



weekly worker



**They fuck you up, the left:
Pat Byrne - ex-Militant,
ex-Socialist Appeal**

- Stop the War in decline
- Economic crisis deepens
- Kondratiev long wave?
- CPGB aggregate

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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Tiny SWP cog
and its
mechanical
mindset

LETTERS



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

Pep talk

A few comments on the CPGB's *Draft programme* and some more general observations. First, the section on 'Socialism and democracy': Where the hell are the soviets? You know - a system of elected local councils cascading up to a general country-wide representative council - delegates recallable by the 'lower' delegating body at any time. A bottom-up representative structure to replace the gas house otherwise known as parliament. Maybe this was just an oversight, but it's a pretty big one.

Also in this section - I know it may seem like a minor issue but it is symptomatic of deeper problem - it would be a good idea to drop the term 'petty bourgeoisie'. It was originally a corruption of the French expression *petit bourgeois*, which, of course, just means 'small business owner/operator'. Besides being archaic and out of touch with some of the people you are trying to talk to, the use of the term 'petty' is a deliberate put-down and serves no good purpose.

While you're at it, try working out a bottom-up system for the party itself. There was a reason why the Bolshevik Party fell victim to bureaucratic corruption in the period after the conquest of power in the 1920s and 30s. It is useless to blame external factors for the total destruction of the party. Nor does it serve to target personalities. From the onset of World War I, Stalin, Trotsky and even Lenin were, in many ways, projectiles in the grip of forces they had little control over. The foundations for the conquest of power in an extreme crisis were outlined by Lenin and laid down by the party - largely steered by him - between 1902 and 1914. But there was no preparation for the administration of state power. If you read *What is to be done?* carefully, you will see that the goal at that time was basically a radical 'bourgeois' democracy - what we would later call a social democratic regime - like Sweden's.

The defeats of the 20s, 30s and 40s have never been properly analysed. Nor for that matter has the debacle of 1914 been properly explained. The left seems only to be able to repeat the same formulas over and over in spite of what clearly is a disastrous record.

It seems to me that in all Bolshevik and pseudo-Bolshevik organisations we are looking at a structure that was not fundamentally different from the ideal liberal representative democracy. One where the representatives are 'empowered' to carry out their 'mandate' for a fixed period of time. A true communist organisation requires a system that always keeps the membership in control, no matter what the external circumstances are. Some adaptation of the soviet principle to the party needs to be examined.

Finally, in general, it looks like you are basically talking to each other - the 'broad' Marxist left. Try to cut down on the jargon. Take some of the hoary old chestnuts and see if there aren't more modern versions of them that still carry the same scientific content. Then start swapping them out. This is another reason why the revolutionary movement and left in general seem to have gone downhill more or less constantly.

Stu Smith
email

Name handicap

The name of your party immediately made me think that yours was a Stalinist tradition - something that you should consider seriously. That is the reason that the Socialist Workers

Party calls itself socialist rather than communist: they don't want death by association with what the general public are automatically going to think of as the discredited politics of Stalinism, the loss of the civil war in Spain, gulags and all the rest.

I read your paper with interest - one notes that the letters pages are very extensive and there is less actual news than in the SWP newspaper, but it doesn't take a genius to work out that you probably have very few journalists and scant resources.

The death of what I consider to be the real socialist tradition - ie, that of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Kollontai and comrades such as John Reed and Victor Serge - will come about if the current sectarian situation persists. If you and I can amicably communicate ideas with each other without getting into factional fighting, then I see no reason why the CPGB and SWP can't have an entente.

I agree with Peter Manson that Olivier Besancenot is a serious breath of fresh air ('Besancenot - go beyond outdated national borders', October 6) - as I believe you are - and I wish you the best of luck in the future.

Jamie Rankin
email

Synchrony

I am getting increasingly puzzled by Heather Downs (Letters, September 29).

The 'McClintock effect' is the scientific name for the finding that, under certain circumstances, human female menstrual cycles can become synchronised with one another. Many studies have confirmed that this can happen to a limited extent where women enjoy sufficient day-to-day contact and solidarity with one another. For example, a careful study of Bedouin women living in intimate contact and cooperating on a daily basis found a significant degree of menstrual synchrony. Other studies conducted under different circumstances have found no such effect, as might have been expected.

More important is the fact that all female mammals, not just humans, have the biological capacity to increase or decrease the level of synchrony/asynchrony according to local circumstances and their own reproductive needs. It would be utterly extraordinary if human females were the one species genetically incapable of doing any of this.

Of course, not all mammals synchronise using the moon as their external clock. More frequently, they use the sun - in which case we refer to 'breeding seasonality'. In the case of evolving *Homo sapiens*, evidently, female solidarity was at times unusually strong and capable of exploiting the light/dark rhythms of both sun and moon. Try living on the African savanna *without* taking account of the moon: chances are you'll be a lion's supper in no time!

Anyway, how else should we explain the fact that the average human menstrual cycle length is 29.5 days? That shouldn't be taken for granted. Chimpanzees, for example, have a cycle length of 36 days. In the case of bonobos, it's 40 days. Humans are unusual in having a menstrual cycle of that length - something which becomes especially striking when considered in conjunction with the fact that pregnancy in humans lasts (again on average) exactly nine times 29.5.

29.5 days is precisely the time it takes for the moon to pass through its phases, as seen from the earth. It's what we would predict if evolving human females had become specifically adapted for synchrony using the moon as their clock. 'It's just a coincidence,' the men in white coats will say. Of course, it *could* be

just a coincidence - I admit that. But why not explore whether there might be a scientific reason?

As any naturalist will tell you, reproductive synchrony allows a group of females to maximise access to the locally available males. In other words, it's a way of avoiding getting monopolised alongside other females in some alpha male's private harem. Synchrony can never be perfect. But the greater the *degree* of synchrony, the harder it is for the dominant male to stay in power.

Predictably enough, Heather Downs doesn't like any of this. For some reason, she doesn't like synchrony at all, invoking "several studies which do not support that possibility". I am sure comrade Downs could also find "several studies" which go on to conclude that women's solidarity in general is biologically impossible, contrary to human nature and anyway a threat to civilisation as we know it.

Chris Knight
Lewisham

Not going away

In reply to Arthur Bough (Letters, October 6), let me simply restate what are, to us in the National Union of Mineworkers, basic facts.

'Surplus' capacity was only 'surplus', given certain factors. For example, the selling price of coal, which I have laboured to explain to Arthur in our recent correspondence, although *the cheapest in the world at the point of production*, was weighed down by the lowest subsidy in the world. None of the pits highlighted as 'marginal' and 'unprofitable' were that, if one applied the subsidy and support level offered throughout the rest of the coal-producing world. It was certainly not because we had too many mines and miners, but simply the wrong government energy policy. This is before we even got into areas such as early retirement, shorter shifts or working weeks, all of which would have reduced the so-called surplus.

Arthur tells us that "141 out of 198 collieries made a financial loss", but "loss" is determined not by some universal economic ledger, but by the policies above. There are also strong arguments about social benefits of a high-wage industry generating low-priced fuel to power stations and industry which are not counted in this myopic analysis of 'the price of coal'.

We did not accept the nebulous concept of 'profit and loss' applied to the nationalised coal industry. We demanded that the national asset of coal be mined as a socially useful product. In 1984-85 we refused to accept the monolithic rules of Thatcher's market or being thrown into some dog-eat-dog world, where colliery competed with colliery for an ever smaller bone. It was this challenge of values which marked the higher political terms of this struggle from purely 'trade union' struggle.

Pits closed under Wilson in the 1960s simply because he was driven by the idea of a massive nuclear alternative. There was no iron law of economy, as Arthur constantly seems to argue.

Turning to the post-1985 situation, we *won* most of the disputes which swept the coalfields in response to new management disciplines and agendas - for example, disputes about who should work where. Most importantly, after a 78% 'yes' vote in a national ballot for industrial action and after weeks of unlawful picketing and strikes across Yorkshire, miners forced the withdrawal of the national disciplinary code. There was industrial action on securing the re-employment of many of the sacked miners (though by no means all), halting the imposition of non-union

contracts and forcing the near total unionisation of private contract firms. Arthur doesn't understand the period between 1985 and the final solution of John Major to finish with the industry almost entirely.

Arthur doesn't understand workers' control in the mining industry. Cavilling, job controls, resistance to supervision, control of overtime, etc, have developed independently of any indulgence by Victorian coal owners or nationalisation boards. His arguments that improvements in safety were linked to the development of modern mining techniques and not to nationalisation and the lowering of the individual profit motive - and also that this happened in private mines in other parts of the world - simply cannot be proved. Tonne for tonne, man for man, there is no comparison.

But I am not arguing that nationalisation, such as we experienced it, was some cherry on a stick or what we demanded; only that it had been infinitely better for the welfare of the miners and their families than the blood-sucking coal owners before or since. The question relates not to the form of ownership, but to the power of the workers and their ability to intervene, challenge and change systems and technologies. In Britain, nationalisation was linked to high union engagement and workers' intervention, but it is possible, as in the case of Iraq or China, for this not to be so.

The NUM has never had "a purely trade unionist position" on coal or on BAe. BAe ought to be nationalised under workers' management, with a crash alternative product restructuring with no loss of jobs or wages. The country still needs ships, planes, trains, buses and a million and one other things that I am quite certain BAe could design and build. We are not confined to trade union consciousness and workers' class-consciousness is not confined by struggles within trade unions. This is simply a self-serving myth of the vanguardists and party builders.

David Walters, for his part, states: "Coal kills and kills more than any other form of energy ever known to have been developed" (Letters, October 6).

Well, yes, until the post-war development of nuclear energy and since Roman times at least, coal was *the only* source of energy, unless you seriously want to compare deaths and injuries from water wheels and oxen. The oil industry came in with the birth of the internal combustion engine in the late 19th century but, let's be right, coal *was* power for most of our developed existence.

So, set against the last 2,000-plus years and a comparison with other sources of power and energy developed over the last 70 years, David is clearly right. The miners and their families know that better than anyone. Our struggle since the time of the first miners' unions has been to secure safer working conditions and safer utility of coal power for the miners and consumers of coal.

The struggle for clean-coal technology was not "invented by the US coal industry in 1987" at all, and David should perhaps do a little more research before making such a daft statement. The NUM was among the forerunners of campaigns for clean air and anti-pollution schemes in the post-war period. Research establishments were developed at a number of colliery sites, Grimethorpe being the most successful and well-funded (mainly by Scandinavian countries concerned with acid rain) from the 1960s. Other plants experimented with the fluid bed power generator - a scheme which burned tiny amounts of coal dust and gave off infinitesimal amounts of CO₂.

Mining communities developed joint fuel and power systems, which minimised duplication of excess coal burning by using a central communal boiler, which heated homes, hospitals and schools set to thermostats, and reduced amounts of CO₂ and pollution radically. Labour councils in mining communities were developing these in their new estates, linking old folks' houses, nurseries, hospitals, schools and libraries with one central boiler, usually burning smokeless coal.

The NUM was, along with Greenpeace, the co-founder of Energy 2000 at the end of the 1970s, an organisation which aimed at the strict control of open-cast mining, the securing of clean-coal technology, no new nukes and research into alternative sources of power. However, Thatcher pulled the plug on all clean-coal technology schemes and let them collapse - Thatcher and Major refused our demands to fit pollution wipers on all coal power stations, which would have radically reduced pollution.

At present the most efficient clean-coal power station in the world is being constructed at my old colliery, Hatfield Main in Doncaster. It will produce power with *no* CO₂ emissions and 90% reduction of any other associated emissions. The power station, as a by-product, will produce hydrogen, which the company planned to give free to the council to power clean buses and trains. It is a prototype for the most efficient coal-power generation in the world, but is in the hands of private capitalists and speculators, who cannot be trusted to see this scheme through once the European subsidies dry up.

But the point is, none of this is "sleight of hand". China is sadly not the "most serious" about clean-coal technology, at least not if by that we mean using the most efficient form of technology. Neither to date is the USA, because they see this 100% extraction of CO₂ system as too expensive and are looking at much poorer, less efficient, but cheaper schemes.

One would have thought the so-called greens would throw their weight into demanding the application of this technology rather than pointlessly demanding the end of coal production. Power on a world scale is 60% supplied by coal; nuclear accounts for something like 8%. There are hundreds of years of coal reserves, in many countries basically untouched.

Coal *will* be mined and burned. How it is done and at what cost in human and pollution terms are the issues we must realistically challenge. The NUM is categorically against the kind of strip-mining operation imposed upon the coal communities in the USA. This is the most anti-social and destructive form of mining in the world and what makes it worse is the lack of any responsibility to recover the decimated and desecrated lands and peoples. That is the fault of this particular mining method and the political system which allows it to go unchallenged. But you will never win the support of the American unions by decrying all coal mining of any sort.

The degree to which coal power and mining is dangerous and anti-social is directly related to the class struggle and the power exercised by the working class and miners as an advanced sector of it: the death and injury rate increases in direct proportion to our loss of control.

Uranium miners are known to be among the most numerous victims of any mining operation. Common sense will tell you they face exactly the same kinds of death and injury as coal miners, and exactly the same conditions producing lung diseases, but *additionally* they have a devastating propensity to lung cancer caused by the radon gas which lives in

the rock, far more than any other form of mining respiratory disease.

Dave is right, though: this direct underground mining of uranium is now giving way to open cast, because deposits are running out. The side-benefit of this is to reduce the number of deep miners and lower the proportion of men per tonne extracted. The downside is that open-cast work then exposes a massive area of land to radon gas and pollution, and puts at risk far wider proportions of the population.

David is fooling no-one by suggesting that nuclear power is safer than coal. Nuclear has only been a source of power effectively since the 1960s - ie, 50 years. How many disasters have we witnessed, killing how many people? Nuclear power rests upon military capacity; it wouldn't exist as an energy source if it wasn't for that fact. Iran, which is sitting on vast quantities of oil - and incidentally massive, untouched virgin coal seams sufficient to keep the country powered for thousands of years - wants to develop nuclear power for military purposes. We cannot look at the 'nuclear option' without looking at this central factor.

Finally, and most importantly, while a slag heap might to non-mining eyes look grim, let me tell you that we collected blackberries on the tip, sledged down it in winter and had sex in the long grass at its summit. A radioactive pile of nuclear waste, which will sit there threatening us for half a million years, will never be so benign or accommodating.

David may have convinced himself that the debate is only about nuclear and windmills, but that's because he and his comrades in the green movement are talking to themselves. Coal production worldwide is rising; new coal mines are sprouting like daisies, as are coal-powered stations. If we are serious about pollution and greener energy, we have to direct ourselves at cleaning up the greatest energy provider, not wishing it away. It just isn't going away.

