

Back Livingstone

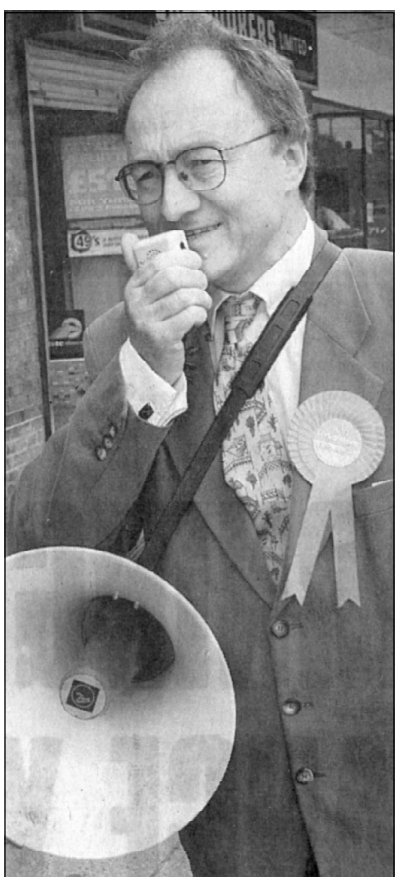
As we go to press, the Labour Party's fabled machine is in open disarray. Whatever the eventual outcome, Tuesday's failure by the party's London selection panel to come up with a short list of names to present to the electoral college in next month's ballot to choose a mayoral candidate has caused unquestionable embarrassment and damage, perhaps most of all to Tony Blair. However much the prime minister may try to dissociate himself from this shambles, however much his spokesmen may try to depict the farce as part of a complex 'democratic' process, Blair has only himself to blame, for the fact remains that it was his latest attempt to hobble Ken Livingstone that was the proximate cause of the debacle.

At the centre of the panel's decision to call Livingstone for a second, "clarificatory" interview was his stated refusal to give an undertaking that, if elected as the party's candidate, he would commit himself *a priori* to an election manifesto *not one word* of which has yet even been written. Specifically, Livingstone reportedly made it clear that he could not and would not stand on a platform that includes a plan for the privatisation of the London underground, under the so-called Public Private Partnership, a scheme which would hand over something like a third of the tube's infrastructure to Railtrack.

The 12-month history of Millbank's attempts to fix the mayoral ballot was rooted in a single problem: how to prevent Livingstone emerging as the official candidate. When the electoral college stitch-up began to unravel, and Frank Dobson began to look like a loser, desperate measures were called for, measures that present us with vivid proof, if such proof were needed, of New Labour's utter, cynical contempt for democracy.

As recently as Friday last, Blair and his team of special advisers were letting it be known, through leaks from "senior Labour figures" and "one well-connected insider", that "Mr Blair would prefer an independent Livingstone mayorship or even a Jeffrey Archer Tory victory to Mr Livingstone as a Labour mayor" (*The Guardian* November 12). The implication was that the theoretically "independent" selection panel would do what Blair wanted and, after going through the motions, bar Livingstone from the short list, probably on the grounds of chronic disloyalty. If that led to his standing as an independent and even winning the mayorship, then so be it.

Twenty-four hours later, the same sources were leaking a diametrically opposite story, according to which the prime minister had decided to take a gamble and "allow" Livingstone onto the short list. The rationale behind this *volte face* was revealed on Monday, when *The Guardian*, under the headline, "Blair plans all-out war on Livingstone", reported that he proposed to launch a "withering assault" that would make Livingstone



Standing against Blair

unelectable by depicting his victory as a return to the days of the 'loony left'. Blair made the strategy explicit by stating that, "The Labour Party has come a long way since the early 1980s and I will never ever let the party go back to those days - not while I'm in charge". As one "insider" put it, "the tactics are now to let him run and then blast him" (*The Guardian* November 15).

According to other reports, the change of heart had been occasioned by "secret figures compiled by Millbank", which suggested that Dobson was ahead in the contest and would win. On the basis of these poll returns, Labour's general secretary, Margaret McDonagh, persuaded Blair to let Livingstone stand, thus overriding the advice given to Blair by his political secretary, Sally Morgan, who argued strongly that the selection board should be used to bar Livingstone from the contest.

To make assurance double sure, the Blair team devised two undertakings which all candidates would be required to make to the selection board: the first, an 'oath' of loyalty to the party, whereby the candidates had to agree that they would not stand independently if they failed to make the short list or in the event of being defeated in the eventual ballot. Livingstone, with characteristic cheekiness, unhesitatingly accepted the first precondition, saying that he would be prepared to "swear on the bones of a saint". In reality, of course, he had no choice in the matter, since, had he declined, he would have brought about his immediate exclusion from the short list on the grounds

that he was, after all, planning to go it alone.

Even as the selection panel was continuing its deliberations, Livingstone was telling a 500-strong audience in London of his commitment to Labour: "I don't want anyone tearing up their party cards," he told the 'Listen to London' event, organised by the rail unions. "You don't walk away just because you've had a bad day." Pat Sikorski of the RMT, and formerly Socialist Labour Party vice-president, asked him what he would do if he was not selected: "Will you support us and stand anyway?" Comrade Sikorski described himself as a supporter of the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation, which intends to stand a slate of candidates for the GLA elections. Livingstone did not reply directly, but stated that he would rather have any Labour candidate as mayor than a Tory one: "This is not about seeing the government brought down. It's about making the Labour government represent the movement that put it where it is."

The second 'oath' involved a blanket prior agreement to stand on whatever manifesto the party produced. It was Livingstone's refusal to jump this hurdle which brought about Tuesday's impasse.

The panel's decision to seek clarification was puzzling in many respects. On the face of it, they had no room for manoeuvre - if Livingstone persisted in his refusal, his name could not go forward. Allowing him on to the short list would have amounted to their acquiescing in his defiance of Blair's will. Charitable souls might have been inclined to see the board's action as reflecting a determination to see fair play or as an expression of genuine uncertainty about Livingstone's stance on the manifesto question. At the time of writing, such an interpretation seems rash indeed.

A glance at the composition of the selection panel, themselves very carefully selected by the Millbank machine and rubber-stamped by the NEC, tells another story. It was perforce reduced from 13 members to 12, when Baroness Uddin was obliged to resign, after being unable to restrain herself from publicly denouncing Livingstone on Radio 4's *The world this weekend* (November 7). Of the dozen remaining members, three - Jim Fitzpatrick, Clive Soley and Ian McCartney, the latter a 'leftwing' cabinet officer minister - were Blairite loyalist MPs; four - Richard Rosser of the TSSA, Paul Kenny of the GMB, John Hannet of Usdaw and Margaret Wall of MSF - were safe rightwing trade union officials; three more - Lady Gould, Margaret Payne and Les Eartle - were known 'modernisers', with a record of grudges against the left; the remaining two - Mari Williams and Margaret Sinclair - were careerist figures who could be relied on to do the right thing. In total, therefore, the panel included not a single member who could have been regarded as even vaguely sympathetic to

Livingstone's cause, which was no doubt why they were chosen in the first place.

By the time this paper reaches our readers, there presumably will be no need for speculation as to what this sorry mess was all about. If Livingstone is allowed on to the short list, it will represent a major defeat for Blair and New Labour. If he is not, then he must surely abjure his prior undertaking and stand as an independent - not to do so would mean effectively resigning himself to remaining an outcast MP for as long as the electors of Brent East wish to have him represent them in the Commons. Accusations of double-dealing and untrustworthiness will doubtless follow hard on the heels of an independent candidacy, but it seems improbable that they will do Livingstone much damage in the eyes of the millions of Londoners. His accusers, after all, have hardly behaved decently themselves.

Unless the prime minister's press secretary and a small regiment of 'sources' have all been lying through their teeth, Blair himself stands revealed as a dictatorial and increasingly desperate manipulator, and, what is worse, a manipulator who has brought great damage on himself and his party.

Whatever happens, Livingstone's prospects look very healthy, as the results of a Guardian-ICM opinion poll published on November 16 amply demonstrate. According to a poll of some 1,000 Londoners conducted between November 11-14, it would make little difference to the outcome of next May's election whether Livingstone stood as Labour's official candidate, or as an independent. In the former capacity, he would beat Jeffrey Archer by almost 40 percentage points; in the latter, he would still be 27 points ahead of Archer, his nearest rival, with Dobson consigned to a humiliating third place.

Of the prospective Labour candidates, as voted on by Labour supporters in the poll, poor Dobson - who has had a disastrous campaign so far and who cannot escape giving the impression that he never wanted the job in the first place - finds himself actually in third place behind the no-hoper Glenda Jackson, having evidently failed to pick up any of the seven percent of votes which went to Trevor Phillips before he graciously consented to become Dobson's running mate. So bad has been Dobson's showing hitherto, that there is talk of putting off the planned December party ballot until the new year, on the grounds that voting could be disrupted by the vagaries of the Christmas post. All this is alarming news indeed for Millbank and New Labour, but exactly what they deserve.

As we have said before, the issue at the heart of this controversy is one of democracy. Whoever becomes mayor of London will command one of the biggest direct electoral mandates in the whole of western Europe. The increasingly desperate attempts

by Blair and his entourage to prevent Livingstone seeking to secure this mandate - notably the crude gerrymandering embodied in the electoral college 'solution' and the blatant use of 'loyalty' oaths and the like - constitute a contemptuous affront to Labour's 70,000 London members, not to mention the millions of ordinary Londoners who have consistently voiced the desire to see Livingstone in charge of their city. Democracy is a weapon that we must wield against Blair. Labour's vulnerability is the left's opportunity.

If the events of recent days have made one thing clear, it is that, if Livingstone does emerge victorious from the Labour party ballot, he will be the party's 'official' candidate in name only. His victory in this contest, followed by victory in the mayoral elections themselves, would be a real body-blow to everything that Blair and New Labour stand for. Hence, our already declared support for Livingstone - albeit critical support, given without illusions as to the man's politics, but condemned in some quarters as 'opportunism' - is more than justified. Needless to say, if Livingstone does go it alone, our position would be even more strongly supportive. Such a move would likely precipitate wholesale defections from the Labour Party in London and beyond and could realistically be expected to act as a catalyst for the revival and realignment of forces on the left - our stance was singled out by Peter Kellner in a desperate attempt to find Livingstone guilty by "association" (*Evening Standard* November 15).

In the event of Livingstone reaching the short list, our first priority must be to support the struggle of such unions as RMT - barred from participation in the electoral college on the spurious ground of late payment of dues - to regain its members' franchise in the election. Similarly, such anomalies as that presented by the undemocratic allocation of 50,000 votes to the London region of the Cop - 200 votes for each of its members - must be exposed and ruthlessly criticised. Perhaps most importantly, we should back up efforts to secure the support of the party's activists, whose votes look like having a crucial impact on the outcome of the ballot.

