

# THE LENINIST



## LONG LIVE MAY DAY!

**Join *The Leninist's*  
contingent on this  
year's May Day  
demo: 10am, Sunday  
May 1, in Finsbury Park**





Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:  
for a genuine Communist Party

**MAY DAY** – international workers' day – is always of more than symbolic importance for the working class movement. It acts like a barometer of the class struggle. May Day certainly reflects the level of morale, consciousness and internationalism of our class. In a true sense May Day acts like a pointer to what is and what is to come.

The reason for this is simple: May Day draws in all strands of working class struggle and allows particular struggles to be seen in the context of the world wide struggle of the working class for socialism.

Those joining May Day demonstrations are those who recognise the need for the workers of the world to unite across sectional and national divisions. Because of this, as well as mirroring day-to-day changes in the political climate, May Day also gauges the strength of the politically organised working class – the vanguard.

Hence, as the strength, both in terms of numbers and consciousness, of the vanguard changes, so does the size of May Day demonstrations. The steady decline in the numbers mobilised on May Day over recent decades is therefore highly significant to say the least.

While there have been certain years – for example 1984, when the ranks of the London demonstration were swelled by the presence of militant miners – May Day has been reduced to a meaningless ritual for many participants.

This undoubtedly directly reflects first the decline and now the disintegration of the CPGB. Traditionally the CPGB provided the backbone and motive force behind May Day mobilisations. As an inevitable consequence of the cancer of opportunism the contingents of the CPGB – and its NCP and *Morning Star* offshoots – have become smaller and smaller and more and more demoralised.

But all is not bleak. Quite the reverse in fact. The rising class struggle in Turkey and the emergence of a Leninist led Communist Party of Turkey has found expression on the streets of London, as has the birth and growth of *The Leninist* itself.

In contrast to the dispirited and silent as the grave contingents of 'official' British communism, the forces of Leninism have grown in size and confidence. Indeed there is every likelihood that this year's May Day demonstration in London will again see organisations supporting the CPT constituting the largest contingent. There is also every likelihood that our declared aim of being the biggest British section will also be realised.

Without exaggeration if we succeed in this it will mark a major turning point in our struggle to re-equip the working class in Britain with a genuine Communist Party. Not that our still very small organisation is contemplating an immediate declaration of the formation of a genuine Communist Party. That would be ridiculously premature. But if we outnumber the various opportunist groupings – including the 'official' CPGB – then it will mean that Leninism will be placed firmly on the agenda.

There will be many sympathisers in Scotland and elsewhere who will say that London is a long way to go for a May Day demonstration, others will say that they have work commitments or that they would prefer to participate in local May Day celebrations. We have no time for such excuses. Distance, work and local activity should not be allowed to interfere with the struggle to lay the basis for a genuine Communist Party in Britain. And on May Day that struggle will find its highest expression in London.

The revolution demands the highest levels of commitment. There can be no room for parochiality in the struggle for a genuine Communist Party. Every sympathiser of our paper and its noble cause therefore has a duty to join us in London.

In closing let us take this opportunity to convey our May Day greetings to our heroic friends and comrades around the world.

Long Live May Day!

*The Editor*

Six month subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5; Europe £8; Rest of World £10 (airmail £17.50). Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £10, Institutions £20; Europe £16, Institutions £26; Rest of World £20 (airmail £35), Institutions £30 (airmail £45). Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. All cheques payable to November Publications Ltd. Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolich Road, London E16 2BS. Published by: November Publications, BCM Box 928, London copyright April 1988 ISSN 0262-1649

## LETTERS

### RCN Nurse

As a member of the RCN and RGN(SRN) with many years experience I would like to express my deep concern at the present situation within the NHS.

I have been directly responsible for administering care and preventing illness and disease for most of my working life, and to see the NHS crumble before my very eyes is soul destroying.

The growth of private health care which has accelerated drastically since 1979 has been nauseating for most people working for the NHS. Those that can afford Bupa subscriptions can literally walk into hospital, reserve a bed, book a surgeon at the date which suits them, while other less fortunate people financially must wait for up to six years. Many are dying on the waiting lists simply because this criminal, evil, Tory government refuse to adequately fund the NHS. They would rather see people suffer and die!