David Douglass
 South Shields

Not credible

I'm sorry, but Dave Douglass's latest letter on Jarrow is pretty pointless (October 6). It's not surprising that the comrade cannot be 'bothered' to reply to my critical article on the politics of the 1936 Jarrow march ('They obeyed the rules', September 29).

In his letters contributing to this debate (September 1, September 22, October 6), I am yet to come across the "contrary facts" he claims he has that might prove his contention that the march was "not some anti-leftist diversion". Indeed, when I have cited *facts* such as the exclusion of communists and supporters of the militant National Unemployed Workers Movement from the march, Dave claims not to have been aware of this - although, for my part, I don't know of any serious study of the action that *doesn't* talk about it.

The comrade again complains that I quote "wholesale" from Matt Perry's *The Jarrow crusade*. Now, I'm not sure what particular political axe comrade Douglass has to grind with Perry, but I note he is not above quoting the man himself when he views the author as bolstering *his* case. In any case, this is not generally a reputable polemical method - it's a sort of guilt by association that blurs rather than clarifies key issues. For instance, in the article Dave cannot "bother" to reply to, I quote a number of times from *The slump* by J Stevenson and C Cook, even reproducing their general political assessment of Jarrow as a respectable, anti-communist action that "became a folk legend because they obeyed the rules".

Now, these two 'revisionist' historians - as the health warning

reads that I slapped on them in that article - think this is a *good* thing. I, unsurprisingly, don't. But the real nature of Jarrow 1936 is something that people from across a broad political spectrum can recognise, even if they draw diametrically opposite conclusions from that.

But this book is also useful in giving an insight into the contemporary thinking of the ruling class about Jarrow. I have no reason not to accept the findings of Dave's original research that in "mass assemblies of the unemployed workers [in Jarrow] the first proposals had been to march to London with guns and grenades in their pockets, gathering an army of armed workers on the way" (Letters, September 1) - given the general tenor of the time and the mass influence of the communist-led NUWM, this is quite possible. But the notion that there was *anything* of this gutsy militancy in the Jarrow march itself by the time it set off - with its non-political, sectional, Jarrow-specific demands, its ban on communists, the favourable special branch reports, as it progressed down the country, the recommendation that these "orderly" marchers be invited to tea in the House of Commons with the purpose of "encouraging and placating them", or the Jarrow men themselves "cheering lustily" as King Edward VIII passed down the Mall (instead of taking aim and firing, had the ethos of the early meetings Dave cites prevailed, perhaps) - is simply not credible.

Lastly, in his characteristically vivid prose, Dave gives us an inspiring picture of Jarrow 2011 as it sets out from the town on October 1. Far from being peeved that Youth Fight for Jobs - a front group of the Socialist Party in England and Wales - didn't begin their slog down the country under what Dave dubs my "infallible communist leadership" (ahem), I think this is excellent. I remind the comrade that, despite our criticisms of the general politics of SPEW and the opportunist bid it has made to claim the heritage of Jarrow 1936, I underlined that the action "deserves the support of all working class activists" and wished "the comrades of the YFJ success on their march" ('They obeyed the rules', September 29).

Mark Fischer
 London

Anti-politics

Having recently moved to Sheffield, I attended my first meeting of the Sheffield Anti-Cuts Alliance (SACA) on October 11. I was left somewhat underwhelmed, to put it mildly.

Only 22 people made the monthly 'open' meeting of the steering committee - almost exclusively members of the revolutionary left. There were half a dozen or so members of the SWP, with a couple each from the Socialist Party in England and Wales, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain (funnily enough, it is listed as "The Communist Party" on the SACA website). Chair Martin Mayer is a member of the Labour Representation Committee and sits on the national executive of Unite and there were also a couple of other members of the local trades union council present.

Anybody can attend and speak at these monthly meetings, but only delegates of affiliated organisations have a vote. This is the only SACA forum where 'normal' people can actively get involved. There have been a number of irregular public meetings, but at these contributions from the floor are normally restricted to two or three minutes. In addition, there are separate meetings of the officers group.

So you would expect that these monthly open meetings are not bogged down with organisational issues

(which surely should be discussed amongst the officers), but debate where the alliance is going, what policies it should develop in order to defeat the cuts, how it should engage with Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors, etc.

But not so. In effect, I felt like I landed in the middle of a zoo, where male gorillas are engaged in some chest-beating stand-off. Or peacocks shoving their fans into each other's faces. You get the flawed picture, I hope. SPEW was gushing about their Jarrow march. The SWP was gushing about the 'Unite The Resistance' rally on November 19. The AWL was gushing about a meeting of union activists involved in the November 30 strike.

There were some bizarre wars of words over rather trivial issues: the AWL's Rosie Huzzard got told off by a number of SWP members for calling the activists meeting a "strike committee" - it can only be a "strike support committee", because the individual unions themselves organise the committees. This took about five minutes. The SWP and a couple of members of the trades council then fought over who had organised more buses to bring people from Sheffield to the demonstration against the Tory conference on October 2. Another 10 minutes of my life wasted. Then there was a lengthy debate around stalls, which concluded in a decision that we should have them when enough people are available to run them. Fifteen minutes down the toilet.

This behaviour was even more puzzling, as there weren't actually any 'normal' (ie, non-affiliated) people around to 'impress' by this behaviour. But it probably explains why there weren't any. I am told that when SACA was set up, these meetings were at least twice as big and actually quite vibrant.

Now, however, they are quite a sad reflection of the state of the left. There is a lot of hostility and almost no cooperation between the different organisations involved. It seems they're mainly using SACA to promote their own campaigns.

Because so much time was wasted on hearing these so-called "reports", the meeting did not actually get to what could have been slightly more interesting agenda points: there was supposed to be a discussion item on the 'way forward' for SACA and a supportable proposal to call for a national anti-cuts conference "bringing together all anti-cuts organisations, trade unions and other interested and affected parties to discuss the way forward".

In hindsight, it seems quite possible that SWP members in the room wasted time on purpose to avoid such discussion. At the end of the 90-minute meeting, I voiced my frustration with proceedings and suggested that the next meeting should discuss strategy as its first item. Also, I proposed that future meetings of SACA should actually start with a political opening and a discussion (maybe restricted to 45 minutes) as a way to draw in more people. The SWP members in the room got very agitated about this and started to shout "No way!", but there was no time to discuss this further.

I was approached by AWL members afterwards who told me they had previously tried to make the meetings more political, but were blocked by the SWP. Clearly, this is a discussion that needs to be had again. We are in the middle of the biggest crisis of capitalism and yet the left wastes its time with this incredible sectarianism.

I wonder if other comrades in different cities have better experiences to report? Surely, it can't be this bad everywhere?

Tina Becker
 Sheffield

ACTION

CPGB podcasts

Every Monday we upload a podcast of commentary on the current political situation. In addition, the site features voice files of public meetings and other events: <http://cpgb.podbean.com>.

Communist Students

Thursday October 13, 6pm: Meeting, Cameron committee room, 3rd floor, Manchester Metropolitan University Union, Oxford Road, Manchester M15. 'The Arab spark'.

Organised by Manchester Communist Students: manchestercommuniststudents@googlemail.com.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesdays, 6.15pm, St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 (two minutes from Camden Town tube).

October 18: 'The myth of primitive matriarchy'. Speaker: Chris Knight.

Sex Worker Open University 2011

Wednesday October 12 - Sunday October 16: School, Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, London E8. Bringing together sex workers and allies from around the world to learn new skills and empower themselves.

Full programme: www.sexworkeropenuniversity.com.

Behind the built environment

Thursday October 13, 7.30pm: Lecture in the 'Whose mind is it anyway?' series, Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2. The effect of urban building and design on our lives and the modernist architecture espoused by communism. Speakers include: Anna Minton (author and journalist), Jonathan Meades (author and broadcaster). Tickets: £8/£6.

Organised by Bishopsgate Institute: www.bishopsgate.org.uk.

Remember Jimmy Mubenga

Friday October 14, 12 noon: Vigil, Crown Prosecution Service, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1. Vigil to mark the first of the death of Jimmy Mubenga in police custody.

Organised by the Justice for Jimmy Mubenga Campaign: justiceforjimmymubenga@gmail.com.

Future of higher education

Saturday October 15, 10am to 4pm: Teach-in, G12 Theatre, University Avenue, Glasgow G12. 'The economic crisis and the future of higher education'.

Organised by Centre for the Study of Socialist Theory and Movement: www.gla.ac.uk/schools/socialpolitical/research/sociology/socialisttheoryandmovement.

Academic freedom and the crisis

Saturday October 15, 10am: Teach-in, room 915, Adam Smith Building, Centre for the Study of Socialist Theory and Movements, University of Glasgow. Speakers include: Hillel Ticktin, Christine Cooper and Dr Des Freedman.

Organised by Centre for the Study of Socialist Theory and Movements: gziinfo@udcf.gla.ac.uk.

Celebrate diversity

Saturday October 15, 9.30pm: Conference, TUC Conference Centre, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Rejecting Islamophobia and fascism. Speakers include: Jack Dromey MP, Peter Hain MP, Claude Moraes MEP, Jean Lambert MEP, Michelle Stanistreet (NUJ), Hugh Lanning (PCS), Steve Hart (Unite), Weyman Bennett (Unite Against Fascism), Martin Smith (Love Music, Hate Racism).

Organised by Unite Against Fascism and One Society, Many Cultures: www.onesocietymanycultures.org.

Fight poverty

Monday October 17, 10.30am: Conference, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Speakers include: Frances O'Grady (TUC), Mark Serwotka (PCS), Christine Blower (NUT), Nick Cohen (*The Observer*), Owen Jones.

Organised by TUC: www.tuc.org.uk.

Obama syndrome

Tuesday October 18, 7.30pm: Lecture, Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2. The high expectations surrounding Barack Obama's election have subsided. Tariq Ali in conversation with Bonnie Greer. Tickets: £8/£5.

Organised by the Bishopsgate Institute: www.bishopsgate.org.uk.

Save our jobs and pensions

Wednesday October 19, 7pm: Rally, main Victoria Hall, Ealing town hall, New Broadway, London W5. Speakers include: John McDonnell MP, Dot Gibson (National Pensioners Convention), Zita Holbourne (Black Activists Rising Against Cuts).

Organised by: Ealing Alliance for Public Services: nickgrant2512@mac.com.

Anarchist Bookfair

Saturday October 22, 10am to 7pm: Debate and controversy, Queen Mary's, University of London, Mile End Road, London E14. Speakers include: Ian Bone, Stuart Christie, Darcus Howe, Selma James, Chris Knight and Hillel Ticktin. Meetings on: UK riots, Arab uprisings, China's workers and capitalism's crisis.

Organised by Anarchist Bookfair: anarchistbookfair.org.uk.

Labour Representation Committee

Tuesday October 25, 6.30pm: Meeting, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Guest speaker: George Binette (Camden Unison) - 'Mobilising for action on November 30'.

Organised by Greater London LRC: <http://gl-lrc.blogspot.com>.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

SWP

The tiny cog and its mechanical mindset

Peter Manson reviews the first of three SWP pre-conference bulletins

Yes, it is that time of the year again. In the three months before the Socialist Workers Party's annual conference, SWP comrades are allowed to submit their ideas to the whole organisation for publication in their entirety in three *Pre-conference Bulletins*. What is more, during this brief period they are even permitted to form a temporary faction, provided at least 30 members sign a "joint statement" and, in accordance with the SWP constitution, all the faction's documents are exclusively distributed "through the national office".

Prior to 2009, the *Pre-conference Bulletin* (also known as *Internal Bulletin*, or *IB*) was only available in printed form - the central committee claimed that to circulate it electronically would jeopardise members' "security" and that would allow the identity of contributors to be more easily revealed to their employers or to fascists. In reality, of course, details about every half-decent activist already circulate freely on the internet - those who have genuine security concerns should surely use a pseudonym. The real reason for the restriction was the CC's desire to prevent criticism from becoming public and to keep firm control over what passes for internal debate.

However, two years ago the CC relented and began emailing the *IB* to all members, who are told not to forward them to non-SWPers. As a further gesture in the direction of "security", it publishes only the first name of contributors. This has the effect of muddying the waters somewhat - those members not in the know cannot be sure of the status of contributors. Are they senior cadres and do their comments have the CC seal of approval, for instance?

IB No1 (October) signals a further retreat from the leadership's antipathy towards the free exchange of ideas that the internet permits. Once upon a time the SWP banned its members from taking part in online discussion forums and up to very recently it continued to express its disapproval of the idea, on the grounds that such forums are "undemocratic" - branch meetings are open to all members, and that is where debate should take place!

Now, however, the CC document, 'The SWP and the internet', has faced up to the inevitable: "Many comrades now regularly post ... to Facebook and Twitter, and comment ... online. A few also produce valuable blog entries (and some less useful!). While these kinds of forums are not a substitute for branch meetings, etc, it would be wrong for the SWP to abstain from such forums." Progress indeed! (This article also states: "Each month well over 350,000 people visit the [Socialist Worker] site, generating in excess of 1.25 million page views.")

A largish submission from "Ian (Manchester)" - which takes up six pages, mainly regurgitating standard SWP 'wisdom' - makes a more than useful contribution on this subject, however. He writes: "In the age of the internet, any organisation larger than a sect cannot have free internal debate if it fears those debates becoming visible to those outside its ranks - no fudge is possible on this. But the desire to



Cogs and wheels

separate 'internal' debate from the class is based on a false understanding of democratic centralism. How can a party take sensible decisions about what to do in the class without seeking the views of those it works alongside?"

He continues: "Open debate ... would have the great advantage of allowing mistakes to be promptly identified and corrected Mistakes are inevitable, but it is impossible to ensure a whole party learns from them without being willing to acknowledge them publicly." And he adds: "A mass revolutionary party would include members with varied political opinions ... Party growth helps openness and diversity, which are in turn preconditions for genuine mass parties."

At last we have an SWP comrade who, no matter how vaguely, recognises the difference between genuine democratic centralism and the bureaucratic centralist impostor advocated by so much of the left. Perhaps comrade Ian will develop a thoroughgoing critique of the SWP's practice and propose a radical overhaul. For the moment, however, he concludes by saying: "Having had a party structure that has changed so little for such a long period means that more debate will be required to work out what changes will be best."

Shaping the fightback?

This first *IB* is dominated by another CC document, 'Perspectives for the SWP', which this year, not unexpectedly, is centred on the forthcoming class battles, as workers and their unions react to the coalition government's austerity attacks. Much of what the CC writes is correct and this section of the document begins in a measured way.

