



ILN-SWGP try to oust CPGB

In a worrying development, the Socialist Workers Party supported an hysterical proposal by the Independent Labour Network to effectively kick the Communist Party of Great Britain out of the Socialist Alliance, the fragile electoral bloc for the European elections in London.

At the meeting held on Tuesday March 2, of the manifesto sub-committee of the Socialist Alliance, formerly the United Socialists, ILN representative comrade Toby Abse nervously tabled a motion "regarding the continued participation of the CPGB in the Socialist Alliance project". Sub-committee chair, the Socialist Party's Julie Donovan, put back the ILN's contentious motion to the end of the meeting's business to allow the work of the committee to continue. Another ILN proposal effectively called for the re-opening of negotiations around the electoral platform of the Alliance. It urged special amendments to the platform's section on the environment and equal opportunities.

Before debating the controversial motions from the ILN, the agenda proceeded in a businesslike and comradely fashion. Matters concerning the finance committee, trade union contacts, sponsors for the electoral bloc and the details of the Tuesday March 9 rally were discussed. Comrades from all organisations, except comrade Abse from the ILN, took on responsibilities from the meeting.

Comrade Abse was then invited to introduce his motion to amend the Socialist Alliance platform. While minor in detail, the ILN's attempt to re-open negotiations around the platform amount to an attempt to drag it to the right. Seemingly the most urgent detail for comrade Abse concerned the inclusion of a statement on genetically modified foods - an issue that ironically was absent from the ILN motion.

In response to comrade Abse's proposals, CPGB representative Marcus Larsen argued that re-opening discussions around the platform could endanger the fragile unity already achieved. Pointing out that the platform as constituted fell short of what the CPGB considered as adequate and that the CPGB had been deliberately excluded from negotiations around the platform, comrade Larsen said if negotiations were to be re-opened, the CPGB would be

asking for substantial redrafting.

Comrade Martin Thomas of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty said that we "can't unpick what was agreed three months ago". Following on from comrade Thomas, comrade Rob Hoveman of the SWP was more circumspect, saying that he was "not keen to reopen the bulk" of the platform for discussion. However, he argued that as issues moved on, it was necessary for us to be able to respond to them.

While arguing that renegotiating the platform was not advisable, the SP's Julie Donovan said that we would be "mad" to release the platform as our main propaganda in the election campaign. The comrade from the International Socialist Group - supporters of Socialist Outlook outside the Labour Party - said he was sympathetic to the CPGB's position as they had not been included in the negotiations for the platform. He argued that separate literature could expand on positions sketched out in the platform.

Anticipating the meeting of the London ILN which was to occur the next evening, comrade Hoveman asked comrade Abse if the issue of amending the original platform was a barrier for the ILN's continued participation in the electoral bloc. Comrade Abse said it was not, but he could not speak for the entire ILN.

Marcus Larsen spoke in favour of minimalist joint propaganda and of the danger of re-opening the platform through the back door if the SA propaganda/manifesto committee was going to enter into long debates about our future explanatory leaflets. If we responded in the manner suggested by comrade Hoveman, Larsen argued, we would be approaching issues 'as they developed' in quite different ways, reflecting the varying politics of our organisations. While debates around the electoral bloc could be useful, they could become a bottleneck on the practical propaganda work of the Socialist Alliances.

Rounding up the item, comrade Donovan put three proposals to the meeting for recommendation for the broader Alliance committee to meet in two weeks time. The first proposal concerned the principle of whether we would open negotiations around the platform. No one - including comrade Abse - objected to the proposi-

tion that the original platform be left as it is.

The second proposal from comrade Donovan was that the issues of the environment and equal opportunity be included in our election material. There were no objections. The third proposal from the chair was for the substance of the ILN amendments to be included in the leaflet to activists and in other propaganda. The International Socialist Group representative had pointed out that he opposed the substance of the environment amendment and comrade Larsen said that he opposed the substance of the equal opportunities amendment, particularly around its proposals for "positive discrimination". The third proposal fell.

The meeting then went on to deal with the ILN's thinly veiled expulsion motion:

"London ILN proposes the following motion regarding the continued participation of the CPGB in the Socialist Alliance project:

1. The CPGB claims that it supports the Euro-election platform agreed by ILN, SWP, SP, SO and AWL, using the term 'critical acceptance'. In the view of the ILN there is much evidence of criticism, but little evidence of acceptance, never mind support. In recent issues of the *Weekly Worker*, the platform has been described as 'rightist, economic and ... totally inadequate'; 'not a socialist platform in substance'; 'a workerist shopping list'; 'it goes no further than to seek to resurrect the failed social palliatives of old Labour's left social democrats'. This 'weak platform', claims the *Weekly Worker*, faces the threat of a 'further rightist direction'. It is 'non-socialist' and 'dismally reformist'. Comrades proposing a broad front are described as being 'opportunistic' and 'fundamentally defeatist'. If this is support, or rather 'acceptance', it would be interesting to see what denunciation and rejection consists of.

2. The CPGB's involvement in the Socialist Alliance has not been subjected to proper democratic discussion either between the original members of the SA or within individual organisations.

In these circumstances ILN proposes:

1. That the CPGB's continuing involvement in the Socialist Alliance

project should be considered as provisional. CPGB should not be given a seat on the platform at the public launch next week.

2. The continuing involvement of the CPGB in the Socialist Alliance should be properly discussed to the satisfaction of all the original members of the Socialist Alliance. ILN, March 2 1999."

Underlining comrade Abse's obsession with the contents of the *Weekly Worker*, he said that he was "more closely involved" with this proposal than the motions to amend the platform, saying he had gone through the *Weekly Worker* with a "fine tooth comb". He went on to claim that the CPGB was the only organisation at the table which refused to use a "transitional method". Comrade Abse raised the spectre of lamppooning by the *Evening Standard* because the CPGB's programmatic demand for the right of the working class to defend blacks, lesbians, gays and working class areas by any means necessary.

Comrade Abse included selective photocopies of *Weekly Worker* articles - 'ILN split danger' (February 4) and 'Meeting the challenge' (February 18). Echoing his anti-communist motion, he said that if these were examples of critical acceptance, he would hate to see what rejection would look like.

In response, comrade Larsen said that this move by the ILN was dangerous and contrary to the interests of the working class. He said that the CPGB, even though bureaucratically excluded from the formulation of the platform, was prepared to critically support it, as the unity of the left in London for the European elections was a positive thing in itself. In addition, far from there being little evidence of support from the CPGB, comrade Larsen pointed out that it was in fact the ILN that had just tried to amend the joint platform, not his organisation.

He argued that rejection by the Socialist Alliance of the CPGB would result in our Party standing a full slate of 10 candidates in London and elsewhere. If excluded, or put on a 'provisional status', comrade Larsen said that the CPGB would be forced to do just that. He further said that a further split in the left vote was a situation the CPGB wanted to avoid and

that is why it was critically accepting the joint platform.

Comrade Larsen added out that the CPGB had entered the Socialist Alliance with a clear understanding that there were no gagging orders.

The representative from the International Socialist Group said that the *Weekly Worker* had "come a long way" since they had tried to 'foist' their structure on the London Socialist Alliances in January 1998 and said that this should be encouraged. The comrade failed to notice the paradoxical nature of his remarks. The LSA, the *other* unity grouping of the left in London unanimously agreed this very same inclusive and democratic structure in October 1998 - the representative of *Socialist Outlook* included. In January 1998 an attempt by SPEW, SO and the SDG to establish their exclusive control narrowly, but thankfully lost the day.

Comrade Martin Thomas went along with the spirit of the International Socialist Group representative. The comrade said that it was practice that counted and that the CPGB seemed to be committed to unity in practice. Comrade Julie Donovan also lined up against a witch hunt, pointing out that she rarely agreed with anything in the *Weekly Worker*, but that this could not be a barrier to unity.

Comrade Hoveman took a different stance. Inclusion in the electoral bloc was dependent on established "bona fide" commitment. He had "not seen this yet from the CPGB" and would support the ILN.

In response, comrade Larsen pointed out that at two out of the three previous activities of the United Socialists/Socialist Alliance, the SWP had been conspicuous by their absence and that if we were going to play the game of "bona fide commitment" then the SWP and even the Socialist Party's involvement would come into question - but certainly not the CPGB's. He pointed out that there had been minimal mention of the alliance in either the SWP's or SP's newspapers. Even Socialist Outlook had been trying to ride two horses at once.

Putting the motion to an indicative vote for report to the larger committee, comrade Donovan recorded the ILN and SWP in favour of the motion with the CPGB, SP, ISG and AWL voting against ●

Marcus Larsen



Party notes

Brittle Bolsheviks

Over the last few years, I have written several times of certain problems in the levels of discipline and standards of Party work. Obviously, this has not been a linear process. At different times and under different circumstances, all comrades in our ranks have shown real drive and commitment. However, like every other organisation on the revolutionary left, the Communist Party has suffered from the period of reaction. This is a hard time for communist cadres.

We have had some comrades leaving us citing our 'unreasonable' demands in the abstract. While they were themselves already operating at a level well below what has been agreed as our 'minimum', they objected to Party discipline *in principle*. Its demands - apparently - are "unreasonable" given the 'level of the workers' movement at the moment'.

Then there are those comrades who might be called the 'brittle Bolsheviks'. These are good comrades who have a very *formal* commitment to the correctness of our approach on Party discipline. Thus, they agree wholeheartedly with our demand for 10% of members' income, commitment to active weekly participation in Party organisations or the serious financial and political involvement implied by our annual financial campaigns, the Summer Offensives. In fact, they agree so *much*, that the moment they as individuals slip below required levels, they *insist* on resigning from the Party as an expression of their toughness on these questions.

No-one can show their commitment to the project of reforging a genuine Bolshevik party in this country by *leaving* our organisation, no matter how 'hard' they are on themselves as they do it.

Discipline in a communist collective is not a set of rules and regulations imposed *externally*, by a barking Bolshevik 'sergeant major' laying down the law of some *a priori* set rule book. Discipline must be a process of *internalising* the morality generated by the struggle for communism. Communist discipline understood in a rounded way is not a formal check list of 'dos' and 'don'ts' - it is a lifetime commitment to the project of human liberation represented by the fight for communism.

A commitment to the project of human liberation - if it is to have any meaning at all - must be linked to the fight to build the Party. Otherwise, it is pious wishful thinking. Such a Party is built from human material, with all its frailties and inadequacies. Therefore, 'the Party' and its discipline are not lifeless, abstract concepts - they only acquire meaning through being constantly related to the human material that builds them.

Thus, a *mechanical* application of the highest standards of Party membership that we enshrined in resolutions a few years ago would lead to a pretty drastic purge of our ranks - today, as it would then - and what would be the point of that? *Real* Party discipline - an internalisation of the fight for communism - means striving to solve comrades' personal problems, the difficulties we all may occasionally experience, through and with the Party.

