did I say 'assume'? Many Trotskyists have in the past insisted that our politics were 'Stalinist', however comprehensively life contradicted them.

We hope that a positive by-product of this period of flux in the workers' movement internationally will be the orientation of the best elements of the Trotskyist movement, alongside revolutionaries from other backgrounds, to the pivotal question - the re forging of a Leninist party.

Using 'Trotsky and Trotskyism' as an introduction, the PCC will be approaching a number of organisations for discussions. We will feature the resulting exchanges in the pages of the *Weekly Worker* ●

**Mark Fischer**  
national organiser

## Cruel deception

Would Alan McCombes care to comment on Bill Bonnar's review in *Red* (summer 1998) of Donald Sassoon's "excellent" book, *One hundred years of socialism*?

Just how do Bill's arguments square with the reassurances given to Peter Taaffe? In paragraphs 54 through 61 of his document 'For a bold step forward', Alan gave his word that the programme of the proposed Scottish Socialist Party would commit its entire membership to "the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers' power". Alan went on to claim that there is now unanimous support for this in the SSA. His familiarity with the politics of the membership is clearly less comprehensive than he would like to believe. Evidently it has slipped his mind that Paisley branch stood a candidate in the general election whose attitude to our *Charter for socialist change* exactly parallels Tony Blair's to clause four. What we are dealing with here are purely meaningless ritual commitments to be privately, publicly even, ridiculed. Bill's review suggests to me that Sean Clerkin was not the only SSA candidate whose commitment to common ownership and workers' power was less than wholehearted.

What is Alan's response now that we discover that the key task, as far as Bill is concerned, is the election of a left government whose aim would not be socialism? Will he, in defiance of CWI discipline, agree with Bill's description of the French Socialist Party as a model socialist party? Would an SSA/SSP government behave like Lionel Jospin's government today? Bill isn't just disproving the claims Alan makes for unanimous support for "a full-blooded socialist programme"; his remarks are a slap in the face to Gauche Révolutionnaire (the French section of the CWI). Alan might wish that, for diplomatic purposes, the entire rank and file of the SSA could pretend we agree on 80% of our politics. Neither Bill nor I labour under the delusion that this is the case. And I, for one, consider it unhealthy to perpetrate such a cruel deception on our class.

Bill's model of a socialist organisation in a revolutionary situation is the Stalinist CP in the Spanish Civil War; mine is the Bolsheviks in the 1905 and, in particular, the 1917 revolutions. Bill's model of a socialist organisation in a non-revolutionary situation is the one in government across the Channel today defending the interests of the French ruling class; mine is the Bolsheviks both before and between the Russian revolutions. The theses, resolutions and manifestos of the first four congresses of the Communist International would come near the top of my list of recommended reading for any young socialist; for Bill they would, I suspect, be more likely to appear on a list of proscribed literature.

It is not necessary for us to pretend we all agree on 80% of our politics in order to coexist in one party. Bill appears to be implying that Leninists in the SSA dream of rapidly transforming it into a democratic centralist party. He warns that were we to succeed he would jump ship. But no one is foolish enough to see this as a credible project. Bill and I both agree 100% in building support for workers in struggle, be they Scots like the Glacier workers, English like the Liverpool dockers or whatever. Given this fact, and given that we also agree on building united fronts around struggles and campaigns which fight over progressive issues, such as opposition to all forms of oppression, there is a basis for us to coexist in one organisation for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, at least some of us have not forgotten the explanation Lenin and Trotsky gave for why we have but one example of the working class taking power this century. This is because of the failure of Marxists outside Russia to patiently and methodically build democratic centralist vanguard parties with deep roots in the class, and to do so not after the revolution has broken out, but in the years and decades beforehand.

**Tom Delargy**  
Paisley

## Right of reply

I thought my article 'Rapprochement stalled' (*Weekly Worker* May 28) might be slightly provocative. As it turned out, I stirred up some different, indeed unexpected arguments. I want

to deal now with what I thought would create debate. I will leave for another occasion the surprising question of the existence or not of a 'Dundee group' and whether they can join the tendency.

I certainly expected my claim that there was a "big hole in the policy of openness" would bring forth a reply. Openness does not and cannot mean that any and everything must be printed in the central organ. However, a 'right of reply' in the letters page, to those criticised or misrepresented is a minimum requirement and indeed a democratic safeguard.

When Lee Rock was criticised in the *Weekly Worker*, he was able to exercise a right of reply. That was to the credit of CPGB. When the national organiser made comments in his column about comrades leaving, their replies should have been printed. After all, if it is important why comrades left, we must hear their reasons directly. That is the starting point for drawing out the politics.

If all we are allowed to hear is the PCC or their representatives, then it is conceivable that all we might get is 'spin doctoring'. I hope it is not too cynical to suggest that leaderships have a vested interest in deflecting criticism and putting the best spin possible on any events.

What we need to find out is the real politics of the situation. Was it a product of a "right-wing liquidationist trend" or the result of an incorrect political line or method? In either case there are very important reasons why we should continue to discuss these matters, even if those who left disappeared into a black hole. The problems of rightwing liquidationism or an incorrect political line will remain and continue to damage us. Unfortunately so far, all we have heard is petty trivia about hard times and comrades' personal problems.

The CPGB have set themselves high standards in terms of openness. It is the job of all comrades, supporters and sympathisers to assist in maintaining those standards. But they do not exist in a vacuum. At times of crisis or setbacks there is a tremendous pressure for damage limitation and self-preservation. It is far easier to sweep things under the carpet, and on the face of it this seems less damaging. But that is short-sighted.

At times like this the commitment to openness is really tested. For this reason any departure or alleged departure from openness needs to be challenged openly.

Are my concerns paranoid and without foundation? The truth is that the events, beginning with the resignation of the previous editor, placed tremendous pressure on the group for damage limitation. The fact that the CPGB had its own internal debate about openness, as a result of these events, indicates the same. I was disappointed that so few CPGB members came out openly to defend their ex-comrades' right of reply. Too many seem easily seduced by the argument that the letters were lacking in merit and contained factual errors. Even if both these claims were true, it would surely be an argument for printing, not suppressing them. Let the readers judge and not censors acting supposedly on their behalf.

Comrades Conrad and Kent did speak in favour of printing the letters in at least one meeting I attended. But most comrades were indifferent or against. I was surprised by Manchester comrades. They had become very concerned about the threat to openness posed by a thesis on this subject, but seemed indifferent to a right of reply. Perhaps I am wrong on this and they will no doubt correct me.

Whether the failure to print these letters constitutes a "big hole", a little hole or a minor hiccup is arguable. Jack Conrad's reply ('Party notes', June 4) provides an answer. Essentially he explains that the right of reply has not been abandoned, but rather temporarily suspended. A special procedure was thought up. A major document, rumoured to be 15,000 words, has been written, presumably critical of the ex-comrades. This will be sent to them. They will then be able to decide whether they want their original letters printed along with this document.

It needs to be said that the Dundee comrades had no choice in this. It was imposed upon them. The rationale for this was "because we do not want to further sour things and deepen divisions". I accept that this rationale was sincerely meant by Jack Conrad.

He has spoken on a number of occasions in favour of cooling the situation and maintaining friendly and comradely relations. However, a lot of bad things can be done in the name of good intentions. I fear that this will do exactly that. We will await this document with interest.

There is a lot of personalised politics going on about the merits of various individuals. We need to get rapidly away from this stuff and onto the real politics. The CPGB has suffered a political setback as a result of its intervention in Scotland. We need to find out whether this is a result of a trend of rightwing liquidationism or the result of the CPGB following an incorrect political line or method.

**Dave Craig**  
RDG (faction of the SWP)

## All crap

Regarding Don Preston's column ('No Politics please, we're Bullites' *Weekly Worker* June 11), my *Socialist News* article on drugs nowhere called for their banning. It argued that the 'legalisation' campaign played into capitalism's hands since the drugs trade, the biggest on earth now, was deliberately used to pacify the masses, frequently with identifiable imperialist-state promotion around the world.

Campaigning about any 'legal' reform which does not challenge capitalism is a reformist diversion. More pressing tasks face communists than exposing 'illogical' cannabis laws. All capitalist law is crap. Pot-smoking hobbyists should declare their interest.

