

weekly worker

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Thursday May 11 1995

The government is pressing ahead with plans to close down more London hospitals after forcing through its policy this week. As well as the world famous Guys and Barts, Edgware, the Brook in Greenwich and many others will go - unless workers themselves make a stand

Fight for your health

WEDNESDAY'S vote in parliament on the continued run-down of London's hospital services was yet another blow to the government.

It came as no surprise that most Tory 'rebels' backed down. Only two, desperate to hold on to their seats and parliamentary perks, supported the mildly worded Labour motion to "halt the withdrawal of services, and moderate the pace of change" in London's hospitals.

Since the introduction of the market into the NHS in 1990, 304 hospitals have been closed across the country. That amounts to one in eight, with an equivalent number of bed losses - almost 40,000 gone over that period.

The government had hoped that the publication of hospital waiting list figures the previous day, showing a 2.9% drop since last year in England, would help stem the criticism. But in fact there were *more* people waiting in London.

Despite massive government and health authority efforts targeted at cutting the numbers on the lists for more than a year, the overall figures have hardly changed - more people are now waiting for less than a year.

The policy has been to rush patients in and out and put much more emphasis on out-patient and day centre treatment - that way you wait less for treatment, but the quality is likely to be poorer.

Institutions like the Royal College of Surgeons claim that fewer, more specialised units, such as those for cancer and accident and emergency, result in a more efficient, high-quality service. This is disputed by John Lister of London Health Emergency: "They may be more convenient for the surgeons," he told the *Weekly Worker*, "but a longer journey is the last thing you want if you are getting treatment for cancer."

It is quite incredible that some 'experts' in all seriousness suggest that fewer A&E units lead to 'improvements', despite the extra time needed for ambulances to reach them.

John Lister sums it up like this: "The government rants on endlessly about 'improving

patient care', but it is diminishing it by closing down hospitals people want to go to."

On the one hand Virginia Bottomley transfers treatment to day centres, but on the other increases travelling time to reach them. No wonder her boasts of 'improvements' are seen by workers as a pathetic joke.

But won't help soon be at hand in the form of a Labour government? Forget it. Margaret Beckett, the shadow health secretary, does not even promise

to call a halt, let alone re-open the hundreds of hospitals the Tories have closed down: "Labour calls for a *reassessment of the pace and scale* of the closures and bed losses," she says (*The Guardian* May 1, our emphasis).

Labour is just as committed as the Tories to running capitalism, and the truth is this rotten system will claim it can no longer afford to provide workers with the healthcare we need until we organise to fight for it.

At a time when the population

Lobby Dundee health trust

THE FIGHT against hospital cuts and closures in Dundee is building up towards the meeting of the health trust on May 22. Petitions are flooding in, particularly as the word on the street is that not only will DRI close, but so will Kings Cross Hospital.

The Communist Party will present its petition at the meeting and demand better healthcare facilities for all. Mary Ward, CP branch secretary in Dundee, said, "The fight for decent healthcare goes on. We will expose the health trust bureaucracy as only interested in profits, not patients. We call on the unions to take up this massive public campaign and to fight for their members and for improved services. We need more hospitals, not less".

Willy Wilson, the trust secretary, says

the Communist Party's presence at the May 22 meeting will be "welcome", but implies that once the facts regarding the closure of DRI - for "sound clinical reasons" - are made clear, then the public's fear will be allayed.

Our fears will be allayed when hospitals are run by workers, not bureaucrats. The trust can play with figures as much as it likes. The Dundee public will not be duped and will fight the trust all the way. Other parties and organisations must join the fight.

Nancy Morelli

Lobby the health trust
Outside Ninewells Hospital
lecture room. Assemble in
the foyer at 6.45pm, May 22

is ready to respond to a genuine campaign for real improvement, where are the health unions? Why the delay in stepping up action to win decent pay for their members? An imaginative campaign for

those real improvements, together with big pay rises for health workers, would win the support of the entire working class.

If the unions continue to drag their feet, the rank and file must themselves organise the fightback.



offensive

Communist Party Offensive 95

THIS YEAR has been another busy one for the Communist Party. Each year presents new political challenges in our fight to reforge the CPGB.

Over the last two months we have been involved in intensive fundraising for our local election campaigns. Our experience here has positioned us well to challenge Labourism in the next general election.

In order to fund this campaign we must fight for the financial resources we need. This will be the task of this year's Party Offensive, which is why we have set the ambitious but necessary target of £25,000.

The Party Offensive - to be launched on June 4 - is a vital political task in our calendar. Comrades from around the country

have always thrown themselves into the task with vigour. Often unemployed comrades have managed to raise over £1,000 in the two months.

It is a time when all members, supporters and sympathisers go out to workers to fight for support to build the working class Party. We will need all your support this year to reach the target by the beginning of July.

Comrades need to set targets to meet by that time and all readers are urged to join us in the launch for this year to really put the Party on the offensive.

Send in your pledges and confirmation of attendance at the meeting at 5pm in London on Sunday June 4.

Linda Addison

Smash the 1% pay offer!