The leadership writes: "If the coordinated battle over pensions were to become sufficiently powerful to win, it would transform the situation ... It would boost our side in every battle and be an important step in reversing the shattering of working class confidence in the 1980s." This is compared to the December 1995 strike wave in France: "It opened up a period in which a higher level of struggle was possible, but also in which the

political space for the anti-capitalist left expanded."

This betrays the economistic outlook of the SWP. If its CC is only aiming for the situation in France 15 years ago, that is clearly woefully inadequate given the depth of the capitalist crisis. The same is actually true of the 'parallel' perspective summed up by the ridiculous SWP call for an indefinite general strike. While it is right to say that partial "smart strikes" are "unlikely to be sufficient to defeat a key plank of the government's agenda", it is wrong to conclude: "That is why we will raise the slogan, 'All out, stay out', in November."

The more I read this slogan, the more it seems to me like a mere device to both activate the current membership and win new recruits by attempting to make the SWP appear the most militant and revolutionary group. Is 'All out, stay out' really on the cards, and if so what would be the outcome? True, the CC insists that the government is "weak", but it admits that the working class is in a pretty poor state. Rank-and-file organisation is almost non-existent, while the "revolutionary party" itself is hardly in a position to lead a bid for power: "The SWP, an organisation of a few thousand members, is unlikely to be the decisive force in a movement of three million workers." Yes, it is a bit unlikely. So what does the CC think would happen if there really was an indefinite general strike under these circumstances?

Nevertheless, the CC talks up its own role: "We must prepare the party to meet the tests we will face. As the largest revolutionary organisation in Britain, the burden of historical responsibility rests on our shoulders, and the development of a perspective that can match up to this new situation is a challenge to us all."

The leadership admits, however: "More resistance does not necessarily lead to a stronger SWP and we know that we face competition and challenges from competing trends." But it goes without saying that the SWP has no perspective of uniting these "competing trends" within a single Marxist party - such an achievement really would aid the process of rebuilding our class's strength. The CC's desire to simply outstrip the others is in fact classic sectarianism.

Unite the Resistance

The CC describes how it hopes to influence events: "The tiny cog of the revolutionary left cannot turn the giant cog of the TUC. But we are in a position to shape aspects of the struggle and to give it a more effective and militant character - provided we have an intermediate cog."

This approach is typical for the confessional sects. The mechanical mindset betrays the contemptible attitude towards the existing working class and its future potential. Instead of seeking to unite the Marxist left into a Communist Party and winning the majority of class-conscious workers to that party, the bureaucratic sect perpetuates Bakuninist methods. Knowing that their organisation will

never achieve anything significant by itself, knowing that it will never convince the majority in society, the self-selecting elite think that they can move the unknowing mass conspiratorially, dishonestly, covertly, through a system of wheels and cogs. The latest "cog" is something called Unite the Resistance.

You may not have heard of this body and could be forgiven for thinking it laudably aims to bring together the various anti-cuts campaigns. Unfortunately not - "it is not another attempt to create a national coalition of cuts campaigns", states the CC. In fact the leadership makes its usual nod in the direction of a rapprochement between the SWP's Right to Work and RTW's rivals, only to dismiss it: "We recognise the need for joint work with Coalition of Resistance, the National Shop Stewards Committee Anti-Cuts Campaign, the People's Charter and others. We are in favour of cooperation and unity. But we should also recognise that no such unity is at all likely in the short term. Therefore we are for continuing to build RTW."

But back to Unite the Resistance. The SWP got its members holding senior union positions, along with some non-members, to call a rally under that name just before the June 30 mass strikes. They are organising a repeat on November 19. But now UTR is to be transformed into a "hybrid organisation" - apparently a combination of, or cross between, a "broad left" and a "rank-and-file movement". Compared, at least in the aspiration, to the Communist Party-sponsored National Minority Movement of the 1920s, according to the CC.

But the leadership does not go into detail. That is left to "Sean of North London" - presumably Sean Vernell, whose own contribution is conveniently entitled 'Unite the Resistance: building a middle cog'.

He explains: "Socialists need to be raising the argument in the run-up to November 30: all out, stay out. But how do we turn this from a propaganda demand into one that becomes a real possibility?" Well, "The urgent task for the SWP is to create a middle cog within the organised working class that can turn the larger cog of the movement." That "middle cog" needs to consist of "around 25,000 workers within the unions, and outside"

"Sean" continues: "Unite the Resistance is ... the beginning of a hybrid organisation. Its aim is to build networks that ensure that the official calls from the trade unions are implemented and the action taken is the most effective. It has general secretaries as well as rank-and-file militants involved in the rallies and conferences. It attempts to use the official structures of the movement to create unofficial networks."

Comrade Vernell (or whatever other leading SWPer called Sean is a University and College Union activist) sings the praises of the SWP-backed UCU Left rank-and-file grouping, claiming credit for the success of the March 24 lecturers' strike: "It was not unofficial action, but it took the unofficial networks to ensure that the official call was supported by the members." As a result, "The SWP, by playing a central part in UCU Left's

development, has managed to attract and recruit some of the best militants. This year, so far, 19 have joined the party."

All this is meant to show that the SWP can play a decisive role in the forthcoming battles - it can be the "tiny cog" that sets the whole machine in motion - although, to be honest, I think the winning of 19 recruits to the SWP is a bit of a let-down compared to the achievements of the National Minority Movement.

"Sean" concludes: "We need to throw ourselves into a movement that can defend the gains made by working people and by so doing lay the basis for one that can begin to raise the possibility of an alternative way of running society. The next step in creating such a movement will be on November 19 in London at the Unite the Resistance conference." Well, I know rallies can have a role, but surely this is overstating things.

'Stronger party'

The CC claims that despite "a degree of internal turmoil over recent years ... in many ways the party is growing stronger".

But that is not how perennial oppositionists "Anne and Martin (West London)" see things. This couple, who surface every year in the *IB*s, slyly use the John Rees-Lindsey German "rightwing bloc" as a whipping boy for the failings of the current SWP. The former leadership is blamed for deliberately wrecking the SWP branch structure - a situation the current CC has failed to remedy: "The rightwing bloc's relegation of organisation essentially still seems to hold sway."

"Anne and Martin" state an obvious truth: "... the overwhelming majority of SWP members are not active. Even for those who are, the only encouragement [from the leadership] is to wait and support the next big event." Such as the Unite the Resistance rally perhaps?

The reason why most SWPers are "not active" is because of the chasm that exists between the "registered members" - ie, anyone who said they wanted to join in the previous two years - and the real members: those who regularly turn up to SWP events or support SWP actions. No doubt the leadership will reveal more when it gives the figures in one of the two forthcoming *IB*s.

In this *Pre-conference Bulletin*, though, the self-perpetuating central committee recommends a slightly different leadership following the 2012 annual conference. It proposes to re-elect itself in its entirety - apart from Chris Bambery, of course, who resigned from the SWP in April - and to add four new faces to its number.

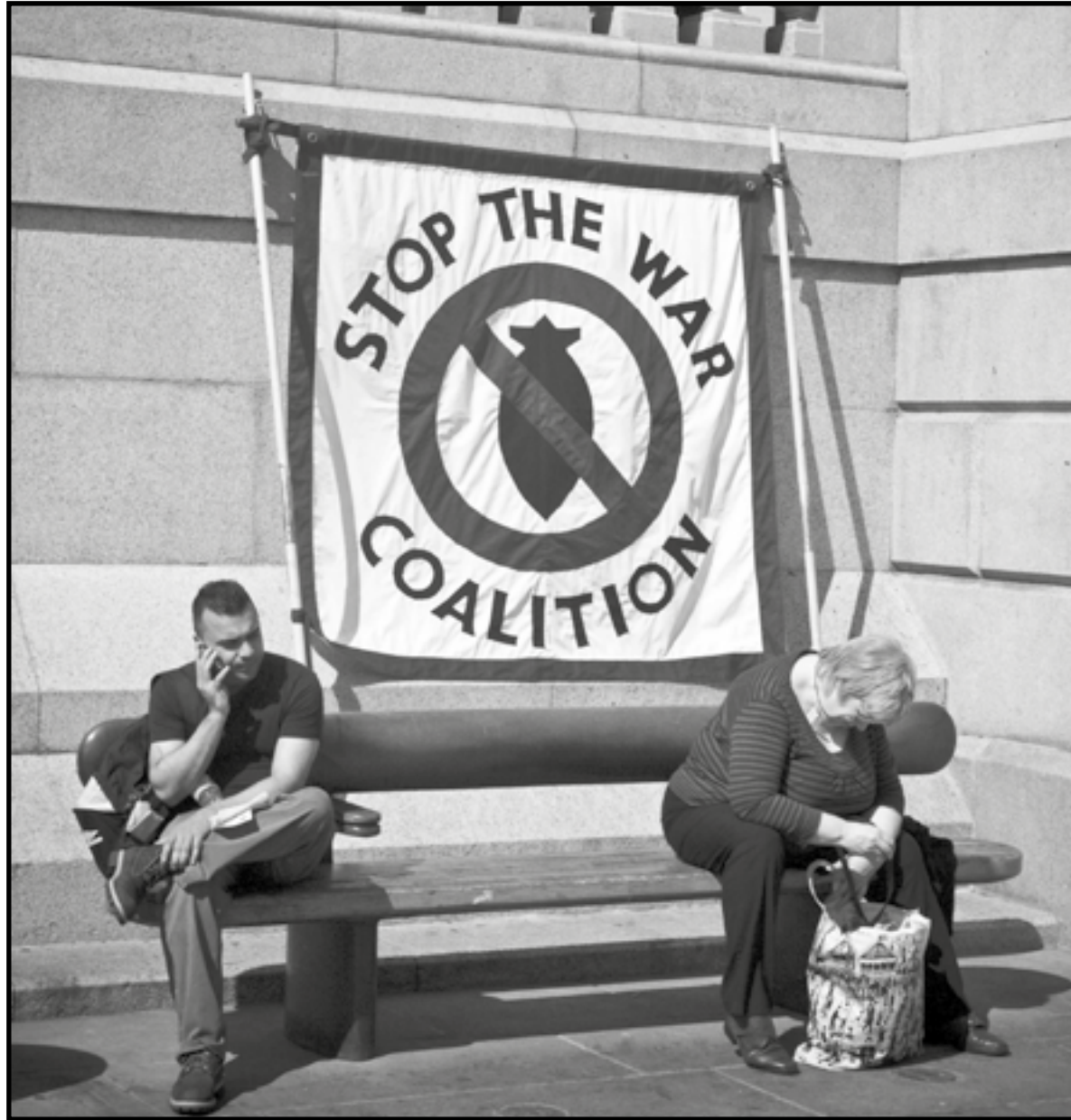
The four are SWP student organiser and National Union of Students executive member Mark Bergfeld, author and former *Socialist Worker* journalist Esme Choonara, Ray Marral (who?) and apparatchik Mark Thomas. They will take their places after the January 6-8 conference alongside Weyman Bennett, Michael Bradley, Alex Callinicos, Joseph Choonara, Hannah Dee, Charlie Kimber, Amy Leather, Dan Mayer, Judith Orr and Martin Smith.

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STWC

Not so memorable

The decline in the anti-war movement has left the STWC all at sea, argues **Harley Filben**



In decline

"This is clearly going to be a memorable day," declared a mail-out from the Stop the War Coalition, imploring people to attend the STWC 'anti-war mass assembly' in Trafalgar Square on October 8. Indeed, there are many factors that made it a day to remember - none of them reflecting particularly well on the coalition, however.

The event was marketed as an equivalent of the various (in truth, often quite politically dubious) 'square occupation movements', which are no doubt the latest bit of political ephemera to capture the lively imagination of John Rees.

The best you could say about this branding strategy is that it made a virtue out of necessity. There were, at most, a thousand left activists (and others) milling around in Trafalgar Square at any one time; about 3,000 assembled for the 4pm march on Downing Street, and were promptly and easily kettled.

So the 'mass assembly' approach had the effect of concealing very slightly the painfully obvious decay of the anti-war movement; even so, it is clear that the cabal that runs STWC - principally John Rees's Counterfire group and the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain - have no understanding of what made the square occupation movement, for all its faults, an attractive proposition to newly radicalised elements.

The missing ingredient X is spontaneous energy. The great strength (and weakness) of the square occupations was that they came out of nowhere; thousands of people really were concerned to work out what

needed to be done, and so it did not matter particularly that the protests were ultimately directionless. If they came out of nowhere, of course, then they were likely to return to nowhere in not too much time; however, the elemental anger they represented certainly did have a genuinely energising effect.

By definition, you cannot call this energy into being by fiat. It cannot be announced in mail-outs from a central office. At a fundamental level, it is quite incompatible with the very means with which Stop the War has been organised since its inception - haggling on a central leadership committee. Without that energy, the October 8 jamboree was exactly what it looked like - a thousand or so (mostly) leftwingers milling about in Trafalgar Square. The mood of the event was such that one comrade wandered up to the CPGB stall and asked in all honesty, "So when does it start?"

The centre of attention for most of the day was a large stage (set up in time-honoured fashion in front of Nelson's Column), on which nothing very much happened. For the most part, a large screen played videos in some sense related to the aims of the movement, with hundreds of people looking on a little listlessly. There was also a 'naming of the dead' exercise (given the toll of recent imperialist wars, a little difficult to do comprehensively), a series of platform speeches by various notables and - at one surreal moment - a cover of Aled Jones's well known protest classic 'Walking in the air'.

Next to the stage was a marquee,

with a parallel programme of discussions and meetings. In a sense, the story of the marquee is the story of the day; while the place was packed out for a short debate involving Tony Benn, an earlier session - an 'open mic' meeting for 'ideas to take the movement forward' was attended only by the odd empty crisp packet that blew in through the door. *Nobody* has any ideas to take the movement forward; and, over the course of the last 10 years, any and all such ideas have generally been rejected by the conservative clique in charge.

Brar barred

The clique has been quite happy to wield its authority in arbitrary accordance with the perceived political needs of the day. Hands Off the People of Iran was denied affiliate status in 2007 on the basis that it 'opposed' Stop the War - a denial that has been persistently renewed at each subsequent AGM; the 'smoking gun' was comrade Mark Fischer's less than flattering comments about the coalition's leadership, delivered at a CPGB members' aggregate, in his capacity as CPGB national organiser.

The CPGB, however, remains affiliated; comrade Fischer's comments damn only Hopi, it seems, despite the *Weekly Worker's* long history of scathing criticisms of Stop the War's leadership. The inconsistency cannot be explained with recourse to political reason; it was a nakedly cynical power-play by the CPB and the organisation Rees then headed, the Socialist Workers Party. Hopi was feared more than the CPGB, because it had gathered support far

beyond the ranks of the organisations that started it off. That was considered too much of a threat to the sensibilities of Islamist organisations (and, indeed, direct apologists and agents for the Iranian regime).