Ending British colonial tyranny in Ireland was forced on Britain by revolutionary struggle and is a different type of 'reform' entirely, seriously undermining and weakening British imperialism. Anti-apartheid was a victory, not for letter-writers to the UN essentially, but for the revolutionary struggle in Africa, to which imperialism was obliged to concede, weakening itself.

You get excited about "thousands of influential international bourgeois" writing to the UN to say that "the global war on drugs is now causing more harm than drug abuse itself." More reformist illusions. Capitalist society is not going to get *anything* right - ever, no matter how many bourgeois write to the UN. All social problems will continue to degenerate. No use 'legalising' school truancy, or football-following hooliganism. Alienation cannot be reformed away. It can only grow relentlessly.

Let some or all drugs be legalised tomorrow; the *Socialist News* piece made no objection. It simply argued that the problem of escapist drop-outs, via drugs or alcohol, would still remain, and imperialism would be no weaker, and possibly even more secure. Feeling free to get smashed is not an obvious revolutionary educator.

There was no call to "persecute the alienated", whether "losers, addicts or alcoholics", as you imply. Nor was escapism remotely "blamed" on those who drop out. The capitalist system *alone* is responsible for alienation, as was made perfectly clear.

You admit that drug addiction under socialism would be a bad sign of a rotten state, implying that no one should *want* to become a drug or alcohol addict. But in the fight for revolutionary consciousness now, where the state of mind people are in really does matter, you pretend that the only thing that counts is that people should 'feel' they are 'free' to do what they like. "Human freedom now," you insist. It is a complete illusion in reply to the correct view in *Socialist News* that "The 'liberty' to do something which in no way challenges capitalism's economic, political, and social controls, is a false 'freedom'."

Yours is a completely un-Marxist view. The fight for revolutionary consciousness is all that matters. The 90% of our lives that we spend simply living, breathing, surviving, existing - or getting smashed - is of great interest to the individual, but of no great interest to the history of the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois-capitalist system.

**Royston Bull**  
Stockport



From **The Call**, paper of the British Socialist Party, June 20 1918

## George Plekhanov

It is with the deepest regret we learn of the death of the founder of the Russian Social Democratic Party, George Plekhanov, at a sanatorium on the Russo-Finnish frontier.

Of late years we disagreed with him very profoundly, particularly since the outbreak of war when he fell into the slough of social patriotism of the very worst kind, often even forgetting his whole socialist past, as for instance when he objected to the proposal to expropriate the landowners on the ground that it was not in the interests of the Russian peasants themselves to have rich landowners suddenly become poor without any means of livelihood ...

Nevertheless Plekhanov's whole life, since that day in December 1876, when as a young student in Petrograd he unfurled the red banner of socialism at the Kazan Square, was given up to devoted work for socialism and labour. The Russian translator of Marx's *Communist manifesto*, he was also Marx's most ardent disciple ...

Using Marx's principles as a guide, he accurately foretold, as later events have shown, the future economic development in Russia, and upon that he based his whole socialist propaganda amongst the ever extending industrial proletariat of Russia.

Exiled from his native land for the best part of his life, Plekhanov lived at Geneva, Switzerland, where he did an immense amount of theoretical and practical work ... Unfortunately for at least the last 12 years or so his intellectual strength seems to have largely forsaken him ... On the outbreak of war the havoc was completed - he became an ardent nationalist and embraced Russia's cause against Germany, even before the Revolution had begun to show its head.

When the Revolution triumphed he returned to Russia. The workers, though disagreeing with his present attitude, could not forget his glorious past, and they gave him a great ovation. On the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates however, and in deference to his past, he was given a consultative voice only, his party not being admitted to representation as being of no importance.

Thus passes away a brilliant yet in the end tragic figure in the international socialist movement ... But this we know: long after the present nightmare - with its ruin of souls, intellects and bodies - has passed away, George Plekhanov will still be remembered and valued for the great and brilliant part he played in his earlier days in building up the Revolution and international socialist working class movement ●

# 1918

Russian Revolution  
this week 80 years ago

## Assembly elections

# Tory split on Ireland

As the June 25 elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly approached, Blair's hopes for a clear victory for the pro-agreement forces were set back by the partial ending of British bipartisanship over Ireland.

The traditional joint approach by the main British imperialist parties was suspended when the Tories decided to vote against the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Bill last week. In accordance with the British-Irish Agreement, the bill provides for the early release of prisoners of war who are not "supporters of a terrorist organisation". Groups such as the IRA which maintain a "complete and unequivocal ceasefire" are no longer deemed to be "terrorist". Their members would qualify for early release as long as their organisations were considered to be "cooperating fully" with the arms decommissioning body. The Northern Ireland secretary - currently Mo Mowlam - has the final say on the freedom of individual prisoners.

During last month's referendum campaign Blair was at pains to assure unionists that nobody would be released unless arms were being handed over. But the bill does not insist upon the *prior* surrender of weapons because, as Mowlam explained, such a commitment was not written into the agreement, which had to be accepted in its entirety. The Conservative and Ulster Unionist parties put forward an amendment tying early releases to "the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations and the achievement of the decommissioning ... by May 22 2000". When this was rejected, both parties voted against the bill.

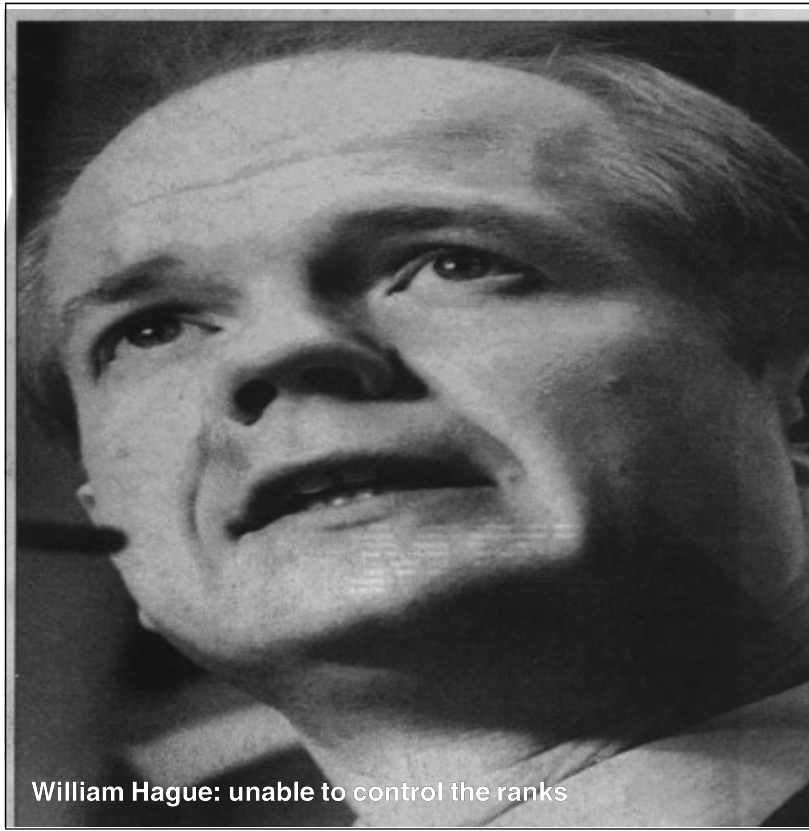
Before last week UUP leader David Trimble had seemed prepared to support Blair's more open-ended line. However, he came under increasing pressure from his MPs and party organisation to distance himself from the legislation. Clearly the sound of the Democratic Unionist Party's Ian Paisley breathing down his neck was not to Trimble's liking.

The vote was preceded by heartfelt pleas from Labour to maintain the imperialist consensus on Irish questions. But Tory Northern Ireland spokesperson Andrew Mackay denied that the bipartisan policy had been ended, drawing a parallel with the Labour Party's own actions when in opposition: "Labour voted against the Prevention of Terrorism Act at critical times in the fight against the IRA. But still an overall bipartisan policy held."

He explained that the Tories had "reluctantly consented to legislation" over prisoner release when it first came before the Commons because it "was part of an overall agreement". Only when their amendment was not accepted did they vote against at the third reading.