Letters

State capitalism

I would like to make some comments on Gary Salisbury's letter ('No freak' *Weekly Worker* 91) concerning the nature of the former USSR.

Gary claims that the Soviet economy was "workers' state capitalism" after 1917, because it had emerged from the world capitalist economy.

The term 'state capitalism' derived from Lenin. The conditioning of this term depended on the fact that the fledgling USSR was a proletarian state, not a bourgeois one. Lenin used the term after the introduction of NEP in 1921 to describe those enterprises based upon the combination of state and private capital. He distinguished these "mixed" state capitalist enterprises from the 'pure' state trusts and enterprises which he described as "of a socialistic type". It was Stalin who, after the abandonment of NEP, described the pure state trusts and enterprises as *genuinely socialist*.

Under Lenin's description there was the implication that these pure trusts and enterprises will have the right to be called "socialist", not by type but by genuine content, *only* after the contradiction between town and village had ended and where all men and women had learnt, for themselves, to satisfy fully all human needs. In short, a genuinely socialist society would arise only after the nationalisation of industry in alliance with the *voluntarily* collectivised rural economy. Lenin envisaged that this would take some three generations at least and would be intrinsically linked to the development of the international socialist revolution.

Stalin's forced collectivisation programme after NEP shattered this voluntary alliance from which the Soviet economy never fully recovered. Stalin's supporters would argue that he had little choice in the face of a real threat internally from the growing Kulak class of wealthy peasants under NEP and a real threat externally from the growing menace of capitalist crisis in Europe.

Gary's assertion, then, that the USSR was "workers' state capitalism" could only have been partially true during the NEP period (1921-29) and also during the period of perestroika under Gorbachev (1985-91), when the USSR again opened up partially to the capitalist world.

If Gary's description of the entire Soviet era as "workers' state capitalism" is correct, how would he describe the economies today of China and Vietnam?

Clive Carr
Letchworth

Past errors

Dennis Hobden of Brighton has just died aged 75. In 1964 Dennis stood as the Labour candidate for the Kemp Town division of Brighton. No one expected him to have a chance, but that was before our Party took a hand.

The Brighton branch of the CPGB saturated the working class districts with leafleting and door-to-door canvassing. Members of the local Labour Party were only too glad to accept our help (unofficially).

From eleven o'clock on we were sitting in the Brighton Dome as the results came in. After an hour or two it was announced that there was to be a recount. This was followed by another recount and then another. It went on all night. In the morning we heard that Dennis had won the seat with a majority of seven.

It was our Party policy then to support Labour when we were not contesting. In the seventies a new edition of the *British Road to Socialism* predicted a gradual and evolutionary advance towards socialism in Britain through increasingly leftwing Labour governments. That this was based on simple wish fulfilment rather than Marxism was soon made clear when 1979 ushered in a series of more and more rightwing Tory governments.

It appears that this may be followed by a rightwing Labour victory with the help and approval of the powers that be, who seem to be considering that the Blair version may be better able to con the workers into accepting continued robbery and exploitation. Subordinating our Party to Labour, and particularly the PLP, which has always been opposed to workers taking action, doesn't seem to have got us anywhere. A genuine party of the working class combining theory and action is desperately needed. We should welcome the resurgence of the CPGB, cutting out the errors and revisionism of others, as experienced in the past.

Mary Carter
North Devon

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

From *Workers' Dreadnought*, paper of the Workers' Socialist Federation, May 8 1920.

Communication of the Amsterdam Bureau

The sub-bureau of the Communist International is under the impression that some misunderstanding prevails about the attitude of the Bureau towards affiliation of communist groups and parties to the British Labour Party.

A resolution passed at the February conference in Amsterdam and two letters written to comrades of the ILP have been interpreted differently. It is for this reason that we wish to accentuate our opinion briefly ...

We have stated that affiliation with the Third International of groups that participate in the Labour Party is possible, as is shown by the British Socialist Party, in so far as they accept common principles and tactics, which involves a persistent struggle with the Labour Party against the policy and tactics of this body. We are convinced that participation in the Labour Party, if accompanied by communist critics and action, will only be temporary.

Since we agree with those comrades

in England that object to any participation in the Labour Party, we are of the opinion that they should not give up their attitude on the plea of unity. Much as we should like to see a united Communist Party in England, it may be better to postpone this ideal than to compromise on important issues.

We strongly appeal to our English friends to unite on the basis of 'no affiliation to the Labour Party', as we clearly see the catastrophe that will follow the coming into power of a parliamentary L a b o u r government. Warning in advance may help to unite the workers, after the failure becomes evident, under the banner of communism.

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Communist optimism

ONCE AGAIN, London saw a spirited, disciplined and militant May Day demonstration, as its streets reverberated to the sound of revolutionary chants and slogans.

As usual, the Communist Party provided the most impressive 'British' contingent. True to our reputation and tradition, we gave the clearest expression of *communist optimism*, which is so sadly lacking within the bedraggled ranks of the 'revolutionary' left in Britain.

Also true to *their* own tradition, organisations like the SWP, Militant Labour, WRP, etc, were conspicuous by their absence.