If the present trend continues there will be no national health service. If private health care continues to expand we will soon be reading about those absolutely barbaric practices by surgeons who carry out absolutely unnecessary operations on hapless patients solely for financial gain, as happens not infrequently in the USA.

It is becoming clear to me that there can be no healthy future for the working class under an increasingly reactionary capitalist system in which real human needs and values are brazenly exploited to the hilt, just like everything else. What is to be done?

It is blatantly obvious that the Labour Party and TUC leadership have played a miserable role in defending the working class from the Tory onslaught. So far, the brave actions taken by rank and file nurses and ancillary staff of the various health unions (not forgetting the equally brave actions from other trade unions taking sympathy strikes) in defiance of this onslaught have received no encouragement whatsoever from their so called 'leaders'!

This state of affairs has consequently led to temporary disillusionment and confusion within the NHS. What is needed desperately is the building of a united front of rank and file trade unionists and political activists in defence of our living standards irrespective of TUC/Labour Party policy.

It was with this in mind that I attended the NHSSC inaugural conference in Sheffield on March 26th. Unfortunately it ended in utter chaos, mainly due to the contributions made by some comrades (SWP, Militant) who either do not believe workers can build an effective alternative leadership to the present one, preferring to remain faithful to Kinnock and Willis, or think the working class is already too demoralised and it would be totally unrealistic to imagine a properly organised fightback for the foreseeable future.

Both views are not only defeatist but were also very damaging to the morale of other activists, some of whom had travelled a long way just to hear this.

Political groups who peddle this line do not belong in places where genuine and concerned comrades are trying to build a militant revolutionary alternative to the decaying capitalist system. The present wave of industrial militancy up and down the country demonstrates that workers, far from suffering demoralisation are beginning to realise that they must take matters into their own hands if the Labourite/TUC bureaucracy

refuse to mobilise for mass strike action in order to bring down this government.

The current crisis within the NHS has made me realise that it is only part of a much bigger and deeper crisis – that of capitalism itself.

Unless we can overcome the crippling sectionalism and sectarianism (not to mention pessimism) which has been the hallmark of trade unionism and the political left generally for too long now, ordinary working class people will increasingly suffer the consequences for many generations to come.

Anne Smith  
Herts

### Criminal Libel

Sir, You have recently sent me issues of your most recent editions. I would be glad if you would cease from sending any more copies as I deliberately did not renew my subscription when it became due recently.

I do not want to read your paper any more for the following reasons:

1. I do not like your attacks on the *Morning Star* (in which I am a small shareholder) and its staff.
2. It is a *criminal libel* to refer to the British Police Force as "scum in blue". Likewise, it is a *criminal libel* to refer to the Duchess of York as "a walking vagina", as you did before she got married not so long ago.

Please do not send me any more copies of *The Leninist*.

This correspondence is now closed.

Mr David C Rattray, MA (Oxon)  
Bognor Regis

### Thanks 1

To the staff and workers at *The Leninist*:

Thanks for all the support and prominent coverage of Ireland.

Anthony McIntyre  
H Blocks, Long Kesh

### Thanks 2

Just a short note to say thanks for the paper and the Communist Party of Turkey programme (which is excellent!).

At the moment most of the debate is in the north, as you've probably heard. There's some good work being studied in Long Kesh, eg *Congress '86*, and of course Magheberry.

Tony McNeill  
Portlaoise Jail

### Protestant Workers

I would like to give my views on your Ireland supplements (*The Leninist* Nos 13, 14, 15). Overall, I was impressed by them, as were other comrades here.

One aspect of the articles I don't fully understand is where you talk of a Marxist-Leninist programme breaking the divide between Catholic and Protestant worker. I do not see how, given our situation, this could be successful. Any Marxist-Leninist programme would, I believe, draw sections of the advanced Protestant working class to our banners, somewhat

like our murdered comrade. Ronnie Bunting. But, as I see it, the majority of Protestant workers have this myth of being somehow better off than their Catholic counterparts, as well as their aspiration to join the labour aristocracy within their ranks. It would, I believe, be a distraction from the struggle to try to reach them.