To stand back from giving Livingstone support, on the self-evident grounds that his politics are entirely inadequate from the point of view of the working class and the struggle for socialism, would be a profound mistake. As comrade Mark Fischer observed last week, "For revolutionaries [a Livingstone challenge] creates the possibility that a mass working class movement, independent of Labour, could rise and take very different political forms from the past. This is not something to observe passively. If we are communists, we will be active, fighting agents in the process" (*Weekly Worker* November 11) ●

Michael Malkin

Party notes

The Labour Party and Livingstone

Draft theses

1. Labour emerged in the 20th century as a hybrid political formation. Through trade union, and then individual, affiliation the mass of its membership were working class. However, whether or not a party should be categorised as a workers' party does not depend solely upon membership. What is crucial is those who lead it and the nature of its actions and political tactics.
2. The Labour Party has traditionally been staffed by a combination of career politicians and trade union bureaucrats. In war and peace these people acted fully in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. Reforms have been conceded, especially in the period of the post-World War II social democratic state. From the point of view of the Labour leadership such measures had nothing to do with empowering and furthering the struggle of the working class. They were designed to stabilise and sustain the system of capital by demobilising the working class.
3. The Labour Party is therefore correctly defined as a bourgeois workers' party, a party with a predominantly working class membership, but which acts in the interests of the bourgeoisie. Sociologically it is proletarian; politically it is capitalist.
4. The Labour Party has always been divided into a left and a right. Except in the most exceptional circumstances the right dominates, especially when it comes to practical implementation of policy. The relationship is symbiotic. Rank and file discontent with the leadership in particular and the effects of the capitalist system of exploitation in general is articulated by the Labour left. Often this is enshrined in recipes for a nationalised socialism which relies upon the existing, bourgeois, state for realisation. The strength of the Labour left tends to vary with the class struggle, being a key site of mediation between the working class and the capitalist system. The Labour right needs working class votes but is in the business of obtaining and maintaining political power. In a society dominated by the capitalist metabolism and bourgeois ideas and values, this effectively means serving the production and reproduction of capital.
5. We note that Lenin welcomed the formation of the Labour Party as a step forward. The organisation of the Labour Party, based on trade union affiliates, represented a break from the Liberal Party and the potential for working class independence from the bourgeoisie. Lenin therefore seconded the affiliation of the Labour Party to the 2nd International in 1908. That did not imply illusions. Lenin famously described the Labour Party as "an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers".
6. When the Communist Party of Great Britain was established in 1920 Lenin correctly urged it to seek affiliation to the Labour Party (the British Socialist Party - the biggest body that helped form the CPGB - was from 1916 a Labour Party affiliate). He also correctly urged communists to support the Labour Party in elections "as the rope supports a hanged man". These tactics were specific historically and applied to Britain alone. The communists were not supporting Labour because it was the 'lesser evil'. The aim was to get a hearing from rank and file workers in movement.
7. The Labour Party leadership and con-

ferences turned down repeated CPGB attempts to affiliate. Nevertheless individual members of the CPGB often held dual membership or represented their trade unions at Labour Party conferences. The first communist elected as an MP, Shapurji Saklatvala, stood as an officially selected Labour Party candidate. CPGB members successfully led the National Leftwing Movement within the Labour Party, and through its *Sunday Worker* - edited by William Paul - gained a considerable audience for their ideas. From the mid-1920s onwards the Labour leadership imposed a witch hunt - bans and proscriptions - in an attempt to isolate the communists. Unfortunately this was compounded by the so-called 'third period' turn demanded by the Stalin-Bukharin duumvirate in the USSR.

8. Expunging the old state socialist clause four, introduced in 1918 under the pressure of the October Revolution, represents the extreme marginalisation of the political influence of the Labour left. The introduction of electoral colleges indicates the relative loss of influence by the trade union bureaucracy. Such changes, plus the overt pro-big business links and stance of the Blair government, show that the bourgeois, active, pole of the Labour Party has achieved unprecedented domination. Nevertheless in terms of individual membership and trade union affiliation the rank and file of the Labour Party is overwhelmingly working class. Hence in spite of the internal ideological and constitutional innovations introduced under Blair the Labour Party continues to be a bourgeois workers' party.
9. Positively overcoming Labourism remains a strategic task for communist revolutionaries. This cannot be achieved by crude attempts to write off the Labour Party. Communists must develop a critical but cooperative relationship with workers influenced by left reformism. Without such a process - whereby the advanced elements win over those with medium or backward consciousness - there can be no hope for a mass Communist Party, let alone the rule of the working class.
10. The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB is right to critically support Livingstone's bid to become the first directly elected London mayor. Though Livingstone is effectively standing on a New Labour programme - his main point of difference is opposition to tube privatisation - this is in no small part the result of the regime imposed by Millbank Tower, which has gone to extraordinary lengths to foil his candidacy.
11. Livingstone's victory would be a big blow against Blairism. It would more importantly not simply be a victory for one man, but for a movement, no matter how incoherent, from below.
12. Communists will actively work for the Livingstone campaign. Whether Livingstone is the official Labour candidate or not is an entirely secondary question. Livingstone as London mayor would be a living anti-Blair manifesto on the other side of the Thames. Those who back Livingstone's right to stand but cannot bring themselves to vote for him as mayor if he is chosen by the Labour Party electoral college in London are either hopeless doctrinaires or put the interests of their sect above the interests of the working class as a whole ●

Jack Conrad

Scotland and Livingstone

On November 10 in Glasgow, the AWL held a public meeting on left unity. There was unanimous agreement that all revolutionaries eligible to join the SSP ought to do so. We found ourselves equally united in having political horizons that stretch south of the Scotland/England border.

Unlike the overwhelming majority of SSP members, including CWI comrades, I believe that Scottish workers take a keen interest in politics at an all-Britain level. Therefore, I see no need to apologise for having rapidly steered the debate from left unity on a Scottish basis to the London mayoral election. The bridge which took us from the one to the other was provided by a sharp clash of opinions on the revolutionary attitude to Labour's trade union links. Sandy McBurney argued in favour of the majority SSP line: immediate and unconditional disaffiliation. Only myself and AWL comrades openly dissented.

In circumstances where Blair has cynically and undemocratically disenfranchised tens of thousands of trade union members in his bid to foist a puppet on the London Labour Party, does it really make sense to ask workers to walk away? Ought they to do this just as it is becoming clear precisely how shallow are Blair's roots inside one of the most important sections of the Labour Party? Surely not. A significant leftwing breakaway (and one not confined to London) is in the offing as a consequence of a fight against the deeply unpopular gerrymandering of the Blairite leadership. There is a realistic prospect of such a breakaway attracting towards it large numbers not in today's Labour Party, workers with politics far to the left of those rank and file Labourites itching for a fight with Blair over this issue. Only sectarian dogmatists who have never read *Leftwing communism*, or who have forgotten the method it set out, could judge such circumstances as providing an opportune moment at which to advocate instant disaffiliation.

Tom Delargy
Paisley

Ken and Tony

I am confused. I thought "historically, the relationship between left and right in the Labour Party has been essentially symbiotic" ('Party Notes', November 11). I thought this was an explanation to describe Labourism - mutability, lack of principle. Before, during and after the last general election the *Weekly Worker* pointed out the likelihood of the rebirth of the left within the Labour Party. This was not presented as a reason for 'action stations': rather it fleshed out the amorphous body that is Labourism - the struggle against which is crucial for communists today. It seems though that this perspective has been ditched by the CPGB - the big hollow phrases are being wheeled out. If you disagree with 'any hit against Blair is a good hit' you are useless to the class.

Blairism and Livingstonism are part of the same category: Labourism. Blairism has not detached itself. Symbiosis does not allow it: they need one another. 'Ken Livingstone for mayor' is not a window of opportunity for communists or the working class; instead it is an attempt to 'gum up'. Reformism is setting into the cracks made by the crisis of the labour movement. Putting every effort into making an alternative is tough. But that does

not make it wrong. Rapprochement was the word used some time ago. I see no reason to change it to collusion. Or has the CPGB gone one election too far?

Phil Rudge
Hackney

Scargillism

Just to correct a few inaccuracies in Dave Osler's 'Scargill and Scargillism'. The 1992 'public opinion' campaign against the last and terminal swathe of pit closures was necessary and Scargill had not gone soft. Indeed we had to sit on him to stop him calling for industrial action and an unlimited all-out strike from day one. Not because the activists and militants and Scargill did not want strike action, but because the *membership* was dead set against any such call. We needed time to try and build a head of steam among the *miners*, never mind the other sections we wanted to join us.

The dockers did not come out over a separate issue. It was essentially a solidarity strike, the preservation of which had implications for the Dock Labour Scheme itself, but started when Hatfield Main picketed the railway line from the ports to the steelworks and cut off coke and iron ore. This was illegal solidarity action by the NUM.

In order to spread and preserve this strike it was tactically necessary to point to a specifically *docks* issue, and challenge the jibe that the dockers were just being used by 'Scargill' to support the miners. Of course, we activists thought everyone in the world should just down tools with the miners, but other workers needed to be shown some self-interest in supporting the miners. That is why some dockers tried to show the issues as separate. It was a tactic.

Having said that, I thought much of the article was well observed and accurate.

Dave Douglass
Doncaster

Old Bull

The Harvey piece (*Weekly Worker* November 11) declares it "perfectly correct to demand that the state acts" in defending Scargillism's call to renationalise the railways, but completely misses the point of attacking SLP reformism.

The political priority against Scargillism is to expose its conscious counterrevolutionary intentions, now more bluntly being asserted but still not clear to everyone.

The *EPSR* stayed the course to expose Scargill's feeble 'centrism' (such as it first appeared to be) - 'supporting' it in order to bring its essential reformist limitations more rapidly out into the open; in order the sooner to dispose of Scargillism as a confusing factor for would-be revolutionary-minded workers. The *Weekly Worker* ludicrously fell at the first hurdle for such Leninist tactics, its supporters getting expelled everywhere for trying to build a rival SLP to Scargill's.

Royston Bull
Stockport

Right slogans

I would like to comment on Tom Delargy's two letters in the *Weekly Worker* (November 4 and 11).

In particular, Tom claims that I "locate the root cause of the tragic history of the Russian Revolution in the mistakes of (or even betrayals by) Lenin and the Bolsheviks". This is very similar to the attack Jack Conrad made on our organi-



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

sation. We wrote an extended reply at the time of Jack's initial attacks, which was not published in the *Weekly Worker*, but which I quoted from at the last day school of the Republican Communist Network held on October 20. So I am a little surprised at Tom. I think it may be worth quoting from this:

"Trying to find retrospectively which individual, organisation or Marxist theoretician was correct is to adopt an idealist, not a materialist method."

I hope Tom is now satisfied that we have never "refused to explain the defeat of the Russian Revolution from a perspective of internationalism", rather than of international communism. However, perhaps he can now understand that there is no contradiction between the internationalist position he acknowledges the CT has now taken over Kosova and Ireland, and our opposition to the use of 'international socialism' as a platform for the RCN. The debate which is going on is not between internationalism and nationalism. The two sides of the debate differ over how internationalism is best expressed in the RCN's slogans. One side proposes, 'Workers' power, international socialism, world communism', while the other proposes, 'Workers' republic, international revolution, world communism'.