For all their vainglorious proclamations about "world revolution" and the evils of "socialism

While paying lip service to Bolshevism, the British left boycotts London's May Day march

in one country", our friends have a peculiarly insular, almost isolationist, approach to internationalist solidarity. The SWP even holds its own separate May Day jamboree!

Our Party attracted many to its banner, including a comrade from New Zealand, who thought that we "looked the best". We sold nearly 200 copies of our May Day special edition of the *Weekly Worker* - an impressive figure, especially if you remember that the vast majority of people who attended the May Day demonstration were Turkish or Kurdish.

Even though the numbers at May Day have been steadily declining over the last few years, we are absolutely confident that in the near future hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of workers will once again join the demonstration and point the way forward for the whole of humanity.

Danny Hammill

Review

The Party's not over yet

Enemy within: The rise and fall of the British Communist Party, Francis Beckett, John Murray, pp239, £19.99

BECKETT'S aim of producing a popular 'objective' history of the Party for the general public is a good one. The fact that this can be done today indicates a degree of 'mellowness' in the establishment towards the CPGB. With communism 'dead' and the Party collapsed, the spectre seems to have been exorcised.

Beckett's popular outline is however a highly anecdotal and 'personal' history. He leans sympathetically towards the stolid types in the Party - the Pollitts, the Bob Stewarts (a "stout, sincere man with a sober moustache" - p14).

Beckett's key weakness is - as he blithely admits in his interview with me - that he really does not understand communist politics. Understanding what drives Communist Party members is thus impossible.

Beckett tries to define the early Communist Party's relationship with the Labour Party by informing us that Lenin believed that that the British Labour Party was "the authentic voice of the British working class and that little could be achieved without it" (p13).

The debate on affiliation to the Labour Party is portrayed as being between those - like the "stout" and "sincere" Mr Stewart - who wanted to participate in elections and affiliate to Labour (as the "authentic voice" of the working class presumably) and others who castigated the Labour leaders as "the deadly enemy of the revolution which you and I are seeking" (p15).

Beckett alone cannot be blamed for this distortion of the explicitly *revolutionary, anti-Labour* Communist Party of 1920. His list of acknowledgements reads like a rogues' gallery of opportunists, pro-Labourites and liquidationists in the Party over the years - Monty Johnstone, Noreen Branson, Mike Squires, Mick Costello, Andrew Murray, Douglas Hyde, Brian Pollitt, to name but a few.

His failure to understand the birth of the Party leads him to misunderstand its death. Rather than the left being thrown into some irrational, collective, self-feeding frenzy in the 1980s (p229), the collapse of our Party was the end of a long drawn out *process* of decline. Death by "a thousand opportunist cuts", we have called it.

However the book tries to present

the Party's history in terms of many of the remarkable, dedicated and sincere people who made it up. But don't expect any deep political insight into what made them communists in the first place.

His failure to mention either the fight of the Leninist wing of the Communist

Party (although he verbally admits he knew of its existence) or the Party today, organised around the Provisional Central Committee, places a question mark over the book's core integrity. Dealing with the continuation of the Party under the PCC would have made a book about the "rise and *fall* of the Communist Party" less 'tidy', but rather more accurate.

Mark Fischer

A liberal adrift

In January of this year, Mark Fischer spoke to Francis Beckett

Histories of the Communist Party are always written from a particular perspective. What preconceptions did you bring to the work?

I approached the work with positive feelings towards the Party and in particular towards the communists I knew. The communists I have worked with were always the people who I relied upon, the easiest to communicate with, the most disciplined. That is not a political judgement; it is a 'personal' judgement with political *overtones*.

I became less positive about the Party as I looked more closely at some of its darker sides. Its unnecessary secretiveness, for example. Its self-deception. What Party leaders had to do in the late 1930s to try to convince themselves that what was happening in the USSR was either not happening or that it was not as bad as all that - or even that it was justified.

You suggest that the demise of the Party in Britain was not an automatic reflection of the problems in the USSR. So what was the key factor?

I think the sectarianism that flooded the British left from the late 1960s onwards. From about 1979 on you saw a series of bitter disputes - largely about 'angels on pinheads' in my view.

Certainly the Establishment equipped itself with a team of class warriors in 1979. The question is why the response of the left was to fragment. I don't know the answer.

Surely one of the explanations for the demise of the Party is the fact that once it had renounced its revolutionism, there was really no 'room' left for it on the British left? I think that is probably true. My difficulty with some of your questions is that I am not a political theorist. I have written a history of the Party in a popular form. The book itself is only 100,000 words, so there is a lot I have had to leave out.

There is a *prima facie* argument for what you are saying. The Communist

Party started to move down that 'reformist' road from the mid-1930s, from the abandonment of *Class against class*.

I notice you have divided the Party into "class warriors" and Eurocommunists.

Because I basically needed some sort of shorthand, although I say that these are gross simplifications. Shorthand is bound to distort the real division and alignments in the Party, which were of course extremely complex. But the book is not really written with informed communist politicians in mind. It's a sort of popular introduction for people who know next to nothing about the history of the Party.

Historically, this century has been a terrible time. Yet in this country we have never been through a time of such despair as in the 1980s, a time when every bit of hope you had was torn up. When my father was active in politics in the 1920s and 30s, you could see little moves forward on the left and in society.