The decision produced strong criticism from sections of the establishment. *The Independent* referred to "the folly of breaking the cross-party accord" (June 22) and Labour's Stephen Hesford, MP for Wirral West, called the Tory vote "an act of political terrorism". He feared as a result that "extremists opposed to the peace process" would "make damaging headway" in the assembly elections: "The Conservative Party will have to bear a great deal of responsibility for the consequences which could follow - be it instability or, worse, a return to violence" (letters, *The Independent* June 23).

Immediately after the vote Liberal



William Hague: unable to control the ranks

Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown and Lord Alderdice, leader of the Alliance Party in the Six Counties, made a joint appeal to Tory peers to support the bill in the Lords. Ashdown said the Tories had chosen "the worst imaginable time to break with the well established tradition of bipartisanship".

This appeal, backed by Downing Street, was not just a case of barking in the wind. The Tories are far from united on this whole question. While only former Conservative minister Douglas Hogg voted with the government, many others abstained. Those who were present but did not vote included John Major and former Northern Ireland minister Sir Brian Mawhinney. Half the shadow cabinet failed to follow the official Tory line.

Despite these divisions, the threat to disrupt the legislation - and the peace process itself - in the Lords is real. Tory peers are led by Lord Cranbourne, an ultra-reactionary unionist, who would dearly love to wreck not only Blair's Northern Ireland settlement but his whole programme of constitutional reform, not least the abolition of hereditary peers like Cranbourne himself.

Sections of the Conservative Party still believe that a crisis in the Six Counties could be their opportunity. The advance they envisage for themselves would not necessarily be made through constitutional means. No doubt many have fond memories of Lord Carson, who led a protestant rebellion against Asquith's Home Rule Bill in 1912, setting up the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Last weekend *The Daily Telegraph* took up Carson's cause once again. It reported that the government is secretly planning to move his statue, along with one of Sir James Craig, from the front of the Stormont building to a more inconspicuous location. That would clear the way for the new assembly to meet at Stormont, free of the trappings of the old Ulster. An inscription at the foot of Carson's statue states that it was erected "by the loyalists of Ulster as an expression of their love and admiration". UUP assembly candidate Chris McGimpsey says: "Carson saved Ulster and this is an affront to its people."

The *Telegraph* editorial commented:

"Unionists care passionately and they are right to care. To move Carson's statue ... would be yet another betrayal of Northern Ireland." It called on its readers to stand by the legacy of "this brilliant protestant lawyer, born in Dublin, who warned strongly against the division of Ireland, but stood by the people of Ulster when Westminster was too stupid to understand their plight" (June 20).

Today, of course, the reactionary wing of the Conservative Party is most certainly not "against the division of Ireland". A united Ireland reincorporated into the UK is beyond even their retrogressive ambitions. Instead hold on to "Ulster". While most believe that the agreement will ensure this, the legitimising of "terrorists", whom the British state was unable to defeat despite almost 30 years of bloody oppression, is more than many can stomach.

This section is backing the rejection wing of the UUP and would not be averse to seeing Paisley leading the biggest unionist bloc in the assembly. As we go to press, such an outcome does not look likely. The election campaign was remarkably low-key, and the single transferable vote system also favours moderate unionists. A few days before voting, Trimble made a play for the lower preference votes of SDLP and Sinn Féin supporters. He called for "a new Northern Ireland in which pluralist unionism and constitutional nationalism can speak to each other with the civility that is the foundation of freedom".

To be sure, this remains a vision of a partitioned Northern Ireland under British domination, but it represents a clear departure from the old sectarian gerrymandered statelet. Within a very short time Sinn Féin itself will emerge in the dull colours of a major force of "constitutional nationalism". During the campaign SF leaders made it clear that they were "ready for government". They were hoping for a further increase in support, perhaps even replacing the SDLP as the biggest nationalist party in terms of votes. This, if combined with a big DUP vote, would destabilise Blair's peace process and could give the Tory ultra-reactionaries the chance they have been waiting for ●

Jim Blackstock

## action

### ■ CPGB seminars

**London: June 28** - 'Bismarckian socialism' in the series on Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution*.

For more details call 0181-459 7146.

**Manchester: June 29** - 'the Soviet Union - a freak society?'

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.

### ■ 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

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## Reaction to One Nation

# Australian left at sea

Following the Queensland state elections, the mainstream media have been busy apportioning blame (or, in a few cases, credit) for the success of Pauline Hanson's rightwing racist One Nation party. One Nation gained 12 seats out of 89 in its electoral debut on a populist anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian immigration platform.

Politicians from all the main parties have been finger-pointing as well, with the federal Liberal Party reversing the Queensland Liberal's policy of recommending supporters to give their lower-preference votes to Hanson's party. In an emerging consensus between Labor and Liberal at the national level, it appears that One Nation will be put last on the preference lists of both parties in the forthcoming federal election. Already, prime minister John Howard has said this will be the case in his leafy Sydney harbourside seat of Bennelong.

While the liberal anti-racist agenda dominates the Australian media, criticism of One Nation has been muted from some quarters, the ghost of the White Australia policy not yet fully exorcised from the body politic by multi-culturalist consensus. Unlike in Britain, where to raise the ethnicity of an immigrant nowadays consigns a politician to the fringes, in Australia, the legacy of the former racist immigration policy still lingers.

Now that One Nation has broken into the big time, the government-owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation has said it will allocate it free air time in the lead-up to the forthcoming federal poll. This will give added respectability.

The reaction of the left press to One Nation's sudden explosion in support is worth examining. All the left pundits, as well as those writing for Packer or Murdoch, have been able to comment on the widespread disenchantment with the major parties, and can also agree that, in the short term, One Nation's support is largely at the expense of the conservative coalition. In the month that One Nation support jumped from seven to 12%, coalition support dived by the same margin, from 39 to 34%, while Labor's support rose one point to 42%.

Yet beyond that the left in Australia, marginal and divided as it is, has developed fairly bog standard, yet conflicting, responses to One Nation's electoral bolt from the blue. The partial exception perhaps being the Democratic Socialist Party (formerly attached to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International).

Most of the old 'socialist left' of the Labor Party and dissolved fragments of the former Communist Party have nothing to say. These 'forces', having either retreated into academia or been absorbed into the trade union and public service bureaucracies, are all but spent. Old-fashioned social democracy has been squeezed by the realities of globalisation and the absence of a forward-moving workers' movement (notwithstanding the defensive struggle and partial victory of the wharfies). Besides, the economic nationalism of tariff protection is a key plank of One Nation's politics. It is shared by the Communist Party (formerly the Socialist Party of Australia).

The two largest left organisations in Australia are the Cliffite International Socialist Organisation and the Democratic Socialist Party. Relations

.....

"Given Hanson's incoherent views on guns, capital punishment, zero funding for the arts and xenophobic economic nationalism, not to mention her party's links to loony rightwingers (including the Confederate Action Party and the anti-semitic League of Rights), she is viewed as far from 'safe'"

.....

between the two organisations are not warm. The response of the ISO to One Nation is predictable for any left-watcher from Britain, but the DSP, while failing to break from an economic understanding, is far more thoughtful than what can only be described as the brain-dead Cliffites' knee-jerk 'vote Labor, but ...'

### ■ International Socialist Organisation

*Socialist Worker* (Australia), a clone of the British publication, sang a familiar tune up to the Queensland election: "Vote Labor, but build a socialist alternative". Perhaps the change of line on elections in Britain has not yet been fully digested on sunnier shores? While many are familiar with this slavish tailing of Laborism, in the context of the success of Hanson in providing an alternative to the mainstream parties, the ISO looks comatose.

Clearly, Hanson has not achieved her successes through arguing 'Vote Liberal, but build the One Nation alternative'. All alternatives, by their very nature, begin as minorities. Hanson has directly aimed her message at a disenfranchised minority. Her success, she believes, may yet see this turn into the majority rightwing party in Australia.

Even *Socialist Worker* (Australia) is able to see the success of this method for One Nation: "It is the cynicism people feel towards both major parties that Hanson taps into," it notes (June 5).

Far from attempting to build an electoral audience now (rather than awaiting some imagined, surgically pure,

breakaway from Labor in the glorious future), the ISO encourages continuing illusions in Labor: "[Queensland] Labor leader Peter Beattie's failure to present Labor as a real alternative to the coalition feeds the idea that the major parties are the same." It adds: "*Socialist Worker* supporters should vote Labor to get the Nationals out." While thousands have already made it clear through their votes for One Nation that Labor is no alternative - a fact which the ISA has itself recognised - *Socialist Worker* criminally tries to push them back.