In a great bureaucratic irony, there is now *another* victim of the purge-happy STWC leadership. The Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) has been summarily expelled, ostensibly because it had been "publicly attacking" the coalition in its press.

The CPGB-ML, led by comrade Harpal Brar, is an organisation we have previously characterised as "ultra-Stalinist"; it upholds the legacy of JV Stalin with unassailable loyalty, and also avowedly supports 'anti-imperialist' nationalists in the third world. It is the CPGB-ML which turns up at every Stop the War AGM with a motion calling on us to adopt the slogan, 'Victory to the resistance!'

A far cry from our politics or the politics of Hopi, then - and according to the CPGB-ML statement on the matter, the underlying political basis for the split is over the recent Libyan conflict, whereupon - true to form - Brar and his comrades came out in full support of Gaddafi.

Presumably foremost in the minds of Rees, the CPB's Andrew Murray and co is the fact that this line does not exactly play well in the public gallery. If, as Stop the War always intended, we are to build the broadest possible unity against the war, then we cannot have idiosyncratic left groups scaring off 'ordinary people' with their hard political lines.

Yet it is time to face some home truths. Stop the War is not in any sense 'broad'. In fact, it is barely alive. The last period in which the coalition could mobilise numbers significantly greater than the immediate periphery of its component organisations was during the 2008-09 Gaza war, almost three years ago. There are several reasons for this, some outside of STWC's control; principally, the Iraq war is over, and the Afghanistan war is beginning to wind down. The ruling class, meanwhile, won the battle of ideas over Libya, which was always an easier sell than the Iraq disaster.

That is only part of the story, however. The fundamental problem is that STWC is, and always has been, run almost entirely from its central office. Political lines are decided by negotiations among the different components of the steering committee, with the effect that they are both too diffuse and too exclusive. It has become a front organisation for activity on right-on international

causes agreeable to its leading components.

Without an army

The consequence is that, firstly, it is not immediately clear what Stop the War is *for*; it no longer has the crystal clarity it once did as an alliance between all those opposed to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is now wheeled out for Palestinian solidarity and sundry other worthy causes without any fundamental unifying principle. The organisation became increasingly reliant on foot soldiers, in the first instance from the Socialist Workers Party, and the latter's retreat from full participation in STWC after the loss of Rees, Lindsey German and their supporters left the coalition unable to sustain itself meaningfully. They are generals without an army.

The 'central office' model had its uses - at the time of the outbreak of war in Iraq, the ruling class was in acute political crisis on the issue. There was thus an objective basis for truly mass demonstrations against war; and getting 1.5 million people to London requires central organisation. Yet that was never going to last; it was quite predictable that softer elements would drift into a 'Back our boys' mindset, or else call on our governments to 'fix' the mess they had made.

At that point, initiative needed to go to component organisations and to the localities; the next march may not have been so big, but *more* active support would have been retained than we actually managed, more diverse tactics could have thought up and deployed, and the anti-war movement would have been in a better position to take advantage of the endless political disasters that flowed from Iraq. However, the leadership held onto its rule by *diktat*, based on a *false* image of February 15 2003.

There are those who will welcome the death of the Stop the War Coalition; the ruling class, for a start, and its paid apologists. 'Left' practitioners of sectarian idiocy like the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, for whom marching alongside Islamists is *ipso facto* a violation of communist principle (and for whom active opposition to imperialist war is deemed "kitsch"), will no doubt join in.

We do not. The steady decline of what was once the largest mass movement in recent British history is a tragedy, all the more so in that it could have been avoided. Given the apparently limitless capacity for self-delusion on the part of its leadership, however, it is difficult not to conclude that Stop the War is a terminal case ●

Head to head in Halle

In publishing Zinoviev's largely forgotten four-hour speech and



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ECONOMY

Death by a thousand cuts

With the clock ticking on the euro zone and the UK in danger of slipping in another recession, there is still no sign of 'bold vision' or a 'comprehensive strategy' from the ruling class, argues **Eddie Ford**

It is not often that Marxists find themselves in agreement with the governor of the Bank of England. But we can only concur with Mervyn King's sober comments on October 6 about Britain being in the grip of an economic crisis "as serious as anything since the 1930s, if not ever".

King went on to comment on the "very unusual circumstances" of this situation - indeed, he argued, governments and the markets are now confronted by "problems even worse than at the height of the credit crunch". For King, the world is now suffering from a "1930s-style shortage of money". In turn, he argued, Britain is part of a world economy that is "closing down at an even faster rate than people thought even a few months ago". Meaning that, as the United States and the euro zone possibly slide towards recession, UK plc will inevitably get dragged down with them - there can be no 'recovery' in one country.

'Desperate'

Alarmed by the worsening situation, the Bank of England (BoE) announced that - as part of its so-called 'shock and awe' approach - it was injecting £75 billion into the ailing economy by a second dose of quantitative easing (QE2).

The first round in 2009-10 saw the creation of £200 billion in electronic money, a measure that George Osborne described at the time - when he was still a fiscal pin-up boy for the right - as the "last resort of a desperate government". Meaning that by the end of the four-month programme, the BoE will have bought a total of £275 billion in assets from banks, representing around 20% of GDP. Many expect that the cumulative total resulting from quantitative easing will eventually reach £500 billion or even higher (though to date QE has acted more to fuel speculation in asset prices and thus helped push up the cost of energy and food). In the view of the majority on the BoE's monetary policy committee, QE2 was necessary in order to stimulate demand, given the overwhelming evidence that the "underlying pace of activity had weakened", and that the impact of Osborne's austerity programme was "likely to continue to weigh on domestic spending" - namely, that the UK is on the verge of a double-dip recession.

This is a viewpoint certainly held by the credit rating agency, Moody's, one of the terrible triumvirate alongside Standard and Poor's and Fitch - the new horsemen of the financial apocalypse. The agency took the decision on October 11 to downgrade the part-nationalised Royal Bank of Scotland by two notches from Aa3 to A2 and also Lloyds TSB by one notch to Aa3 to A1. Moody's also cut its ratings on Santander UK, the Cooperative Bank, Nationwide and seven other smaller building societies. Explaining its decision, Moody's said the downgrade was necessary because the government was stepping back from bailing out banks when they ran into difficulty - contending that it is "more likely now to allow smaller institutions to fail if they become financially troubled". Will the UK itself be next for downgrading?

Now the RBS and Lloyds bosses, showing their deep love for the ordinary British taxpayers who bailed them out in their hour of need, are



No vision from bourgeoisie

mounting a war against its poorest customers. With delicate sensitivity, Brian Hartzer, the head of RBS's retail operation in the UK, informed the British public that from now on those customers with a basic bank account will be charged for using the cash machines of rival banks.

Meanwhile, the British economy is going from bad to worse - the coalition government has made sure of that. There is no alternative - only Plan A. Death or glory. Hence the latest official statistics and surveys make for particularly grim reading. Figures released on October 5 by the Office for National Statistics showed that the downturn of 2008-09 was even deeper than originally believed, with a 7.1% drop in GDP. Revising previous numbers, the ONS halved its GDP estimate for April-June this year to just 0.1%, suggesting the economy had already ground to a halt *before* the European debt crisis escalated in the summer. Additionally, household spending dropped 0.8% in the second quarter - its sharpest decline since the depths of the recession at the start of 2009.

If things were not bad enough, the ONS also reported that manufacturing output fell by 0.3% in August, slightly faster than the original forecast of a 0.2% fall. That left the annual pace of growth at 1.5%, the slowest for 18 months. The wider industrial sector, which makes up around 15% of the economy, saw output rise 0.2% in the same month, defying those who expected a 0.2% fall; however, the sector's overall production rate was still down 1% on the year. Quite predictably, as revealed by recent business surveys, manufacturing as a whole is suffering from a fall in global demand, as key trading partners in the euro zone grapple with sovereign debt problems and their own sluggish or non-existent growth. So the latest quarterly survey from the British Chambers of Commerce of more than 6,000 businesses (October 11) showed them bracing for a "deterioration in the economic situation" in view of signs of "stagnation in the domestic economy": that is, all the key indicators on the domestic market, exports, business confidence, cash-flow, investment in plant and machinery, etc have weakened over the last quarter.

Then, in yet another blow to the

government's crumbling economic 'strategy', the latest *official* figures released on October 12 showed that unemployment had reached a 17-year peak - rising by 114,000 between June and August to 2.57 million. The total for 16-24-year-olds hit a record high of 991,000 in the quarter - a jobless rate of 21.3%. Other figures showed a record cut in the number of part-time workers, down by 175,000, and there was also a record reduction of 74,000 in the number of over-65s in employment. According to the ONS, there are currently 9.35 million people aged from 16 to 64 classified as economically "inactive". Taking all these statistics and surveys together, the only country which has suffered a worse recession is Japan - as Osborne had to admit on the BBC's *Today* programme on October 7. No Plan B at all, George - really?

Well, perhaps a little one. He has told us that "further steps" would be taken to "boost" growth in his autumn statement next month - apparently, the treasury is "exploring further policy options". One of them being the plan to lend money directly to businesses through 'credit easing', the scheme which Osborne announced at the Tory Party conference last week. Another idea being touted, for example, is putting a limit on how long construction firms can hoard land on which they have permission to build - they could now be required to release the land for someone else to build on. But all desperate piss-in-a-pot stuff, compared to the enormity of the economic/financial problems facing the UK.

Drop in the ocean

In reality, obviously, Britain is almost totally dependent on events in Europe - and just take a look at the continent. The euro zone seems to be dying the death of a thousand cuts. Yes, in the end Angela Merkel won with relative ease the vital September 29 Bundestag vote on whether to ramp up the European Financial Stability Facility mechanism - a 'no' vote would have delivered the death sentence to the euro zone project. Yet the vote has been rendered a near instant irrelevancy compared to the amount of money potentially needed to bail out those countries and banks which are clearly on the brink of

collapse - *trillions* are required, not the paltry €440 billion which is the EFSF's current lending facility. A drop in the vast ocean of debt.

The collapse, break-up and nationalisation of Dexia bank in Belgium is surely a taster of what is to come. Dexia asked for help for the second time in three years after a liquidity squeeze sent its shares tumbling - and the French, Belgian and Luxembourg governments into a panic. The bank is a repeat offender, having been initially bailed out in 2008 when the three governments jointly put in €6.4 billion to keep it afloat - dear god, please don't go under. Under the emergency plan, Dexia's French municipal finance operations will come under direct state control, whilst Luxembourg's finance minister said a Qatari investment group was ready to buy the bank's Luxembourg units. Dexia's near-collapse should send-off klaxon alarms about the health, or otherwise, of Europe's various lenders, given that it has an estimated global credit risk exposure of around \$700 billion - twice the GDP of Greece, in other words. Now there is something *serious* to think about.

To those who appreciate gallows humour, the burden of bailing out Dexia led to a warning from Moody's that it might downgrade Belgium - on the grounds that the government was overstretching. Quite possibly true. So damned if you do and damned if you don't. Ominously, just hours after France and Belgium agreed to break up Dexia, Austria's Erste announced it had also fallen victim to the "recent turbulence". The banking group said it would lose as much as €800 million this year and would have to write down €180 million in euro zone sovereign debt. Another bailout on the horizon?

Plainly, the European banking/financial system is unravelling - decaying before our very eyes. There is even a chance that the EFSF will never even get to use its (utterly inadequate) €440 billion war chest - after the Slovakian parliament on October 11 voted against the bill to boost the powers and size of the bailout fund. Naturally, rejection of the proposal also triggered the collapse of the fragile four-party coalition which had ruled Slovakia since July last year. Slovakia has a population of 5.5 million, its GDP representing a mere 0.5% of the European Union's, and was being asked to fork out €7.7 billion towards the EFSF pot - an amount equal to roughly 12% of its total annual economic output.

Of course, just like in Ireland, there will almost certainly be another vote - and the pressure will be on to vote 'correctly' this time. In all likelihood, by one means or another, the Slovakian parliament will eventually consent to the new mega-EFSF. But it is by no means a complete certainty and any further delay in ratifying the new EFSF mechanism could prove to be disastrous. The clock is ticking against the euro zone project. Greece is not going to magically go away and a 'disorderly' default by the Greek government could deliver an absolutely devastating blow to European banks, causing lending to freeze up.

Whither Greece?

'Debt inspectors' from the EU, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank say they have reached agreement with the Greek government and that it is

"likely" that the country will get its next tranche of €8 billion bailout cash by early November - assuming that the country is not already bankrupt by then. The Greek finance minister, Evangelos Venizelos, has sought to reassure nervous investors that the country has enough money to pay pensions, salaries and, far more importantly, bondholders through to mid-November - "no problem", he bullishly declared upon returning from a euro zone finance ministers' meeting in Luxembourg.

However, the EU, IMF and ECB troika also issued a statement saying that Greece will no longer reach its "fiscal target" for 2011, due to a regrettable drop in GDP and also because of "slippages" when it came to the carrying out of the "agreed measures" - ie, further assaults on the Greek working class. The statement added, on a note of perverse optimism, that the 2012 deficit target of €14.9 billion could still be met if there was a "determined implementation" of the government's austerity programme and in this spirit praised the decision to end sector-wide collective labour agreements as a "major step forward".

Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank, told the German *Wirtschaftswoche* magazine on October 8 that there was a "total lack" of vision in Europe, with more leadership being particularly needed from Germany. He worried that the entire euro zone teeters on the verge of a "euroquake" if the Greek default is bungled, thus triggering off contagion on a vast scale - the effects of which would be felt around the entire world, especially the United States. In which case, forget recession - rather, say hello to the new great depression.

Over September 16-18, the IMF, World Bank and G20 finance ministers issued a series of resolute communiqués promising "bold action" to do "whatever necessary" to prevent Europe's sovereign debt crisis from spinning totally out of control. Very impressive-sounding. Yet next to nothing has been done. Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy met in Berlin for bilateral talks over the weekend of October 7-9, with bank recapitalisation supposedly at the top of the agenda - the two countries, we heard, were pursuing a "common course". But how exactly are they going to do it? So far we have not been told. France, petrified of losing its triple-A credit rating, wants to spread the pain by using the EFSF, but Germany remains resistant to the idea - keen that the respective national governments should get their own wallets out.

Eyes are now turned towards the EU summit meeting in Brussels on October 23, originally scheduled for the week before. Yet another summit - more meetings about meetings. In upbeat mode, Herman Van Rompuy, the European Council president, asserted that on the day they would "finalise" their "comprehensive strategy", allowing EU leaders to present their master plan for rescuing the euro zone to the G20 summit at Cannes on November 3-4. David Cameron, for one, hopes that the leaders take a "big bazooka" approach to resolving the euro zone crisis and finally bring to an end the chronic uncertainty, which is having a "chilling effect" on the world economy.