All you saw in the 1980s was the triumph of cynicism, of everything that was most unpleasant about human beings. I don't think we come out of that suddenly, not unless you think we are ripe for another Bolshevik revolution. I don't think that would necessarily be a good thing.

I see a place for communists, but I'm not sure that I see very much hope for their organisations in the short term.

Possibly the best we can hope for is a period of government by Tony Blair, moving rightwards at a slightly slower speed than the present government.

You can order this book and many others from our book club - *London Books*

Please order *Enemy within* from London Books, c/o CPGB, Box 35, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London, E8 2NS for a 10% discount incl p&p

After the clause

New Labour turns to liberalism. The left must turn from Labourism

TONY BLAIR’S success in ditching the old clause four is historic. It marks a defining moment in British politics. The Labour Party now constitutionally espouses what it calls a “thriving private sector” and the “enterprise of the market”. In plain English - capitalism.

As an unintended consequence there exists a wide space on the left, which can and must be filled by a Communist Party. Though some committee room sectarians will flinch, that means uniting all Marxists, all revolutionary socialists, all genuine working class partisans in the task of reforming the CPGB. Labour’s dramatic shift to the right is our opportunity for rapprochement and making communism a mass force. Society might still be moving to the right, but capitalism is drifting towards a new general crisis. Popular discontent is already palpable.

Under such conditions the attempt to reinsert Fabianism into Labour’s constitution is a diversion. There is, in fact, no reason to raise the dead clause four from its grave. True, from Arthur Scargill to Alan Simpson, from Tony Benn to Ken Coates, the Labour left say that it gave Labour a socialist soul - but clearly to be a left Labourite is to *misunderstand* the history of the Labour Party.

With or without reference to clause four, every Labour government has ensured that the working class continues to be exploited. If by some fluke Blair had lost the vote at Central Hall, Westminster on April 29 and still won the next general election, his government would do just what MacDonald, Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan did - manage capitalism.

Clause four was never intended to guide the practice of Labour in office. It was a sop, not an aim. The pledge to “secure for the workers by hand and brain the full fruits of their industry” through “the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange” was invented as an antidote to Bolshevism. Despite being a far cry from genuine socialism - that is, the first phase of communism bought about by the self-liberating activity of the working class - the promise of a radically altered system kept militant workers within the orbit of Labourism. That is what it was intended to do and that is what can now be changed.

British working class politics have long been as primitive as they were paradoxical. The classic country of capitalism, the land upon which Marx based his celebrated *Das Capital*, was the last of the important countries in Europe to produce a mass workers’ party. And when finally our class did bring forth its own party from the “bowels of the TUC”, it was a sorry, half-formed and misshapen creature.

In continental Europe Marxism stood intellectually triumphant over anarchism and utopian socialism. Marxism had become the natural ideology of the working class. The mass social democratic parties of Germany, Austria, France, Italy and Russia were led by disciples of Marx and Engels. Their revolutionary programmes were based on foundations laid by the *Communist Manifesto*.

The British Labour Party began life in 1906 explicitly rejecting the class war and socialism. Our woolly-minded and parochial trade union bureaucrats boasted that we British were above such foreign things. As a result their Labour Party was a trade union version of the old Liberal Party. Nevertheless it did represent a definite step forward. For example, if the unions in politically backward USA made such a move today, communists would almost certainly welcome it, not least because it

could be used to facilitate the argument for what is really needed: ie, a Communist Party.

Only after the October 1917 revolution in Russia did Labour’s grandees decide to present their party under the red flag. Workers had been embittered by the horrors of World War I and inspired by the young Soviet Republic. To *delay* communism Labour transformed itself. From a loose federation in 1918 it became a cohesive, national party with individual members who were subject to central discipline. To make that palatable to the rank and file the arcane platitudes of liberalism were discarded. What replaced them though was not scientific socialism, but clause four Labourism.

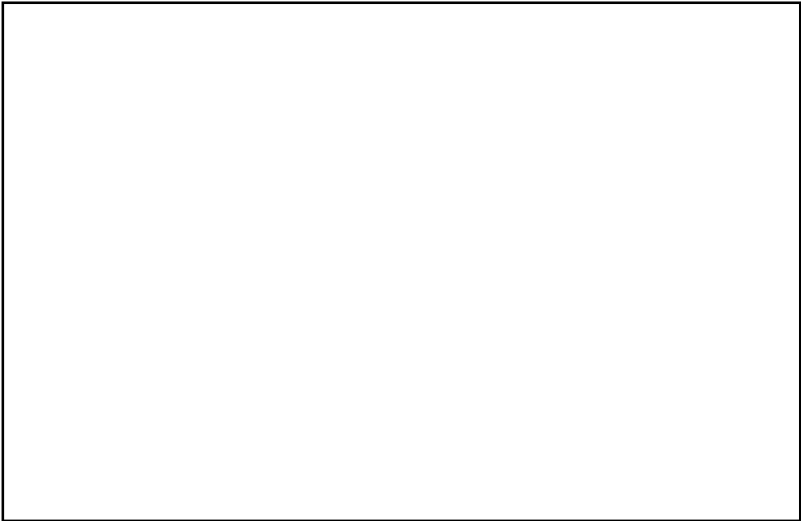
Labourism by its nature is eclectic, unscientific and empirical. Labourism proposed to work for socialism through the existing institutions, not against them. The capitalist state machine, monarch and all, was not to be smashed. It was to be perfected. Labour’s ‘socialist’ Britain would be ruled over by some hereditary descendent of William the Bastard. And if clause four is taken at face value, the economy would operate along Proudonist lines. Private property was not to be abolished. It was to be nationalised (universalised). Wage labour was to continue, only the full value of the workers’ output would return to them. In other words Labour’s programme was for a monarchical, state capitalist *Britain* - theirs always was a national socialism.