'Brittle Bolshevism' is a parallel of ultra-leftism. Its facade of 'hardness' hides massive internal tensions which tend to shatter it to fragments when it receives serious knocks. Similarly, an ultra-leftist is often an opportunist afraid of his/her own shadow - just look at the way the 'extremists' of the Revolutionary Communist Party have been quietly absorbed by mainstream society over the last few years.

Communist discipline is therefore a process, not a finished rule book through which comrades must be 'sieved'.

The Party project is tough enough to withstand the vicissitudes of our comrades' episodic wobbles, whether these are precipitated by private relations, financial crises or political exhaustion.

The question is - are the comrades who claim adherence to the Party project 'tough' enough?

All our problem should be solved with and through the Party. This is the essence of being a communist under present-day circumstances ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

On the sharp end

As a friend of the CPGB - a fellow traveller, if you will - I am now going to offer some friendly advice which I trust will be taken in the spirit in which it is offered.

I consider Mark Fischer's last two 'Party notes' columns on the Ian Donovan incident extremely important. I agree that the enquiry into this affair has to be wide-ranging. It has to provide us with an opportunity to focus our minds on how the Socialist Alliances can provide us with a forum in which we can strangle the sterile sectarianism of the past. I wholeheartedly associate myself with everything Mark has written about the extenuating circumstances (Spartacist incitement) which provoked comrade Donovan into his idiotic temper tantrum. I hope due weight will be given to this and that no one will be able to exploit this incident to argue that he is excluded from the SAs on a permanent basis.

There are, however, those who have been on the sharp end of CPGB polemics who can be expected to sneer at Mark's comments. As far as some of those involved in the SAs are concerned, there is precious little to choose between the literary and verbal provocations of the Sparts and the CPGB. I once described Mark Fischer in *Weekly Worker* in less than parliamentary language. I am however fortunate enough to be one of the CPGB's critics who has had an opportunity to talk to party members. I have found them all fraternal, respectful of those with different opinions and characterised by far less sectarianism than organisations with less of a reputation for sectarianism. Socialists who disagree with the CPGB can work constructively with them. In this respect they have nothing in common with the Spartacists. That said, I hope every left group can take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Ian Donovan incident to re-examine how we polemicise with one another.

When Mary Ward and Nick Clarke resigned from the CPGB last year, they denounced its culture of deliberately insulting people. Although I did agree, in part, with what they said, I accept that Nick's subsequent portrait of a cuddly, touchy-feely Lenin is as much a distortion of reality as the caricatures bequeathed us by Stalin. Internal polemics within the Bolshevik faction, let alone the broader RSDLP, were regularly no more polite than Jack Conrad at his most venomous. Given however our entirely different political context, I would recommend that Jack, and others, adopt a more consistently sensitive approach. If we want the SSP and the SAs to be as all-embracing as we claim, we need to prove this. Socialists to our right clearly need reassurance that we are not just saying this for form's sake. There will be more than enough die-hard sectarians (and MI5 *agents provocateurs*) looking for an opportunity to prise apart the fragments that have come together (first in Scotland and now, belatedly, throughout the UK), without our playing into their hands.

Although Jack Conrad has expressed irritation (justifiable irritation) that big boys and girls are behaving like prima donnas, the fact of the matter, whether we like it or not, is that there is an enormous well of accumulated bitterness, distrust, even personal loathing, amongst activists already in the SAs, and even more amongst those who remain, as yet, on the periphery. Fragile Egos R Us.

If we want the SAs to be as all-embracing as we say, then we need (for the time being) to preface our criticisms of individuals, and organisations, with the occasional reminder of what exactly unites us, why we feel the need to coexist in a single organisation. The tone with which we criticise one another within the SSP, and within the SAs, has to be able, to some extent, to differentiate friends from foes. We neglect this at our peril. We must not take it for granted that everyone understands this. If we do get complacent about this, we can anticipate that those who mistake us for unreconstructed enemies (a fifth column in effect) will decide to get their retaliation in first.

Hopefully before too long we can dispense with this charade of diplomatically massaging each other's egos. But if this is what it is going to take to get the SA project off the ground throughout the UK, then I for one vote in favour.

Andrew Jamieson
Glasgow

Inadequate old slogans

The recent debacle of the Labour government concerning genetically modified food, in which it once again put the interests of the transnational companies above those of consumers and producers, shows that the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party. The Labour Party is already becoming as universally hated as the Tory Party in its last years of government.

What should the attitude be of revolutionary organisations towards the Labour government in this rapidly changing situation? Firstly, the old slogans of putting Labour to the test are totally inadequate. How many tests does it take before Labour are finally shown to be bourgeois? Secondly, we should have no confidence in this reactionary government and instead develop propaganda calling for its downfall. The main slogan of this propaganda should be: 'For a united revolutionary left and workers' government to replace the Labour government'.

Phil Sharpe
Nottingham

Intimidation

The Irish Republican Socialist Party would like to highlight the recent intimidation of party members in the Galliagh area of Derry this week. IRSP members were distributing the recently produced *Starry Plough* newspaper, which is the national organ of the Republican Socialist Movement, when they were attacked and a small quantity of papers were stolen and burned.

IRSP Ard Comhairle spokesperson Fra Halligan said: "It appears to us that there are people that for whatever reason do not want or are afraid of the nationalist working class communities being made aware of an alternative to the so-called peace process."

In conclusion the IRSP representative stated: "Although this is an isolated incident, we would take this opportunity to call on those responsible to desist immediately. This form of 'political intimidation and censorship' failed in the past and will certainly not succeed in the future."

IRSP
Belfast

Only for the historians?

Because of the response from Detlev Blanke (*Weekly Worker* February 11) I read again 'Hurricane of persecutions' (*Weekly Worker* January 21) in English. I suppose it was intended as a propaganda article [for Esperanto] for the English readers. I do not know the *Weekly Worker* and its tendency. It is the fashion today to see only bad in the Soviet Union.

You are right that Esperanto in the Soviet Union was only able to do anything under the roof of the peace movement (or how the Soviet comrades thought the peace movement ought to look). I, too, never saw the use of the tedious resolutions of MEM (World Esperantist Peace Movement). But one must accept that this was the only possibility of Esperanto life.

Besides, the Soviet Esperantists had a very strong relationship to 'peace' because of their experiences in World War II. For them it was not a problem to declaim romantic poems about the necessity of peace on earth, and at the same time make propaganda for the army. It was absolutely impossible to discuss the right to refuse military service (an important base of the peace movement in the western countries) - not because bureaucrats forbade it, but because it was incomprehensible for them.

I saw the utility of Esperanto in the fact that we were able to discuss these different experiences and enlarge our understanding.

Under the roof of the peace movement one could arrange journeys and meetings. No-one read the official documents and resolutions. In the Soviet Union it was the peace movement, in Hungary the trade unions, in the GDR the so-called Culture League, which made official Esperanto activity possible.

Among the functionaries (the so-called secretaries) there were two kinds. The first adored

capitalism and the western countries. The privileges of position allowed them to travel, to earn western money, to own western goods (video apparatus, computers) which for others were more difficult to acquire. They did not hesitate to ask for support from other Esperantists - for the Esperanto movement, naturally. Often they were able to use their contacts in western Europe to move there. They were the most shameful bureaucrats. They inhibited every autonomous movement in their country's organisation. Officially they were communists, but that was only on the surface.

The second kind were both communist and Esperantist. Usually they led local or special-interest groups on a voluntary basis. They were not paid functionaries of the official organisation.

Hosting westerners was never without a problem. Most often the socialist states preferred methods which hindered direct personal contact. So you sit together in a big hall and vote for peace. Afterwards everyone had to go in different directions; private or individual discussions were not encouraged.

Between people who do not speak the same language that method works easily. In the company of interpreters one cannot discuss freely. But Esperantists were not controllable. They were easily able to agree a separate rendezvous. They sat together in bedrooms, even if the organisers gave separate bedrooms to the various nationalities - or honoured the western visitors with rooms in the most luxurious hotel in the town, where a simple native did not dare go.

But Esperantists jumped over the barriers. They dared, without an official guide, to travel across town, they risked using buses and trams - ordinary westerners did not do that.

Therefore the visit of western Esperantists was always a risky matter for the local organisers. They had to placate the police (who received all the names and a detailed report) and selected harmless themes. Culture was relatively unproblematic, or a theme in congruence with current official politics. They drafted impressive resolutions which said nothing, at least nothing new, but made it possible to mention Esperanto in a positive way in the local press and calm the party functionaries.

From today's perspective it is easy to knock the communists in the socialist countries and put them all in one pot. But the situation was complicated and varied.

I myself, as a participant in the world festival in Moscow, was able during a buffet, to speak with the then deputy chief of the Komsomol [Young Communist League]. He confessed that the situation for young Esperantists was unsatisfactory and the Komsomol was thinking of taking over the youth organisation. Unfortunately this did not take place because of the known developments.

The official organisation in the Soviet Union, responsible for Esperanto on a national level, was tedious, unhelpful, stonelike - just as one imagines a Soviet functionary. But there was a compromise. The Soviet Union could no longer forbid Esperanto because the fraternal countries all had an Esperanto movement. So they used the organisation responsible for international relations. Better than nothing, and an expression of the division of power.

Nevertheless, it is the snow of yesterday, which is of interest only for historians.

Capitalism more successfully destroyed the structures of Esperanto in all of the eastern countries. Money is lacking, as well as other resources, such as free halls for meetings, or modest journals.

Esperanto also failed to communicate to the Esperantists in the socialist countries that they would lose by the introduction of capitalism. They wanted to travel and have a car and a life like westerners. They did not accept that the reality is relatively close to the political teaching which they did not wish to hear.

Roland Schnell
Berlin

Uncomfortable unanimity

Tom Delargy of the Scottish Socialist Party reflects on its founding conference

Something rather odd happened at the SSP's founding conference (Sunday February 21). It was, for the most part, surprisingly pleasant. Everyone must have been pleased with the turnout - 200 or so delegates in a packed-to-capacity hall. On top of that £14,000 raised in pledges towards our target of a £100,000 election fund. Not at all bad. Many excellent speeches. A healthy tolerance of minorities being allowed, even encouraged, to articulate their concerns.

However, the national council ought to come clean and admit that there was a serious fault with the way things were conducted. The motions on the two principal areas of controversy, Europe and drugs, were not seen by delegates until the day of conference. This is unacceptable. These motions, including the preambles to them, were three pages long each. And no opportunity was allowed to suggest amendments. It has to be accepted by the national council that delegates to conference should not feel bounced in this way ever again.