Few are convinced ●

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DEBATE

The crisis is financial, it is not economic

Taking issue with Mike Macnair, Arthur Bough insists that the global economy remains in a long-wave upswing and advocates the setting up of workers' cooperatives

In a recent *Weekly Worker* article Mike Macnair says he agrees with Trotsky's objections to the 'long wave' theory of economic cycles.¹ But Trotsky supported the idea of the long wave.² He opposed a mechanistic view, recognising the role of political intervention and exogenous factors, such as wars and revolutions.

Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev responded: "Wars and revolutions also influence the course of economic development very strongly. But wars and revolutions do not come out of a clear sky, and they are not caused by arbitrary acts of individual personalities. They originate from real, especially economic, circumstances. The assumption that wars and revolutions acting from the outside cause long waves evokes the question as to why they themselves follow each other with regularity and solely during the upswing of long waves. Much more probable is the assumption that wars originate in the acceleration of the pace and the increased tension of economic life, in the heightened economic struggle for markets and raw materials, and that social shocks happen most easily under the pressure of new economic forces."

"Wars and revolutions, therefore, can also be fitted into the rhythm of the long waves and do not prove to be the forces from which these movements originate, but rather to be one of their symptoms. But, once they have occurred, they naturally exercise a potent influence on the pace and direction of economic dynamics."³

Kondratiev is more dialectical. Mike's argument is like the discussion of the role of the individual in history. Individuals (events) shape concrete history, but cannot explain history, as opposed to the powerful economic and social forces, which give rise to them, and by which they, in turn, are shaped and constrained.

Overall growth

Even if you reject the theory of long waves, the economic data is this. Between 1980 and 1990 global trade rose from \$4,000 billion to \$6,000 billion, remaining flat until 1994. Between 1994 and 2000 it rose from \$6,000 billion to \$12,000 billion. But, the sharpest rise has most notably been since 2002 rising from \$12,000 billion to \$28,000 billion by 2007.⁴ In 2007, for the first time since 1969, not one of the world's economies was in recession. China was growing at 10% per annum, Azerbaijan and Angola at 26%, Mauritania at 18%. These kinds of economies have continued to grow strongly even during the aftermath of the credit crunch.

When old industries are in decline, and the baton is being past to new dynamic industries, it always looks like a terminal crisis to the former. The same is true when old developed economies are in relative decline. There is due concern that unemployment in developed economies has risen by several hundred thousands, but the developing economies are today creating millions of new jobs every year!

As I wrote in a response to Mike's views some months ago, "... although there is clearly a crisis in the peripheral



Just financial?

euro zone economies, as a whole it continues to grow, with Germany ... growing at more than 3%, and remaining the world's second largest exporter after China. In the second quarter of 2010 Germany grew at an annualised rate of 9.5%, and 3.9% in the third quarter ... Austria grew at 3.6%, whilst Poland grew at 5.3%. Sweden ... 6.8%!⁵

In its latest assessment, the International Monetary Fund forecasts world growth to be around 4% per annum. Economic growth has slowed in the last few months, but such slowdowns are normal for capitalism. There has been a three-year cycle for at least the last 30 years, and another slowdown was due, with or without the existence of the financial and political crisis. The money hoarding, which Hille Tickin spoke about in his recent *Weekly Worker* article, is a result, not of capitalist crisis, but of capital throughout the globe making huge profits over the last decade or so, and even now most firms continue to report rising profits.⁶

There is a financial/political crisis, but it cannot be simply equated with a 'crisis of capitalism'. It even has to be distinguished from an economic crisis, though the former may well create the latter. Once this is understood, the actions of states and governments can be better evaluated.

Mike says the IMF proposals for the recapitalisation of the European banks would require funding from governments, because private investors are unlikely to do the necessary. The proposals for refinancing, via the European Financial Stability Facility/European Stability Mechanism, based on leverage, mean the issuing of EU bonds in all but name. Such bonds would attract investment from global investors, because of Germany's backing. On October 5, the French finance minister agreed the banks needed recapitalisation, but said this should be done by Europe, not nation-states. That needs a measure of fiscal union. Slowly, bureaucratically, then, they are moving towards a political and fiscal union. The question is whether the market will give them time to achieve it.

Why does Mike think the 'haircut' suffered by the banks and financial institutions will be paid for by the northern European middle and working class? The capital will be raised via long-term borrowing in the capital markets, rather than through short-term fiscal transfers by member-states out of their current budgets. The latter does imply that either taxes rise or budgets are cut; the former does not. It implies either: money printing, leading to inflation; or higher bond yields; or higher taxes in the longer term. In that all these could mean higher costs for workers, they may pay this price. But, that is not at all guaranteed. If it prevents a financial meltdown, and the economic crisis that would follow, it implies higher capital accumulation than would have been the case, which means higher demand for labour-power and higher wages. The raising of the €2 trillion via long-term borrowing on capital markets would not cause the contagion Mike describes, because of being planned in advance, and, compared with the sums these markets deal with, it is not such a massive figure. The danger of contagion arises from an unplanned event, not a planned, coordinated and adequate response.

Rather than meaning "more austerity is coming", it is intended to provide an alternative to austerity, which the leading circles of capitalism now clearly see as counterproductive. In his BBC blog, Paul Mason sets out three different problems: (a) sovereign debt; (b) distress in the banking system; (c) declining growth: "The IMF and US government believe there is a fourth problem: that austerity measures are exacerbating problems a-thru-c."⁷

Governments' responses are not a result of "ideological error". There could be inertia in some policy circles within the state, just as, in the 1970s, Keynesian orthodoxy continued for some time after it had failed. It is clear that a consensus within national and international state bodies such as the IMF is forming around reversing austerity, and the implementation of coordinated stimulus on a significant scale; hence the talk about a new Marshall Plan.

A political dynamic explains the actions of political parties. The Tories supported Labour's spending plans up to a few months before the election. The Republicans have said they will vote against any of Obama's proposals for pure political advantage. They were prepared, under the influence of the Tea Party, to risk wrecking the economy for narrow political advantage over the debt ceiling. Parties have to get elected, and rightwing populist parties have to appeal to their core vote - the small capitalists, middle class and backward sections of workers, who make up the base of these parties. Their interests diverge from those of big capital, which for over a century has required the service of a large, interventionist state: ie, social democracy.

Cooperatives

It's untenable to say Marx argued for co-ops, but did not mean it, which is Mike's argument about Marx trying to keep the Proudhonists on board.

Marx ripped into the Proudhonist version of co-ops in *The poverty of philosophy*. Marx, in the *Critique of the Gotha programme*, ripped into statism and the state-aided co-ops put forward by the Lassalleans, whilst arguing clearly in favour of workers creating co-ops through their own efforts. Engels repeated his sentiments in subsequent letters to Bebel. Marx argued clearly for the establishment of co-ops in *Capital* Vol 3, saying they are the transitional form to socialist property. In his copious notes, which took account of events after Marx's death, Engels did not see any reason to add or detract anything from Marx's statement in that regard, even in 1894, when he published it.

I have written at length on why the left's approach to co-ops is wrong.⁸ They continue to grow, and there are plenty of examples of the superiority of co-ops, and other worker-owned enterprises, over those of private capitalists. Last year worker-owned firms outperformed FTSE 100 firms by a full 10%. There are more than a billion co-op members around the world, and they are significant economic players.⁹

I do not want to present it as perfect, but Marxists should consider why the Mondragon Corporation co-op's average pension of £13,000 is quite a contrast to the miserly UK state or public sector pensions.¹⁰ Mondragon has been able to establish its own workers' university with tuition fees of around £3,500 pa - as opposed to the £9,000 now being charged in Britain!¹¹

I do not make the building of co-ops the be-all and end-all of rebuilding the labour movement. I have spent considerable time uncovering the true nature of Marx, Engels and others' writing on co-ops, and defending them, because the domination of the labour movement by Lassalleism and Fabianism for the last 120 years has covered over that truth.¹² It is necessary, as Lenin said, to "bend the stick" in that process. My position starts from the premise that it is necessary for the working class to carry through a political revolution, to demolish the capitalist state and to establish a workers' state in its place. That needs a mass, revolutionary workers' party to organise the political struggle. However, I do not believe workers can simply suck this party out of their thumb; nor can the conditions for that political revolution simply arise as an act of political will.

In the 19th century, individual socialists (usually not workers) could develop socialist ideas and build small Marxist circles. But you cannot build a mass workers' party on that basis. Workers need to see in practice that those ideas have a foundation in reality, and can meet their needs. That is the basis of historical materialism: for ideas to become dominant they must arise out of the material conditions in society, out of real productive and social relations.

It is on these grounds that I argue not just for co-ops, but for rebuilding the labour movement on the basis of an independent working class, creating for itself the kind of self-government, on a wide front, that Marx described, and in revolutionary, class antagonism to the existing forms

of property, democracy and state. That applies as much to building defence squads and a militia¹³, to factory committees, as to co-ops. I do not propose the building of these things, because I believe the capitalist class and its state will simply allow it to happen, but precisely because I know they will not, and so the working class will have to engage in a political class struggle - as opposed to the limited sectional struggles involved in trade union and parliamentary, reformist actions - and will have to develop its party, and its interests, as a result. The Cooperative Party emerged for precisely that reason at the start of the 20th century.¹⁴

If Mike means by his criticism that I do not place much stress on what Ed Miliband says, on what motions are passed at Labour Party and trade union conferences, he is right. In nearly 40 years of being a union militant, holding positions from steward up to sitting on the regional council of the TUC, the most effective thing I ever did was as a young steward building a workplace group that focussed on workers' own self-activity. Unless you build that solid, mass base of self-active workers, all the rest is a mirage.

It is on that basis that I argue for Marxists working in Labour branches to turn them outwards, to build self-activity within their local communities, and so on. Neither Labour nor any other party can be a mass, revolutionary party without that work being done first, because any mass workers' party will reflect the existing level of workers' consciousness. Its failure to accept that which leaves the sects pure, but sterile.

The problem with Mike's approach is that, while he rightly criticises the limitations of reformist solutions, he ends up with a maximalist solution, which is propagandist. By contrast, launching occupations against cuts, turning the occupied workplaces into co-ops and building other forms of self-government would enable workers to deliver immediate solutions via their own agency, without relying on those of the reformists. And that is inherently transitional, leading to the maximum programme demands of social revolution ●

Notes

1. 'Mapping the alternative' *Weekly Worker* September 29.
2. See L Trotsky, 'Flood tide': www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/flyci-2/06.htm.
3. ND Kondratieff, 'The long waves in economic life' *The Review of Economic Statistics* November 1935.
4. *Financial Times* World economy supplement, October 10 2008.
5. <http://bofflyblog.blogspot.com/2010/12/cpgb-cuts-strategy-falls-between-scylla.html>.
6. H Tickin, 'The theory of capitalist integration' *Weekly Worker* September 8.
7. www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-15185692.
8. <http://bofflyblog.blogspot.com/2009/03/can-co-operatives-work-part-1.html>; <http://bofflyblog.blogspot.com/2009/03/economics-of-co-operation-part-1.html>.
9. www.ica.coop/coop/statistics.html#economic.
10. <http://workerco-operatives.blogspot.com/2010/07/mondragon-system-for-pensions.html>.
11. www.mondragon.edu/en.
12. www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1966/twosouls/5-lassalle.htm.
13. <http://bofflyblog.blogspot.com/2009/08/proletarian-military-policy.html>.
14. 'Co-ops against capitalism' *Weekly Worker* July 22 2010.

THE LEFT

Overcoming sectarianism

Pat Byrne was the last of three comrades to address the CPGB's Communist University in a session entitled 'They fuck you up, the left'. This is an edited version of his speech

I first got active in the Schools Action Union in 1969. I nearly joined the Young Communist League, but ended up joining the Labour Party Young Socialists and through that the Militant in 1972. In the Militant I was active mainly in the trade union field, but also in the Labour Party up until 1985.

Unfortunately most people outside the Militant/Socialist Party tradition do not really know that much about it. When Mike Macnair did a series about the Militant's entryist tactic in the *Weekly Worker*, there were a lot of things in it that were not entirely accurate. I do not blame him - unless you were active in the Labour Party you did not really know what the Militant were up to: what was wrong with it and what was good about it.

I left the Militant in 1985 when I came to the conclusion - arising out of the miners' strike, youth work and international work - that Militant was actually run by a clique. Although it was active in the Labour Party and unions, it was highly sectarian. It was not involving its members - ultimately the leaders were control-freaks. Five years after I left, a big split developed between Peter Taaffe and Lynn Walsh on the one side and Alan Woods and Ted Grant on the other.

I tried to rejoin, but they would not let me. So I joined the Grant/Woods group, which published a paper called *Socialist Appeal*. We tried to warn them that if they did not learn from the Militant experience they were not going to go anywhere. Of course, after a couple of years it became obvious that they were just trying to reproduce the Militant from the 1960s, when it was a small group.

That is generally the experience of too many of the splits on the left and in the socialist movement. They end up reproducing the things that they were fighting *against*. They do that because they rush - in rivalry with their old organisation - into producing a newspaper, which involves huge amounts of human and other resources and the building up of an organisation. They do not take time out to sit down and say: What went wrong? Why did it go wrong? How can we avoid those mistakes?

Pat Byrne: no full-timers

About two years ago the International Marxist Tendency, the group led by Alan Woods (Ted Grant had died by that time), itself suffered a split. The interesting thing was that much of it was about organisational questions - about democracy inside the group. Basically the organisation was run on the principle that you must be 'united': you have the debate internally, but you must not explain your differences to anyone else.

This was taken to the ridiculous extreme whereby the international secretariat would have their debates and there would be differences, but they would form a united front against the international executive committee. The IEC would form a united front against the central committees of each country, which would in turn form a united front against their membership, who would then form a united front against the working class! Then suddenly, out of the blue sky apparently, the leadership splits. Their differences up to that point had been concealed and the membership had not been involved. That is one of the classic symptoms of the way in which sectarians behave.

I like the title you gave to this session: 'They fuck you up, the left - expulsions, excommunications and the culture of sectarianism'. It links sectarianism and the lack of democracy, which go hand in hand. But I do not go along with the conclusion of the poem on which the title is based: ie, you just have to get out. We did a quick calculation recently: there are something like half a million ex-Leninist Trotskyists in Britain who 'got out'. That is a tragic situation.

Imagine if we could have constructed healthy organisations on a completely different basis. Instead of saying to recruits, 'Look, the revolution is going to happen in the next five, 10 or 15 years, so

you must become super-active and give up all your time and resources', we had taken a different view. We should actually have been saying, 'We don't know when the revolution is

going to come, but, if you believe in these principles, build them into your life.