Despite Labourism falling well short of the aspirations of many, it was seen as full of potential. That is why Lenin urged the newly formed CPGB to seek affiliation to the Labour Party and work for the election of a Labour government. Here was a party that had just adopted socialism, albeit of a typically British philistine variety, and had not yet been tested in office. To overcome the *socialist* illusions the mass of workers had in Labour it had to be actively exposed.

If Labour let the communists affiliate, that would be good - they would openly publish and fight for their views within its mass membership. If on the other hand Labour refused to let the communists enter, that would be good too - Labour’s commitment to socialism would be revealed for what it was: a cynical sham. Each way the tactic of affiliation allowed the communists to win.

The same goes for the related tactic of supporting a Labour government. We would put Labour into office not because it represents some lesser evil. A Labour government had to be supported like the rope supports the hanged man. Communists would not passively wait for Labour’s inevitable shortcomings, inadequacies and downright betrayals to teach the workers. That by itself would lead to nothing but demoralisation, abstention and a swing to an alternative capitalist party. Communists would on the contrary do everything they could through the practical school of class struggle to shift the loyalties of the workers to the CPGB and prepare them for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, no matter who was occupying No10 Downing Street.

Since the early 1920s there have been seven Labour governments. Unfortunately, due to the liquidation of our CPGB under various prostituted cliques and opportunist leaderships, Labourism was not positively exposed. Nevertheless through its own nauseating anti-working class conduct Labourism exposed itself negatively. No one seriously has socialist illusions in the



Sydney Webb drafts the clause which served the Labour Party - and capitalism - so well for 77 years

Labour Party any more (excepting perhaps, for its own narrow reasons, the pro-Labour left). Indeed the vast mass of the population have no understanding of the concept of socialism, let alone a burning desire to fight for it. Blinkered by the narrow parameters of capitalist politics, Labour is merely viewed as a lesser evil when compared with the Tories: ie, the role the Liberal Party played in the 19th century. Hence, though Lenin’s tactics as regards Labour might apply at some point in the future, they are definitely not appropriate at this moment in time.

Blair has brought Labour’s ideology more into line with its practice. Despite his claims this supposed moderniser’s “social-ism” has nothing to do with Victorian ethical socialism. Firebrands like Edward Carpenter, John Bruce Glasier and Robert Blatchford preached against capitalism and prophesied the coming of a New Jerusalem. Blair’s New Labour will be a pro-capitalist SDP Mark II. Blair’s Victorian values are those of a conventional liberal politician in the mould of William Ewart Gladstone.

That is why Blair and his cronies in the shadow cabinet make no pledges to spend beyond what capitalism considers it can afford. And that in turn explains why he speaks of Margaret Thatcher’s “admirable qualities” in Murdoch’s *Sunday Times*, courts big business, promises to retain the anti-union laws and champions a market system which for millions means unemployment, pauperisation, speed-ups and mortgage debt.

The argument around clause four was strangely tangential. For Blair it was actually about ensuring Labour’s victory at the next general election. He wanted to make Labour a thoroughly respectable alternative in the eyes of the establishment and its media. He was determined to prove that capitalism would be safe in the hands of the Blairgeoisie. Rewriting clause four was a high risk strategy. But it paid off handsomely. Using the ‘take it or leave it’ referendum - a device perfected by dictators and autocrats from Napoleon Bonaparte to Adolf Hitler - Blair won by a landslide. The postal ballot in the constituencies, the former bastions of Bennism, gave him 87%. The vast majority of Labour members and trade union affiliates want rid of the Tories. Anything, they believe, must be better than Major and his bloodsuckers. So they enthusiastically voted not so much for Blair’s new clause four, but for a Blair government. Result - the trade union barons were put in their place, big business was impressed, Paddy Ashdown is now a potential partner and the left was humiliated.

What of the ‘Defend clause four - defend socialism’ campaign? Two things are immediately apparent. One, it had nothing to do with the practical needs of the working class nor socialism. Two, it was a defence of Fabianism by activists who for the sake of their self-image, for

the sake of their leftwing credentials, require an *excuse* for staying in, or continuing to support, Blair’s party.