What, for me, gave conference a surreal quality was the utterly unexpected, virtually unanimous backing for positions that I support. On the drugs question I arrived confident that I would be in the majority. What does amaze me is that of the 200 or so delegates, no one abstained and only one voted against Kevin Williamson's paper. Bill Bonnar himself voted for it. What on earth are we to make of this? People do change their minds, especially as a result of a good, open debate. I myself have done this. Many times. But does Bill truly believe, "It is time to recognise that drug use (legal and illegal) is here to stay for the foreseeable future and a strategy needs to be developed which recognises this and has as its primary objective reducing the harm which drugs can cause - through education; providing the necessary resources and back-up; changing whatever drug laws are causing more damage than the drugs themselves - as well as promoting tolerance and understanding towards drug use

ers"? Does he now support "ending the criminalisation and victimisation of drug users by employers and the law"? If he does, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly applaud his change of heart. Several speakers did argue that the motion could have been tougher. Indeed it could. There is, nevertheless, an inexorable logic which will drive the policy of the SSP to make fully explicit that which remains, for the moment, implicit. I just hope everyone who voted for it, Bill included, appreciates just what they have let themselves in for.

If this road-to-Damascus conversion of Bill surprised me, I still find it virtually impossible to take in what happened in the European debate. Once again, Bill and I found ourselves on the same side of the ideological barricades. While it is true that there was an unexpectedly large number of abstentions, not a single delegate voted against the motion! All speakers had to admit that the new motion was a fudge cobbled together at the very last minute. While neither the CWI (especially outside Scotland) nor the anti-CWI coalition of Hugh Kerr, Allan Green and Bill Bonnar can be entirely satisfied, I want to go on the record to say that I am over the moon.

This last-minute fudge between the CWI and the anti-CWI has, inadvertently, given me most of what I wanted. I will not say that I could not have done a better job had I drafted the motion myself. I believe I could. That said, the 'compromise' motion represents one hell of an advance on both of the original motions, neither of which I could have voted for. These focused exclusively on support for and opposition to the Maastricht Treaty and the single currency. CWI members Harvey Duke, Nicky McKerral and Phil Stott all put the case for a 'no' vote in any referendum on the single currency but chose not to push the issue to a vote at conference (this brought criticism from Hannah Sell in this week's *The Socialist*). If I understood Phil correctly, he thinks that the party will need to settle this question prior to the European elections in June. I believe that any attempt to do so would be a serious mistake. Here we have one of the rare occasions where I would enthusiastically echo Bill Bonnar. Let us wait until the referendum is called before taking a definitive decision.

The CWI, Socialist Outlook, the SWP, the Scargillite Labour Party and others have already declared for a 'no' vote. Until quite recently, that was my position. Unlike the CPGB, I still will not categorically rule it out. I am however increasingly attracted to supporting a boycott. Calling for a 'no' vote does not just run the risk of causing confusion between international socialists and rightwing, little Englander xenophobes (and the likelihood is that it will be the latter who will dominate any campaign). Pinning our colours so firmly to the 'no' mast is also liable to create illusions in workers' heads, to foster a complacent attitude that by remaining outside Euroland a capitalist UK, or an independent capitalist Scotland, could evade the convergence criteria. This is unlikely to be the case. Savage cuts of our jobs, wages, welfare state, etc are likely to be justified either by the need to enter Euroland or in order to remain competitive with it.

International socialists need to ensure that the debate at the time of the referendum is not reduced to whether it is preferable for workers' pockets, wallets and bank accounts to be emptied of euros rather than pound sterling, as our jobs and wages are slashed to maintain capitalist profitability. I would

argue that the SSP and our co-thinkers, our comrades south of the border in the Socialist Alliances, need time to compare the pros and cons of a 'no' vote versus a boycott. I would also strongly support the right of Hugh Kerr, Allan Green, Bill Bonnar and others to be given more time to articulate their case for a critical support for the euro.

No one can be in any doubt that if the CWI had lost the vote at this year's conference on the SSP's approach to the referendum, it would have immediately declared its intention to fight, fight and fight again in order to save the party it loves. Hugh, Allan and Bill can be expected to do likewise if and when they lose such a vote. It could be five years or more before Blair gets the bottle to hold a referendum. Do we really want to make a hypocrite of Hugh in the interim by insisting he argues a line on Europe which we all know he rejects? I do not think it is in anyone's interest that we try. And I do not believe he could carry any conviction even if he agreed to do it.

Whenever either side wins a vote on what we should do in the referendum, this will just usher in the first phase of the losers' attempt to get the decision overturned. We ought therefore, if we can, to postpone any decision until we need to make one. Conference's motion on the euro stated: "While recognising that what we are witnessing is part of a natural development within the European capitalist system, we will actively oppose and campaign against any and every proposal which acts against the interests of the working class. This includes opposition to the draconian cuts in public expenditure necessary to meet the criteria for the establishment of the euro." If Hugh, Allan and Bill can live with this, I believe they have conceded as much as we can reasonably ask, especially given the amount of time left before the announcement of the referendum.

I can be accused (I fully expect to be accused) of sitting on the fence by those who have already made up their minds in favour of a boycott and by those, the majority, who support a 'no' vote. But I refuse to be bounced years in advance of the referendum. We ought to fraternally debate this question, as we ought to debate every issue of substance. Openly and honestly. When it comes to debating our differences, being on the winning side, though nice, is not everything.

I have to own up to feeling more than a little concerned about the unanimity, or near unanimity, of votes on questions which initially appeared to be extremely controversial. In addition to the unfortunate way that delegates were presented with these motions, and the lack of opportunity to amend them, another factor might account for the remarkable absence of dissent. The desire to be on the winning side is the type of opportunism which so swelled the ranks of Stalinist parties in the past.

Bourgeois and social democratic parties are also corrupted by this culture of opportunism and mindlessly following the leader. Our culture has to be different. It has to be one of encouraging minorities to express their dissident views, and to have their own views challenged in turn. This is one reason why I support Hugh, Bill, Allan and others not to have to pretend they oppose Emu when they clearly do not. It is also why I am pleased that Phil Stott, Nicky McKerral, Harvey Duke, Hannah Sell and all CWI members, north and south of the border, have finally gone public in openly criticising Hugh, Bill and Allan for supporting a 'democratic Europe' and a 'people's Europe' which remains a capitalist Europe. I do not apologise for the fact that on this question I stand unambiguously alongside the CWI, parting company with the CPGB, leaving them in the capable hands of Bill, Hugh and Allan ●

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: 5pm Sunday March 7 - 'Oriental despotism', using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* vol I as a study guide
For details phone 0181-459 7146.

Manchester: Monday March 15, 7.30pm - 'The industrial reserve army', in the series on Karl Marx's *Capital*.
Phone 0161-226 6133 for details.
E-mail: cpgb2@aol.com

■ Party wills

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

■ London Socialist Alliance

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

■ Socialist Alliance

Launch meeting of Socialist Alliance, formerly known as United Socialists: Tuesday March 9, 7.30pm, at Friends Meeting House, Euston.

Trade union rally: Saturday April 17, 2pm, at South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, NW1.

North West Recall conference: Saturday March 6, 12 noon, at YMCA building, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. Meeting to plan European election campaign in the North West.

■ Glasgow Marxist Forum

Public meeting - 'Marxism and the national question' - should socialists campaign for a federal republic? Speaker - Mary Ward.

Wednesday March 10, 7.30pm, Partick Burgh Hall. All welcome.

■ March for jobs!

There will be a major demonstration in Cologne on May 29 to coincide with the heads of government summit of the EU. This will be a protest against unemployment, job insecurity, social exclusion and racism. It will be the follow-up march to the 50,000-strong demonstration in Amsterdam in June 1997. The Cologne demonstration is expected to be at least the same size, if not bigger.

To organise effective participation from Britain under the banner of Cologne '99 a meeting has been called, open to all interested organisations and individuals. It will be held on Saturday March 6 at ULU, Malet Street, London, 11.30am-4.30pm (nearest tube - Goodge Street).

For more details contact Andy Robertson (secretary of Euromarch Liaison Committee). Tel: 0191-222 0299. E-mail: EUROMUK@aol.com.

■ Fuascailt

Picket Downing Street to demand the removal of restrictions on POWs being transferred from England to Portlaoise. Sunday March 7, 12 noon.

■ Mumia must live

The coalition is open to all who support the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the racist death penalty. A rally is being organised in London on April 25 as part of a huge wave of international protest aimed at freeing Mumia and making this a focus for a broad struggle against the barbarous use of legalised murder - the death penalty.

Next organising meeting - Thursday March 11, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube).
mumia@callnetuk.com, www.callnetuk.com/home/mumia.

■ Turkish rights

Rally against disappearances - support the 'Saturday mothers' for International Women's Day. Saturday March 6, 4pm, Trafalgar Square.

■ Dover Residents Against Racism

For details phone Patrick on (01304) 216102 or Martin on (01304) 206140.

■ Support Tameside careworkers

Support Group meets every Monday, 7pm, at the Station pub, Warrington Street, Ashton under Lyne. Donations and solidarity to Tameside Unison, 29 Booth Street, Ashton under Lyne.

■ Strike Support Group

Solidarity with workers in struggle. Meets every Monday at 7.30pm. The Cook Tavern, Phoenix Road, Euston. For more information call 0171-249 0041 or write to SSG, 145 Imperial Avenue, Victorian Road, London N16 8HL.

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Left unity Unprincipled manoeuvres

In its February 4 issue, the *Weekly Worker* exposed the attempts by Mike Davies, the Leeds-based secretary of the Independent Labour Network, to force a "renegotiation" of what he called the "ultra left" and "non-viable" Socialist Alliance platform agreed in London by the initial participants in the slate for June's European elections. Comrade Davies's sectarian clumsiness now seems to have blown up in his face. A 'national' meeting he called, in Leeds on February 27, to which only the 'usual suspects' received invitations, turned into a fiasco.

Just 10 'delegates' turned up, with four others who arrived without credentials being relegated to 'observers' benches. On the kosher side of the hall were ranged three representatives of Leeds ILN; two personal representatives of Ken Coates, the Nottinghamshire MEP and co-founder of the ILN; two Socialist Party members (from Leeds and Doncaster); a single Londoner, Toby Abse of the metropolitan ILN; and two members of the steering committee of Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance.

In the opening minutes of the meeting, it became apparent that comrade Davies had also been at work in the West Midlands as well as London. These are the two regions in which a Socialist Alliance has, so far, been declared. Davies expressed his disappointment at the absence of West Midlands delegates, a factor which, he suggested, would greatly limit what the meeting might be able to achieve. This brought an interjection by comrade Declan O'Neill of the GMSA steering committee.

He said he could shed some light on this matter. He proceeded to read an open letter from John Rothery, deputy leader of the Walsall Democratic Labour Party and an influential figure in the West Midlands Socialist Alliance. This referred to the deterioration in relations between the West Midlands SA and the ILN, which had followed comrade Davies's actions in "calling meetings to which only a select few are invited".