Pace yourself, so you can still serve the movement into your old age.'

If we had done that we might have been able to hold onto some of these people, instead of becoming a revolving door. Too many organisations fasten on to some of the negative features of young people: impatience, overwillingness to sacrifice and to follow people blindly. They play on those and they build their whole organisations around them. They do not care if people drop out: they have got a formula and they can recruit replacements. Some of the flower of our youth are sucked into such organisations, churned up and then spat out again. It is such a tragedy.

It is not just the left that is aware of this behaviour: it is well known among wide layers of society. To be honest, we are completely marginalised in Britain, and among many thinking people we are a laughing stock. We keep splitting, because we are not able to resolve our differences. Leaderships regard anyone who comes up with criticisms as an enemy to be driven out of their organisation - they are incapable of dealing with that. As a result we are not able to build a movement.

When the typical lefty gets up at a community meeting pulled together for some campaign, they will launch into some crude denunciation, using leftwing jargon or empty slogans. People just groan when they hear this: the language is just so alien to them. Or you see all those Socialist Workers Party placards on demonstrations - they often display good slogans, but instead of being produced for the movement, they have 'SWP' at the top. Then they are surprised when people rip that part of the placard off.

Sectarianism

What is sectarianism? The classic definition is that of socialists putting our own interests before those of working people as a whole. When the typical socialist group is preparing how to intervene in a struggle, it tends to focus less on how it can advance that struggle than on, for example, how to get a speaker on the platform to gain prestige; how to get membership contacts, sell papers, expose its rivals. Ironically they do not realise that, by being the best fighters espousing the cause, they would win much more support. But unfortunately they seem to approach such campaigns by thinking: How can I expose that group?

attitude towards working people as a whole: they are seen as a market, a source of money, paper sales and members: it is not about building the interest of the working class.

Why does sectarianism arise? Conditions determine consciousness - that is a famous phrase, which I think is true, and it is related to sectarianism. If socialists fail to spend the majority of their time working in broad organisations of working people, then I think they will inevitably come to be sectarian. There are several benefits from working in broad organisations (by that I mean trade unions, tenants' organisations, pressure campaigns - in other words, organisations where people have all sorts of views, but have come together to fight for particular causes).

First of all, working with people who do not agree with you is a very healthy thing. When you are in a situation where you spend most of your time with others who share your views, it becomes incredibly insular. That reflects itself in your language, in your lack of understanding of what working class people are thinking, what issues they are interested in, etc. I joined Militant when they had about 300 members scattered all over the country, who had to work on their own in all sorts of organisations. But when it grew to 5,000-8,000 members, then a lot of them worked only with each other and never met anyone outside. As a result they really lost touch with what other people were thinking and, of course, they became highly sectarian towards everyone else.

You also learn how to put forward socialist ideas in broad organisations. That is not easy; you have to learn that as a skill. Timing is important: I have seen too many people on the left come to trade union branch meetings and start ranting on about imperialism, when the workers actually wanted to talk about hours or job cuts. But if you are patient, my experience is that over time you get to raise all the political issues - but they have to be relevant. Also, there is the question of using ordinary language - jargon puts people off.

I have been very active in community organisations, such as the tenants sector - fields where often you will never meet a leftwing activist or socialist. Yet they contain tens of thousands of good people, who are looking for answers. The left are on demonstrations about this, that and the other, but not at the grassroots, where they need to be.

Another thing concerns the priorities of working people. I was in the Scottish Socialist Party when the Socialist Workers Party was part of the organisation. When we used to go out canvassing we would discuss beforehand what issues we should raise. But SWP members were determined to go on the housing schemes and talk about issues like the Iraq war. But after about 10 households they would change their tune: they had to get down to the grassroots, bread-and-butter issues that people wanted to talk about.

And *how* to talk to people is very important. Many leftwingers do not seem to understand that people have got all sorts of views. They are not all consistent: some are progressive,

some reactionary. So when they engage with someone reactionary, they say, 'You racist!' They do not understand where such views come from, how to relate to them and how to argue these issues. You can only get that from hard experience.

However, there is a peculiar situation in almost all the groups - they have leaderships who spend most of their time writing articles, reading books, lecturing to their own members, etc, and not doing any work in the mass movement. I believe that we have to turn that completely on its head: the activists - the people doing the mass work - should be in the leaderships and running the organisations.

We thought we would be different; we would not suffer from all the usual problems. But we did, because they arise from the group's natural dynamics. The bigger an organisation becomes, the more full-timers it has and the more they take control. I would argue that we should not have full-timers as leaders, because those people are not involved in the struggle and do not know what the workers are thinking. They end up completely misunderstanding strategy, tactics and politics.

Freedom is knowledge

I would like to finish with a quote from Engels. Now I am not a big one for quoting Marxist authorities, because often that is used to impress or intimidate people. But this one is a good one, and we are here at Communist University.

Engels is famous for saying (although he was actually repeating a quotation from Hegel): "Freedom is a recognition of necessity." What he is getting at is this: we can only start to have some control over the direction of events when we are aware of the forces that are driving us. In *Anti-Dühring* Engels says Hegel was the first to express correctly the relation between freedom and necessity: "Necessity is blind only insofar as it is not understood." He then goes on to state:

"Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. This holds good in relation both to the laws of external nature and to those which govern the bodily and mental existence of men themselves - two classes of laws which we can separate from each other at most only in thought, but not in reality. Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with knowledge of the subject ... Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature ..." (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch09.htm).

Now the tragedy is that the left has been completely blind to the whole question of social psychology. They just stumble into all the negative pitfalls: egotism, jealousy and the desire to command people to follow and conform. We do not make any effort in our structures, in our education, in our vigilance to counteract these tendencies. We are not even aware of them; we just fall into them again and again. I think if we could study these things, we may not be able to get rid of them altogether, but maybe we could minimise them ●



OUR HISTORY

'Unity' on what terms?

The founding of the Communist International in March 1919 provided a pole of attraction for class-conscious workers inspired by the October revolution. Large sections of parties affiliated to the discredited Second International rejected national chauvinism and social-pacifism and looked towards the new revolutionary centre.

The Labour Party in Britain was at the forefront of attempts to resurrect the Second International, in order to stymie this trend towards communism and coordinate opposition to the Comintern. As part of its efforts, it wrote to the newly formed CPGB. It received this sharp reply, published in the party paper and also as a special pamphlet.

Your letter addressed to the socialist and communist parties of the world states that the congress of the Second International held in Geneva in July-August 1920 instructed the British Labour Party to approach other socialist and labour organisations with a view to re-establishing the Socialist International; and that the British Labour Party, on the understanding that it was to have a free hand, accepted the invitation.

In a concluding paragraph your signatories state: "In accordance with the resolution passed at Geneva, we are addressing this to all socialist sections and not to selected groups. We decline to take part in mere sectional movements and we feel convinced that the socialist bodies of the world will agree with us that to act under the inspiration of petty exclusivism will never provide for socialism the international organisation which it requires." As stated above, the letter is specifically addressed to "the socialist and communist parties of the world".

The all-embracing spirit here manifested is in refreshing (and suspicious) contrast to the petty exclusivism which denied the Communist Party of Great Britain affiliation to the British Labour Party. Apparently the Labour Party changes its policy in accordance with its needs at the moment.

In its opening paragraphs the letter deals with the failure (we prefer to call it the apostasy of its leaders) of the Second International during the war. The apology advanced is that the collapse was part of a general breakdown affecting all sections of the international socialist movement; that it was due to the unavoidable splitting up of all sections of the population into national groups as a direct result of the passions engendered by war; that, in short, the Second International was the unwilling victim of a catastrophe that inevitably dissolved international relations of all kinds:

"When the war broke out the Second International was not strong enough to stem the currents created by militarist imperialism and capitalism. It tried at Basle in 1912, and again in Brussels only a few days before the outbreak of hostilities, but its attempts were in vain.¹ Europe, socialist and non-socialist, broke up into national groups as fighting proceeded, and some of these groups which are now blaming the Second International most bitterly for its failure joined in the debacle."

To say that all sections of the socialist movement were swept away by national passion is no defence - it is an indictment. It is not even true, for in every country there was a fraction that fought steadfastly against the warmongers and, although in most it was only a small fraction, in some -

as in Italy, Serbia, and Russia - it was practically the whole party.

At most, it touches only effects, whereas what is needed is an explanation of a cause.

Why then was the international socialist movement swept away? Why did the Second International collapse? The answer lies in the Second International itself; in its doctrines; its mentality; its whole ideology.

The Second International collapsed because of very definite and well understood reasons. For a whole generation it had preached the doctrine of triumphant parliamentarism in the countries under its sway. The socialist movements affiliated to it had increased their voting power enormously, and in some cases had entirely squeezed out, or rather absorbed, the old liberalism. Constitutionalism reigned supreme, and the revolutionary ideals that had dominated the First International had become dissipated in the quest for minor reforms, and in the day-by-day struggles for dialectical victories on the floors of the representative assemblies. Electoral success, *instead of being a means for carrying on the revolutionary fight*, had been elevated into an end in itself. And always the delusion grew that it was possible, given the requisite majority of representatives, to vote capitalism slowly out of existence ...

In short, the Second International had lost its soul long before the outbreak of war, and the protests made at the Brussels conference, on which stress is laid in your letter, were actuated more by ordinary pacifist motives than by any real desire to rally the workers of the world to a revolutionary fight against war, as a preliminary to the overthrow of capitalism.

The failure of the Second International in the time of trial was inevitable. Any other International organised on the same foundation of reformism must fail as tragically in the future. In the name of unity you call upon us to help re-establish such an International. In the name of the world revolution, we decline. We refuse to betray the workers of the world in such fashion. Instead, we call upon the workers in all countries to form up in the communist parties that follow the banner of the Third International.

Much credit is taken in your letter for the efforts which have been made since the armistice of November

1918 to consolidate international unity. At Berne, Amsterdam, Lucerne and Geneva, we are told, the British representatives made repeated attempts to achieve this end, but without much success. Indeed, it was impossible. The national hatreds and jealousies aroused by the war, for the intensification of which the very persons who met at these congresses were themselves individually and collectively responsible, prevented such a consummation.

At the last congress held (that at Geneva in August 1920, nearly two years after the armistice), for example, the delegates felt compelled to preface their pious socialist resolutions by forcing a degrading acknowledgement of responsibility for the war from the German delegates. That acknowledgement would have come more appropriately from the whole body of delegates there assembled than from any section of it. By discussing war responsibilities at all, the delegates proved clearly their bourgeois nationalist outlook and their complete inability to understand the international socialist position.

Moreover, during the period under review the one fact that dominated the international situation was the Russian Revolution; then, as now, fighting a glorious battle against a whole world of capitalist enemies. It is not enough to say, as do your signatories, that capitalist attacks upon Russia were protested against and opposed ...

Mr J Ramsay MacDonald, at least, did not attempt to hide his sentiments towards Soviet Russia, as the following quotation will show: "The whole Second International is anti-Bolshevik. *It is indeed the only real bulwark against Bolshevism short of military executions.*" (*Labour Leader* August 14 1919.) At the time this was written our Russian comrades were still fighting desperately against the counterrevolutionaries with the result still in the balance and victory not yet achieved.

The same congress, too, greeted the return of its Hungarian comrades to the democratic principles of the International, as a prelude to a protest against the white terror of Horthy.² But that terror had followed upon the suppression of the soviet regime under Bela Kun.³ By the "return to democratic principles" the congress meant the return to the fold of the Second

International of the social democrat traitors who by fraud and trickery had betrayed the soviet government to the Entente,⁴ and brought about thereby the overthrow of that Hungarian revolutionary working class, which had made a magnificent, and, for a time, victorious struggle against its exploiters only to fail in the end. So failed the Communards of Paris in 1871; but any so-called International which had dared to 'greet' their overthrow in the Geneva manner would, by that act alone, have condemned itself to the oblivion it richly deserved.

That the International conferences mentioned have examined and passed decisions on the war problems (peace treaty, League of Nations, war responsibilities, and so on) is not convincing proof of the fitness of the Second International to lead the international working class in its struggle for the abolition of capitalism. All the bourgeois political organisations, have done the same. Such academic discussions show clearly the difference between the two Internationals - the Second and the Communist. The one is a bureau for bourgeois research and debate; the other a general staff for revolutionary action.

... You remark: "Some social democratic governments, in the early days after the war, were suddenly faced by armed revolts of the left, and suppressed these revolts by similar means." Your comment that this was deplorable is far too mild. It was a crime against the international working class. Nevertheless, as you state you do not desire to shirk attack on the issue, it is well to notice how carefully the names of Herr Noske and the German majority Socialist Party, of which he was a leading member, are kept out of your reference. And that omission is deliberate as well as wise. Rarely has a single individual been regarded with such worldwide detestation as the same Herr Noske; and the fact that the German majority Socialist, together with the British Labour Party, constitute the backbone of the Second International is no recommendation to the latter body, though it explains much in your letter. The foul murders of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg can be laid directly at the door of those upon whom you deem it necessary to bestow a special paragraph of apology.

But more sinister than this reference to the past is your anticipation of the future: "We cannot help feeling but that a full and honest discussion of a *problem which may confront any country which is passing through revolutionary conditions*, at any moment, is most essential if we are to re-establish some international understanding which will be the basis of socialist action in the future and clarify the problems of the transition period."

Point is given to this observation by the persecution of communists in Georgia and Yugoslavia. In neither case have "armed risings of the left" taken place, but the persecution is there all the same. If, in any country passing through revolutionary conditions (and all countries are in that position) a Noske suppression is possible, the remedy lies, not in a rapprochement with those who so readily undertake to preserve the dying capitalist regime, but in such a strengthening of the left as will make suppression impossible. In the class war there can be neither impartiality nor neutrals.

Finally, on the plea of urgency you make an appeal for the re-establishing

of the International. You fear that because of the lack of unity the old order will stabilise itself, and reform round itself interests that will be difficult to dispossess, and prejudices that will be hard to overcome. The danger is indeed great and calls for energetic action on the part of the workers of the world.

There are two courses open. First, to continue along the old Second International lines of pre-war days; to regard capitalist society as an organism whose ills must be cured by the cooperation of all its members ... That way lies futility, bloody disillusionment, and worse. Pursuing these ideals, the Second International landed into the hell of the great war. All the signs point to a second and greater catastrophe if the same policy be pursued in the future. The world capitalists are already preparing for their next war. The reforms so glibly put forward serve but to buttress the collapsing structure of capitalism instead of destroying it.