To the CT, 'International socialism' has a number of disadvantages, one being that it suggests a fixed stage, without any movement. The problem was acknowledged when Dave Craig (RDG) suggested 'International socialist revolution' as the intermediate slogan. This at least has the advantage of suggesting a process rather than stage, emphasising the transitional nature of socialism.

The CT fears that the slogan 'International socialism' is designed to erect a barrier, which consigns 'World communism' to the Greek Kalends: ie, never. It is a sign of the political maturity of the RCN that it is giving full time to debate this issue.

Allan Armstrong
Edinburgh

Irish-Irish

Jack Conrad (*Weekly Worker* November 11) writes: "There is a one-county, four-half-counties area around Belfast containing a clear British-Irish majority. This forms a geographically coherent whole broadly comprising of County Antrim, north Tyrone, south Derry, north Armagh and north Down - as I have pointed out, some council districts have massive British-Irish majorities."

Jack goes on to demand: "As an ethno-religious nationality with a common territory the British-Irish should be given the right of self-determination in a united Ireland." Using Jack's own method, "There is a one county, four half-counties area containing an Irish-Irish majority. This forms a geographically coherent whole broadly comprising of county Fermanagh, south Tyrone, north Derry, South Armagh and south Down."

As an ethno-religious nationality with a common territory the Irish-Irish should be given the right of self-determination. So, Jack, instead of putting demands on a future united Ireland, why are you not putting demands now on the present United Kingdom?

Ivor Kenna
Central London

GLA campaign

Looking promising

All indications are that Ken Livingstone will be a candidate for mayor. Whether he stands as 'New Labour' or as an independent, his candidacy - not to mention a victory - would be a blow against Blairism. It would create fluidity and perhaps the opportunity for revolutionaries to address the masses of working people still held in electoral thrall to the Labour Party. It is an important opportunity for revolutionaries to fight for a political space to the left of Blair's party.

This period of delicate minuet between 'Red Ken' and the Millbank leadership has been preceded by a frustrating series of near-farcical attempts by the left outside Labour to unite for electoral work. Over and over again, the left's seemingly congenial sectarianism and its sad lack of self-belief combined to wreck the project. Often, this weakness has, as a biproduct, manifested itself as bitter hostility to the CPGB, ironically the very organisation that has most consistently fought for an open, democratic and principled approach to left unity.

This hostility takes on quite ab-

surd forms - none more so than the repeated refusal of all the factions that have been involved in the various unity attempts to even mention our name in their published reports. The latest of these entertaining 'significant silences' can be found in autumn's deathly dull *All Red and Green*, the national bulletin of the Dave Nellist-John Nicholson Socialist Alliance. There is an inaccurate report of recent developments in the London Socialist Alliance by Nick Long. We read, for example, a comprehensive list of those participating ... excluding the CPGB, of course.

This latest manifestation of the LSA has proved to be a pretty flimsy affair so far. Its next meeting takes place on November 24, with Patrick Sikorski invited to speak on behalf of the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation. CATP has taken the decision to stand a list of 11 candidates for the Greater London Authority elections, although doubts are still being expressed whether the campaign will have sufficient cohesion or cash to actually deliver.

CATP would be able to merge pretty seamlessly with any

Livingstone campaign. Ken repeatedly insists that the miserable state of transport in London is at the core of his challenge. Bearing in mind that so many of the LSA groups involved have expressed the fear of lacking 'credibility' with the voters, such a package is inviting.

There are therefore likely to be tensions within the alliance between those committed to a version of left unity and those who have been markedly less enthusiastic - the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, for example. Similarly, Sikorski is apparently coming under pressure from his co-thinkers in the bedraggled Fourth International Supporters Caucus to keep the rest of the left at arm's length.

The decision to stand was confirmed at a CATP meeting on November 9 attended by about 35 comrades. There alongside Sikorski were the likes of Fiscite Brian Heron, a man renowned for his dirty anti-left witch hunts in the Socialist Labour Party.

Comrade Greg Tucker, secretary of the LSA, leading RMT militant and member of Socialist Outlook, is keen to develop cooperation between the

CATP and LSA. There has been talk of possibly bringing together a joint slate. While various Fiscite leftovers may balk at such a suggestion, the RMT is setting the pace. It probably realises that bringing the left on board is the best option it has for giving itself an activist base to service a campaign of any type.

All of us should welcome the fact that an initiative supported by the transport unions in London - a bloc whose leadership remains militantly un-Blairised - has committed itself to standing candidates *against* Labour, possibly in concert with a huge independent challenge from Livingstone. However, these developments underline once again the opportunities the socialist and revolutionary organisations have let slip over the past period. A viable left bloc - if it had been built in a committed and non-sectarian way - could now be a position to fight for *political hegemony* over these developing splits from Labour.

The left may find itself once again in the guard's van - not the vanguard ●

Mark Fischer

Undermining the struggle

Statement on British-Irish

As readers of and/or regular contributors to the *Weekly Worker*, we have been following and taking part in the discussion on the national question. We would like to take a further opportunity to persuade the comrades to drop the demand for the right of the pro-British Irish to build their own state, for the following reasons:

1. Lenin only fought for the right of self-determination of *oppressed nations* - in opposition to oppressor nations. Lenin did not defend the right to secede of *oppressor non-nations* in opposition to oppressed nations.
2. Northern Ireland or the loyalist community is not a nation, but part of the Irish nation. Supporting the right of self-determination of the Irish nation as a whole is incompatible with supporting the right of secession of its pro-UK population.
3. Marx and Engels were against the 'self-determination' of the pro-slavery southern states in the North American civil war. Communists did not defend the right of self-determination for South Korea, South Vietnam, anti-communist China, monarchist unionists or West Germany in opposition to revolutionary unification with the rest of their respective countries. Leninism does not recognise self-determination rights for privileged communities interested in maintaining imperialist settlements.
4. The demand for self-determination for Ulster unionists does not have any real support and it is wrong to try to impose it on Ireland. The best way of winning unionist workers to

our side is through a programme of revolutionary socialist transformation.

5. It is ridiculous to expect a republic to allow a part of its own nation to be ruled by a foreign monarchy under a segregationist regime that oppressed, harassed and ghettoised the oppressed people, those who favour a one-nation republic.
6. Lenin advocated self-determination as the best way to remove national obstacles preventing working class unity. If the workers of the oppressor nation defended the right of the oppressed nation to secede, it would build bridges with the workers of the oppressed nation. The new CPGB position would mean asking Irish republicans and anti-imperialist fighters to become the champions of the loyalist right to have their own state.
7. The goal of working class unity would be pushed even further into the distant future if the anti-republican community exercised the right to separate from a republic. A new repartition would create massive pogroms and ethnic cleansing. Nobody would be happy because the republicans would not see the achievement of national unity and sovereignty, and the unionists would lose territory.
8. The new position on the Irish question has two further implications. The CPGB always unconditionally (albeit critically) defended republican fighters against British imperialists and unionists. With the new position there would be a danger and a tendency to be concerned with the rights of the unionists to defend themselves and to impose their 'legitimate' self-determination rights. In a similar way, comrade Conrad is saying that the 2,000 Kelpers from the Malvinas islands and other settlers implanted by Britain against nations that they colonised should have the right to choose which should be their state. This could lead to siding with Brit-

ish loyalists against Irish republicans and Argentinean nationalists.

9. Comrade Conrad is extending the right of self-determination to non-nations and to non-oppressed nations. In doing so he is undermining the legitimate democratic and national rights of the oppressed majority.
10. The new position also undermines the struggle for revolutionary democracy because it assumes that the Irish question can be resolved without a proletarian revolution. The CPGB is not proposing to achieve Irish national self-determination through a socialist revolution and a workers' republic. They seek a pure bourgeois democratic solution without fundamentally challenging capitalism in a futile attempt to convince unionists that they would be better off in a bourgeois 'binational' federal Irish republic.
11. We hope the CPGB will re-examine its position. Transforming the right of self-determination into a universal panacea has led to unconditional support for the pro-Nato KLA. After the KLA-Nato military victory Kosovo is an imperialist undemocratic enclave in which ethnic minorities are being persecuted or expelled. The imperialist triumph is leading to Nato expansionism, encouraging Russia to imitate the west and bomb Chechnya and Dagestan with imperialist complicity. This in turn will lead to more worldwide attacks against workers and oppressed peoples.
12. The only solution to the national question in the British-Irish islands is a socialist federation of workers' republics. Bourgeois federal republics exist in Germany, France, the USA, Argentina and Brazil, and all of them are exploitative capitalist regimes. In Ireland the workers of all communities should unite against their bosses, the segregationists and for an all-Irish secular, democratic workers' republic ●

Gerry Downing, Chris Edwards, John Stone, Dave Brown

Website

Our website carries a comprehensive archive section including key articles on Socialist Alliances, Russia, left polemics, the Northern Ireland peace process and the British-Irish question.
www.duntone.demon.co.uk/CPGB/

Where to get your Weekly Worker

■ London

Bookmarks Bloomsbury Street, WC1
Centreprise Bookshop 136-138 Kingsland High Street, E8 2NS
Compendium Books 234 Camden High Street, NW1 8QS
Dillons Bookshop Queen Mary College, 329 Mile End Road, E1
Housemans 5 Caledonian Road, N1 9DX
Index Books 16 Electric Avenue, SW9
New Beacon Books 76 Stroud Green Road, N4 3EN
Politico's 8 Artillery Row, SW1P 1RZ

■ Bristol

Greenleaf 82 Colston Street, BS1 5BB

■ Cardiff

Rebecca Books 131 Crwys Road, CF2

■ Edinburgh

Word Power 43 West Nicolson Street, EH8

■ Glasgow

Barrett Newsagents 263 Byres Road

■ Hull

Page One Books 9 Princes Avenue

■ Leicester

Little Thorn 73 Humberstone Gate, LE1

■ Liverpool

News from Nowhere 98 Bold Street, L1

■ Manchester

Frontline Books 255 Wilmslow Road, M14

■ Nottingham

Mushroom Books 12 Heathcote Street, NG1 3AA

■ Southampton

October Books 4 Onslow Road, SO2

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: Sunday November 21, 5pm - 'The principle of class self-emancipation', using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution, vol II: The politics of social classes* as a study guide.

Sunday November 28, 5pm - 'The modern state, part 1', using Ellen Meiksins Wood's *The pristine culture of capitalism* as a study guide.

Manchester: Monday November 29, 7.30pm - 'Modern imperialist economics', in the series on crisis. E-mail: CPGB2@aol.com.

■ Nominate Bannister

The Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Unison has chosen the Socialist Party's Roger Bannister as its candidate for the post of union general secretary. The CPGB is officially backing him. Already the minimum of 25 Unison branches have nominated, but it is important that as many as possible add their support before the November 26 deadline. Call Glen Kelly on 0171-251 8449 for details.