Having for years dully limited itself to the politics of ‘Tories out, out, out’, the pro-Labour left has been completely thrown off balance by Blair who promises to make the slogan a reality. Not surprisingly, given the period, the further to the right he pushes the party, the more success it scores in election and opinion polls alike. Tied organically to Labourism, falsely equating Labour’s interests with those of the working class, the pro-Labour left pathetically tells Blair that his rightism endangers Labour’s chances at the forthcoming general election. Apparently he should try their leftism instead. Like some quack doctor the pro-Labour left can only sell its own patented remedy.

Showing the effect bourgeois society exerts through Labourism, everything in the workers’ movement lacking firm political principle was pulled to the right by the futile attempt to save the clause drafted by Sydney Webb and Arthur Henderson over three-quarters of a century ago. In 1991 the Socialist Workers Party cheered the death of ‘state capitalism’ in Russia. Having forgotten something and learnt nothing, in 1995, citing the Blair danger, it dutifully rallied to the side of Fabian state capitalism.

Also taking up Labour’s lost reformist cause in the name of a lesser-of-two-evils “pro-socialist elements against pro-capitalist elements” were the epigones of Stalin and Trotsky. For a deserving Joseph Vissarionovich - the *Morning Star*, New Communist Party, Communist Action Group, etc. For a less deserving Lev Davidovich - Workers Power, Spartacist League, Militant Labour, etc. To all these groups - nationalisation - ie, property relations - is the essence of socialism; not the power of the working class - ie, social relations. The pharaohs of Egypt and the emperors of Rome must have been “pro-socialist elements” in their time, given how much state land they farmed and how many state slaves they exploited.

The demise of the old clause four plunges the whole of the motley pro-Labour left into crisis. Those who joined to further the Bennite project in the 1980s find themselves in the 1990s members of a party Shirley Williams again admires. Those who argue that Labour is the only realistic vehicle for socialist change are now flatly contradicted by its constitutional aims and values. Those who say ‘Vote Labour, but ...’ will have to admit that they are after all calling for a pro-capitalist vote.

Labour’s new clause four demands a break with illusions and excuses. These times require honesty and courage. Let us unite, not in defence of Fabianism. Together we can provide a real revolutionary alternative to capitalism.

Jack Conrad

What we fight for

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

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

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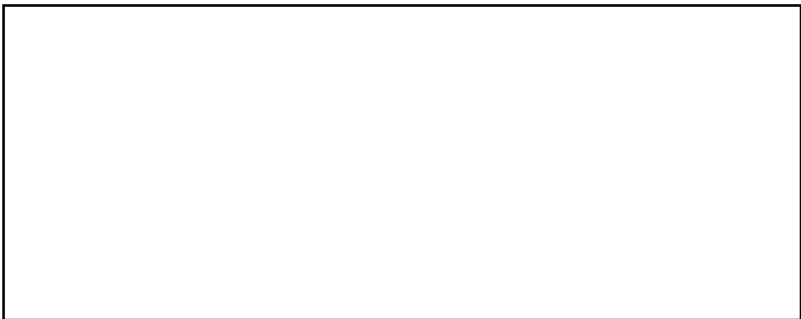
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Are nations real or imagined?

This Sunday (May 14) the London seminar series on *Nationalism* looks at 'Nations: objective and subjective'.

Next week's seminar is on the 'Genesis of Marx's theory of alienation'.

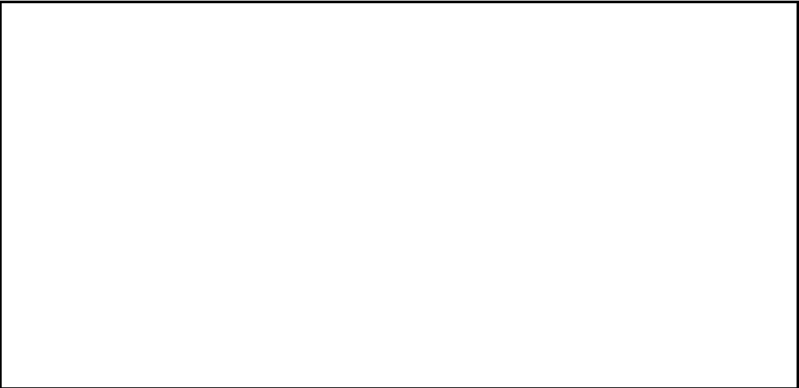
Seminars are in central London at 5pm every Sunday. For more details, call 0181-459 7146

Election fight for workers' organisation

THE COMMUNIST Party's election campaign in England brought the tasks of the left in this period into sharp relief for the comrades involved.

In all the areas in which we stood the feeling of discontent and anger ran very high amongst the working class. From Manchester to Kent communists knocking on doors generally received a warm response.

Many people were angry at the whole system and the feeling against all politicians was dominant. Our job was to explain why communists are different. But the very fact that communists were welcomed on the doorstep marks a change in politics over the last few years.



Communists took their election campaign to both young and old

There was very little hostility. People were interested in our ideas and not afraid to talk about the profit system as the root of many of their individual problems and those of society as a whole. The slogan, 'Put people before profit', was particularly popular.

The response in the Moss Side area of Manchester in particular was very enthusiastic. Even if people had not read our literature, they were keen to talk politics on the doorstep.