Unity of the international forces is indeed imperatively necessary; but on a definitely revolutionary basis, recognising the class war as a real war and not a mere matter of political polemics. The dictatorship of the proletariat to which you refer contemptuously as a "phrase of fluid and uncertain meaning" is no mere phrase, but a living fact that is stirring the minds of millions of workers in all countries, and is actually in operation over a great part of Europe.

This basis of unity to which we have referred is already supplied by the Communist International to which the Communist Party of Great Britain is affiliated. We, therefore, call on the militant class-conscious workers of this country, whether already organised or not, to give allegiance to the Communist International through its national section.

Those leaders of labour, among whom are included the signatories of your letter, who supported their capitalist governments in time of war may well call for the re-establishment of the Second International which would perpetuate all capitalist governments in time of peace. For ourselves, we aim at the immediate overthrow of the capitalist regime through the dictatorship of the workers, by means of its effective and increasingly powerful instrument, the Communist International ●

Arthur MacManus (chairman), **Albert Inkpin** (secretary)

On behalf of the Communist Party of Great Britain

The Communist January 1921

Notes

1. Congresses of the Second International at Stuttgart (1907), Copenhagen (1910) and Basle (1912) all passed resolutions militantly opposing the coming European war. On the very eve of the carnage, July 29 1914, this position was reiterated by the International's bureau meeting in Brussels. Leading CPGBer Robin Page Arnot commented, however: "The outbreak of the war [revealed] the line of cleavage ... between those who supported their governments, making timely use of the exceptional clauses in the 1904 resolution in order to enter coalitions, become ministers and effective recruiting agents on the one side ... [and] the minority who remained faithful to the resolutions of the International and would have no truck with the bourgeois on any action" (*The Communist Review* July 1923).

2. Miklós Horthy (1868-1957) was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian navy who headed the counterrevolutionary government that crushed the Hungarian revolution of 1919.

3. Bela Kun (1886-1938) became a leading figure in the Comintern after the defeat of the Hungarian revolution. An ally of Zinoviev, he was prominent in pushing the Communist Party of German (KPD) along the line of the 'Theory of the offensive', which culminated in the disastrous 'March action' in 1921.

4. The Entente powers in World War I consisted centrally of the United Kingdom, France and Italy.



Ramsay MacDonald: don't mention the Germans

REVIEW

Jailbirds, lovers and Chinese bureaucrats

Jim Gilbert looks at some of the films on offer at this year's London Film Festival

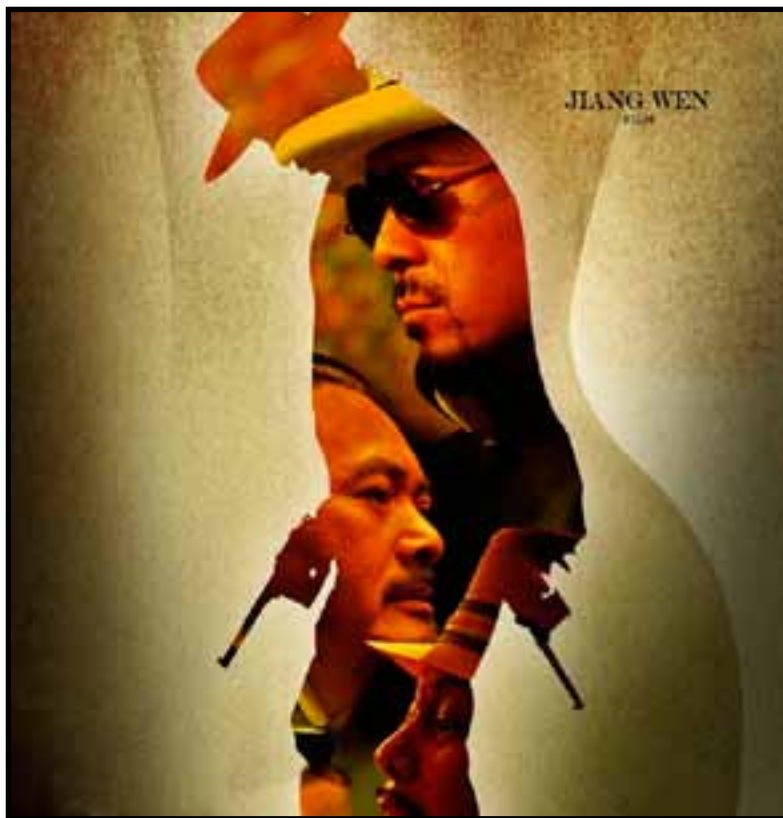
This year's London Film Festival, the 55th, opened on October 12 in its usual grand fashion. It is one of the few such events that steadfastly refuses to give awards and instead aims to bring together quality films from a wide swathe of current styles and genres from around the world.

First showing at the festival on Friday October 21, *Wild Bill* is actor Dexter Fletcher's excellent directorial debut (he also co-wrote with Danny King and produced). At the beginning, the initially unlikeable Bill (Charlie Creed-Mills) leaves prison on licence after serving eight years for drugs and violence offences, only to find that his two sons, 15-year-old Dean (Will Poulter) and 11-year-old Jimmy (Sammy Williams), have been abandoned by their mother for the last nine months. Their London flat is a tip. Dean has been working illegally to make ends meet. Father and sons find it hard to adjust, especially when the possibility of being put in care looms; but Dean is resourceful and blackmails Bill into staying long enough to prevent this.

Wild Bill takes on the alienating effects of prison without didacticism and shows the corrosion that long terms of imprisonment inflict beyond those imprisoned: to individuals, relatives, families. At first, we do not really care about Bill, self-centred and prepared to abandon the boys to their fate. Only Dean's implacable fervour to remain out of the state's caring clutches makes Bill reconsider fleeing to Scotland, as his erstwhile criminal associates have pointedly suggested. Bill's presence is clearly an embarrassment and threat to the scumbags he knew previously, but his duty becomes ineluctable. Redemption can come in many ways, sometimes when least expected. Poulter and Williams brilliantly express the initial anger and resentment, and then the children's need and love that gradually win over Bill.

Dark horse (director: Todd Solondz): Knocked out by meeting Miranda (Selma Blair), young and overweight Abe (Jordan Gelber), who works for his father (Christopher Walken), seems bowled over that she even gives him the time of day, let alone agrees to go out with him. That she then says 'yes' to his marriage proposal says more about her mental state: on the rebound and under the cosh of prescription sedatives. All that said, it is very hard to discover why we should care that much about these characters. Although Blair and Walken are in their own ways good value, the occasional flashes of humour are insufficient compensation for a tiresome tale about a 30-year-old who needs to grow up. The film's first outing at the LFF is on Friday October 14.

Sleepless nights stories (director: Jonas Mekas): Chronic insomniac Mekas lays his camera down on dining tables - or anywhere else he can - to collect diary items of a sometimes intimate and sometimes banal nature. But this pioneer of experimental film still effortlessly draws us into his concerns for those he converses with ('interviews' seems too unengaged a word). The experience of decades of creation in his arena of artistic expression definitely tells: Mekas



Let the bullets fly: directed by the masterly Jiang Wen

gets his contributors to spill titbits of their realities into our ears and eyes without let or hindrance. It is showing at LFF for the first time on Tuesday October 18.

Let the bullets fly (director: Jiang Wen): This masterly concoction of historical and political truths is played out through the story of a bandit who decides to become governor of 'Goose Town'. This popularised, Sergio Leoneesque presentation of anti-hero versus villain has a lot going for it beyond the quasi-western genre it superficially inhabits. *Let the bullets fly* breathes political commentary at the young Chinese republic's warlord chaos.

But not only that: it is a wry whack around the head for China's current political leaders and surplus-reaping ruling class, as well as all who rule us everywhere. It re-voices an inchoate cry down the ages: a modern manifestation might be to call for such heroes as 'Pocky' Zhang (Jiang Wen himself) to save China today from those like people-trafficker and drugs lord Huang (the wonderful Yun-Fat Chow). But this is no monochrome, two-dimensional take on the two protagonists. The Huang and Pocky characters are presented in much more complex terms and given depth.

Back at Goose Town, it is denouement time: the masses hear Pocky's clarion call, eventually, leading to Huang's fall from power and the looting of his mansion (ie, taking back on an individualised basis the social product he took for himself), while Pocky's gang disperses largely for profitable pastures new. But will Pocky's enigmatic desire to stay mean he goes from outlaw to sheriff? Wednesday October 19 is the film's first showing at LFF.

Martha Marcy May Marlene (director: Sean Durkin): America, the land of cults and weird communes, spawns yet another on-screen formulation of the same. Here, a 'cult' is defined as being outside the Christian mainstream churches - themselves all cults of one kind or

another. Be that as it may, however, this particular one has no obvious religious trappings; maybe they are to be considered implicit. Women and men sleep in separate dormitories, though new female recruits are forcefully 'first-nighted' by the foul cult leader, Patrick (John Hawkes), and then comforted the next morning by a woman who has already been through the supposedly wonderful experience.

A distinct lack of charisma on the part of the rapist guru can only leave the viewer wondering why the eminently watchable Elizabeth Olsen as Martha *et al* of the title - or any of the other women in the commune - would stay for a moment. Motivation to join the cult is hardly apparent. And it is hardly survivalist: it engages in burglary, with a bit of murder on the side, to keep it going. LFF shows it first on Friday October 21.

The awakening (director: Nick Murphy): Mysticism on film often requires a lot more suspension of disbelief than is possible. In this ghost story several inconsistencies make it even more difficult. While the tension and suspense are well constructed, the problem with such works is that, unless they are allegorical or in some other manner to be taken as symbolic, almost anything can be constructed under the rubric of irrationality. And it does not always wash.

Headhunters (director: Morten Tyldum): Disappointingly, this is not a police procedural in the mould of the Marxist pioneers of the genre, Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, although it is based on the first novel of their erstwhile acolyte, Jo Nesbø, to make it onto the screen. Instead, in this standard crime thriller Roger Brown (Aksel Hennie) is a disagreeable art thief whose day job is to be Norway's most successful executive corporate headhunter. He gets headhunted himself in a way that is not good for his health.

Like crazy (director: Drake Doremus): English girl Anna (Felicity Jones) meets American Jacob (Anton

Yelchin) and spark a relationship at college in California. She outstays her student visa and gets barred from the USA when trying to return. Jacob comes over to London and they marry, but she still cannot get back into the US. They try a commuting relationship, but the geographical distance produces long intervals of absence from each other. With some inevitability, since the pair clearly lack staying power, they drift apart. Poignancy and thoughts of 'what if' deflate into ennui. Even were inhuman immigration laws to be done away with tomorrow, what these two go through tests their mettle in a way nothing else could.

Pariah (director: Dee Rees): Thanks to the Sundance Institute, Rees's short work of the same title is now writ large here. This coming-of-age piece about a young, inexperienced lesbian in Brooklyn sees her sweetly trying to sort herself out. Naive, 17-year-old Alike (Adepero Oduye) gets a date through her more knowledgeable friend, Laura (Pernell Walker), but she is too skittish yet. Try as they might unthinkingly, Alike's disapproving parents cannot destroy youthful zest and love of life; they especially disapprove of Laura. So said parents pressure Alike into hanging out instead with fellow student Bina (Aasha Davis). But parental plans go agley, as they so often do: on Bina's initiative, Alike has her first experience with her; but Bina is only experimenting with lesbianism. Clearly, growing up and coming out is not the easiest combination, but the human spirit does its best.

Footnote (director: Joseph Cedar): Two Talmud scholars of quite contrasting research styles seem to be in contention for the Israel Prize. But when it comes to award time, an administrative error gives it to the wrong one. And the wrong one is morbidly self-obsessed professor

Eliezer Shkolnik (Shlomo Bar Aba), father of the rightful recipient, professor Uriel Shkolnik (Lior Ashkenazi). Prize committee chair Yehuda Grossman (Micah Lewesohn) has always been Eliezer's nemesis, and could not care less how the error affects him. But this raises Uriel's ire and he fights dad's corner; forced secretly to renounce ever getting the award, he even has to write the judge's reasons for accepting Eliezer ... only to have Eliezer deplore Uriel's research in a newspaper interview. A kick in the teeth or what? Sadly, the sound score undermines the drama.

Guilty (*Présumé coupable*) (director: Vincent Garenq): While murderer Raoul Moat had weirdos celebrating 'Moaty', no-one has yet, to my knowledge, ever done the same for Ian Huntley. This illustrates the greater revulsion toward child sex crimes and informs us how those on the receiving end of false allegations of 'paedophilia' might feel. It is just such a situation, based on the real-life experience of one man, an official in the legal system, who had this barbarous falsity alleged against him, that *Guilty* (it should be 'Presumed guilty') portrays.

The injustices that Alain Marécaux (Philippe Torreton) suffer during three years on remand in prison are exacerbated by severe deficiencies in the French 'justice' system, which despite all evidence to the contrary still wants to cover its back by giving him a suspended sentence. It is more than four years before complete exoneration; ironically, Marécaux returns to his job as bailiff subsequently.

Watch this space for more reviews from the London Film Festival ●

For information about venues and times for 55th London Film Festival film showings, go to the dedicated web pages here: www.bfi.org.uk/lff.

Fighting fund

Booking up

Special thanks this week to comrade RA, who gave a £20 donation to the *Weekly Worker* alongside his payment for the two new CPGB books, our revised *Draft programme* and *Head to head in Halle*.

Readers of the print version of this paper will have seen our regular ads for these two works, both of which have just had their second print run after the first sold out within a few weeks. The second run is also going well, with a steady flow of orders still coming in. *Halle* - based on the rival speeches of Zinoviev and Martov before the 1920 congress of the Independent Social Democrats in Germany - carries two fine introductory essays from Ben Lewis and Lars T Lih on this key debate, translated for the first time into English.

Why not follow the example of comrade RA and add a donation to the £15 cover price? If you

buy both books the price is £20, including postage, but if you feel that is a small sum ... And please remember to specify that any donation is for the *Weekly Worker*.

Apart from RA's £30, the last week has been a pretty poor one. We need £1,250 every month, but we now have just £455 and we are almost halfway through October. Thanks also to comrades SM, DV, GD and CF for their standing orders and to KT (whose cheque we are expecting any day now!).

We had 12,645 online readers last week, but I'm sorry to say that none of them donated to our fighting fund. Please make use of that 'Make a donation' button and help make sure we get the cash we need ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

AGGREGATE

Labour needs Marxism

Workers must aim to take the organisations of the movement - including the Labour Party - away from the bureaucracy's control. **Alex John** reports on last weekend's aggregate of CPGB members

Welcoming the recent formation of Labour Party Marxists (labourpartymarxists.org.uk), comrade John Bridge opened a full day's discussion on the Labour Party at the Sunday October 9 CPGB aggregate in London's Conway Hall. "It is more than timely for Marxists to actively intervene," he said, when capitalism is not only deep in crisis, but in visible decline as a social system, and the Labour leadership, together with the whole trade union bureaucracy, is under pressure from below.