The same issue also notes: "When people were fighting to support the Maritime Union, Hanson was silenced. It was clear that workers had a common enemy." Because of its crude economism, the ISO fails to see the raw material is right there for the building of an actual political alternative. We support strikes - let Labor take the racists on. The ISO will advise you from the sidelines. These are the politics of confusion and endless circles.

*Socialist Worker* states: "Rather than demolish the racist lies [of One Nation], Labor has insisted that native title is a 'diversion' from the real issue of 'jobs'." Yet in an interview in the British *Socialist Worker* (June 20) Alison Stewart of the ISO leadership seems to contradict this: "If they [Labor] had campaigned hard over issues like privatisation and deregulation then they could have won over some of those disillusioned with the [Queensland] government."

Tied to the coat-tails of Labor, the ISO in Australia is committed to serving votes up to these reactionaries time and again.

### ■ Democratic Socialist Party

By comparison, the DSP's opinions are more considered. In an interview in the *Green Left Weekly* (June 24) Peter Boyle, DSP federal election organiser, correctly points out that One Nation cannot simply be dismissed as an expression of rural backwardness. He correctly identifies the basis of One Nation's platform as the national chauvinism of the capitalist class, not just the 'Tories', as the ISO would have us believe. Comrade Boyle says: "One Nation taps this ... [disenchantment] through a combination of scapegoating of Aborigines, Asians and 'foreigners', and an appeal to Australian nationalism. The line is that the alternative to so-called economic rationalism [neo-liberalism - ML] is economic nationalism ... It is appealing not just because it's simple but also because it builds on years of brainwashing that all Australians share a common interest."

While partially identifying the source of One Nation's ideas, comrade Boyle fails to point to the petty bourgeois nature of Hanson's eclectic programme. It appeals to small farmers and other small businesses, as well as backward elements of the rural and urban poor. So far, Hanson's support from larger big businesses is limited or non-existent.

Despite having the courage and principle to put its alternative to Labor where it most hurts them - in the ballot box - the DSP fails to break from economism, even if it is more sophisticated than the dull ISO version. When asked what the alternative to economic nationalism was,

comrade Boyle says: "Our message is that protectionism, economic nationalism, won't save jobs, won't stop the cuts to basic services and the destruction of entire communities. All big businesses are committed to the neo-liberal madness. If Australian capitalists are offered a few billion dollars more of tariff protection or subsidies, they'll grab it, thank you very much, and then use it to 'modernise', restructure and sack another few thousand workers anyway ...

"If society wants to control the profit madness in the finance sector, it has to nationalise the whole sector and put it under democratic, community control ... If we want to stop the relentless job destruction by big businesses, we have to take them out of the hands of their profit-hungry owners" (*Green Left Weekly* June 20).

While it is important to develop clear answers around economic issues, a knee-jerk call to nationalise is, at the end of the day, no better than the programme of discredited 'left' social democracy or 'official communism'. It is an economic 'solution' confined to the borders of the nation-state. Answers to economic problems of capitalism must be a subordinate part of a political programme of working class political self-emancipation.

The DSP does not see the connection between the political way we are ruled and its economic manifestations. Instead, struggles against racism, for democratic rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, for the right to strike, for women's liberation and for a republic are subordinate to some abstract 'socialism', which seems to be equated to nationalisation (under workers' control, of course).

If the DSP believes that 'socialism' will come through a party like itself nationalising capital, rather than through workers' own self-activity, this only demonstrates how far it is from a Marxist approach.

### ■ Communist Party of Australia

The Communist Party of Australia, the renamed 'Moscow-line' rump of the former mass organisation, continues its head-in-the-sand nationalist approach to socialism. While echoing aspects of the *British road to socialism*, the CPA adopts a conspiracy theory to international and national politics. It sees creeping world government in the OECD-proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment. King Canute-like, it wants to resist the 'evils' of globalisation. And it seriously argues for the defence of 'Australian sovereignty'.

In its analysis of Hanson, it has a similar approach. Writing in the *Morning Star* (June 17), Anna Pha, editor of *The Guardian*, paper of the CPA, points to a partial truth before continuing muddle-headedly. She writes: "Hanson is being used to change what is acceptable and to break down views which do not condone outright attacks on indigenous people, Asians, Italians, Arabs and other races and religions [sic]".

It is unlikely that there are Machiavellian forces manipulating Hanson puppet-like in order to break down political correctness, as Pha imagines. While multi-culturalism is not yet as all-embracing as in the UK, it is already dominant.

Yet Hanson, from the reactionary

side of politics, has seized upon the divide-and-rule reality of multi-culturalism. While this official anti-racism attempts to control ethnic and racial conflict in the interests of smooth capital accumulation, it is also able to pit community against community in the struggle for scarce 'ethnic dollars'. Such 'privileges' are condemned by the racist bigots in One Nation.

Despite herself, comrade Pha, in the very next paragraph, can still write: "The Liberal Party felt it necessary to dis-endorse [Hanson] as a candidate in the federal elections." Pha does not see the contradictory significance of the two statements. It seems that not all of the ruling class is that happy with racist views being associated with a possible party of government.

Comrade Pha argues: "Ms Hanson offers the ruling class a vehicle for directing disillusioned and disaffected voters in a politically 'safe' rightwing direction - one that will not challenge their interests." Given Hanson's incoherent views on guns, capital punishment, zero funding for the arts and xenophobic economic nationalism, not to mention her party's links to loony rightwingers (including the Confederate Action Party and the anti-semitic League of Rights), she is viewed as far from "safe" by large sections of liberal (and some Liberal) opinion. The ruling class only turns to such extreme reactionary forces as a last resort, not only for use against the working class, but against dissenting elements of the bourgeoisie as well. While One Nation's success has shifted Australian politics to the right, Hanson would have to clean up her act to become acceptable to the ruling class as things stand now.

The CPA, mired in conspiracy theories, fails to notice what the *Green Left Weekly* reports (June 24): "Victorian premier Jeff Kennett has been quoted as being prepared to stay in politics longer than planned in order to 'chase One Nation and its current philosophy down every burrow'. [Federal] government ministers have written to the *Age* defending multi-culturalism and citing business initiatives that look only at the colour of people's money, not of their skins."

Jeff Kennett of the Liberal Party, was once seen as the loony right of the conservatives. When he came to government in Victoria, many of the left ridiculously called his government 'fascist'. Yet even he defends the status quo against Hanson's extreme xenophobic nationalism.

But the CPA - the walking dead of 'official communism' - could hardly be expected to produce an analysis that bears any resemblance to reality.

The ISO, condemned to parrot the dull politics of economism and Laborism, is equally bereft of ideas. It flips from ultra-left 'storm the barricades' to a pathetic tailing of Labor. The DSP, despite claiming to have dropped Trotskyism and adopted Leninism, has certainly not broken with the economism so prevalent amongst the epigones of Lev Davidovich.

One Nation is a real threat in Australia. Let us hope the shock of the old parading as the new can act as a stimulus to the left to take up the battle for an independent working class programme ●

Marcus Larsen

## 'Race relations' row

## Police shift on Lawrence

Last week the Metropolitan Police made a public apology for its failure to bring the killers of Stephen Lawrence to justice. He was stabbed to death by racists in April 1993.

The apology, which came at the London public enquiry into the murder and subsequent investigations, marked a shift in the balance between two contradictory establishment pressures.

On the one hand, the ruling class must always stress the 'impartiality', 'honesty' and 'reliability' of its police and judicial system. In this way it hopes to maintain respect for these institutions in the eyes of the majority - and, by implication, acceptance of the bourgeoisie's own right to rule. For that reason the establishment's instinctive reaction to allegations of police corruption or negligence is to deny their substance. Hopefully any shortcomings or improprieties can be covered up or, failing that, the odd 'bad apple' can be scapegoated.

On the other hand, if it appears that respect for bourgeois institutions may be breaking down amongst a substantial section of society, it may become necessary to drop the insistence that all is well. In the Lawrence case a large part of the black community - not to mention liberal opinion - clearly believes that something is amiss, following the failure to secure a conviction.