■ Support Tameside

Support group meets every Monday, 7pm at the Station pub, Warrington Street, Ashton under Lyne.

■ Scrap tuition fees

National demonstration - Thursday November 25. Assemble 12 noon, Malet Street, London, outside University of London Union, WC1. Organised by National Union of Students.

■ Red Room

'Leave to remain' by Leon London, Lisa Goldman (dir) at Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11. Box office 0171-273 2223. November 24-December 12. Tickets £8 (£5 conc).

■ Reclaim Our Rights

London campaign organising conference: 'The trade union rights bill'. Speaker: Tony Benn MP. Saturday November 20, 11am-4pm, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London. For an agenda and registration (£5), contact London Reclaim Our Rights, 10 Weald Close, Rotherhithe, London SE16 3ET.

■ Stop tube privatisation

Rally with speakers and music. Tuesday November 30, 5-7pm, Euston station. Phone 0171-281 4621

■ Defend public services

Public meeting to launch a joint borough campaign and discuss the standing of a candidate for the GLA Greenwich and Lewisham seat.

Thursday November 25, 7.30pm, Deptford Albany, SE8. Organised by Greenwich and Lewisham People Against Cuts. Phone Nick Long: 0181-314 5961.

■ Close down Campsfield

National protest, Campsfield Detention Centre, Langford Lane, Kiddlington, Oxford. Saturday November 27, 12-2pm.

■ Party wills

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

■ New numbers

The Weekly Worker has changed its phone and fax numbers. Telephone: 0208 965 0695; fax: 0208 961 9864.

Our postal and email addresses are unchanged.

CWI Scotland split

The lines of division in the Committee for a Workers International in Scotland are becoming clear. Following Peter Taaffe's recent tour a surrogate war has been launched against the majority, using Philip Stott and his Dundee based faction (Harvey Duke, Bruce Wallace, Jim McFarlane, Alec Manley and Mark Walker).

The opening salvos were fired by comrade Stott before Taaffe arrived in Scotland. In August he produced a short review of the Scottish Socialist Party one year after its launch. The gist of his analysis is that while the SSP has been a success - there are 1,300 card-carrying members and around 40 branches - work around building the CWI 'party' has suffered. Unless that is rectified, argues comrade Stott, there is a distinct danger that the SSP will fall prey to either left reformism or nationalism. Softness on the tuition fees issue is cited as evidence.

In September he followed up his 'The SSP one year on' with an 'Organisational resolution'. Here he outlines his - and Taaffe's - proposals to build the CWI as a party within a party. There must be recruitment material, contact discussions, the publication of *International Socialist* bimonthly (instead of quarterly), a monthly newsletter, a CWI conference, an elected committee, a budget and closed branches.

The Stott faction was answered by Alan McCombes. He amended Stott's document and presented it to his comrades in the form of 'SSP one year on' mark II. Here comrade McCombes - editor of *Scottish Socialist Voice* - celebrates the SSP as his party, which he distinguishes from Labourism and left social democracy, because it is a "class struggle" organisation.

Comrade McCombes also decisively trounced the Stott faction on CWI Scotland's executive. Six of its seven members - the dissenter being comrade Stott - agreed his 'Marxism in the new millennium'. As can be seen in the extracts we reprint, the majority is determined to wind down CWI Scotland, or, as they want it to become known, the International Socialist Movement. Instead of comrade Stott's 'party within a party', the majority insist on open discussion forums and a mere ideological trend.

Not surprisingly, this is not to the liking of the Stott faction. For them the CWI is key - not least with its "breakthroughs" in London, Coventry, Ireland, etc. The Scottish majority is accused of wanting to "throw everything into the SSP": ie, liquidation.

Revealingly, the Stott faction perfectly reflects comrade Taaffe's obsession with organisational forms and failure to tackle the political problems which are driving the CWI majority in Scotland to the right and to nationalism: eg, the demand for an independent Scotland.

The material reprinted here comes from November's *Members Bulletin* of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, whose editor, Hannah Sell, adopts for form's sake a studiously neutral stance between the two warring CWI factions in Scotland ●

Marxism in the new millennium

Agreed by six of the seven CWI Scottish executive members

The first 12 months of the SSP have vindicated completely last year's decision to transform the Scottish Socialist Alliance into a coherent political party and to devote the major part of our time and resources to the building and political and organisational development of the new party. It is no exaggeration to state that the creation of the SSP has had a profound effect on the consciousness of a huge strata of the working class. In a generally difficult situation for socialists and Marxists internationally, the political terrain in Scotland has been partially transformed as a result of the intervention of the SSP.

The SSP has given confidence to tens of thousands of people who would previously have regarded themselves as socialists, but who had become disorientated as a consequence of the serious defeats suffered by the working class in Britain and internationally over the past 15 years

If we can consolidate such a party within the next few years, the struggle to overthrow capitalism in Scotland will be substantially accelerated. It would be criminal negligence for the forces of Marxism within the SSP to now squander this historic opportunity by retreating from or diluting our previously agreed strategy. The hugely favourable situation we now face in Scotland is partly rooted in the objective situation, including the development of the national question over the last 10 years

However, there are also other wider political factors that have enabled us to emerge as the major ideological current on the left in Scotland. In particular, the historical annihilation of Stalinism and the collapse of left reformism - both of which were mass forces in Scotland in the 1970s and 1980s, with which we could not have hoped to compete - have now cleared the road for the rise of genuine socialism.

That is not to suggest that reformism is dead and buried. In the future, under the impact of events, reformist currents are likely to reappear within the Labour Party and the SNP. These ideas will undoubtedly get an echo among the broad mass of the population because they seem to offer an easier option than the militant anti-capitalist, pro-socialist stance of the SSP.

At some stage there could even be a vertical split-off from Labour and/or the SNP based on a section of the trade unions and MPs/MSPs in which reformist ideas would predominate. Because of the advanced political programme of the SSP, which includes support for an independent socialist Scotland, wholesale democratic public ownership and a policy of workers' MPs on workers' wages, it is highly unlikely that significant sections of the trade union bureaucracy or the Parliamentary Labour Party would join the SSP

The possibility of such a perspective unfolding in the future underlines

the urgency of the tasks we now face. If we grab the window of opportunity that has now opened up to develop the SSP into a powerful force within the working class, any future reformist-based workers' party would find it much more difficult to build a mass active base, although inevitably it would attract electoral support.

However, it is one thing to recognise that left reformism is likely to develop within the trade unions, Labour, the SNP and the wider working class. It is another thing entirely to suggest that left reformism will achieve the mass roots or the stable political base that it was able to achieve in the past, particularly in the 1970s and early to mid-1980s

Rather than being fearful and defensive about phantom organisations which do not even exist at this stage, we should engage in the SSP brimful of confidence that the ideas of genuine Marxism, of revolutionary socialism, will ultimately prevail

However, we have to base our organisational strategy upon the situation as it is now, and upon how it is likely to develop in the future, rather than on some worst case scenario which is contradicted by all of the existing evidence.

And rather than viewing the SSP as a hostile or potentially hostile environment in which our main role is to carry out a variant of entrism, we should recognise that the SSP is a working class, socialist party made up in the main of people who want to break with capitalism.

As was the case with SML or Militant in the past, most people joining will not have fully worked out ideas as to how socialism will be achieved. That does not mean that there will be absolute clarity or agreement on all issues facing the SSP. In the future, political clashes are unavoidable. In any growing, living, dynamic party which is successful, there will inevitably be different currents reflecting both the caution of some sections of the working class and the impatience of others.

Even the central leadership of the Bolshevik Party split on the eve of revolution faced with the decisive question of taking power. The leadership of the old Militant organisation split in the early 90s when faced with a new situation in relation to the mass workers' parties and the need for a new strategy in Scotland.

And it is no secret that there have been a whole series of differences, including organisational splits within the CWI over the past period; or that the CWI leadership was and remains strongly opposed to the political strategy of the Scottish section of the CWI.

Any successful socialist party will at different stages come under pressures from opportunist and from ultra-left ideas. There may at a certain stage be pressures, for example, to dilute our programme on the national question, or on the issue of workers' representatives on workers' wages, in order to entice trade union leaders and Labour politicians into the party.

There will be other pressures on the party to run too far ahead of events or to advance ideas and slogans which do not sufficiently take into account

the stage of consciousness of the wider working class. Some elements of the SSP, for example, have argued that our MSP should have refused outright to swear the oath of allegiance - a position that would not have been accepted or understood even by the most advanced sections of the working class.

And of course, in the future, there will be even more decisive issues to be battled out within the SSP, as the party begins to face up to the task of leading the working class to power.

For these reasons, it is essential that we maintain a vibrant Marxist current within the SSP that can provide a framework for key issues to be debated out and at the same time can promote the ideology of Marxism within the SSP and help equip the party with a clearer and stronger theoretical grounding.

However, the task of developing such an organisation is more complicated than the task, for example, of building an independent organisation such as SML, or an entrism organisation such as Militant operating in the hostile environment of the Labour Party.

For many of our members, there seems to be no difference between how they operated in the past as part of SML, and how they operate today as part of the SSP.

The elections and other campaigns and interventions have been conducted on the basis of our politics and our methods. The programmatic document agreed virtually unanimously at the SSP founding conference is, if anything, a more far-reaching programme for the overthrow of capitalism than the founding constitution and manifesto of SML

The strength of our organisation cannot be simplistically reduced to the crude yardstick of attendance at branch meetings. It is a fact that there are far more active Marxists in Scotland today than was the case before the launch of the SSP.

However, while most are active in the SSP, a layer do not attend CWI meetings for a variety of reasons. For some members, especially in our strongest areas, the problem boils down to the question, 'What is the role of our organisation, when the SSP itself seems to provide virtually everything - political discussion, public campaigning, intervention in the class struggle, fighting elections, etc - that SML itself provided in the past?'

To simply say, 'We need to raise the consciousness of these members about the role of the CWI organisation' is inadequate, not least because it poses the question in turn, 'But what is the role of the CWI organisation?'

Until we answer this point politically, we will fail to raise anyone's consciousness about the role of the CWI organisation.

So what is the role of the CWI organisation? Is it an alternative 'party within a party' waiting in the wings for the SSP to fail, or to fall under the spell of reformism?

The CWI organisation ... is a tendency, or a platform, or a current, within the SSP. Its orientation is not towards the broad mass of the working class, as a party's orientation would be, but towards the SSP and its membership That does not mean we should not seek to build the CWI organisation. The bigger the force of Marxism within the SSP the stronger our influence is likely to be.

But clearly, the task of building an organisation within a party in which Marxism is the predominant political

influence is a more complicated task than the straightforward process of recruiting to an independent party.

The following organisational resolution does not pretend to provide all the solutions to this problem. However, it does represent an attempt to develop an organisation of Marxism within the SSP that can assist the party to develop a much clearer understanding of the measures necessary to see the struggle for socialism in Scotland through to a victorious conclusion.