Comrade Rothery's letter prompted a blistering attack upon Mike Davies by Toby Abse. He made plain the "total distrust" in which Davies was now held by London ILN members. The latter was obliged to offer some explanation. "Cock up, not conspiracy," he asked those present to believe. In respect of the current meeting, for instance, he had agreed the date only a fortnight ago with John Nicholson, the joint convenor of the Network of Socialist Alliances and he was surprised that comrade Nicholson had not turned up. "Pressure of work" had delayed his posting of the notices, which had meant that they were received rather late, or at worst, not in time, by so many invitees.

The attempted Davies-Nicholson axis was revealed. But its early demise is most certainly not linked to any commitment to unity Nicholson may claim to have. Rather it is sentiments issuing from the powerful West Midlands component of the Network of Socialist Alliances that appear to have put paid to it.

Comrade Rothery's remarks are echoed in the Liaison Group's recently published paper (*The All Red and Green* No4, spring 1999). The other Network joint convenor, Pete McLaren, writes: "The way our socialist programme has been decided, and the way of electing our candidates, has varied from region

to region. Such local autonomy is what the Network is all about."

He goes on: "The names 'Left Alliance' and 'Socialist Alliance' were amongst those agreed [at the December 1998 national ILN meeting in Doncaster] to be registered. It was hoped regional socialist lists would stand under the same name to enhance publicity, but recent reported attempts by some in the ILN to impose a programme and possibly candidates in some areas suggest this sadly may not now be possible." It has not taken arch-opportunist Nicholson long to realise that a link with Davies could cause more difficulties than it is worth.

Superficially undaunted, comrade Davies moved onto the issue of "the title" of the united slate in the various regions. Yorkshire and Humberside wanted to run under the banner 'Left Alliance', he reported, whilst it was now apparent that London and the West Midlands preferred 'Socialist Alliance'. "Is it still possible to agree a common title?" he asked. At this stage, comrade Ken Fleet, for Ken Coates MEP, reported that the latter had registered the title 'Alternative Labour List'. He stressed, however, that a decision had not yet been made on whether to put-up a slate in the East Midlands. Comrade Coates is still "consulting his constituents, although many people are encouraging him to run". This matter might best be left until after the registrar of political parties had given his rulings, in mid-March, on which titles were to be accepted, the Coates delegation suggested.

A retreating Mike Davies proposed that the meeting be closed, to be reconvened on Sunday March 28, at a Birmingham venue, in order to facilitate the attendance of delegates who will have travelled to the previous day's Network of Socialist Alliances conference in the same city. He went on to propose that delegation rights on that occasion be granted to the participating organisations in each of the regional slates. This at least was a clearly constructive and democratic formula, but it was killed by a rapid intervention by the Yorkshire Socialist Party delegates, supported by Chris Jones, of the GMSA steering committee and Socialist Outlook. "We are not just here for elections," they concurred. Comrade Davies withdrew his motion and the meeting ended with a shabby status quo.

The right wing of the tentative alliances has clearly suffered a setback. But, as recent developments in London have shown (see *Weekly Worker* February 18), it will now increasingly be the case that the 'drag anchor' role will be taken up by ostensibly 'revolutionary' organisations like Socialist Outlook, and by the conservative elements of the deeply fractured Socialist Party. Whilst SO argues in the London meetings for a "broad" platform and "broad" slates, preferably headed by minor celebrities, the February edition of its monthly paper contains *not one mention* of the European election socialist unity project.

A major challenge thus remains for communists working within the alliances, who desire to see concrete steps taken in making a politically independent working class and in securing a clean and permanent break, not only with Blair's New Labour, but with Labourism ●

John Pearson

Call for SLP compromise

In a last desperate move as party members, officers of West Ham, Lewisham East and Deptford CSLPs break Scargill's ban on the circulation of documents

February 22 1999

Please pass on to all CSLPs, sections and affiliated unions

Dear Comrades,
We are very pleased to report that Carolyn Sikorski, Brian Heron, Terry Dunn and Helen Drummond (all founder members of the SLP) for the time being remain in the party.

The 'complaint' taken out by Arthur against these comrades was scheduled for February 13. But the complaints committee decided that they could not hear the 'complaint'. (Arthur's 'complaint' came in two versions. The first, on January 5, said that the four had refused to comply with an NEC instruction to withdraw the Appeal and "cease their activities". The second, on January 27, claimed that they had "contravened" 13 clauses of the constitution: clause VI (2) and (4), clause III (3), clause VI (1) and (3), clause VII (1) and clause X (3); and Clause III (3) - again - and (4), clause XI (2) and (4), clause XII (3) and (6) and clause VII (4).

The essence of the matter remains the right of party members, or (now) constituencies, to put forward an appeal for 25% support by the membership for a special congress

Before the hearing started on February 13, Imran Khan (as a party member, friend and representative of the 'respondents') pointed out that the complaint should not go ahead because the complaints procedure could not be followed. There was no appeal panel established by congress, as required by the procedure.

At first Arthur argued there was a panel. It had been appointed on his suggestion at the January 1999 NEC. He quoted a general clause in the constitution that allows the NEC to stand in for the congress between congresses.

However, the complaints procedure adopted at the 1997 congress states categorically that the appeal panel "shall" be nominated by congress. This is completely mandatory. Other clauses in the procedure allow more flexibility. This one does not. Also, it is natural justice that the appeal panel is entirely separate from the NEC. The NEC may be involved on one side or another in a complaint. (The procedure states that it is guided, at all times, by natural justice.)

In this case Arthur's accusation related to an NEC instruction. The three-person complaints committee, established by Arthur, was all male and, crucially, contained two NEC members. The complaints committee impartiality was therefore open to question from the outset, given the NEC member's involvement, which broke with any sense of 'natural justice'.

Arthur said he would have to take the matter back to the NEC.

He explained that the NEC by itself could carry out any disciplinary measures, including expulsion. Paul Hardman, as chair of the complaints committee, then said that Arthur was right and the hearing was over. As the rest of the complaints committee had not yet uttered a word on the matter, the 'respondents' and their friends offered to leave to enable the committee to discuss what they were going to do. The complaints committee agreed. After a five-minutes meeting the committee said they had decided that they could not go ahead with the hearing.

It was pointed out by the 'respondents' that the complaints procedure had been drawn up in the first place because the idea of trial, judgment and sentence by the NEC, especially when the NEC were involved in a complaint, was grossly unfair. It is important that the party acts to stop expulsions by the NEC. The next scheduled NEC is on March 20.

In addition to the charges, Arthur has now written four letters to West Ham CSLP. He *refuses* to give them, "or anyone else", a list of the secretaries of CSLPs and affiliated unions and sections. He *refuses* to circulate the Appeal for a Special Congress to discuss how our Party is organised *despite the Appeal now being presented by a constituency*. It seems that the clause giving 25% of the membership the right to call a congress does not really exist.

Further anti-democratic steps have been taken. 'CSLP women's sections' have now been told not to give information to national women's section officers; regions have been told they cannot circulate motions they have passed to CSLPs in their regions. Some people seem to be given names and addresses or information about their areas or sections; others are refused.

In his latest letters Arthur takes another step which undermines our party's democracy. He states that no CSLP, union or section of the party may write to any other, without permission of the congress, the NEC or without going first through the "general secretary's office".

We need to sort this out quickly. The whole party needs to settle these and many other questions about our internal party organisation. Clearly they are not answered by our constitution. We cannot accept a situation where one officer, however important to the party, simply makes up new rules as we go along. Questions as important as these need to be answered by the membership after proper discussion.

If we do not have a special congress to deal with these issues then our next full congress will have to be four days. Congress arrangements committee voted

down a proposal for a properly prepared four-day conference. It decided on a two-day congress in November 1999. But we cannot sort out the growing list of anti-democratic rulings or the serious problems in our organisation, as well as all the other vital political issues, in a rushed, two-day congress in the 1997 congress style. Let us deal with the problems in a rational and a comradesly spirit.

The long delay now in dealing with Arthur's charges; the undermining effect on the party of these charges and the discussion which is starting on counter-charges; Arthur's 'rulings'; impositions by the NEC, etc, etc are affecting the functioning and the future of the party. These problems will not go away by trying to silence those who voice them, but good members will leave if they are not democratically resolved.

In light of this three CSLPs propose the following compromise:

1. All charges (and potential counter-charges) relating to the matter of the Appeal for a Special Congress are dropped.
2. The NEC decides to convene a special congress on internal organisational issues, for one day only, in July, which can make decisions and if necessary amend the constitution. Constituencies, affiliates and sections to send in brief resolutions on those matters only.
3. The appeal panel to be established at the special congress.
4. The NEC to draw up a paper looking at the best month for annual congress and submit a rule change to the special congress with immediate effect.
5. A special commission be established by the NEC composed half of supporters of the Appeal and half of opponents (if they wish) to agree an agenda and do the work to organise the special congress.

We put forward this resolution to the next meeting of the NEC with the genuine desire to get all of the SLP moving again. We call on all parts of our party to support this compromise. It is not too late. But we will not be able to challenge Blair's leadership of the labour movement if our democratic credentials are getting worse than those of New Labour. Our party started on a great wave of enthusiasm and commitment. That came, partly, from the sense that the SLP was something new on the British left: open, democratic and full of respect for every comrade's experience and opinion if they dropped membership of any previous party. That is the foundation to which we must return. Support this resolution before the next NEC.

In comradeship
Ann Brook, John Mulrenan, Terry Dunn

Still loyal to Arthur

Royston Bull, editor of the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* and vice-president of the SLP, was expelled last month (see p8). We reproduce the main text his January letter sent to Scargill just before he was hauled before the notorious complaints committee

I can see no real solution to this problem [Scargill's NEC resolution and the demand for *EPSR* closure or self-censorship on SLP politics; and the subsequent announcement that he was to take his recently elected vice-president before the complaints committee - ed] other than to offer my resignation as SLP vice-president.

As explained below, *EPSR* closure is not an option for all kinds of reasons. Socialist Labour is a coalition of anti-capitalist tendencies which has declared itself open also to those who argue for a Marxist-Leninist approach to the class struggle - provided, of course, that it is the SLP that is being built and nothing else, and no organised factions.

The *EPSR* has always fully supported this SLP unitary constitutionalism, and fully supports it still, and will carry on advocating its support. However, it is obvious that having someone so prominently connected with the *EPSR* elected to a leading position in the party has created some difficulties.

Were these political differences (such as over the extent and nature of the imperialist crisis and how this should affect the work, propaganda and development of the SLP), I would stand my ground and argue. I would consider that a proper contribution to the SLP. But arguing over the apparent implication that it is a liability for the SLP to have as vice-president someone so identified with the *EPSR* seems pointless to me. If the SLP leadership is not happy with such a relationship, then there is no point in forcing it.