Working class people who have seen their wages plunge, living conditions deteriorate and job opportunities close up are looking for ways out of the rot. But in the absence of strong, independent organisation, most workers see little alternative but to vote Labour.

In Moss Side itself Labour achieved a massive majority with 1,701 votes. Next was the Tory with 132. Throughout the country, as we know, the Labour Party won a huge percentage of the votes. This was the problem that communists had to address in these local elections and will have to address in the future, not least in the general election.

From work in these elections we have certainly confirmed our view that there

is a vacuum in society. Labour has moved to the right to join the Tories, but nobody is giving people the real answers that they need. We have to turn our political strength into a mass organisation that can provide a credible alternative.

Much of the left *still* tells workers to vote Labour. We must fight for working class organisation now, because everybody in reality knows that Labour will continue the attacks on the working class. Workers tell us this on the doorstep, but will still vote Labour to get the Tories out. In elections we have a hard but vital task to fight for independent working class organisation. Labour is already setting itself up for a major onslaught on workers' lives. We cannot tell people to vote for this.

Our fight against Labourism may be hard, but it is essential. There is massive discontent, but we cannot wait for a Labour government for this to spontaneously explode. Workers' anger can only take a positive form if we are organised.

After the elections our task must be to build that organisation. To build strong communist branches ready to fight for working class demands in the

next elections and to fight for what we need against Labour's promised attacks.

Helen Ellis

Communist votes

Markus Miller, Moss Side in Manchester - 80 votes (3.6%)
Roger Harper, Hulme in Manchester - 36 votes (3.4%)
Tom May, Dallow Ward in Luton, Bedfordshire - 51 votes (1%)
Phil Railston, Temple Farm in Strood, Kent - 44 votes (1%)

Other left votes

Militant Labour/ Welsh Militant Labour:
St Michaels, Coventry (Dave Nellist) 1357 votes (40.1%)
Butwell 653 (27%)
Park Ward, Sheffield 594 (21.5%)
St Thomas, Swansea 310 and 401 (19%)
Hucknell 348 (17.5%)
Worsborough, Barnsley 422 (16.4%)
Bristol 313 (16%) and 251
Howden 320 (15.5%)
Thanet 262 (15.2%)
Newcastle-Under-Lyme 269 (13.8%)
Gateshead 186 (13.5%)
Rugby 185 (13.8%)
Netherley, Liverpool 290 (13.2%)
Rusholme, Manchester 371 (12%)
St Oswalds 210 (11.5%)
Jarrow, South Tyne 233 (10.4%)
Hardwick, Teeside 100 (10.3%) and 97
Granby, Liverpool 219 (10.2%)
University Ward, Leeds 368 (10.2%)
Cardiff 365 (10.1%)
Little Horton, Bradford 312 (9.1%)
Tipton, Sandwell 192 (8.8%)
Swindon 133 (8.4%)
Sheffield 200 (8.2%)
Breckfield, Liverpool 201 (8%)
Melrose, Liverpool 201 (8%)
Netherton, Sefton 198 (7.7%)
Orrell, Sefton 198 (7.7%)
Upper Stoke, Coventry 294 (7.5%)
Bandle Hill, Stevenage 131 (7.2%)
Brighton 195 (7.1%)
Leicester 146 (6%)
Castle, Swansea 378 (5.4%)
Sheppell, Stevenage 58 (5%)
Gillingham 86 (4.3%)
Fazakerley, Liverpool 110 (3.5%)
Southampton 107 (3.5%)
Townhill, Swansea 149 (3.5%)
Ipswich 63 (3.4%)
Pitsea East, Basildon 86 (2.6%)
West Hull 130, 113 and 93
East Hull 223, 115 and 100

Communist League:
Fallowfield, Manchester 234
Levensholme, Manchester 16
Central, Manchester 15

PO climbdown

SCOTTISH postal workers forced a further retreat on the Post Office's attacks on their working conditions last week.

The dispute began when all sections of the Post Office decreed that the May Day bank holiday (still taken in Scotland) should be replaced for this year only by the VE Day holiday the following week. The Communications Workers Union claimed that both should be holidays and, following a nine-to-one vote in favour, workers took official strike action on May 1.

On their return they found that the Post Office was attempting to impose worse working conditions, using the backlog as an excuse. In what was clearly a pre-planned, coordinated management action, earlier starts and heavier loads were demanded, as well as no second delivery. Several workers were suspended and thousands walked out again (this time unofficially).

Despite CWU repudiation of this action, workers stood firm and after two days had forced a complete management climbdown. The suspensions and threatened disciplinary actions were withdrawn and normal work patterns were resumed.

Alec Brownridge, CWU assistant branch secretary in Edinburgh, told me: "The members are delighted with the outcome. The Post Office dug a ditch for themselves and had to back

down."

But the Post Office is aiming to break union resistance by consistently taking legal steps against the CWU whenever workers react against these provocations. The union bureaucracy is bending over backwards to remain within the law, but this is still not preventing court action and the imposition of large fines.

Last month an attempt to impose similar work changes to those in Scotland was attempted in Newcastle. This too was thwarted after a successful two-week strike. Billy Hayes, national assistant secretary for delivery staff, commented: "Despite this severe - and illegal - provocation, our members waited the legally required seven days before embarking on last resort strike action. We abide by industrial relations rules, but Royal Mail ignore them."