Blair's attempt to win a new consensus in order to rejuvenate British capital has given fresh impetus to bourgeois anti-racism. Whereas the



More power to their elbow?

social democratic consensus was built on the foundations of the post World War II boom and the neo-colonial influx of 'inferior' peoples, Blair's New Britain requires the full integration of their descendants into the British mainstream. While most postwar immigrants might have been prepared to accept second-rate citizenship, their children and grandchildren certainly would not. Social stability now calls for the redefining of a multi-cultural Britain. As part of this process trust for the police must be consoli-

dated within the black community.

In this context negligence and incompetence in the high-profile Lawrence investigation has been a setback. For that reason Ian Johnston, the third highest ranking officer in the Metropolitan Police, was instructed to make his fulsome apology, despite having consistently defended the conduct of the murder inquiry right up to last week.

Speaking from the witness box at the public enquiry, Johnston addressed Stephen Lawrence's father directly: "On behalf of myself and the commissioner, who specifically asked me to associate myself with these words, and the whole of the Metropolitan Police, I offer my sincere and deep apologies to you," he said.

Standing up for dramatic effect, he continued: "Mr Lawrence, I wanted to say to you that I am truly sorry that we have let you down. It has been a tragedy for you. You have lost a son and not seen his killers brought to justice." But, he added, "It has been a tragedy for the Metropolitan Police, who have lost the confidence of a significant section of the community for the way we have handled the case."

Clearly Johnston's change of tack did not come about as a result of some miraculous conversion. It occurred after his boss, Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir Paul Condon, was leaned on by the government.

Indeed the setting up of the enquiry was itself a specific component of Blair's scheme to win over the black community. It also appeared to meet the wishes of many black activists and large sections of the left. For example only last week *The Socialist* seemed content with what the enquiry has uncovered: "Accusations that police racism and corruption lie behind the failure to bring Stephen Lawrence's murderers to justice are slowly unravelling as the public enquiry progresses," it stated (June 19).

But others were not so content. Earlier this week Sgt Mike Bennett, chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, reacted to Johnston's remarks by condemning the whole "stage-managed" enquiry. The hearings were undermining race relations, he said - just what the "militants and agitators" wanted. It might be inspectors and chief constables who utter the apologies, but it is the rank and file represented by the MPF who carry the can. They would prefer to improve "race relations" through continuing to repeat dead-end assurances that

the police are not racist. Some ruling class elements were also distinctly unhappy that the government could engineer such a humiliating police climbdown. They too favour improving "race relations" through the culture of unquestioning respect for state institutions.

Most left groups, however, believe that senior police officers, if not personally racist themselves, nevertheless represent the 'racist state'. It has become a matter of faith for these comrades that the capitalist state must always and in every circumstance be 'racist'. In fact Condon and Johnston form part of an establishment that now accepts an *anti-racist* consensus. That is not to deny the widespread racism that does exist amongst the police, as in all sections of society of course.

But it is not only individual racist attitudes that account for the disproportionate harassment and arrest of blacks - particularly black youth. Capitalist society is based on a pecking order, and those at the bottom often become lumpenised and therefore the 'natural' suspects of crime. The socioeconomic position of blacks is on average below that of whites. Which is why the police 'naturally' regard a young black driver of an expensive sports car as much more suspicious than a young white man.

Equally naturally however, it would never occur to the bourgeoisie to locate the essence of the problem in capitalist social relations themselves. On the contrary the solution offered by bourgeois commentators and the black middle classes alike is one of more 'positive discrimination'. Black journalist Peter Victor thinks the answer to police racism lies in the promotion of blacks to "the commanding heights" (*The Independent* June 16). He writes: "Put brutally, nothing of any significance is going to change until ... the police fear the black man they are subjecting to an illegal search might well be a detective superintendent himself - or the victim of a race attack be related to the home secretary ..."

Victor's complaint seems to be that the police associate respectable members of society like himself with the lower order simply because of his skin pigmentation. Hence, when it comes to the Lawrence case, it would be "hard to imagine such a sloppy investigation into the murder of a teenager from any other ethnic group. Would police wait two weeks before arresting the

prime suspects in the murder of a Jewish youth? ..."

His colleague, Trevor Phillips, takes a slightly different angle: "What is most disheartening is that the police officers who failed the Lawrences will never be persuaded that their actions stemmed from any kind of racial bias. Carelessness, incompetence, neglect even; but they are clearly baffled by the suggestion that their behaviour might have been affected in any way by the colour of the victim ... the hardest task we face is convincing the perpetrators - I mean the police, not the murderers - of their own *unconscious prejudice* (my emphasis *The Independent* June 22).

No doubt Phillips would like to add an extra, psychological, content to police race awareness courses.

It is precisely comments such as these which led New Labour to set up the Lawrence enquiry in the first place. After two failed prosecutions (the second was conducted privately by the Lawrence family itself), the government wants to be seen by the black community to have done everything possible not only in admitting to police failings, but in putting Stephen's killers behind bars.

Last week two high court judges ruled that five men previously charged with his murder must appear before the enquiry. Lord Justice Simon Brown said: "One might have thought that the applicants, if they were innocent, would be clamouring for the chance to proclaim that innocence and clear their names. But that is not the position, and their rights must be respected." Therefore they could not be asked at the enquiry as to their innocence or guilt.

Nevertheless, it may well be that the state will find some means of locking them up. At present nobody can be tried a second time for the same offence after being found not guilty. It is unlikely that the government would move to change the law to permit a retrial - especially as without dramatic new evidence a conviction would remain far from certain. Despite the high court constraints on questioning, the enquiry lawyers will try to extract such evidence from the men. Two of them, Jamie Acourt and David Norris, have never been tried for murder, since their cases were dropped before coming to court. They could face fresh murder charges without a change in the law. All could be jailed for perjury.

In its clamour for action to be taken, the left seems oblivious to the dangers of giving yet more powers to the state. Powers assumed in order to jail Stephen Lawrence's killers today will be used against the workers' movement tomorrow. In condemning the police for not pursuing them with enough vigour, the left is happy to ignore the methods employed. The use of hidden video recorders - which may have demonstrated that Acourt, Norris *et al* are vicious racists, but failed to link them directly with the murder - will be aimed sooner or later at revolutionary 'suspects'.

Only through our own working class organisation can we defeat the racist thugs. Far from calling on the state and its police to do the job through further oppressive measures, revolutionaries are fully aware that the state itself is the main problem. It exists to defend a system of exploitation which ensures that elements the most alienated sections of society are driven into the arms of reaction over and over again ●

Alan Fox

## Summer Offensive '98

## Keep it coming

Comrades are booking places now for their families and friends to join our celebration meal to mark the completion of the CPGB's 15th Summer Offensive fundraising drive. The event is in London on the evening of Saturday July 11 - places should be booked quickly. The minimum price is £20, but a solidarity price of £50 per head is recommended to help push the total raised up to and beyond the £20,000 target.

As anticipated, this is proving to be a tough target for our organisation to raise in the present period of reaction. Only a few new comrades have joined in the Offensive for the first time, and established veterans of previous campaigns have, in the main, been slow off the mark. This is not only because we all have the same personal needs as anyone else - the rent has to be paid, household bills have to be met, and so on. It is also true that political tasks cannot be put aside for the two months of fundraising. Above all, the *Weekly Worker* must still be written and produced, week in and week out. Prioritising fundraising work for the duration of the campaign is easier said than done.

Nevertheless, I know that comrades have taken extra shifts, in some cases second jobs. Others

have organised street stalls, or collected goods and sold them in car boot sales. Some have parted with personal possessions, or simply gone without a few luxuries. Party printshop comrades have significantly raised their output of commercial work in a way which promises well for the future.

All of this shows a microcosm of the future communist society - from each according to their ability: selfless collective work for no personal gain, all for the common good. The effort many put into building themselves a private haven to escape the insecurities of this dog-eat-dog society, we communists channel towards the project to liberate humanity.