(1) The *EPSR* is an independent journal publishing for nearly 20 years and supported by far wider circles than the handful of readers and contributors who happen to have joined the SLP in the last two years. It is partly backed by financial support which is only available "for the publication of an independent Marxist journal". It is out of the question that the *EPSR* would ever cease to publish a weekly Marxist commentary on the international class struggle and in particular from the perspective of the UK workers' movement.

(2) What I was asked for at the December 12 NEC was an undertaking *in writing* in respect of a very detailed, complexly worded motion of which no copies were available, and which I was hearing for the very first time in a farcically rushed last few minutes of an agenda which the chairman was insisting would have to be abandoned at any second because there were trains to catch, etc. In an effort to be helpful to committee proceedings which seemed to me to be incorrectly conducted but which I was new to, I gave assent to what I thought would be a possible way of satisfying the party on compliance with that motion.

(5) With no acknowledgement of that *written* undertaking (delivered as requested by December 31), you now return to an *EPS Review* published on December 15. Presumably, either the written undertaking was considered inadequate, or a different issue has arisen, or the goalposts have been moved.

(6) But even though much of the ma-

terial of the December 15 publication had been prepared before the week-end of December 12-13 (when I was occupied with the business of that SLP NEC meeting in London), and I had less involvement than usual in bringing out that issue, I am as content for the *EPSR* to be judged on No979 as any other, from the point of view of the SLP constitution and the NEC resolution of December 12. Let these matters be sorted out once and for all.

(7) No979 has this small criticism about an SLP refusal to comment on the moral and political crisis for the American ruling class over Clinton: "A workers' party should try to give a lead to the working class over all such politically prominent moralising upheavals" - fully in line with its 20-year fight for Marxist philosophy, and in line with motions moved at SLP congress. Such a comment would have been routine at any time for the *EPSR* to make on a significant party in the labour movement in 20 years analysing developments there. If that is considered "commenting on the affairs of the SLP" in defiance of an NEC instruction, then the presumed offences will be never-ending because the SLP is a key part of the labour movement and its decisions will always be central to any commentary on how the class struggle will be fought.

(8) The Trotskyite factionalising against the SLP is attacked comprehensively, just as Trotskyism has always been attacked for 20 years as anti-communism and anti-Marxism, and as it will continue to be so attacked. The ex-IMG grouping known as Fisc represent a relatively prominent typical trend in recent Trotskyism and might come under attack at any time for what they do, and not just because they have become involved in the SLP (as would appear to be being alleged if this is the cause of the complaint). It is their reactionary Trotskyite fake 'leftism' which is the problem, not specifically that they are now practising it around the SLP. They are routinely criticised as unrepentant defeatists, just like all the Trots, who refuse to give up misleading the working class by getting Ireland wrong, the imperialist crisis wrong, their itch for 'left' alliances wrong, etc. Trotskyism will remain in the *EPSR*'s firing line.

The bilious Trot outburst insisting that "cranky Marxism" should have been "swept away along with the Berlin Wall" just happens to be one of those memorable illuminating moments which define fake 'left' reaction in politics, and it just happens to have been uttered at a London region SLP meeting [by Fisc's Brian Heron - ed]. It will have to go on being referred to again and again. The question of the role of the world's first workers' states in the 20th century will inevitably remain the absolute front line of all class war ideological struggle, and will have to be returned to again, and again, and again.

(9) There may be other points of complaint against *EPSR* No979, which can be responded to when presented, but the point of this general defence of the *EPSR*'s position is to explain what its policy has to remain (as an independent journal), decided 17 years

before the SLP was thought of, and decided and maintained by a loose alliance of theoretically like-minded socialists, most of whom have no connection with the SLP.

(10) The problem arises over people closely involved in the *EPSR*'s 20-years publication who have then become active in the SLP - in particular myself who has been the *Review*'s immediate past editor.

(11) But the oddity here is that three years ago when the *EPSR* was running frequent polemical arguments about the SLP (before deciding by an editorial board majority to be generally supportive of the SLP project), some of the criticisms that were made were inevitably hostile. The arguments finally settled down towards being increasingly encouraging about the working class building the SLP, to such an extent that the *Review* is now routinely jeered at by the Trotskyite swamp as being 'sycophantic' towards the SLP. Yet part of the complaint would seem to be that by becoming more and more supportive of the SLP project the *EPSR* has earned for itself the wish of the SLP leadership that it should be closed down.

(12) As for individuals with an *EPSR* background such as myself, how does my position differ, say, from a very prominent SLP member [Alec McFadden - ed] who is very closely associated with the Welfare State Network newspaper, an individual who has publicly campaigned inside the SLP for the party to become organised supporters of the *Morning Star*, that sad vestige of revisionist degeneracy, and whose WSN paper agitates for the working class to vote and support New Labour! - just as the *Morning Star* does? Surely if people who have been actively responsible for spreading that sort of theoretical and practical backwardness can be encouraged in their SLP membership, the people responsible for the *EPSR*'s development into becoming the scourge of the SLP's enemies and detractors (ie, all the Trots and revisionists with their "left alliance" and "pro-'left Labour' MPs" factionalising, their anti-unitary-party oppositionism, their defeatism, and their anti-Scargill organisational agitation, etc) should be welcomed even more?

How does the SLP standing of a journalist whose paper has won scores of people to become active SLP members compare with that of a journalist [Victoria Brittain - ed] whose paper *The Guardian* publishes nothing but contemptuous attacks on the SLP, the NUM, on communists, and on the workers' states, and runs warmongering propaganda direct from the CIA against China, Korea, Kampuchea, Zimbabwe, etc, and whose own material takes a western imperialist line against Kabila in the Congo??

Even the *Socialist News* publishes articles advocating non-SLP policy (such as separate schools for black children in Britain, and a Blairite retreat from arguing for socialism on the doorstep, etc) which the *EPS Review* would not touch with a barge pole.

And unlike other papers in support of the SLP, the *EPS Review* is right in the forefront of ideological struggle, having produced the only coherent theory of the dialectical puzzle of the

Soviet Union's priceless strengths and achievements coupled with its catastrophic failing; having been light years ahead of everyone else in explaining the importance for the fight for socialism in Britain of the triumphant national liberation struggle in Ireland which the Trots and revisionists describe as a defeat; and having consistently exposed the looming crisis for American imperialism and revisionism when Trotskyism and revisionism was still doubting the economic crisis, and defeatistly capitulating ideologically to the supposedly all-powerful US 'New World Order', etc, etc, etc.

(13) And if a complaints committee investigation is called for, should it not be into who leaked details of that December 12 NEC meeting to the following issue of the *Weekly Worker*, a paper totally hostile to the SLP, rather than against the subsequent *EPSR* issue, which made no mention of NEC proceedings? Should it not be an investigation against whoever has leaked the details to the *Weekly Worker* of every single NEC meeting that has ever taken place, as opposed to the *EPSR* which has *never* reported or commented on NEC proceedings ever?

Should it not be a complaints committee investigation against whoever was responsible for supplying the *Weekly Worker* with the full text of a factionalising, all-out attack ['Renewing our sense of purpose', written by then vice-president Pat Sikorski - ed] recently by SLP prominent Trots on how the party has produced nothing but "weakness in organisation" and "weakness in collective leadership which undermines goodwill among members" and "recreates all the old demoralisation and cynicism so familiar on the traditional left", etc? Or a complaints committee investigation into the factional and unconstitutional agitation for a special congress of the party as a way of refusing to accept the official special congress results?

Or an investigation into the monstrous vilification campaign which the CPGB Trots started up because they felt they had been beaten by pro-constitution *EPSR* agitation, and which Fisc Trots then took up as a way of hoping to reject the special congress results which went against them?

(14) I offered to submit myself to a full-scale party inquiry into these foul allegations of 'homophobia', but it was rejected as "seeking to continue an internecine debate" on my part!! No such thing. It was the internecine Trots in the SLP who started all this, outrageously distorting *EPSR* articles on the Labour Hackney council's 'politically correct' cover-up for the 16-year paedophile career of Hackney Labour councillor Mark Trotter, and on the New Labour government farcical 'one lapse of judgement' cover-up of the pitifully shambolic Welsh secretary, Ron Davies - solely in order to manufacture a 'victory' over the *EPSR* (having lost every political argument to the *EPSR*'s superior Marxist understanding of the world, and stauncher backing for the SLP's constitution and subsequent development). Exposing this Labour Party use of PC nonsense to cover up the failings of rotten opportunists was 'internecine' to no one in the SLP other than to the artificially exaggerating Trotskyites, who were looking for any excuse to start a campaign of vilification against the *EPSR* and myself in particular.

And the hypocrisy of these people is unbelievable. The most abusive

'homophobic' stunt-vilification by the defeated Trots after the election results which closed the November 1998 special congress came from Tony and Ann Goss. Here is how these Sikorski backers were characterised just two years earlier in the *Weekly Worker* Trot rag:

[Using his familiar cut-and-paste technique, Bull reproduces an SL Kenning article from the *Weekly Worker* of November 21 1996, where Sikorski's support for the Gosses, despite their own anti-gay prejudices, was exposed.]

But far from any protection from this disgusting Trot practice of using the most deliberately inflammatory personal vilification to score points when political argument fails, this complaints procedure is now unwittingly encouraging this abuse tactic by giving it further credence.

(15) The implication of organised entryism and of being a party within a party is particularly unpleasant. The *EPSR* has never campaigned against any election result; or agitated for any special congress; or tried to manipulate the women's section for its own political ends - or the black section as it was; or publicised a slate of candidates; or threatened to strike and to consciously defy the constitution; or campaigned systematically against any party policy; or ever held any party-manoeuvring planning meeting or ever urged its readership to do so; or do anything other than what it has always done - which is to put out a weekly commentary on the international class struggle, including observations on the more noteworthy philosophical and political shifts of significant tendencies within the British labour movement, which must include the SLP.

(16) The *EPSR*'s original analysis, made during the birth of the SLP, is that the party could become a major centrist revival movement for the cause of socialism in this country, helpful to restoring working class confidence in socialism, and as such deserved to be actively supported by those specifically fighting also to keep Marxist revolutionary science alive as a necessary part of that fight for socialism.

(17) It has been the *EPSR*'s understanding that such an aim could remain fully compatible with active, loyal membership of the SLP. It is nice to think that perhaps the congress vote for me as vice-president reflected the same sentiment, but maybe not.

(18) I certainly have no wish to be at odds with the party leadership on an issue such as this, which surely should have been sorted out ages ago. And the *EPSR* has not the slightest interest in collecting positions of offices inside the SLP. It has one interest only - the permanent fight for a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the world. SLP-building helps that and is helped by it.