We propose the following measures:

- We will relaunch SML as the International Socialist Movement (Marxist platform of the SSP), taking out a paid half page advert in the next issue of the *Scottish Socialist Voice*, explaining the basic principles of the new organisation. All future meetings will be advertised in the SSP.

- Hold regular monthly open meetings in Scotland's four main cities, with an emphasis on debating the key issues of relevance to the SSP and to socialists in Scotland generally.

- We should invite other members of the SSP who disagree with us to debate with us on relevant topics; and invite people from outside the SSP to participate in these debates ... It will be necessary on occasion, as we have had to do recently, to use the ISM branches as a forum at which our own members can debate internal questions relating to the work of the CWI in Scotland and internationally.

- Each branch would elect a convenor to be responsible for the organising of monthly meetings. As well as political discussion, branch meetings should include items on recruitment to the ISM, finance and the sale of ISM material.

- There should be quarterly all-members meetings of the ISM, to discuss current political issues and to review the work of the ISM and its role within the SSP. The autumn all-members meeting should be also be the annual conference of the ISM. The CWI and the Socialist Party (England and Wales) should have an open invitation to attend all of these meetings.

- The present executive committee, which consists solely of full-time staff, should be replaced with a wider political committee. This new political committee should meet monthly and should consist of two representatives elected from each branch, plus all full-time workers for the SSP who are ISM members, including parliamentary staff. The political committee should elect a smaller three to five-strong coordinating to deal with communications, administration etc.

- Our members, especially those with a high profile within the SSP should uphold the basic principles of Marxism within the SSP on the various political issues that arise. However, it would be a mistake for the ISM to function as a tightly-knit caucus with a pre-determined position on all the day-to-day tactical, organisational and policy issues that arise. Such an approach towards the SSP would not the advance the cause of Marxism within the party but would generate suspicion and resentment among non-ISM members.

- An editorial team of three to five should be elected by the membership as a whole to produce the *International Socialist* magazine. We will continue to publish the magazine quarterly, with the aim of eventually moving to a bimonthly when resources permit.

- One CWI member in every SSP branch where we currently have mem-

looms

bers should be responsible for ensuring that CWI material is available at meetings.

● A convenor should be elected who would devote most of his/her time to developing our organisation

The ISM will participate fully in the work of our international, including European schools, world congresses, IECs and meetings of the British NC that we are invited to attend. We will also seek to utilise e-mail and the internet to forge direct lines of communication with all individual sections and

members of the CWI, in order that we can exchange information and experiences. Our IT group should use the internet, newsgroups to obtain and distribute any useful information from the CWI and from other revolutionary and socialist organisations around the world.

Finally, we call upon the leadership of the CWI to withdraw its opposition to the launch of the SSP and to give full backing to the strategy democratically agreed by the Scottish section ●

A reply to the Scotland EC

Phillip Stott, Harvey Duke, Bruce Wallace
Jim McFarlane, Alan Manley, Mark Walker

The purpose of this reply to the EC statement, 'Marxism and the new millennium', is to outline our political opposition to the arguments contained in the statement. We hope to show how the EC's characterisation of the SSP and its programme, as well as perspectives for the development of reformism and other related questions lead to the resolution proposing organisational changes that would seriously weaken our revolutionary organisation in Scotland

We reaffirm our commitment to the building of the SSP and call on the EC to change their proposals for the CWI section in Scotland.

The introduction to the EC resolution deals with the impact of the SSP and the perspectives for the growth of the party over the next period. We can, and should, all recognise the tremendous breakthrough the SSP has made and the potential for the party to grow in the months and years ahead. Both in the document, 'SSP one year on', and the resolution, 'Building the CWI', these points are made. One of the key tasks the CWI have to carry out is the continued building and consolidation of the SSP itself

When we agreed to the launch of the SSP last year we explained that we were attempting to carry out a dual task. To popularise and recreate a socialist consciousness through the launch of the SSP and to strengthen the forces of Marxism, the CWI. The resolution proposed by the EC has effectively now declared that to be a redundant strategy.

The resolution is clearly arguing that we adopt a new strategy. Our revolutionary organisation/party is now to become an ideological current within the SSP rather than an organisation/party. Why is this now being proposed?

In the document, 'SSP one year on', the SSP was characterised as a "broad, class struggle-based socialist party with a strong revolutionary core in its leadership". The programme of the SSP was described as a socialist programme, but not a revolutionary programme because the party does not accept, at this stage, the need for a revolutionary transformation of society and all that goes with it.

If this characterisation of the SSP is agreed then the need for a distinct revolutionary faction is clear. To draw around it the people in the SSP who

Up to now in the discussion the case has been put that left reformism would not develop as a significant force because the organisations who promoted those ideas in the past like the Labour Party and the communist parties no longer exist. In 'Marxism in the New Millennium' the comrades seem to accept that left reformism will now develop under the impact of events: "These ideas will undoubtedly get an echo among the broad mass of the population because they seem to offer an easier option."

This is correct but there is a new twist added. Left reformist ideas will grow in the "Labour Party, the SNP, in society as a whole", but not in the SSP. This would only be possible if the SSP was a revolutionary party, which is what is hinted at in the resolution, or if the SSP was to stay a tiny organisation with no influence in society. And yet the SSP is to become a mass party in the next few years. But how? Surely if the SSP grows under the impact of events then some new members of the SSP would have illusions in reformism.

This would be especially the case if there was no other viable anti-capitalist party in existence in Scotland. The onset of an economic crisis will see a re-emergence of reformist socialist ideas against the background of a big anti-capitalist mood. The ideas of left reformism are an inevitable stage in the consciousness of a big section of the working class. Especially a working class being newly awoken to socialism after a period of ideological retreat. This can rapidly give way to workers drawing revolutionary conclusions. Events can be speeded up by the intervention of Marxist forces, but not if these forces have been allowed to weaken to such an extent that they are incapable of responding to such events

In Scotland the ideas of nationalism will also be a complicating factor for any revolutionary party to contend with. Particularly under the impact of economic crisis and major class battles the ideas of extreme leftwing nationalism will develop both in the SNP and in society generally, including the SSP and/or any other workers' formations that may arise. Given the determination of the British ruling class not to accede independence for Scotland, the struggle for socialism is very likely to be bound up with an increasing polarisation on the national question. It will be essential that a genuine revolutionary force can stand against very radical, even revolutionary-sounding, ideas that are also shot through with nationalist ideology. Which again, if not combated, could lead to disorientation and defeat.

What we are sketching out here is the much more complicated terrain on which the SSP and the CWI will be fighting on as events unfold than is recognised in the EC resolution. There is no hint of these complications in the EC statement, which tends to give the impression of a straightforward development of the building of a mass SSP which will lead the struggle for power in Scotland. It is a simplistic view of events and especially on how the consciousness of the mass of the working class will develop on the road to drawing revolutionary conclusions.

Some comrades may argue that these are problems for the future. That we can accept the EC position and tighten up our revolutionary organisation when faced with these events. Unfortunately that would prove a disaster. A revolutionary party needs to constantly develop, generate a new cadre, train and educate the new generation, as well as cut its teeth in debate and discussion and intervention in the class struggle. The proposals in the EC resolution will make such a task impossible.

Our position, that the implementation of this resolution would result in the weakening of our revolutionary party, is not an assertion, but is ex-

PLICITLY stated in the following terms: "Instead of seeing the CWI organisation as 'our party' and the SSP as 'somebody else's party', we should state clearly that the SSP is our party" ... "The CWI organisation in contrast is a tendency, or a platform, or a current within the SSP."

Apart from the false assertion that we have ever described the SSP as someone else's party, these sentences are not an accident. Nor are they simply written with a public audience in mind. These words clearly describe the view of the EC that the SSP should now be accepted as our party ideologically. That our tradition, the years of work we carried out in the Labour Party, through SML, the SSA and now the CWI organisation in the SSP can now be represented by the SSP as it currently stands.

If that is the case why not describe the SSP now as a revolutionary party? Why not pose affiliation to the CWI? Why not indeed. Because the membership of the SSP would not accept it. We would have a revolt on our hands if we even raised the question of the SSP accepting the banner of a revolutionary party. Far less joining our revolutionary international.

The growth of the SSP has been in no small measure due to the fact that the party is perceived as a broad party. A party that all socialists can participate in. What purpose is there to be served by asserting that the SSP is our party and the CWI is not. Of course we are all members of the SSP. We have been among the most enthusiastic builders of the SSP and we will continue to be so. There is nothing wrong with our comrades describing the SSP as "our party". But it is wrong and will "result in the disorientation of our members" if we pretend the SSP now represents our programme or tradition.

First and foremost we are members of the CWI. Why? Because encompassed in the CWI, its ideas, methods, programme and outlook is the continued tradition of Marxism, Trotskyism and revolutionary socialism. Because the programme of the CWI will be the programme that a mass revolutionary international will be built around. Because only this programme can win the liberation of humankind from capitalist barbarism.

When we worked as an entrust organisation in the Labour Party we understood we were a revolutionary party working in the mass organisations of the working class. Entrism was a tactic to put our forces in contact with workers and youth who could be won to a revolutionary position. When we formed SML, which by the way was as a result of the analysis of the CWI internationally that the former workers' parties no longer provided fruitful work for the revolutionary party, we stood as an independent revolutionary party that was able to win significant numbers of workers and youth to a Marxist banner. The turn taken to the SSA and now the SSP was done to carry out the dual task of assisting in the building of new political organisations of the working class, while at the same time building our own revolutionary party

One thing is certain: if we downgrade our organisation as proposed by the resolution and fail to build an active Marxist organisation, it is extremely likely that the SSP will fall to other ideologies which, as argued above, will be major contenders to Marxism in the future. Is this scaremongering? We would argue it is a sober assessment based on the tradition historically of the struggle for socialism. There is no straight road to the socialist revolution. The accumulated experience of the revolutionary movement is full of examples of parties, including Marxist parties, who failed the working class.

The proposals in the resolution argue for four city-based meetings of the CWI in which we debate issues of interest to the SSP membership. We

are not opposed to debates but the thrust of the resolution is that the big majority of our meetings should be debates. If that was the case we would be unable, as we do at present, to discuss the building of the CWI, who the contacts are, or the tactical and strategic issues facing the SSP. Debates as proposed would inevitably consume the whole meeting. Our organisational tasks would be abandoned. Our own membership would be reluctant to raise issues of concern if other political opponents of ours were present at such meetings

The [EC] resolution also attempts to abandon democratic unity as a method of our organisation - "It would be a mistake for the ISM to function as a tightly knit caucus" - because it would "generate suspicion and resentment among non-ISM members". This statement and the whole resolution reflect the very real pressures that exists on us to wind down our organisation and throw everything into the SSP. Of course we would not insist on CWI members voting the same way on every issue, but it is vital that we maintain an organisation based on Marxist ideas and methods precisely because the SSP does not stand on that basis. And because we will not achieve the revolutionary overturn of society without such a party.