The campaign has certainly suffered from the late start syndrome, and that seems to have developed into a late finish syndrome. I know of one or two comrades who have only just got themselves sorted, and look set to raise more in the last week of the campaign than they have done in the previous seven. So far we have reached 38% of target, with a total of £7,638 in, and pledges still standing at £14,100. I shall be counting both pledges and moneys raised right up to the celebration meal. So keep it coming! ●

Stan Kelsey

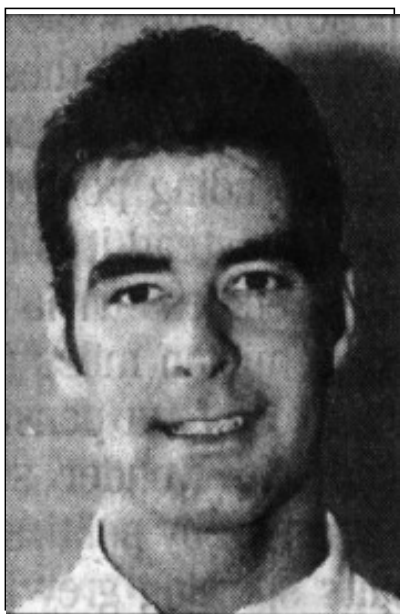


# SSA plunges into nationalism

The third annual conference of the Scottish Socialist Alliance on June 20 was a far smaller affair than in previous years, and, because of the lack of any substantial opposition, quite a tame event. Tommy Sheridan, from the chair, was full of enthusiasm about the gains which the Alliance has made. But looking around at the 50 or so members present - 40 down on last year - this was far from convincing.

The only movement has been to the right. Nationalism has taken a grip on Scottish Militant Labour and the SSA. Rumours abound that SML has lost members to the Scottish National Party - possibly one reason for the low attendance. Reflecting fear of being left high and dry, the leadership emphasised the urgent need to change the main slogan of the SSA to a call for an "independent socialist Scotland". Furthermore, while positive predictions for next year's elections to the Scottish parliament still exist, they are now tempered with the warning that even comrade Sheridan might not get elected if separatism remains the exclusive property of the SNP. The leadership was confident about getting its way at the conference, but far less upbeat about the immediate prospects.

The first half of the conference was spent discussing and voting on the strategic direction of the SSA. The National Council's motion calling for the SSA to adopt a position in favour of an 'independent socialist Scotland' was moved by Alan McCombes - editor of *Scottish Socialist Voice*. He was at great pains to stress his internationalism. Nevertheless, it was clear that the real issue was independence. As to socialism, for comrade McCombes it meant "control of the economy in so far as it is possible ... closing down Trident, ... challenging big business," etc. He was not really talking about anything qualitatively different from many SNP policies. McCombes and co hope that they can



Tommy Sheridan SMP?

fill the space being created by the current 'Blairisation' of the SNP. Alec Salmond has relinquished "radical policies" such as his 1992 call for a £90-a-week pension. It is policies like this that the SML leader wants to defend. Perhaps they think the SSA should take up the mantle of the 'old SNP' - just like Militant once claimed to represent the heart of 'old' Labour.

The next motion put forward was by the Red Republicans - an Edinburgh-based group around Alan Armstrong, which *Socialist Outlook* in Scotland has now apparently joined. They argued for a "Scottish socialist republic". Given that both these motions were for a separate Scotland, the Red Republicans merely tailed the leadership agenda.

Comrade Armstrong began by expressing his pleasure at being able to "agree with 80% of what Alan McCombes said". His only real difference was that the word 'independent' immediately brought the SNP to

mind. The SSA should make it clear from the beginning that it was for a republic.

But SML argued that the word 'republican' was too closely associated with Ireland in view of the latent sectarianism in Scottish society (outside the hall the triumphalist sounds of an Orange Order march could be heard booming). As good Scottish nationalists SML stand for self-determination for Scotland. But not for Ireland. An SML amendment to the Red Republican's motion called for a campaign for an "independent socialist Scotland" with the "aim" of establishing a republic - but without saying so in public. This amendment was carried, alongside the national council motion supporting the call for an "independent socialist Scotland".

Mary Ward and Nick Clarke spoke on behalf of the Dundee-based Campaign for a Federal Republic. They argued their case reasonably well, but to little effect. Having rid themselves of Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in England and Wales, SML is in no mood to listen to those who stand for working class unity against the state. SML leaders are determined not to be thwarted in their rush towards nationalism.

Having won the morning debate easily, Allan Green could confidently propose the logical organisational next step. A separate Scotland naturally required a separate Scottish party. His motion from the national council called for the SSA to transform itself into a Scottish Socialist Party (SML will dissolve itself into the new formation). The 'opposition' from Edinburgh SML/SSA and the Red Republicans was merely one of timing. They feel that the September deadline is too early (perhaps these comrades were also reflecting Taaffe's objections to the "hybrid" form of the new grouping). They were no problem. Allan Green and the SML leadership embraced the Edinburgh proposals. It was a bear hug. There will be no delay. SML leaders are determined to liquidate their organisation by the "early autumn".

The Campaign for a Federal Republic put forward a motion calling for an all-Britain debate with selected organisations and an all-Britain organisation. They were a tiny minority.

Our CPGB fringe meeting at lunchtime was a success. Twenty-five people attended and there was a full and open debate. The *Weekly Worker* sold well and a surprising number of people expressed interest in receiving more information on the Party. Our intervention was from the outside, but effective.

The conference may have been small, but it represented a significant political retreat and a setback for the working class. SML and the SSA leadership are determined to divide our forces on nationalist lines. Despite that there is still a battle to be had to win those instinctively opposed to nationalism and the many who are uneasy with it, to the principled call for a federal republic and the reformed Communist Party needed to achieve it in a revolutionary manner.

The SSA leadership hopes to crown its success with a vote to form a Scottish Socialist Party at the September conference. We support a principled split and opening up discussions with the CPGB's Provisional Central Committee ●

Anne Murphy

## Minimum wage Union strains aid Scargill

Strains between New Labour and the trade union bureaucracy will inevitably increase following the government's rejection of several of the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission.

The commission had advised an hourly rate of £3.60 for workers aged over 20, to commence in April 1999, with an uprating to £3.70 from June 2000; and £3.20 for 18-20 year-olds, again starting in April 1999 and being increased to £3.30 in June 2000. Workers aged under 18 were to be exempted. The government announced last week that the £3.60 rate will be applied at the age of 21, with no commitment to an uprating in 2000. The rate for 18-21 year-olds has been reduced to £3, with an increase to £3.20 in June 2000.

In a letter to professor George Bain, the head of the commission, Tony Blair explained that the government wanted "to minimise the risk that the recommended £3.20 an hour development rate for younger workers could result in job losses at this critical point in the economic cycle". Embarrassingly for the Labour leader, a study of the experience in 17 countries with existing minimum wage legislation, published this week by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, indicates that "the negative employment effects for young adults are generally close to, or insignificantly different from, zero".

Earlier leaks to the press had stressed the worries of chancellor Gordon Brown that the commission's proposed minimum wage rates would discourage employers from taking on long-term unemployed 18-24 year-olds under the euphemistically named 'New Deal'. One of the 'options' is for six months' work at 'the rate for the job' with the employer receiving a £60 per week subsidy from public funds.

The Low Pay Commission report had been unanimously approved only after the three trade union commission members had won the recommendation for the June 2000 uprating. The government's dilution of the proposals, which had been welcomed by most business leaders, is a humiliation for its allies in the union bureaucracy. John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB union, called the decision "a slap in the face" for young workers, whilst Bill Morris, leader of the Transport and General Workers Union, branded the government announcement as "an endorsement of workplace poverty and a green light to the bad employer". He added: "The commission's plan for a lower youth rate will create second class citizens at work, and any delayed implementation for the miserable £3.20 rate merely adds insult to workplace poverty."

Earlier, Trades Union Congress general secretary John Monks, addressing the conference of the British Chambers of Commerce, had warned of the implications for "trade union politics" of any government dilution of the commission recommendations. Explaining



John Monks: fears a militant backlash

that the TUC was "bound into the Low Pay Commission report", Monks warned that "if the government moves away from that, then we will jump free of our commitment too." The strains upon Monks's version of trade union politics - ie, that of naked class collaboration or, as he prefers to call it, social partnership - were further evidenced by the TUC's publication on June 18 of figures showing yet another drop in union membership. A 1.6% decrease in the last year, to 6.6 million, was a continuation of a relentless decline since union membership peaked at 12 million in 1979.

A vacuum is opening up on the left of trade union politics, and it is this that is the source of Monks's fears. Already, the Socialist Workers Party has offered its cadres as union recruiting sergeants, with its launch of the 'Union Rights Now' campaign, which has hosted official TUC speakers on its platforms. Meanwhile, the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws, sponsored by Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, has secured the affiliation of nine unions at national level, and 150 other union bodies, and is aiming to capture a 'head of steam' through its attempt to win TUC support for a massive national demonstration on May 15 1999.