(19) If what you are saying with this complaints procedure is that such a prominent *EPSR* link as myself is an uncomfortable problem in the leadership of the SLP, then I would prefer to offer my resignation herewith, rather than haggle with the complaints committee over the finer points of interpretation of what each clause in the constitution actually means, etc.

I see all this as a political question, not a disciplinary matter and, apart from the additional comments I might want to make once the full details of the complaint are presented, all that I want to say on the subject is contained in this statement, which I would request goes immediately to all members of the NEC for their decision ●

Around the left

Tailing Macpherson

Organisations guided by dogmatic ideology are doomed to eventual irrelevance. Regrettably, the left is saturated with dogma. For the last 40 years those like Peter Taaffe have been predicting the imminent collapse of capitalism - and the red 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s ... A decade ago they were telling us that the reactionary collapse of the bureaucratic socialist states heralded a new Trotskyite or some such dawn. Now the same comrades are insisting semi-hysterically that the police are not "reformable" and that British society remains permeated by some mysterious - though ever shifting - force called "institutionalised racism" - the more you say it, the more the recruits are supposed to flock in.

Bluntly, the left cannot get to grips at all with a post-Macpherson Report Britain, based on a thoroughly safe anti-racism. The new ideology is embraced - eagerly and genuinely - by virtually *all* sections of the establishment. Nowadays, the very definition of respectability is to be anti-racist - not to mention anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, etc. Racism among the 'chattering classes' is the ultimate abhorrence - and to be *perceived* as not being zealous enough in your anti-racism is a social *faux pas*.

Clearly, anti-racism is now part and parcel of *bourgeois* ideology.

But the left, frozen by fossilised dogma, cannot see what is staring it in the face. Or rather, *it does not want to see*. This is for the relatively simple reason that the rapidly developing - and evolving - ideology of anti-racism contradicts one of the key tenets of left dogma. That is, the non-materialist decree that capitalism - and hence the bourgeois state - is inherently racist. That is the absolute truth which cannot change. All bourgeois politicians who say they are anti-racist must by definition be liars and hypocrites. Amen.

Socialist Worker (February 27) provides us with a marvellous case study in anti-racist denial. Its front page thunders, "Condon out! - Police are racist to the core." Inside, there are references to the "scum" who murdered Stephen Lawrence. And so on. But language like this could just as easily be lifted from the *Daily Mail*. Indeed, on occasions it is not always easy to distinguish the front page of *Socialist Worker* - or most of the other soft Trotskyist/Labourite/economistic left papers - from the *Daily Mail*'s. (After all, if anything, the *Daily Mail* has been more militant than the *Socialist Worker* in its anti-racism *vis-à-vis* the 'Lawrence Five'.)

In fact, *Socialist Worker*'s entire coverage of the Stephen Lawrence affair amounts to little more than warmed over left liberalism. Its editorial, with the wonderfully self-parodic title, 'Not time for half measures', quotes a WPC as saying about her fellow officers: "There's a hard core of about 20% who are racist." This of course begs the obvious question of how the police force can be "racist to the core" if 80% are *not* racist. Anyway, the editorial states: "These 20% of open racists set the tone for the rest. Paul Wilson of the Black Police Association [no doubt racist to the core] says ... 'The culture takes hold. The last thing you do is put your head above the parapet.'" The editorial solemnly concludes: "This is what is meant by 'pernicious and institutionalised racism'."

.....
 "It is entirely possible for the state to launch a campaign to purge the police of racists ... you can be sure that if William Hague was asked whether he thinks they should be dismissed, his response would almost certainly be, 'Yes - kick the lot out now'"

It is instructive that *Socialist Worker* - as do almost all the left - adopt and parrot the anti-racist language and terminology of the bourgeoisie. It also appears that it wants the bourgeoisie to make the police acceptable: "There will be many calls for reform of the police over the next few weeks. They will fight any challenge to the way they operate tooth and nail. Now is no time for half measures. Just to begin getting rid of racism in the police would require purging the openly racist elements from the ranks. Are 20% of police to be booted out?"

Well, SWP comrades, despite the rhetorical nature of the question, it is entirely possible for the state to launch a campaign to purge the police of racists. Whatever the proportion "booted out", you can be sure that if, for example, William Hague was asked in the Commons tomorrow whether he thinks the '20% hard core racists' should be dismissed, his response would almost certainly be, 'Yes - kick the lot out now'. Or does the SWP think that Hague is a secret racist?

Frankly, to describe the SWP's own approach to the police as a "half measure" would be too generous. Nowhere in *Socialist Worker* does it make the propaganda call for the police to be opposed and replaced with workers' militias. The *real* nature of the police force - which is to preserve, maintain and defend bourgeois society on behalf of the ruling class - is not alluded to. There is absolutely no reason why the police cannot perform this invaluable function in a solidly anti-racist, though undoubtedly anti-working class manner.

This heresy is banished from the pages of *Socialist Worker*. The best we get is a limp, vague plea that "the pressure on the police needs to be stepped up now. No one should be fobbed off by cosmetic changes."

The irony is that the SWP is lagging behind *The Guardian*. Last week, Jonathan Freedland mooted the idea that the Metropolitan police force should be disbanded on the grounds that it was irredeemably racist. Why bother with *Socialist Worker*

when you have *The Guardian*?

Predictably, the SWP's response to the Macpherson Report is just to trot out the same old economic recipes. No *high* politics. For example on Radio 4's 'Any questions?' programme, the SWP member, comedian Mark Steel, recommended to listeners that if they heard workmates spouting racism they should tell them to stop talking crap. Quite right. But what about political demands? How do we challenge *the state*? Nothing but a very significant silence.

We have long commented, and will continue to do so, on how the left confuses national chauvinism - or even just general xenophobia - with racism. However, we are now seeing a further degeneration in the left's analysis. It - and the bourgeoisie of course - are busily redefining racism so it is starting to mean just some sort of prejudice - any prejudice. We see this abject confusion in Alex Callinicos's article, 'No defence to blame all'.

Naturally, it quickly gets in an enthusiastic plug for the Macpherson Report and its definition of racism. Callinicos comments: "Britain is indeed a racist society, but this is not because most people here are racist. It is because the fundamental structures of this society systematically discriminate against black people in jobs, education, housing and other areas of life. The Macpherson Report has just confirmed what every black person knows - that racism is institutionalised in the Metropolitan Police."

On the previous Scarman definition this is patently false. Sir Paul Condon was not called the "PC pc" for nothing. And what about John Grieve, assistant deputy commissioner and head of the Met's violent and racial crimes unit? He has a passion for the works of Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Bob Dylan, and is a man on a mission to "nick a few racists" - almost the sort of man you would be proud to be seen selling *Socialist Worker* with. These two men are 'impeccably' anti-racist. The policies and guidelines they are *attempting* to implement - often of course against the resentment of some in the lower ranks - are those of *bona-fide* anti-racism.

Callinicos, naturally, does not deal with this. Rather he gives very curious examples of so-called racism: "Some workers see themselves as belonging, with the bosses, to the dominant 'race' or 'nation', while others are excluded as inferiors and outsiders. A classic example is the sectarian division between protestant and catholic workers, the latter of Irish origin, which developed in many British industrial cities during the 19th century. This gave the Tories a hold on working class constituencies in Liverpool that was only eradicated in the 1960s."

Callinicos's analysis is predicated on a massive leap in logic. Like many on the left, he presents us with a description of national chauvinism - or prejudice, communal-religious bigotry, labour aristocratic arrogance, etc - and then casually proceeds to label it racism - which is presumably based on some hocus-pocus biological classification of humanity into four or five 'races'. How on earth can antagonism between catholic and protestant workers be described as 'racism'? That would make the 1642 English Revolution a 'race' war between puritans and high churchers. Both

groups of workers share the same language and the same nationality. Indeed, both belong to the same 'race', if you want to use the unscientific and backward terminology of both racism and official anti-racism.

This all demonstrates the irrationality which is gripping official society over racism and the 'race issue'. Therefore, as the left is tied by a thousand invisible reformist-opportunist-economist strings to bourgeois society, it too reproduces the garbage about racism. Dismally, the SWP is reduced to playing anti-racist footsie with the bourgeoisie.

But if you thought *Socialist Worker*'s coverage was bad, the Socialist Party's is a hundred times worse. The SP is craven in its superstitious deference to official anti-racism and is full of eminently respectable plans to reform the police force and civil society in general. On the front page we read: "A mass campaign is needed to force Condon to quit and bring the police to account. But there also needs to be more far-reaching change than the current, completely inadequate measures. Increasing race relations training for police and toughening laws against racist crime is not an adequate solution, especially when even existing laws like the Race Relations Act of 1976 are not properly enforced." Elsewhere, comrade Mark Wainwright argues: "We support the rooting out of individual racists, support real anti-racist training and extending the anti-discrimination laws" (February 26).

So, the SP's response to the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and the Macpherson Report is to call for the bourgeois state to accrue more draconian powers - perhaps making anti-racist language illegal even in private and abolishing double jeopardy. The fact of the matter is that the Race Relations Act paved the way for subsequent bureaucratic anti-racist measures, the main purpose of which is to divide the masses along the grounds of 'race' and reduce the workers to mere ethnic supplicants to the bourgeois state.

Not that we should be surprised by the SP's anti-racist authoritarianism. The SP vision is of a 'socialism'

handed down to the workers by benevolent state functionaries - for which the workers are meant to be suitably grateful.

The establishment accepts only too well that an injustice has been done - and is *frantically* looking for a redress, even if means fundamentally changing English law - in an authoritarian direction. We should be clear. In its determination to nobble the 'Lawrence Five' the state is quite prepared to remove *our* democratic rights.

Just like the SWP, the SP ends up appealing to reformism and abstract socialism. Speaking on our behalf yet again, it declares: "Socialists will always fight for a thorough reform and increased accountability of the police. We are also in favour of measures which undermine racist attitudes and prejudice. But such measures will have a limited effect unless linked to a socialist transformation of society; the one recommendation the Macpherson inquiry was never likely to give."

But in the meantime, while we are waiting for the new socialist millennium when nobody will be prejudiced, we should be fighting "for the kind of 'policing' people feel is needed, locally and nationally" ... and, no, the comrade is not talking about armed workers' militias but "local, community-based forces, controlled through local, community-based, elected committees", which of course must be "accountable". Both the SWP and the SP are prepared to live with the police force - they just want it to be anti-racist when it oppresses us. They will not be disappointed. The anti-racism offensive of the bourgeoisie is only just beginning.