In reality the political arguments and proposals will lead to the weakening of the forces of Marxism because the resolution attempts to give the SSP and its programme a character it does not have. The only role this resolution can play is to lower the consciousness of our members as to the need to retain and strengthen our revolutionary party here in Scotland. It will reinforce the weaknesses that already exist in Scotland within our organisation and ironically will complicate our work in the broad SSP as our specific weight in the party reduces

The CWI is unique among Marxist internationals in that it has more fully and better analysed the period we have come through, in the last decade, than any other international organisation on the planet. This is not accidental. The CWI through its programme represents the most consistent and clear defenders of the ideas and methods of Trotskyism. This applies not just to the post-Stalinist era but also to the analysis of the post-war boom, the return of recession and slump in the world economy, the colonial revolution, Northern Ireland and many other questions.

Every revolutionary organisation makes mistakes. Lenin and Trotsky made many. Marxism is not a crystal ball that can foretell the future but a scientific method, a guide to action. The past 10 years in particular has been a very difficult and disorientating time for revolutionaries. Inevitably this has been reflected within our own international as well. The splits that have taken place in the CWI over this time are rooted in political questions and the effect of the ideological retreat of the 1990s. There is not time to deal with these issues here, except to say that in our view the CWI remains, still, the only international that has consistently and most clearly understood the period we have been through. The work we have carried out in Ireland both North and South in very contrasting conditions has been and should continue to be an source of inspiration for our comrades in Scotland. The breakthrough we have made in London and Coventry in elections, as well as the work around tuition fees, has demonstrated the viability of Marxism across Britain

We appeal to the conference to delay a decision on these proposals to allow a more full discussion to take place that we hope will result in the withdrawing of the EC resolution and the acceptance of a resolution that will ensure we continue to build the SSP and the forces of the revolutionary party here in Scotland ●

British-Irish debate

Race and nation

The British-Irish debate has raised a number of interesting theoretical issues. It would be useful at this stage to try to take stock before defending my own point of view.

Jack Conrad made a start on such an assessment, dividing us into two camps. He says, "Two distinct shades of opinion have emerged. On one side stand the consistent revolutionary democrats ... on the other side are the inconsistent revolutionary democrats (in certain cases we have revolutionary non-democrats)" (*Weekly Worker* October 21).

Jack sums up these opposed views in terms of those who support "a voluntary union of peoples" versus those in favour of a section of the Irish people being "frog-marched into a unitary state and kept there if needs be by coercion". Presented in this way, it appears to be an argument between 'pacifist' or non-violent revolutionary democrats and physical force revolutionary democrats. Whilst I can see an aspect of truth to this, both camps would equally object. I do not think it gets to the essence of the debate at all.

Physical force does not contradict revolutionary democracy, although the principle of non-violence does. Indeed the idea that this principle is the essence of democracy is thoroughly bourgeois liberal. The liberals always preach non-violent democracy to the working class. Workers may vote, but must never enforce anything on 'scabs' or 'innocent' democratic bosses. Thus the anti-poll tax riot, rather than being a popular enforcement of the democratic will, was a violation of democracy. This of course never prevents liberals from using the armed forces whenever necessary.

This is not really an argument against Jack, because I know he would agree with these points. But it is argument against trying to present his case in this way. Perhaps he is doing this to coalesce his majority by appealing to liberal pacifist sentiments within his own bloc. Perhaps not. Either way, we need to understand the debate somewhat differently.

There are two distinct types of argument going on. First there is a debate within the camp of revolutionary democracy. This is represented in the articles by Jack, Allan Armstrong and myself. All three comrades accept the revolutionary democratic method and openly endorse this approach to politics. Most recently this has been shown by all three joining the newly formed Republican Communist Network, which also endorses this approach to politics. The debate amongst us is a debate within the 'family', no less furious for that. All of us accept that as revolutionary democrats we need to have a consistent, principled approach to any political problem. We just disagree as to what that is. But who is and who is not 'consistent' is far from proven objectively.

Take, for example, the demand for a federal republic. All three of us accept that this is a legitimate demand within Marxist politics. Myself and Jack believe it is a correct demand now. But Allan thinks it is wrong. This is also a debate within the family. When it comes to self-determination for the British-Irish, myself and Allan oppose this and Jack supports it.

The most obvious comrade outside our 'family' is John Stone. As I understand his public position, he is not a revolutionary democrat. His views on bourgeois democracy are inconsistent. He does not give a damn if his view on democracy is illogical and inconsistent. He is inconsistent and proud of it. He is, for example, unconditionally in favour of abolishing the House of Lords, even while the constitutional monarchy remains. He is in favour of abolishing hereditary peers without a workers' republic, but not the hereditary monarchy. He appears to be more hostile to their Lordships (on your bike now) than Her Majesty (who can keep her job until we are ready to have a workers' republic). As a revolutionary democrat, he would be desperately keen to rectify this or other anomalies. But as an economist, he just does not care.

Now if we turn to the Manchester CPGB majority and try to identify their position. I should say that these comrades are not a homogeneous bloc. There are differences amongst them. Whatever generalisation I make will by definition be slightly misleading. These observations about their position are no more than a call for the comrades to make their own positions clear. I have no wish to misrepresent their views.

Manchester comrades appear or have allowed themselves to be presented as semi-Stalinists, not revolutionary democrats. This is because they view the Soviet Union during the period when there was no soviet or working class democracy as some kind of 'socialism'. This contradicts a basic tenet of revolutionary working class democracy based on the Paris Commune. They may be inconsistent democrats and proud of it. This has led them to adopt a position of quoting Jack Conrad from the days when he was possibly still a Stalinist or had not long departed from such views. This does not seem to rattle Jack at all - why should it?

The Manchester comrades are thus represented as 'tankies' whose final solution to the Irish question lies in the aforementioned weaponry. This view of their position may be true, partially true or untrue. If it is untrue then they have made the mistake of allowing themselves to be outmanoeuvred. In addition these comrades seem to have kept quiet on the Scottish question. Silence on this makes it appear that their only concern is Ireland. In other words they are tinted with Irish nationalism.

These comrades need to think whether they want to defend the idea that the USSR was some kind of socialism or whether they want to effectively defend the Irish working class. In my opinion they cannot logically do both. Jack has not been slow to understand this and quite rightly exploit it. If the comrades are revolutionary democrats, they must be serious about resolving their own inconsistency.

Finally I should mention Tom Delargy, whose positions are closer to Trotskyism. I think it is fair to say that Tom is moving towards revolutionary democracy. I do not know whether he has actually arrived yet. But for the time being I will take him as being outside the revolutionary democratic camp.

Finally it might appear that only Jack has a unified bloc. But there are some hidden differences within his

camp, including some who think that everybody should have a right to self-determination. There is also the AWL, which has publicly endorsed the methods of revolutionary democracy, is in favour of a united Ireland, but accepts the right of the protestants to self-determination up to and including the right to call in the British army.

The main debate is within the 'family'. The real issues are to be found there. This is not because we are better arguers than the outsiders, but because we are subjecting our arguments to a clear test - consistency with the principled politics of revolutionary working class democracy. The 'outsiders' cannot subject us to the only test that might persuade us to change our minds. Can John Stone really expose the fact that Jack is not a consistent revolutionary democrat? Of course he cannot, unless he first declares himself to be a total hypocrite.

Let us therefore concentrate on some of the issues that divide the 'family'. The first of these is the question of the nation. Jack argues that there is a British nation and not a Scottish nation. Allan argues that it is the other way round. My position is a 'dual nation' position. There is both a British nation and a Scottish nation. We live in a multinational state with British-English, British-Welsh, British-Scots and British-Irish. Obviously this is a contradiction. But for me, contradiction is at the heart of the national question. At last weekend's CPGB school in London Allan said that his denial of a British nation was merely polemical. In which case his real position might also be 'dual nation'. Perhaps he should clarify this.

One of the issues to emerge is how we define a nation. All revolutionary democrats are agreed that nations and citizenship are a modern idea emerging with the spread of capitalism. We are all agreed that ancient-dynastic Scotland was not a nation. Allan explained during the school the role of John Knox and Presbyterianism in the beginnings of national consciousness. But nobody is proclaiming a mythical 'Braveheart' nation.

The case for a Scottish nation does not depend on the fact that Engels and Lenin referred to the four nations of Britain in *State and revolution*. The question is for today. Scotland has a clearly defined territory and definite border. This is a key factor. There are many oppressed nations in the world whose borders are neither defined nor recognised. Scotland's status as a nation is recognised in UK constitutional law. Its status as a nation is recognised by many international sporting bodies. Scotland participates, for example, in the World Cup. Scotland has many nationally distinct institutions - schools and universities with their own curriculum and exam structures, a legal system with its own codes and rules, a church independent from the state and a distinctive system of local government. Despite the common UK currency, it even has its own banknotes. From the 1880s it has had its own national bureaucracy - the Scottish office with a £14 billion budget. It now has its own national parliament. Nobody can deny that Scotland has a distinct culture, history and a common language.

I have left the most important reason to last. The vast majority of Scot-

land's people consider themselves to be a nation distinct from the English. They consider themselves Scottish. They have their own nationalist parties, which give political expression to idea of a Scottish nation. The Scottish people are, in a word, Scottish. They are no more north British than we consider ourselves south British. Among the world's nations-without-states, Scotland is surely one of the most clear-cut examples.

When CPGB comrades discuss this in my presence I seem to be in a minority of one. This surely gives them a false sense of security. In the real world this calculation turns upside down. With five million votes against, the CPGB is an infinitesimally small minority. More interestingly is why? The answer lies in Stalin's definition of a nation: "A nation is an historically grown, stable community of language, territory, economic life and a psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." Stalin then says: "It has to be stressed that none of the mentioned criteria, taken on its own, is sufficient for a definition of what constitutes a nation. More: if only one of them is lacking, the nation ceases to be a nation" (JV Stalin *Marxism and the national question* p10).

This definition is very narrow. If we apply it as a check list, Scotland scores five out of six and thus fails the Stalin test. Apparently the CPGB thinks Scotland does not have a 'common economy'. The Scottish economy is a capitalist economy and part of the British, European and world economies. Jack points out that nobody has so far questioned Stalin's definition (*Weekly Worker* October 21). This was true. I had considered it no more than guidelines and was not at all concerned if Scotland only scored five. But the CPGB is applying the strict letter of the law as set out by Stalin. Both myself and Allan have now said that we must question Stalin's definition.

Jack explained that when he was accusing me of having a "check list" approach he was not criticising me for having a definition. We all have definitions or, if you prefer, a "check list". Jack's point was that in the face of a problem in Ireland I was offering them a check-list solution. This is not the case. I am arguing for a consistently democratic programme and attempting to be clear under what conditions this programme should be amended to include the right of the British-Irish to self-determination. My view is that the conditions do not prevail at present for a (fictional) amendment of the Irish or UK minimum programmes.