These developments offer opportunities for communists to fight within the new formations for the politics that is really required: that of building a revolutionary rank and file movement, along the lines of the National Minority Movement of the 1920s, and crucially reorganising the Communist Party of Great Britain ●

Derek Hunter

## The fight for Party

Rosa Luxemburg spoke of the struggle for a genuine mass revolutionary party of the class being framed between two dangers. On the one hand, the danger of sectarianism; on the other, that of opportunism.

This is particularly germane for us in the CPGB. Therefore one of the main courses at this year's Communist University examines the fight for Party in the contemporary conditions of today's class

struggle. Speakers from a number of organisations - both those that could be considered 'sectarian' and those that could be considered 'opportunist' (the International Bolshevik Tendency and Alliance for Workers' Liberty being perfect examples) have agreed to do openings for what promises to be a series of lively and mutually beneficial discussions - not least in terms of educating CPGB members and supporters ●

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Around the left

# Like it or lump it

Sometimes real life can be a wonderfully corrective. Just take a look at the SWP. After decades of 'anti-electoralist' dogma, which went hand in hand with (automatic) electoral pro-Labourism, it has finally decided to contest elections. One year of Tony Blair's 'New Britain, New Labour' has had a very sobering effect. Good.

It is well known that comrade Lindsey German has argued for many years within the SWP for such a course. In the latest issue of *Socialist Review* comrade German provides the 'justification' for the SWP's new turn - and outlines the extent of her and Chris Harman's victory over the old majority on the central committee. As far as communists are concerned, this new line is excellent and should have been adopted a long time ago. But for your loyal and possibly bewildered SWP member, brought up since they were knee-high to a grasshopper to believe that all and any election work was a naked example of left reformist 'electoralism', such a development must come as a severe shock to the system. Some sort of explanation - and ideological defence - is therefore required. (Some out-of-touch SWP members we have come across are still hotly denying that their organisation plans to stand.)

The fact that comrade German has gone into print on such a crucial issue for SWP members is welcome. Let us hope that it presages a full, free and open debate in the organisation's publication.

Having said that, the SWP has to squeeze the camel of its new electoral politics through the eye of its economism. This means, amongst many things, reassuring the troops that the "class vote" thesis stands firm - it was okay to vote New Labour on May 1 1997.

Comrade German comments: "Often in recent years supporters have called on us to stand and we have always resisted such calls. Why should we change now?" Of course, if you got all your information from *Socialist Worker* or *Socialist Review* you would have had no idea that "such calls" had been made at all. Indeed those who advocated election work were liable to SWP discipline, if not expulsion or exclusion (nowadays Chris Bamberg and the like do not bother much with formal procedures such as control commissions). Will it now be an offence to *oppose* election work - ie, maintain the old party line?

Comrade German claims: "There is a major paradox in the gap between the *radical leftwing mood which caused Labour's landslide and which has certainly not diminished since then*, and the very low level of class struggle which is a frustrating feature of the present period" (my emphasis).

This then is the "political situation", argues the comrade, which "has led the SWP to consider the question of standing in elections, something we have not done since the 1970s". In other words, the SWP wants to fill the "gap" and tap into the "radical leftwing mood" which exists - apparently - in society.

One valuable aspect of the article is that it provides clues as to the current political mood within the SWP - something which is normally a well-kept secret. Comrade German states: "There are times when to ignore elections would appear as abstaining from



Getting rid of the Tories was never enough

the questions concerning workers. The SWP is a sizable organisation. All sorts of people look to us to give a lead. It would be a mistake to refuse point blank to extend our intervention to elections when there is an ideological crisis of Labourism."

After all, like it or lump it, "it is undeniable that elections form a fairly important part of political life in capitalist society. Most people, including many quite militant workers, define 'politics' in terms of what happens in parliament and elections, rather than as activity in which they themselves take part [like voting Labour?]. It has therefore frequently been necessary for socialists [but not the SWP] to stand in parliamentary or local elections - in order to advance a form of socialism which relies on neither and which believes that the parliamentary structures are a sham. To not participate in these elections would be to leave socialist organisation on the sidelines, having nothing to say while many workers are looking to the parliamentary arena." This is all very well. But surely comrade German is actually arguing for the need to contest elections *in general*?

The SWP has identified Scotland as the place where this "radical leftwing mood" - or "gap" - finds its highest expression. Next year's elections to the Scottish parliament, writes comrade German, are "going to dominate Scottish politics for the foreseeable future, as Labour's inability to deliver is increasingly under criticism and the SNP is gaining ground. The SNP's success is *much less to do with overt nationalism* and much more to with the generalised discontent at the Blair government's failure to deliver; SNP policies on issues such as public spending, the minimum wage and union recognition are all to the left of Labour's official position. It is a mistake to see the only alternatives facing Scottish workers as rightwing Labourism or nationalism. There is a space here for a revolutionary alternative which argues class politics. There may also be a case for standing in other elections" (my emphasis). Obviously the comrade has an economic inability to grasp the

national question. Hence, it should be noted that she actively *downplays* the growing tide of nationalism in Scotland and the reactionary nature of the SNP. In the *Weekly Worker* we long ago observed that Scottish Militant Labour's project - now crystallised in the move to a Scottish Socialist Party - was to constitute itself as the 'left wing' of the SNP. Perhaps the newly 'electoralist' SWP is looking at the political space currently occupied by SSA/SML with greedy and envious eyes ...

Fully aware that she is straying into very dangerous waters, comrade German rushes to reassure the party faithful, and ideologically zealous, that the SWP leadership has not dumped the old credos, stating: "Of course to socialists a big political strike or general strike has 100 times more impact than a parliamentary election." Naturally, "Parliamentary activity is never going to be our most important form of political intervention; rather it is a tactic that we can employ to gather round us a bigger periphery for the class struggles ahead."

In the most interesting passage, comrade German warns of those socialists who "have lost sight of the tactical side of standing in elections and have elevated them into a principle" - picking out Lutte Ouvrière for particular criticism. This is almost tantamount to a polemic. A very rare commodity in SWP literature. The comrade complains that LO "which has polled nearly 800,000 votes in the recent regional elections, has a politics which is evenly divided between a form of syndicalism (obsession with factory bulletins and small strikes) and an electoralism which itself takes an ultra-left form. It takes a dismissive line to the struggle against Le Pen's Nazis and concentrates its fire on the Socialists and Communists rather than trying to engage in a united front with them. Its election results therefore become self-justifying rather than being used to build wider struggles. A recent edition of the party's magazine was entirely devoted to the election results [how terrible]. In Britain we have seen a similar obsession with elections from the

Socialist Party, formerly Militant, which has used a handful of relatively small successes to prioritise its electoral work." She adds: "Since the downturn in class struggles from the mid-1970s, some of the biggest groups have retreated into electoral politics", which has "led them to judge their success inside the working class movement by the number of votes they receive, rather than by their underlying strength in the factories and workplaces".

Comrade German suffers from a self-inflicted ideological blindness. The origins of LO's - and the SP's - politics lies in the fact that neither organisation has a revolutionary minimum-maximum *programme*, not because they "prioritise" election work as such. (The Trotskyist-inspired 'transitional politics' of LO, whether engaging in elections or not, means it is organically incapable of articulating truly independent working class politics. The SP on the other hand is trapped in an utterly wretched 'lesser of two evils' methodology.) But it is hardly astonishing that comrade German glosses over an embarrassing little fact. The SWP does not have any sort of programme - indeed it positively avoids adopting one, almost boastfully. Free-floating theoretically, adrift politically, the SWP could itself easily drift into the very electoralism for which it criticises LO and the SP.

Hence the conclusion drawn by comrade German: "The move towards electoralism by many revolutionary socialists dovetails with the more common position of left reformists in believing that electoral gains are the way forward - the GLC experiment under Ken Livingstone or the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire' under David Blunkett in the early 1980s. Today the Labour left is weak electorally, but we can see the same sort of politics in, for example, the strongly electoral orientation of Arthur Scargill's SLP (with constituency wards, etc).