The left may have lost the plot - we have not. *Our* anti-racism is internationalist - the bourgeoisie's anti-racism is based on a defence of the nation state and the promotion of an incorporative national chauvinism. You cannot be an internationalist without being an anti-racist. But you certainly can be an anti-racist without being an internationalist. Tony Blair, William Hague, Sir Paul Condon and the Bob Dylan-loving John Grieve amply prove that ●

Don Preston

Fighting fund

Makes sense

"As an SLP member there is no point reading *Socialist News* - on the rare occasions it comes out. It tells me nothing about what is going on in my party. Only your *Weekly Worker* gives me a glimpse of what is actually going on! I don't agree with everything, but I have no choice but to read it." These were the words of comrade BH as he renewed his subscription and gave us a "critical" donation of £25.

Of course, almost exactly the same could be said of our coverage of the Socialist Alliances, Independent Labour Network, Socialist Party, etc. So we urge supporters of left organisations who

are already reading the *Weekly Worker* to take out a subscription and send us donations on a regular basis. C'mon, *you know it makes sense* - don't you?

Thanks to comrades JS, MT, PP and EH for their donations. That took our total to £340, leaving us well short of our monthly £400 target for February. Comrades, we urgently need to make up the shortfall in March ●

Robert Rix

Ask for a bankers order form, or send cheques, payable to Weekly Worker

Allan Armstrong has the privilege of leading the very small Red Republican faction of the Scottish Socialist Party - through which his microscopic Communist Tendency operates and finds expression. The Red Republicans constitute the extreme nationalist wing of the SSP - for example, if Tommy Sheridan were elected to Holyrood, they moralistically demand that he should refuse to take the oath of loyalty to the United Kingdom crown and thus not take his seat. No crossed fingers, no MSP, no parliamentary voice. It would be wrong, however, to dismiss comrade Armstrong as simply yet another primitive sectarian oddity who should be filed away under 'C' for cranks.

He is the most consistent, articulate, knowledgeable and theoretically sophisticated advocate of Scottish national socialism. Anyone who has troubled to examine his writings - not least the recent 10,000-word *Weekly Worker* polemic against the CPGB - will appreciate that comrade Armstrong is not only widely read, but possesses a strategic vision far beyond the short-term electoralism and crude economism of his SSP peers (we published Allan Armstrong's "'Union' Jack and defence of the 'British nation'" in two parts over February 18 and 25).

In relative terms then he towers above the puny 'theoretical' efforts of official SSP 'tops'. Hugh Kerr, Tommy Sheridan, Bill Bonnar, Alan McCombes, Allan Green and Phil Stott have no coherent programme. Their Scottish national socialism rests precariously on a wobbly construct of anti-English legends, kailyard reformism and the upward curve of pro-independence opinion polls. Precisely because the SSP's Scottish national socialism is shallow and so vulnerable to criticism or the slightest unexpected ripple of events, comrade Armstrong's theory, or a variant of it, stands well placed to be given official status in the not too distant future - with or without its author's blessing. In that sense, if in no other, Allan Armstrong is the SSP's heir apparent.

Having given, I am duty bound to take. Comrade Armstrong's theory is profoundly flawed. On any basis it is alien to scientific socialism and the interests of the world working class. For all his ability to pluck quotes from various Marxist texts the comrade is in fact no more than a left nationalist and a utopian whose socialism relies on pure voluntarism (the will is all). The objective laws of history and scientifically based social practice are rejected in favour of anarchistic subjectivism.

This can be seen quite clearly in the comrade's opening gambit against me in his *Weekly Worker* polemic. Predictably he objects to my use of Stalin's justly famous definition of a nation supplied in his 1913 pamphlet *Marxism and the national question* (incidentally Lenin had the highest opinion of this work: he gave it "prime place" in the "Marxist literature" on the subject). It is not that Stalin became in later life a bureaucratic dictator and a killer on the scale of Genghis Khan. Comrade Armstrong is not stupid. No, his problem with Stalin's definition is the linking of nations to the rise of capitalism and other *objective* or *materialist* criteria.

Let me briefly reiterate Stalin's definition. A nation is a "definite community of people", he writes. Nations are invariably formed through the merger of the most diverse tribes, nationalities and ethnic groups, brought about in the first place by the dynamic of capitalism. Stalin cites "the British, the Germans" as an "historically constituted community of people" (JV Stalin *Works* Vol 2, Moscow 1953, p303). Nations must not be confused with loose empires such as that of Alexander the Great or state commu-

Scottish national socialism and its red prince - part 1

In defence of definition

Jack Conrad replies to Allan Armstrong of the Scottish Socialist Party

nities such as Belgium, Spain or the former Soviet Union, which have a common territory but no "common language". A nation must also have, "strictly speaking", a "common economic life" and "economic cohesion" (*ibid* pp305, 306). Stalin therefore sums up the "characteristic features of a nation" in the following pithy manner: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (*ibid* p307). Karl Kautsky had a similar 'objective' definition (far narrower than Stalin, in point of fact, who gave full weight to subjective factors; Kautsky wrote of nations as a "community of language" - see *The materialist conception of history* Yale 1988, p380).

Stalin stresses that nations have a history - hence a beginning and an end. Nations come into existence and will certainly go out of existence. In other words they are not fixed categories with their origins in the mist of time, but are fluid and transient. So to understand this or that contemporary nation we must seek out the non-thing, not project what exists back into history.

Comrade Armstrong appears to dismiss Stalin's definition out of hand. Why? Stalin's theory was "developed in the heyday of imperialism" and represents nothing more than "high social democracy" which "viewed capitalism as progressive and socialism as inevitable". Hence, says a sneering comrade Armstrong, "if your nation" passes the "objective" test, thanks to the pulse of "economic forces", then "there should be a one-directional movement towards a greater unity, which 'objectively' helped to create the basis for a socialist future".

A string of problems are immediately evident. Comrade Armstrong seems to equate imperialism with colonialism and colonial empires. Perhaps the notion that the "heyday of imperialism" was in 1913 is a careless slip. There is, however, no mistake when the comrade labels Stalin a "social democrat". He similarly describes Lenin, Trotsky and for that matter a certain 'Union' Jack Conrad.

Of course, in 1913 Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky called themselves social democrats. They were members of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Communists used that "pig of a name" till 1918 when they discarded the "soiled shirt" and re-adopted their true "scientific name". Comrade Armstrong knows all this perfectly well. His intention though is to childishly belittle every trend that came from within the Second International, above all its revolutionary left wing, and in the process boost his own credentials as a pristine 'Marxist'. But for the sake of consistency he should label Marx and Engels social democrats too. Their party in Germany was the Social Democracy. And what about comrade Armstrong's heroes, John Maclean and James Connolly? Were they not members of the Second International - albeit marginal in terms of theoretical contribution?

We can argue about the emphasis any *general* analysis of the emergence of nations should give - to economic developments on the one hand and political developments on the other. For comrade Armstrong, it should be noted, "nationalism and nations rise primarily due to political, not economic factors." He accuses Jack Conrad of being one-sided: "For Jack, nations cannot arise until there has been a sufficient development of the productive forces. Therefore nations can only be said to exist with the triumph of capitalism." Apparently I "ditch" any notion of "dialectical development expressed through class struggle".

I flatly reject the claim that my Lenin-Stalin-derived theory of nations downplays the class struggle. National movements, even in recent times, have carved nation states out of the most difficult conditions with the support of the popular classes - Vietnam, Eritrea and Georgia being examples. Stalin himself refers to the "strength of the national movement" being "determined by the degree to which the wide strata of the nation, the proletariat and peasantry, participate in it (JV Stalin *Works* Vol 2, Moscow 1953, p317). As to Lenin, the constant theme in his countless articles and pamphlets dealing with the subject is not some "objective" check list, as a dismally unoriginal comrade Armstrong suggests. On the contrary Lenin deals with the national question in political and class terms. He was willing to see the tiniest nation states - 50,000 was a figure used. For Lenin the national question was primarily a democratic question, a question over which the proletariat - crucially the proletariat in the oppressor countries - must take an active lead. Jack Conrad takes the same *political* view. That explains why he champions the right of Scotland to self-determination. Can comrade Armstrong deny it? As an intelligent and honest man he cannot.

The real problem is not my objectivism, but comrade Armstrong's subjectivism. He dismisses objective criteria when it comes to defining the nation. Hence in the name of attacking the vulgar economic *reductionism*, which did indeed characterise some of the theorisation of certain leaders of the Second and Third Internationals, he throws out the baby with the bathwater. In my account nations emerge - not out of nowhere, but through and on the material foundations of definite economic developments (not forgetting the role of common geography, language, culture, etc).

It is not the "triumph" of capitalism which by itself invents the nation state, but it is economic progress which facilitates it. Of course, the term 'nation' is an ancient one. But applied in its modern way Marxists have argued that nations first came into being with the "rise" of capitalism: eg, Britain and then the universal paradigms of France and the USA.

Before that, for instance in classical and feudal societies, there were clans, nationalities and classes, but no nations. Take the Greeks of Hellas.

These people spoke the same common language, but with distinct tribal dialects. They shared the same common territory, but fought innumerable wars against each other. They had a recognisably common culture, but they were not united economically. Scattered self-sufficient peasant agriculture, tribal identity, petty artisan manufacture and painfully slow internal communications saw the Greeks living in numerous rival *poleis*. There was no Greek nation. Objective conditions did not allow it ... or does comrade Armstrong imagine that the Greeks of 550 BCE could have been forged into a single nation by political struggle or whim?

Interestingly comrade Armstrong provides no alternative definition of the nation. He does tell us that their "fullest development" comes about "as a product of increasing democratic practice connected with the rising class struggle". He therefore traces the origins of the Scottish 'nation' back before history to the "primitive democracy" associated with the "pre-state communal social systems". This Celtic-centric account forms the basis for the following statement:

"Despite the limits of bourgeois understanding of democracy, there can be little doubt that there is a close link between the idea of a wider franchise and the idea of a nation which incorporates all its citizens. It is the vote which makes you a full citizen of the nation. This is central to most versions of developed modern nationalisms, even if the nationalists themselves do not always adhere in practice to the fullest tenets of bourgeois democracy."

My objection here is that comrade Armstrong fuses together the categories of nation and state. An elementary error. Not all nations are states and more to the point most states, even the most democratic ones, are not nations. In fact the vast majority of states nowadays are not nation states.

How should communists respond to this situation? Since the days of the *Communist manifesto* the historic task we assign to the world's working class is winning the battle for democracy in order to positively overthrow the existing state machine, including the multinational state - the road to communism and universal human liberation is thereby opened.

Our task is not the breaking up of states like Canada, Ukraine, India, South Africa, Iraq, Belgium, etc, into national pieces. While for us the self-determination is a general principle, we *advocate* separation only under exceptional circumstances. Separation as a universal panacea, it hardly needs saying, is the programme of nationalism - a programme advocated by comrade Armstrong and the SSP in the name of socialism.