When asked whether I am in favour of a centralised, federal or separate Scottish and Welsh workers' republics in Britain, I can make a principled abstract check-list answer. I prefer a centralised workers' republic with delegates from every corner of Britain. But a correct answer is also that I will not choose because we do not know the concrete circumstances that might prevail when a move to a workers' republic is on the cards. A Scottish workers' republic may then be correct. But to say this now is dabbling in or even promoting nationalism. Since I cannot predict the future with accuracy I do not rule out, absolutely, national self-determination for the people of Ulster. This is not because I do not think the protestants could change, but on the contrary

because I think they could change radically. But to advocate it now would be reactionary. Now it means nothing other than the 'right' to remain in the UK.

Allan Armstrong has made a number of important points recently. I want to pursue those points in my own way. First is the concept of nation which must be linked to citizenship, not race. We do not need reminding that the Germans defined their nation in racial and cultural terms, which excluded the Jews. Our position must be the opposite of the racial or ethnic nation. Perhaps we should speak of the 'national democracy' rather than the nation.

National democracy (or democracies) began to emerge with the rise of capitalism and the British, American and especially the French revolutions. It will continue until it begins to 'wither away' as a result of the international socialist revolution. Of course national democracy is not a fixed amount, but constantly in flux as a result of the class struggle. Neither is it limited to bourgeois democracy. Its highest form is the dictatorship of the proletariat. Under conditions of modern global capitalism the working class is increasingly mobile. Immigration is and always has been a major component of capitalist development. The national democracy must be defined as multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious (ie, secular) in a multi-nationality state.

National democracy must have two equally important dimensions. The right of nations to self-determination must govern relations between national democracies. Full freedom and equality must be the guiding principle. This is exactly what Allan says (*Weekly Worker* October 28). He points out that this distinction was made by Lenin. These two democratic principles are essential for a consistently democratic position. It is completely mistaken to consider that freedom to secede is the be-all and end-all of consistent democracy. We have to be able to distinguish how they apply to the 'British-Irish'. This is why having a proper scientific definition of a nation is vital if we are not to be moved by our own national prejudices.

It seems to me that territory and national consciousness are vital components. But perhaps the existence of a democratic movement is also necessary. After all a national democracy cannot be formed out of thin air. It must be a product of a democratic movement. As revolutionary democrats our concern is not to unite the Irish nation, but to unite Irish democracy. It is a united Ireland that offers the best opportunity to extend Irish (national) democracy. It is the working class, both catholic and protestant, that has most to gain from the struggle for Irish democracy, provided they actively participate in the forging of that democracy.

In this sense John Stone's point seems correct. It is not the oppression of nations, rather the oppression of national democracy, that concerns us. If Kurdistan or Scotland do not have the right to self-determination, their national democracies are oppressed, although obviously not in the same way. Democracy, in this sense, is not some set of narrow constitutional rules, but the politically organised people ●

Dave Craig

Rescuing Marxism

It is praxis, not deterministic pseudo-science, that will bring emancipation, argues the SLP's **Delphi**

Steve Green (*Weekly Worker* November 4) raises some important points about the scientific basis of Marxism which deserve clarifying.

Firstly, we appear to agree on the main point - that dialectical materialism is a method of analysis and not in itself a science. Steve even concedes that politics is not a true science. We also agree that understanding Marxism as a methodology is in need of "critical reappraisal" (Delphi's words). He also goes on to affirm that the solution to this lies in "learn[ing] from the class struggle" - that is what Delphi, using economy of words, describes as *praxis*.

However, Steve goes on to distinguish Marxist methodology from a 'Marxism' which does not need such a critical reappraisal. The question therefore arises - what is this Marxism distinct from the methodology of dialectical materialism? He obviously does not mean Marxism in action, as this necessarily involves both methodology and practice. Does he mean the accumulated theoretical writings of Marx and Marxists? If so, how do we discern which among these describe objective reality, without recourse also to critical reappraisal tested in practice. Put simply, what elements of this Marxism are "science" and what not?

For the dogmatic Marxist-Leninists, or Trotskyists, the answer is simple. It is canonised in holy writ and *ipso facto* must be scientific. Under Stalinist regimes of course it is enshrined in official state ideology. Here it also serves the role of ascribing scientific authority to a bureaucratic class in its task of promoting industrialisation and socially engineering the subordination of workers and peasants to technology as producers. This is the pseudo-scientific doctrinaire nonsense peddled in the name of Marxism-Leninism by such theoretical Neanderthals as Royston Bull and Harpal Brar.

How indeed do genuine Marxists, Marxist-Leninists or Trotskyists use the methodology, theory or philosophy of dialectical materialism to arrive at an objective understanding of the real world, in order to bring about a transformation to socialism? To repeat - we require no less than an understanding of the "epistemological premises of Marxism". This is not, as Steve translates from Delphine, "the theory and methods upon which Marxism rests". It entails a *critique* of Marxist "theory and methods". To use as basic a definition as possible, drawn from *Collin's concise English dictionary*, epistemology is itself the "theory of knowledge, especially the critical study of its validity, method and scope".

Concluding his letter, Steve refers to a practical example which shows why such a critique is vital - the debate on the "British-Irish thing", as he calls it. Delphi too (who has never claimed infallibility) is also bemused why this long-buried 'two nations' thesis, propagated by the British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO) in the early 1970s, should be resurrected with such vehemence at this time. Obviously it is an attempt to raise the demand of 'Irish-British' self-determination at this sensitive stage in

.....
The Stalinist ghost was indeed present at the feast during the SLP congress. But the spirit of Delphi was abroad too
.....

the peace process. Whether it is intended, as it was by BICO, to undermine republicanism must be left to those most closely involved in the debate to judge.

However, both sides of the debate claim to be putting forward a scientific view of nationality in general and of the 'British-Irish' in particular. Which of these arguments reflects objective reality? How is the truth decided? If a theoretical position is adopted by an organisation on a majority vote, does this make it correct or scientific? It may be good enough for bishops or mullahs in council to claim the hand of god guides them to the correct decision, but, as materialists, we do not have that option.

According to Steve, faced with the inability of proving one proposition or the other by experiment, we may have to "wait for it to happen or not". If so, how are all the acres of print and hours of time devoted to this and other questions justified, if they do not provide Marxists with a *guide to action* which can help, in this case, bring about British-Irish self-determination, or conversely, prevent unionist secession within a united Ireland?

To continue with the present example, it is an objective truth that central to the 'nationality' of the British-Irish is a culture and ideology which is pro-British imperialist, anti-catholic and anti-Irish. Strip that away and what is left? The religious element in British-Irish culture is clearly dominated by the political aspect. Church of Ireland and dissenter congregations exist amicably in the 26 Counties without the need for expression through 'self-determination', or the desire to march with Lambeg drums.

If this is accepted as a truth, then it is difficult to see why the debate has assumed the proportions it has. Is it because, as Delphi is saying about epistemological premises, Marxism is often employed not as a method of critique related to actual struggle, but as a theory, which, having assumed an autonomy of its own, is disputed in terms of an inner 'logic' and not reality? In terms of science it bears the same relation as pure mathematics does to the necessary ability to calculate quantities of food, money, electricity, coal or any other thing required in daily life. In other words, even if the theory does accord with reality - ie, is 'scientific' - but does not provide a way to validate itself through praxis, what is its value to the

struggle for socialism?

Furthermore, if a theory is scientific - that is, based on determined laws - how can its realisation be mediated through praxis? As Steve says, human beings are "conscious creatures", and therefore subjective factors, the factors of will, especially in issues like nationality and culture, come into play. According to deterministic 'scientific Marxism' of the Bull and *EPSR* ilk (Delphi, as always, uses them as an extreme manifestation of this phenomenon and not because they represent any influence), the task of Marxists is merely to make workers aware of immutable laws, and then, conscious of their historic task, they will carry out the role allotted by history.

But this falls down on the very problem of what process generates that consciousness. The Bullites believe it is by preaching the correctness of their own version of scientific rationality. Delphi believes that it is only through struggle, through praxis, that people's consciousness is changed. Marxism's role in this is not primarily as a science, even while it may be providing an accurate analysis of the real world. Workers and other oppressed peoples do not become socialists because they are made aware that they are agents of an historical process. They become socialists either out of self-interest (ie, they anticipate some material benefit) or because they are inspired to fight for a goal which is perceived to be good, or usually a combination of the two. All these are subjective responses.

Never in history has 'science' motivated a movement for revolutionary social or political change, not even the Russian Revolution. Lenin may have used scientific methods to arrive at the slogans, 'All power to the soviets', 'Bread, peace and land', etc, but it was the slogans and the material necessity which moved the masses, not the science. It is the ethical quality of Marxism, the ability to inspire people to sacrifice in attainment of a higher humanist goal, which Delphi argues is the most neglected and valuable element of Marxism. Delphi's "crusade", as Steve dubs it, is not to undermine Marxism by criticism, but to rescue the utopian, ethical, humanist dimension of Marxism from the embrace of deterministic pseudo-science.

'What's new?' some readers may

ask. This debate has gone on within Marxism throughout its history and even Marx himself never made clear whether his scientific approach in *Capital* was meant to complement, or supersede, the humanist legacy expressed in the *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* of 1844, for example. The difference is that now, with the decline of the authority of the Bolshevik tradition, following its historical failure in the Soviet Union, humanist Marxism is not only being debated by academics, but is able to make headway in the class struggle. Dave Osler's article (*Weekly Worker* November 4) on Scargill and the SLP reflects this trend with the statement, "We have to stress that socialism is an emancipatory project" which takes on board "the insights of feminism and environmentalism".

The Stalinist ghost was indeed present at the feast during the SLP congress. But the spirit of Delphi was abroad too and it is a pity that comrades such as Dave were not there to utter it. His analysis of Scargillism contains some good points, but his attack on Scargill's 'ego' is a red herring. Only a leader with immense determination, conviction and sense of purpose could have mentally survived the onslaught which Dave acknowledges has, and continues to be, mounted by the state and media. Scargill often uses Stalinist methods, but his ideology is basically utopian, even romantic. It is this quality, as well as his unquestionable principle, which underpins his charisma. Marxism, both within the SLP and outside, has indeed to become an "emancipatory project", based on genuine liberation and a humanist ethic, if we are to regenerate the revolutionary movement.

To return to comrade Green's letter on Delphi. Perhaps he missed Delphi's explanation that anonymity has been chosen to avoid the accusation of factionalism and in the hope that the ideas will be judged on merit irrespective of the individuals who express them. It should also be explained that Delphi is not meant to suggest divine inspiration, but is in fact an acronym for the main elements of humanist Marxist socialism - *Democracy, Equality, Liberty, Peace, Humanism, Internationalism*. Perhaps the significance of these principles may be elaborated at a later stage in the columns of the *Weekly Worker*? ●

Fighting fund

.....

Painless

Our November fund has been boosted by two sizeable gifts - £50 from KB and £25 from TS. Thanks, comrades. Your donations have helped take us to £228 - on course to meet our monthly £400 target.