"We want to avoid both these positions. We should also enter any electoral fight with extremely realistic expectations. Even if we get a good vote we will look small compared with Labour. That is, however, realistic when you look at our level of support inside the working class movement as a whole, and considering how shallow our roots are and how many areas where we have little or no influence. This tactic should be seen as part of beginning to sink roots in new areas, widening our influence in the working class locally and using elections so that they give us publicity and a platform for other activities."

As I pointed out last week in this column, "the previously hermetically sealed political environment of the SWP is now vulnerable to 'alien' intrusion". It is one thing to think you are 'small mass party' when you deliberately eschew contact with other left groups and shelter under the electoral umbrella of Labour. But quite another when you are out there testing your support.

The next few years could be momentous for the SWP - it will never be the same again. Its self-image will take a serious denting. Communists need to be there to make sure that for SWP members and the left in general the electoral turn is channelled in a *positive* direction - towards *communist* politics ●

Don Preston

## What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Threat to London Socialist Alliance

**W**ith the London Socialist Alliance general meeting just over a week away the issues at stake need to be aired openly. Inclusive democracy and the continuation of the LSA as a united front are under threat. The Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance conference debacle - where the right of all constituent organisations to automatic representation on the steering committee was removed - looks ominously in danger of repetition. The result amounted to the bureaucratic exclusion of the CPGB.

In London there is a proposal before the July 5 meeting to "elect a London coordinating committee". This too would end the present inclusive arrangement, where all affiliates are represented by elected and recallable delegates - surely the very essence of an alliance. The resolution reproduced alongside - now with the support of Socialist Outlook - amalgamates the ones submitted previously by Socialist Party and the Socialist Democracy Group. The aim appears to be a retreat into localism and/or sectarianism, downgrading the LSA and with it the prospect of real political engagement (and therefore a thorough testing and debate of our differences).

Some comrades appear to fear debate. For example, David Lyons of the SDG complains that I have set aside too much time for discussion on July 5. According to comrade Lyons, 11am is an impossible time on a Sunday for anyone to attend a meeting. He believes the CPGB is attempting to impose its own "hard Bolshevik standards" on others (in fact the London timetable mirrors the Scottish Socialist Alliance's conference on June 20).

It seems to me that the whole LSA project is in danger of collapse. The Socialist Party is deeply divided over this issue. A minority - particularly in Coventry, where Dave Nellist is the influential figure - have been enthusiastic. However, the majority of the SP leadership has never taken the SAs seriously and certainly do not want electoral competition.

In the latest edition of *Socialism Today* Mike Waddington - national organiser - argues that the May 7 election results show how right his organisation was to stand independently of the Socialist Alliances. With an organisation visible declining around him, both he and Peter Taaffe have no wish to see another 'Scotland'.

That is why the SP contribution to the amalgamated resolution states that the LSA ad-hoc committee should reduce the frequency of its meetings to once every two months. Supposedly that would allow us "to concentrate on the borough alliances at this stage". A very dubious claim. I have previously cited the example of SP-controlled Hillingdon SA, which did not meet for over 18 months. The London SA, which only came into being in February of this year, can hardly be blamed for this.

In fact the formation of the LSA spurred the creation of local alliances and helped to coordinate their activities, especially in the May 7 local elections. But the SP wants to ignore all evidence of success and insist on the virtual liquidation of the LSA. For this

task it has closely aligned itself with Socialist Outlook and some members of the Socialist Democracy Group.

The agenda is clear. Rather than win more forces to the LSA, the intention is to stitch up the whole thing quickly. These comrades seem to be drawing back not only from joint electoral work (Socialist Outlook is pro-Labour, the SP is out for itself and the SDG has as many views as it has adherents), but the whole idea of honest political debate. Comrade Lyons, who along with a handful of others walked out of the Socialist Party to form the SDG last year, at that time committed himself to fighting all bureaucracy and conspiracy in the workers' movement with openness. It is more than a little ironic therefore to see him concoct behind the scenes an anti-democratic lash-up with the SP and SO. Worse, this is being excused under the guise of anti-communism.

In his *Weekly Worker* article (June 11) comrade Nick Long (also SDG) says that the huge tasks facing the LSA "cannot be carried out by members of an organisation [the CPGB] with ongoing delusions in the ability of the SLP moving beyond anything more than a refounded communist-Labour party". Furthermore he says the CPGB is "ambivalent about the need to give mass political expression to the working class as it becomes increasingly disillusioned with New Labour".

All of this is rather strange. We have consistently exposed the bureaucratic nature of the SLP and its leadership in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*. Moreover we have actively promoted the Socialist Alliances throughout their history. While comrade Long actively participated in Arthur Scargill's witch hunt in the SLP, CPGB members stood as SA candidates against New Labour. The only ambivalence exists in the mind of comrade Long.

The politics of comrades Long and Lyons are a mix of localism and red-greenism, which they believe is shared by the majority of the LSA. Unfortunately, judging by the support of SO and the SP for the call in the resolution to "build links" with, among others, "the green left, the Green Socialist Network, the London Federation of Green Parties", they are not alone in wanting to dilute the explicit working class content of our *socialist* alliance. Surely all our work must be directed towards the aim of a united *workers'* party - green groups and individuals who claim to be socialist are of course welcome to join.

The truth is that there are deep divisions not only between, but within all these organisations. Tensions and schisms are bound to emerge if the LSA is maintained and developed. This is exactly what the leaderships of the SP and SO fear - it is also quite possibly a source of anxiety to comrade Lyons when he looks at his own group. After all comrade Long appears to believe it was a grave mistake not to have supported the pro-police, pro-business Green Party candidate in Hackney.

All who want the LSA to succeed should turn up to the meeting on July 5. It would be a real setback if this positive project were to be effectively closed down ●

Anne Murphy

## *Amalgamated motion to the LSA submitted by Socialist Party, Socialist Outlook and Socialist Democracy Group*

One year into a new Labour government the task of building an effective socialist opposition is starkly posed. This committee recognises that:

1) The development of Socialist Alliances is at a very early stage in London.

Nevertheless there have been a number of steps forward taken with the formation of local borough alliances.

2) The following proposals are put in order to develop the London Socialist Alliance.

We agree that:

1) The primary role of the ad-hoc committee at this stage is to help with the building of borough alliances. We should not be content with their existing membership but aim, through campaigning, to involve more trade unionists, socialists and young people. When the local

Alliances develop, the role of the all-London Alliance will also evolve.

2) Over the summer months we hold and prioritise a combination of local meetings and London-wide meetings on issues such as: the minimum wage, Millennium Dome, housing privatisation, transport, solidarity to workers in struggle (Such as supporting the RMT in fighting against the privatisation of the underground). These meetings should be linked to existing campaigns and should be built by local street stalls and leafleting.

3) We build links with the Labour left, the green left, the Green Socialist Network, the London Federation of Green Parties, self-organised campaigns and trade union bodies.

4) This ad-hoc committee meets less frequently in order to allow

us to concentrate on the borough alliances at this stage. We meet every two months and the meetings are widely advertised among the London Socialist Alliances. We use the meeting to coordinate our work, learn from each other and hold political discussions. This does not preclude other meetings when important all-London issues arise.

5) We set a date in the autumn for a founding conference of the London Socialist Alliance. This meeting would be open to all local Alliances and their affiliates and would elect a London coordinating committee. The conference would also discuss the development of the London Alliances, what role the all-London Alliance would play in the coming year, and proposals from the National Network of Socialist Alliances.

## *Motions to the LSA submitted by the Communist Party of Great Britain*

### **Motion 1**

1. The London Socialist Alliance is a united front of socialists. It is open to affiliation from individuals, borough Socialist Alliances, trade union bodies, political and other working class organisations. The Alliance is committed to democratically agreed campaigns on any issue of relevance to furthering the cause of socialism.

2. The Socialist Alliances are not yet party organisations. The structure of the Alliances are based on inclusive not exclusive principles. Minority views are tolerated and given the opportunity to become the majority. The London Socialist Alliance shall hold general meetings to discuss the direction of the Alliance and debate political questions.

3. The London Socialist Alliance steering committee will provide overall political direction and administrative coordination. It will consist of:

- One delegate per affiliated political organisation.
- One delegate per borough Socialist Alliance.
- One delegate per other affiliated organisation.
- Steering committee meetings shall be open to

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

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

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

### **Motion 2**

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