In this the comrade's views owe nothing to the programme advanced by Marx and Engels. Yet there is an illuminating parallel in the Second International in the form of the Polish Socialist Party and its leader Joseph Pilsudski. While it creates confusion, not clarity, if comrade Armstrong insists on calling me a social democrat, so be it. But if I am a social democrat in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and Stalin, then he should admit his antecedents in rightwing social democracy ●

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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Bull expelled

In an amazing change of fortune Royston Bull, elected as SLP vice-president just over three months ago, is to be expelled from the party. Hauled before a disciplinary committee under the terms of the 'complaints procedure', the editor of the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* was last month 'convicted' by general secretary Arthur Scargill and three stooges of "non-compliance with an NEC resolution".

According to the letter of the complaints procedure, it is up to the NEC itself to implement or overturn the decision, but Scargill has not even bothered to wait for the March 20 executive meeting (the February NEC was cancelled) before giving Bull the boot. There is of course no way that the NEC will refuse to back the Great Leader, and Bull himself obviously believes the outcome is a foregone conclusion. The February 23 *EPSR* announces his expulsion as a fact.

The party was thrown into disarray at last November's special congress, when Scargill decided to ditch his former courtiers of the Fourth International Supporters Caucus and throw his weight behind an *EPSR*-Stalinist-loyalist slate for NEC elections. Bull easily defeated the incumbent Fiscite, Patrick Sikorski, for the vice-presidency, while the 'Campaign to support Scargill and the national leadership of the Socialist Labour Party' swept the board for the executive members elected by constituency branches. Carolyn Sikorski, who was returned unopposed by the women's section, was Fisc's only survivor.

But Bull's very success was to provoke his own downfall. The homophobic views carried in the *EPSR* were now under the spotlight, as the Fiscites, stung by their defeat, launched a rebellion. London regional president, Brian Heron, another ex-NEC Fiscite, won his committee to strike action - refusing to contest the European elections in the capital, unless Scargill took steps to have the democratically elected vice-president removed from office.

The entire leadership, including the Fiscites, had previously kept quiet about the homophobic *EPSR*'s contents, and turned a blind eye to its flagrant breaching of Scargill's Labour Party-style constitution. Clause II (4) prohibits "individuals and organisations ... which have their own programme, principles and policies, distinctive and separate propaganda" from party membership. The Bullites had been more than useful to the Scargill-Fisc alliance in fingering communists and witch-hunting democrats.

However, Fisc was less than happy with Scargill's cancellation of last November's full annual congress and its replacement by the Manchester

special congress, where no membership motions were allowed. Pat Sikorski had issued a set of proposals aimed at clipping Scargill's wings, and Fisc, backed up by former Scargill loyalists Terry Dunn and Helen Drummond, started to circulate their 'Appeal for a special conference' last autumn. It was this which led Scargill, furious at such insubordination, to dump Fisc in the run-up to the special congress. The *EPSR* had to be brought fully on board to ensure his victory in the NEC elections, and Bull was the only other candidate for vice-presidency apart from Pat Sikorski.

But the general secretary was determined to re-establish complete control, and to put both rival factions firmly in their place. At the very end of the first meeting of the new NEC on December 12, Scargill suddenly proposed three motions (see *Weekly Worker* January 14). The first, directed against the Fiscites and the Appeal faction, demanded that they "withdraw the 'Appeal', cease their activities immediately and undertake to abide by the party's constitution" - despite the fact that his constitution actually lays down the right of the members to "request" a special congress.

The second motion instructed the Bullites either to close down the *EPSR* or "give an undertaking that it will not comment on the affairs of the SLP or carry contributions that may lead members to conclude that the *EPSR* is attacking and discriminating against women or sections within our society because of sexual orientation/preference and/or religion, etc".

Finally the NEC was asked to empower the general secretary to "bring proceedings" against either faction, should he consider that they had refused "to comply with these policy decisions". All three motions were overwhelmingly passed.

Bull reports that "the undertaking was duly sent", and reproduces his assurance to Scargill in the *EPSR* (February 23): "I can confirm what I already indicated at the December 12 NEC meeting that I can limit my personal involvement with the *EPSR* journal while an active member of the SLP, and also do my utmost to influence future *EPSR* contents so as to avoid upsetting SLP members."

"The *EPS Review* in 20 years' publication has never had the deliberate intention of 'attacking and discriminating against women or sections within our society because of sexual orientation/preference and/or religion, etc', to quote your letter - and has not the slightest wish to be seen in that light now."

Bull states that this was "totally ignored by Scargill", who furiously complained that the very next issue of the *EPSR* (December 15) following

the December 12 NEC was again guilty of that heinous crime - "comment on the affairs of the SLP". That edition, which Bull claims had already been in preparation with "less involvement than usual" from himself, ranted against Fisc's "reactionary Trotskyite fake 'leftism'" in relation to a comment made by comrade Heron at a London committee meeting. No matter how poor old Roy twists and turns, there is no way Scargill would not view that as a comment on 'his' party.

Bull then tried to ward off Scargill's attacks by offering to resign the vice-presidency in exchange for dropping disciplinary action - but to no avail.

The February issue of the *SLP Information Bulletin* arrived on branch secretaries' doormats only last week. In it Scargill notes briefly that "in view of a potential conflict of interest, and in the wider interests of the SLP, Royston offered to resign as vice-president, an offer which was accepted". In fact this resignation was "accepted" by Scargill alone, since he refused to even read Bull's offer-to-resign letter to the January NEC, let alone permit any discussion of its contents. SLP comrades are now able to study it in the current edition of the *Weekly Worker* (see p5). But Scargill adds that Bull "had been unable to give a satisfactory response" to the December NEC motion, and so "the general secretary informed the NEC that he had lodged a complaint against Royston Bull within the party's complaints procedure".

Scargill further informs the SLP membership that two of the Appeal Four (comrades Dunn and Drummond) "had not responded" to the "NEC's request", while the other two (comrades Heron and Carolyn Sikorski) "have refused to comply with it. Consequently, the general secretary has lodged a complaint with the party's complaints procedure against the [unnamed] initiators of the 'Appeal'."

To our readers all this is very much yesterday's news of course. As we know, the hearings against both factions took place in February. But the Appeal Four (or rather the three that remain, since comrade Drummond has given up in despair), backed up by comrade Imran Khan acting as their lawyer, challenged the validity of the proceedings, on the grounds that there was no panel in place to hear any appeal against the complaints committee's findings. The procedure lays down that the appeal panel must be elected by annual congress, but this had not occurred. Scargill retreated in disarray when faced with these legalistic niceties, promising to take the question back to the NEC on March 20.

Comrade Bull did not think of this line of defence himself. As he reports

in the *EPSR*, the complaints committee had already found against him at an earlier hearing. Following the Appeal faction's challenge, the validity of his own expulsion is surely also in doubt. But the former vice-president has well and truly burnt his bridges with the February 23 edition. He lambastes Scargill's "most disgraceful lies", slams his "meaningless gibberish" and "imbecility", and calls the complaints committee's "ridiculous hearing" a "demagogic bureaucrat's delight".

Bull can hardly contain his fury at the Appeal Four's "bourgeois constitutionalism". On the one hand, the "duly elected vice-president has been expelled for refusing to quit his publishing job in furtherance of the struggle for Marxist-Leninist science", while, on the other, "these Trots are still swanning around inside the SLP", continuing their "disruptive, treacherous Trot activities, which themselves are to go scot free".

Meanwhile Fisc and its Appeal faction allies have launched what could turn out to be a last desperate counterattack. In the names of the West Ham, Lewisham East and Deptford CSLPs, comrades Ann Brook, Terry Dunn and John Mulrenan have put their names to a statement (see p4) - in direct contravention of Scargill's edict, rubber-stamped at the December NEC, that "no individual member of the party and no group of individuals within the party is allowed to circulate any appeal, document, letter ..."

The comrades are proposing a "compromise", whereby "all charges (and potential counter-charges) relating to the matter of the Appeal for a Special Congress are dropped"; and the NEC itself convenes a special one-day congress in July. But do the comrades really expect Scargill to respond positively to any of this, particularly their final proposal - that "a special commission be established by the NEC composed half of supporters of the Appeal and half of opponents (if they wish) to agree an agenda and do the work to organise the special congress"? I rather think they fully expect the general secretary to dismiss with contempt any notion that unelected individuals, some of whom he is in the process of expelling, should be given such responsibilities.

Scargill is not about to welcome back Fisc and co into the fold now that Bull is out on his ear. There is no room within 'his' party for those who dare to challenge the labour king's authority in even the mildest way. This can easily be demonstrated by last weekend's women's section AGM in Manchester. Through his exclusive access to the party membership figures, Scargill gerrymandered the voting entitlement to ensure that Carolyn Sikorski and fellow Fiscite Rachel

Newton were ousted by loyalists.

Neither the *EPSR* nor Fisc has one iota of principle. The Bullites think it is perfectly all right for Scargill to have voided communists and democrats, and would no doubt be more than pleased to see him kick out the Fisc "Trots". It is only now that Royston himself has been shown the door that he announces that "all the eventual weakness of centrist politics" have come to the fore "earlier than anticipated" (*EPSR* February 23).

For the *EPSR* a centrist party is all that can be achieved. What is more, the sheer force of the inevitable and imminent collapse of capitalism will, according to *EPSR* "Marxist science", lead to the development of spontaneous socialist consciousness amongst the working class, finding its expression in an SLP-type organisation, which will be propelled into power. Bull expects and perhaps desires an authoritarian, Scargillite national socialist government, as his letter to the *Weekly Worker* made clear last week (February 25).

In this scenario the revolutionary party, not to mention the working class itself, play bit parts. But who said the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' would be fun? And the Bullites will be rewarded with key ministries in Arthur's administration. At least according to their fantasies - until they were brought back down to earth last month.

Like the Bullites, Fisc hoped to be in Scargill's team. Both factions share a view of bureaucratic socialism where the masses play a 'walk on, walk off' role at the bidding of the Great Leader. This is replicated in a similar top-down structure for the SLP. The nature of the working class party is, for these comrades, no business of the working class. Both factions say that it a breach of confidence, if not high treason, to disclose the details of internal party discussions, differences and disagreements to the membership - while actually secretly using every avenue to undermine other factional centres.

So Fisc welcomes Bull's expulsion. The fact that the vice-president has been expelled simply for expressing a point of view is of no concern. The Fisc-inspired Brook-Mulrenan-Dunn document makes no mention of Scargill's outrageous action against Bull. It proclaims support for an "open, democratic" SLP, "full of respect for every comrade's experience and opinion ..." But then adds, "... if they dropped membership of any other party".

The SLP may be on its last legs. But that does not excuse us from acting in a principled manner. Remaining SLP democrats must condemn Scargill's disgraceful authoritarian attacks on all factions ●

Simon Harvey