Although the Scottish May Day action has been portrayed by much of the left as in defence of the *workers'* holiday, the action failed to reach across *nationalist* lines. Norrie Watson, Glasgow branch secretary, told me, "I cannot speak for England. Our action was to defend the traditional Scottish Spring bank holiday."

The Post Office, however, is making the same attacks both north and south of the border. Postal workers should resist both official union and nationalistic attempts to prevent an effective counter-offensive.

Peter Manson

Fight for car jobs

ROLLS ROYCE workers in East Kilbride this week took two-day strike action for the fourth consecutive week against the threat of at least 500 job losses (one third of the workforce).

Two weeks ago management withdrew 25 compulsory redundancies due for the end of April after the workers threatened all-out action. Now 'voluntary' redundancies only are promised, as a mass meeting of workers of all four unions decided on an indefinite strike if more sackings are contemplated.

Owen Thomas, East Kilbride chair of the MSE, the main union involved, told me: "As far as we are concerned, we're going to win this dispute - we'll leave their plans in tatters. Their business is falling down around them."

Management's policy is to transfer

the work to Derby, where its plans will no doubt be aided by union bureaucrats, who have successfully persuaded their members to call off their own strike action. Bristol and Coventry workers have also been on strike, as the company steps up its attacks at every plant.

Convenors from all plants are co-operating in refusing to allow the transfer of work and in organising a £2 weekly levy. But the union leaders have allowed plant by plant bargaining, resulting in the Derby fiasco.

The crying need is for the rank and file to take the lead in organising united national action by all Rolls Royce workers, all of whom are facing attacks on pay and conditions.

Peter Manson

Barclays strike

STAFF AT Barclays Bank are to strike on May 30. More one-day strikes will follow if management does not negotiate. Unifi, Barclay's in-house, non-TUC union, which represents 32,000 of the 65,000 staff, received 60% support for its call for action to back a 5% pay demand. This will be the first time this traditionally moderate union has taken industrial action.

Employees in the banking industry have been under the cosh for a number of years because of new technology and increasing competitive rivalry between banks. Thousands of jobs have gone and, if management have their way, thousands more will follow. Barclays alone plans 3,000 job cuts this year.

A career in banking once meant a well paid job for life. Not any more. Full time staff are being replaced by temporary contracts and part time jobs. Technology is de-skilling work.

This year management did not even pretend to negotiate, but simply imposed a 2.7% award. Staff patience snapped when the bank disclosed profits of £1.68 billion and generous 19% pay rises for the bosses.

David Nott, assistant general

secretary of Unifi, told me how a staff association had developed into a certified trade union due to deteriorating relations with the management. His members were very demoralised and very angry.

Fewer than 9,000 members voted in the ballot, but this does not reflect members' feelings. Non-voters are pledging their support and new recruits are joining to take part in the action. The union has started a vigorous campaign to build for the strike. David Nott commented: "We know where our strength is and we know where management's weaknesses are."

Bifu, the main banking trade union, has only 8,000 members in Barclays and was taken by surprise by the pro-strike vote. It has no time to ballot its own members but has instructed them not to cross picket lines or do anything that undermines the strike. Bifu members are reported to be joining Unifi so they can take part.

Unifi is considering applying to join the TUC and is developing informal links with unions and staff associations across the finance industry.

Phil Kent

Reforging the Party

LAST SUNDAY a special meeting was held in London under the title *Democratic centralism, the SWP and the tasks of revolutionaries*. It was organised by the CPGB and introduced by members of the International Socialist Group.

The ISG is a group of comrades who have left the SWP and are fighting for democracy in that organisation. Andy Wilson, the opening speaker at the meeting, was expelled from the SWP for raising this demand.

The meeting was also attended by comrades from Open Polemic and the Revolutionary Democratic Group. The lively debate at the meeting was a welcome extension of our efforts to raise the question of the Party and democratic centralism among all revolutionaries in Britain.

Andy Wilson began by explaining some of the theories which had first drawn him towards the SWP, the lynch pin of these being Tony Cliff's state capitalism. For him and others in the ISG, in the face of bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, this theory expressed the need for self-emancipation of the working class and *self*-centralism.

The discussion touched on the theory of state capitalism, but centred on the relationship between Party and class and on democracy in the Party. ISG comrades remarked - an irony for them - that despite the theory of state capitalism the internal regime in the SWP was more 'Stalinist than the Stalinists'.

Comrades in the CPGB suggested that the lack of democracy in the SWP was not so much an irony, as a function of its inherent opportunism - responsible also for its Labourism, as well as for Cliff's state capitalist theory.

Comrades in the RDG, ISG and CPGB agreed on the need for principled unity around a revolutionary programme and with full factional rights, allowing all views to be organised, expressed and thus developed.

In principle no one was against joining with the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB for the task of reforging the Party the working class needs, and further discussions will no doubt be held. The CPGB welcomes this discussion and urges the comrades to use our press and meetings to carry it forward.

Lee-Anne Bates