Labour has always been a bourgeois workers' party dominated by pro-capitalist leaders, and it remains so today. Tony Blair's dream of breaking the trade union link has not been fulfilled. Overcoming Labourism in the opposite direction, by breaking the rightwing grip, is a strategic task for communists.

Lenin urged the early CPGB to seek affiliation to the Labour Party. The rebellious Left Wing Movement of Labour Party organisations achieved a circulation of 100,000 for its *Sunday Worker*, edited by communist William Paul. The London Labour Party and about one third of constituency parties were expelled for refusing to accept the exclusion of CPGB members. This is an example we should seek not to copy, but to emulate. When the CPGB closed the LWM in 1929 - on instructions from Comintern in its sectarian 'third period' - this was an "idiotic blunder", said comrade Bridge.

Praising the report of Labour's conference written by delegate Jim Moody and published in the *Weekly Worker* (October 6), comrade Bridge said he had followed conference on TV - and found it excruciatingly boring. A few 16-year-olds were on display, having their "William Hague moments". Speakers from the floor, apparently randomly picked by the chair - "that gentleman there ..., that lady there ..." - almost always turned out to be carefully selected and on-message. The real differences of opinion had been suppressed. The hall was often half-empty, as delegates escaped the tedium of the media show to talk politics with each other - elsewhere.

The Blair-Brown conflict is continuing with new faces, commented comrade Bridge. While Blair had sought the rebirth of Gladstone's Liberal Party, Brown had emphasised "Labour values". Although Ed Miliband won the leadership contest by positioning himself "a cigarette paper's width" to the left of his brother, he still operates within the paradigm of 'triangulation' - chasing the centre votes and therefore in effect taking for granted the working class base. He may be pulled to the left or right, but we do not expect principled working class politics from him.

SPEW confusion

In a recent issue of *The Socialist*, said comrade Bridge, under the telling title 'Can Labour be reclaimed?', Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, replied to a reader who had expressed "frustration with the Socialist Party stance towards the Labour Party". A "counterrevolution" had occurred in the party, but comrade Taaffe did not say exactly when. Labour had ceased to be a bourgeois workers' party, and is now just a bourgeois party. Surprisingly, however, comrade Taaffe wanted to have his cake and eat it, said comrade Bridge. "If a mass workers' party is not urgently built," wrote comrade Taaffe, "the impulse for a new party could come from within even a bourgeois party" - as in 1974 with the overthrow of the Greek colonels, "the mass socialist party, Pasok, was born from a left split in the liberal capitalist party, the Centre Union."



Expect nothing from Ed Miliband

"Conversely," continued comrade Taaffe, "if Labour is to be 'transformed', as some [a veiled reference to those like Labour Party Marxists] still hope, then this would effectively mean setting up a new party, which by standing on clear socialist policies would represent a clear break" (*The Socialist* September 21).

Comrade Bridge pointed to "a clear lacuna" in comrade Taaffe's argument: he did not mention the trade unions in the Labour Party. In fact the affiliated unions were able to amend *Refounding Labour to win* - as the product of Peter Hain's consultation is now called. Instead of the new category of supporters encroaching solely on their own representation in the party, the unions successfully insisted (in pre-conference behind-the-scenes negotiations) that it will also take equally from the shares of CLPs and of MPs in the party's electoral college.

Furthermore, the bourgeoisie has largely withdrawn its financial support, so Labour is more dependent on the trade union bureaucracy, and "he who pays the piper calls the tune", said comrade Bridge. Ed Miliband is currently under left pressure from the unions. He denounced the June 30 actions, but not the united pension strikes coming on November 30. And deputy leader Harriet Harman has indicated - if the unions ballot, and if the government "remains unreasonable" - Labour will back the action.

While Labour can be transformed into a real workers' party, insisted comrade Bridge, it can never be "reclaimed", because it was never just "a workers' party, full stop". Ralph Miliband (father of Ed and David) in his very useful 1960 book *Parliamentary socialism*, showed that the Labour leadership was "always shit", but also that the reformist opposition on the left was never up to much. There was no 'golden age' to reclaim, when Labour was socialist or under rank-and-file control. Marxists must fight to transform the party because our task is to overcome Labourism and win the workers' movement for Marxism.

Organising to fight the cuts, said comrade Bridge, is not in contradiction to fighting to transform Labour. Of the competing 'united' anti-cuts projects set up by left groups, only the Coalition of Resistance stood a chance of developing into anything, and then only on the basis of the backing of left trade union bureaucrats, who then call the tune. The anti-cuts movement is not a re-run of the anti-war movement. The ruling class is not split, as it was over the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Marxists in the Labour Party should fight openly for the full communist programme of winning the majority of the working class to overcome capitalism. That includes overcoming the bureaucratic sect mentality of the divided left, and uniting the left, presently inside and outside Labour, into a Communist Party. The task of defeating Labourism is a job for the whole of the revolutionary left, organised together as

Marxists.

It would be "dishonest", said comrade Bridge, for Marxists to stand as Labour candidates for local councils on anything less than a Marxist programme - and that is more or less impossible under the present party regime. In fact left MPs, like John McDonnell, can speak more freely than Labour councillors.

Debate

In the debate that followed, Yasmine Mather said that the non-Labour left had to be convinced to address the whole question. But Labour was not the only arena where Marxists should intervene, and she feared that if Marxist become active in the Labour Party it would limit the anti-cuts work they could do. Labour is very unpopular among anti-cuts activists, she noted. The "historical arguments" used by comrade Bridge for involvement in the party should be accompanied with "health warnings".

Comrade Mather said that Ed Miliband's remarks in his conference speech, which she summarised as "markets have problems", reflected the confusion of the Brownites. Likewise, Ed Balls, arguing that "markets support public services", was displaying "post-2008 madness". Even Wall Street journalists are to the left of the two Eds, she said, in that they recognise capitalism is the problem. The trade union bureaucracy is saying 'Tax the rich' and calling for Keynesian solutions to produce growth, but this will not work. But these inadequate remedies are not accepted by the Labour leaders. And on the left - in the Labour Representation Committee, for example - arguing against Keynesianism produces astonishment, she said.

Weekly Worker editor Peter Manson rejected the idea that Labour members could not play a full part in the anti-cuts movement, and in their union. The Marxist left is small in number, but "our strength is in the power of our ideas". The unions are the key to transforming Labour, he said. It is the union link which makes the party qualitatively different from the bourgeois parties.

For comrade James Turley, the left is "mired in sub-Keynesian gibberish" both inside and outside Labour. Keynesianism, to be implemented by the state, is an anti-working class idea, he said. The communist idea is that the working class is the agency for change. Comrade Turley added that Labour's new 'supporter' category is "a nod towards the US system", where the media determines atomised opinion.

I emphasised the need for Marxists to challenge the reluctance of trade unionists and anti-cuts activists to intervene in the Labour Party, which actually means leaving it in the hands of the bureaucracy. But the domination of Keynesian ideas across the spectrum of the left shows that we communists must concentrate our efforts on winning the left, inside and outside the party, for genuine Marxism and getting itself organised into a communist party, so that it will be capable of carrying out effective mass work, including transforming Labour.

In his reply comrade Bridge recalled how the Keynesian "alternative political and economic strategy" produced in the 1980s by right-moving Eurocommunists such as Sam Aaronovitch had been denounced by the Socialist Workers Party at the time, but is now "common sense" for SWP guru Alex Callinicos. Against the great challenge of capitalism in crisis, the left in its present condition is almost useless. Instead of challenging the dominant bourgeois ideas, most of the left is "putting salt into the sea". Transforming the Labour Party will require not only winning the existing left to unite into a Communist Party, but then winning the majority of the working class away from Labourism, he concluded ●

What we fight for

■ **Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.**

■ **The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communist Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.**

■ **Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.**

■ **Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.**

■ **Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.**

■ **The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.**

■ **Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.**

■ **Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.**

■ **The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be ready to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.**

■ **Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.**

■ **We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.**

■ **Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.**

■ **Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.**

■ **Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.**

■ **Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.**

■ **All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.**

Become a Communist Party member

Name _____

Address _____

Town/city _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Age _____

Email _____ Date _____

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weekly worker

Fox and institutional corruption

Guarding the chicken coop

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence - economic, political, even spiritual - is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the federal government", Dwight Eisenhower famously told the American public in his final address as president in 1960 - a speech widely quoted by liberals and paleo-conservatives alike. "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

Plus ça change ... The British government, which may not exactly be lurching from crisis to crisis, but is certainly suffering from a series of public embarrassments, has stumbled into yet another scandal. This time, at the centre of the affray is Liam Fox, a particularly oleaginous and smug Tory who heads the ministry of defence under David Cameron.

A whole series of questions have been raised about Fox's relationship to one Adam Werritty. The two men are clearly enough close friends, but in the schmooze-happy world of the British establishment, friendships rarely remain strictly private affairs; it appears that Werritty has benefited consistently over the years from his old pal's Westminster base.

The two ran a 'charity', Atlantic Bridge, which was in reality (as the name suggests) a think-tank of distinctly Atlanticist leanings, out of Fox's parliamentary office (that is, in some measure at the taxpayer's expense). Werritty, furthermore, managed to hook up with his old friend on no less than 18 occasions when Fox was engaged in ministerial business overseas; in particular, he appears to have set up a meeting with private equity bigwig Harvey Boulter, with the aim of selling voice-recognition technology to the MoD.

In a detail widely seized upon by Fox's critics - who grow more legion by the day - Werritty's business cards even proclaimed him a special advisor to the defence secretary. Boulter seems to have been stung by Westminster lobbyists for £10,000 a month to get hold of Fox via Werritty. It is difficult to dispel the image of these two well-spoken hucksters, using the positions they have amassed between them to grab an ever bigger piece of the pie.

Of course, as scams go, theirs is actually quite pathetically naive. It is difficult to see how Fox expected nobody to notice the fact that he was apparently joined at the hip to somebody who always seems to have an eye on his percentage; taxpayers' contributions to Atlantic Bridge overheads are a matter of public record, and it would not be hard for any committed individual to spot those 18 foreign meetings (along with another 22 at the MoD) since Fox assumed office. Yet the possibility of being found out does not appear even to have entered Fox's head.

This is, in fact, emblematic of



Liam Fox: bang, bang

the psychology of people at the top of society. In truth, it is even more typical of low-level municipal politics, which - since Thatcher and subsequent premiers hollowed out local government - increasingly exists as a playground for political careerists and a bottomless money-pit for developers and contractors (something which the cuts have apparently done nothing to change).

Along with the decay of local political power, however, has gone the decay of the local press and local community activism; in short, corrupt councillors can get away with being in developers' pockets more easily than secretaries of state attempting the same scams with the same favour-courrying methods in the full glare of the public eye. Trotsky once described the Soviet Union as a trade union that had taken power - Liam Fox is a corrupt councillor who has been handed a ministerial portfolio (his career is now likely to go the same

way as the Soviet bureaucracy).

In fairness to him, that portfolio is the one most given to large-scale corruption. Eisenhower was right; the military-industrial complex does exist, and it has tended towards hypertrophy in America. Defence spending may have fallen as a proportion of GDP over the last half-century in Britain, but the bureaucratic institutional forms of the Pentagon have become universalised among those imperialist powers with any serious armed forces of their own.

The result is a bewildering array of state agencies, contractors and corporations intricately knitted together - precisely a *complex* - rooted in society at a point where it is answerable to nobody. Corruption is not even nominally an exception, but *how it works*. There is the famous, if apocryphal, story of the screwdriver requisitioned by a US army unit that ended up costing the American taxpayer thousands of dollars; it is

repeated across the world in a myriad of forms.

In this respect, it is not at all remarkable that a grubby individual like Liam Fox should be involved in these activities. It is not even the first time the military-industrial complex has got this government into difficulties; upon the outbreak of the Arab revolts earlier this year, David Cameron infamously set off on a jaunt around the region, accompanied by a legion of British arms firms, to tool up the various regimes then engaged in violently repressing their own populations.

What is more remarkable is the hypocrisy of the Labour Party in its attacks on Fox. It was a *Labour* government, remember, that canned a Serious Fraud Office investigation into dodgy deals between the Saudi monarchy and BAe Systems - a case relating to tens of millions of pounds in backhanders and dodgy deals. Indeed, it was a Labour government which spent the last seven years selling weapons to Muammar al-Gaddafi, during the erstwhile Libyan despot's brief emergence from the cold.

Labour is quite happy to administrate this enormously corrupt set-up when it is in power. Indeed, it launched Britain into two disastrous wars at least partly spurred on by the immense economic power of the defence industry, and the backdoor economic stimulus that imperialist war perversely engenders in the invading countries. If Ed Miliband imagines it is possible to have a fine and noble mission in Afghanistan without the grubby and ignoble corruption that procures the weapons with which to blow up luckless civilians, then he is frankly an idiot. If he imagines he can get some cheap political capital by hypocritically hammering Fox for crimes relatively innocuous by the standards of his job, alas, he is probably on to something.

The other factor which must be examined is the matter of parliamentary lobbyists. These people have multiplied enormously over the last few decades, and in fact wield

considerable influence over politics as a whole. Again, the paradigmatic example comes from the dog-days of the last Labour government, when Blairite mediocrity Stephen Byers was caught on camera describing himself as a 'cab for hire'.

Werritty seems to have set himself up as an intermediary between lobbyists and Fox (lobbying is a practice given in its very nature to the proliferation of middlemen). It is one particular variation of a general practice whereby big capital incrementally buys off bourgeois politicians - also visible in the last few weeks is the large-scale sponsorship of events at party conferences by major companies.

The Liam Fox affair highlights once again this fundamental fact - corruption, whether direct or institutionalised, is the basic means of ensuring capitalist control over society. Capitalism is often thought - even by some on the left - to be in some measure democratic. In fact, it has an interest in ensuring adequate representation of capital, relative to its magnitude.

The 'old-fashioned' way is the direct bribe; now that this is no longer possible, networks of lobbyists and establishment favour-courrying, along with a judiciary which tends to make decisions benefiting big legal spenders, accomplish the same trick a little less reliably. The role of the so-called 'free press' in this process has already been adequately highlighted in the *News of the World* affair.

The Liam Fox scandal may drag on, as an inquiry digs into his links with Werritty and the latter's links with all manner of ambitious businessmen; these connections may or may not be technically the wrong side of the law. We can be quite sure that if - more likely, when - he is forced from office, the corruption will continue. Only working class democracy can seriously challenge this self-perpetuating stitch-up.

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