However, these two readers are amongst many who have not yet cottoned on to the idea of taking out a standing order. This has several advantages. For our readers, it allows for small, but regular amounts to be transferred - something that is for many much more affordable than finding the occasional large sum. Of course the fact that you pay by bankers order

does not preclude an extra cheque in the event of a windfall!

For us, being able to count on these SOs would go a long way to removing our usual end-of-the-month worries - at present we have to cross our fingers, hoping for a last-minute surge. They provide a painless, yet highly productive means of swelling our fighting fund.

Over to you, comrades! ●

Robbie Rix

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

What we fight for

- Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.
- The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.
- Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.
- We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.
- The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.
- Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.
- We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.
- War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

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

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

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

WW subscription £ _____ € _____

Donation £ _____ € _____

Cheques and postal orders should be payable to 'Weekly Worker'.

	6 m	1 yr	Inst.
Britain & Ireland	£15/€21	£30/€42	£55/€77
Europe	£20/€28	£40/€56	£70/€98
Rest of World	£28/€40	£55/€77	£80/€112

Special offer to new subscribers: 3 months for £5/€7

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL _____

Return to: Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.
Tel: 0208-965 0659
Fax: 0208-961 9864
Email: CPGGB1@aol.com

Democracy or dogma

Since the *Weekly Worker* published comrade Jack Conrad's draft theses on 'Ireland and the British-Irish' in August, later adopted by the CPGB by an overwhelming majority, comrades from several tendencies have contributed articles. The national question in general has also been the subject of analysis. The November 13-14 CPGB weekend school on the national question in the British Isles brought these and other comrades together to continue the debate.

Mark Fischer of the CPGB introduced the first session, on 'The invention of the Celtic fringe'. He discussed the widely held belief among Scottish, Irish and Welsh people that they are descendants of Celtic tribes pushed out to the fringes of the British Isles by invading Anglo-Saxons. Comrade Fischer described the origin of this myth, taught as fact in British schools - and corresponding myths about the origins of the English in Angle, Saxon and Jute tribes - and discussed the ways it has been used since then by the bourgeoisie to construct a post-protestant ideology around the notion of ancient peoples brought together in the interests of all within the United Kingdom.

Comrade Phil Sharpe suggested that if bourgeois politicians can reinforce and make use of such myths, then Marxists should be equally skilled at using myths that suit our political ends. Many comrades from the CPGB disagreed with this. Phil Watson described it as idealism and said we must insist on objectivity. Comrade Conrad added that the history of 'official communism' demonstrates the pitfalls of creating myths and lying to the working class. The task of Marxists is to explain which elements of a myth have a factual basis and where this derives from, and which elements are the lies and distortions used by the ruling class. Our greatest weapon is the truth.

Dave Craig of the RDG spoke about 'The federal republic' to start the second session of the school. First he quoted Lenin's *State and revolution* to show that Engels and Lenin "predicted" the establishment of a federal republic in Britain and regarded it as a "step forward". As the comrade pointed out, the fact that Lenin said this does not mean it is true. But it does indicate that it is a legitimate position for Marxists to hold, unlike, say, support for a constitutional monarchy.

For comrade Craig a federal republic is latent in the conditions existing in Britain. But, he said, we do not need to quote Lenin to know this: we can see it for ourselves. The British state is a union in which three of the four components have no right of self-determination, and the dynamics of this situation has a logic which will lead to a federal republic. The comrade pointed to the strength of the British empire, the conservatism of the labour aristocracy, the defeat of the Irish revolution in 1922 and the failure of the early CPGB to campaign

.....
Our call for a federal republic has nothing whatsoever to do with "completing the bourgeois democratic revolution". In fact a federal republic imposed by the ruling class as part of a package of stabilising reforms would not be a "step forward" at all
.....

for a federal republic as contributory factors in the preservation of the constitutional monarchy. But, said comrade Craig, we are closer to a federal republic than at any time since World War II. Wales and Scotland will either separate to form their own states or unite voluntarily in a federal republic with England.

Comrade Craig made it clear from the start that his call for a federal republic does not mean that he wants to keep capitalism. However, Phil Sharpe, Barry Biddulph and others insisted that a federal republic would not be a step forward towards the goal of socialism. Rather it was part of Blair's agenda - something that looks like progress, but actually preserves bourgeois domination. This was hotly contested. Blair is not a republican: it is clear that his aim is to shore up the monarchy. A federal republic won using revolutionary, working class methods would bear no relation to the models proposed by bourgeois 'modernisers' or those existing in other countries.

Most comrades from the CPGB concurred with comrade Craig's position on the desirability of a federal republic, but warned him against adopting the 'Whig' notion, that social progress is inevitable or separate from

the class struggle. Comrade Marcus Larsen said that historical development can produce many outcomes. Latent tendencies in the current constitutional make-up of Britain have the potential to unfold in different directions, depending on which class forces take the lead in the democratic struggle.

Comrade John Stone stated that a federal republic would be a "step forward", but it should not be our demand. Our demand should be for a socialist republic. He accused the CPGB of fighting for bourgeois democratic demands, while ignoring the call for a workers' republic. As CPGB comrades pointed out, comrade Stone seems incapable of grasping that our call for a federal republic has nothing whatsoever to do with "completing the bourgeois democratic revolution". In fact a federal republic imposed by the ruling class as part of a package of stabilising reforms would not be a "step forward" at all, as comrade Stone believes. If, however, the constitutional monarchy was swept away from below, that would put working class power on the immediate agenda.

The second day of the school began with Allan Armstrong's opening on 'The theory of the nation', offering his own definition of the term. The much discussed definition of a nation provided by Stalin in 1913 was rejected by him as flawed and inadequate. He pointed out that it makes no mention of class divisions within the nation, and argued that the words "stable community" fail to account for the dynamism inherent in the process of nations coming into being, evolving and disappearing. As to a common language and a unified economy, there are many existing nations which lack these features. But the comrade agreed that having a common territory is crucial.

Comrade Armstrong said the real defining elements of what makes a nation are political, the democratic organisation of a territory. The triumph of the nation state involves every citizen of that nation having the vote. He said that in his theory Scotland is a nation, but there is no British nation. He ended his opening with a warning against the error of confusing nations with nationalities.

In the discussion, comrade Craig agreed that Scotland was a nation, and declared himself shocked that anyone should try to deny this "obvious" fact. He criticised the CPGB for using Stalin's definition, but then taking a "libertarian approach" of allowing Scotland national rights despite its scoring only five out of six on this "check list".

Gerry Downing stated that Stalin's definition is undialectical and dogmatic. For comrade Downing the fundamental thing about a nation is consciousness. Scotland is a nation because its people view themselves as a nation. If this is true, Britain cannot be a nation - because, the comrade claimed, there cannot be one nation inside another.

Comrade Jack Conrad, in contrast, said there is a British nation, and within it there is the possibility of a Scottish nation emerging - an example of the fluid, dynamic nature of nations which, he asserted, Stalin's definition does in fact take full account of an indeed emphasises. There is a national question in Britain, said the comrade, and what matters is not so much whether Scotland is or is not defined as a fully fledged nation, but the fact that wherever there is a mass national movement with a legitimate democratic grievance, communists must support the demand for the right to national self-determination.

The final, fourth, session, dealing with the controversial question of the British-Irish, predictably provoked the most intense and passionate exchanges, although the debate was conducted in a constructive and comradely manner by all participants throughout the whole five hours, as it was during the whole of the school.

Sean Matgamna of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty spoke on 'Who are the protestants?' He began with a brief account of the history of Ireland, including the colonial plantations from Scotland and England to what are now the protestant heartlands and the English crown's colonisation of both parts of Ireland. He said the protestants of the north are a distinct people: whether they are a nation or not was a technical question which did not bother him unduly. His principal concern was to unite all proletarians, and his formula for the northern protestants is that they should have as much autonomy as is compatible with the rights of the majority.

He regretted the "demonisation" of the protestants. While accepting that their "master race ideology" is repellent, he denied that it was reactionary not to want to be subsumed under an oppressive theocratic state. Referring to the view of the CPGB majority expressed in the Conrad theses, comrade Matgamna said that anyone supporting the right of self-determination for the protestants logically cannot go on backing the armed struggle of the Provisional IRA. He also claimed that the right of self-determination for the British-Irish should logically include the right - which he would oppose as a demand - to invite British troops into their areas. Not to oppress the Catholics, but to defend their autonomy.

Comrade Stone was shocked by what he called comrade Matgamna's pro-imperialist statements. He was against any national rights for Irish protestants, because they are an "oppressor" community, and Lenin never advocated self-determination for oppressor nations. To allow the British-Irish the right to secede would be to deny the rights of the Irish nation as a whole. Comrade Stone vigorously declared his unconditional defence of any oppressed nation fighting imperialism, a stance which leads him to defend the Provisional IRA, the Argentina of Galtieri, Milosevic's Serbia, etc.

Comrade John Pearson spoke on behalf of the CPGB minority. He rejected as bizarre the assumption that after the achievement of Irish unity a section of the victorious working class would want to split from the rest and form a separate state. He reminded comrades that working class leadership of the national liberation struggle is essential. The task of communists is to overcome the historic division of the Irish working class between its nationalist and pro-imperialist sections. This can be achieved by fighting for the entire programme of the CPGB and uniting the working class in the struggle against all capitalists.

It is crucial not to hand over any outposts of the revolution to the forces of reaction simply to satisfy "liberal platitudes" about self-determination. Self-determination must be subordinate to socialist demands, said the comrade. He rejected the accusation that the minority position holds that the protestants can never alter their reactionary nature. Revolution changes people profoundly. The protestants would not have to join a catholic state, since revolution would destroy the existing Irish state, the British state and the northern Ireland statelet.

Comrade Downing said Sean Matgamna's opening shows the AWL is moving to the right politically, and the CPGB majority is also moving to the right to occupy "what had been the AWL position", by advocating democratic revolution rather than declaring for socialism. Incredibly he said the CPGB majority seemed to be "having doubts" about the viability of the project of socialist revolution as a whole. Comrade Downing proudly admitted to being a "Pavlovian anti-imperialist". It was hardly surprising then that he regarded a dogmatic re-statement of 'permanent revolution' as the key to the national question. The forces of reaction must be defeated before "concessions", such as regional autonomy, should be offered to Northern Ireland protestants. Discussing them now only strengthens the forces of reaction.

Comrade Craig repeated his disagreement with the CPGB majority, calling self-determination for the British-Irish a "step too far". As for the IRA, we support it when it acts in a revolutionary way, as with any nationalist movement. Both the AWL characterisation of the IRA and comrade Stone's uncritical support for it are incorrect.

Comrade Mark Fischer of the CPGB disputed comrade Matgamna's claim that calling for democratic rights for the British-Irish is incompatible with the slogan 'Troops out now'. He reiterated the view of the CPGB majority that socialism consists of fighting for extreme democracy up to and beyond the limits of the bourgeois state, and that a united Ireland which forcibly imprisons a million of its citizens would not advance a single step towards socialism ●

Mary Godwin