No, what's needed is, as you say, a winning of hegemony over the national liberation struggle. The struggle is real – it's being waged here. We as communists must ensure that this struggle is directed to the bringing about of a socialist state.

I see any attempts at so called reconciliation as a fallacious strategy. To my mind, only a socialist state is the answer, and the building of a vanguard party is the first step. Culturally and historically I believe a vanguard party is the correct strategy for Ireland.

I believe that there is all the time in the world for a vanguard party to organise. I do not mean this in any lackadaisical sense, but that there is going to be no solution to the national question in the foreseeable future. Not that I'm being purely nationalist here, but being concrete, there will never be an kind of settlement without the national question being resolved.

So it's up to us Irish communists to get up there armed with scientific socialism as a guide to action, and bring about revolutionary change.

Eamonn McCallion  
H Blocks, Long Kesh

### SWP NUT

In *The Leninist* 61 mention was made of the disruptive tactics of the SWP. You are right. Look at what they are doing in the NUT.

Having settled into its 'down-turn' rut the SWP occasionally ventures out to denounce others. We saw a classic example of this with the launch of the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union by NUT militants. Set up to counter the wrecking actions of the executive, the SWP walked out of the founding meeting and denounced it.

In a leaflet issued at conference the SWP claimed that militants in the union were following the same path as the Labour Party and moving to the right. "This can most starkly be seen with the formation of the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union," they state, "which substitutes campaigning for democracy in the union, replacing building any real fight against the Tories over key issues of conditions and clause 28".

The campaign to get a motion on gay and lesbian rights debated by conference originally got no backing from the SWP. It only jumped on the bandwagon when widespread support had already been won. Many of the teachers from Leicester who had organised for the gay and lesbian motion are the very same people backing CFDFU. Who then has the narrow approach?

Tony Coughlin  
East London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

### WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.



# A revolution betrayed



What will happen when the Soviet army pulls out?

IT IS becoming more and more apparent, to both the left and the right of the political spectrum, that the proposed Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan – now signed and sealed – will mean a butchering of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the drowning in blood of all forces for progress in that country. The Soviet withdrawal will not lead to 'peace' as blockheaded centrists claim. No, it can only lead to the murder of the Afghan revolution.

The agreement reached on the withdrawal of the 115,000 Soviet troops, and their helicopter gunships, MiG fighter-bombers and heavy artillery, will leave the 40,000 strong Afghan army extraordinarily vulnerable and demoralised. Even with the Soviet presence, areas held against the counterrevolutionary Mujahedin bandits are confined to a belt around the Soviet/Afghan frontier, stretching out to Kabul, and the holding of the seven major towns.

The guts of the agreement rests on "non-interference" in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by Pakistan, the USA and, of course, the USSR. It also entails the 'encouraging' of the return of Afghan refugees, of which there are six million out of a population of 17 million. It is these that are the basis of support for the Mujahedin. There can be no doubt that the 'repatriation' of these refugees at the present time will strengthen the military hand of these counterrevolutionaries.

For of course the war will continue, for all Soviet foreign minister, Shevardnadze's claims of "new hope for the Middle East" (approvingly quoted in the *Morning Star*, April 15). Nobody seriously doubts this. And no one – not even Gorbachev – is putting money on the PDPA government's chances of survival.

The *Economist* April 16 predicts that "within a year the top few hundred Afghan communists will be in retirement in Russia, and any left behind will be as rare as French collaborators after 1945."

Evacuation cards to the Soviet Union are already being issued. Not a fact of great encouragement to those who stand for workers' and womens' rights – those very rights which the Mujahedin have pledged to butcher.

Pakistan's president Zia, wrote the *Star* (same date) "claimed that the withdrawal of Soviet troops would lead to the fall of President Najibullah's government." This is

written without comment and, for that matter, without any quote contradicting this – not even a little official optimism from Najibullah himself! With a Soviet withdrawal, writes the US *Newsweek* "a victory for the Mujahedin rebels ... is inevitable."

The *Morning Star* and its flunkies in the CCG 'party' are trying to put as brave a face as possible on this sellout. The strain is showing. Genuine communists cannot afford to be so complacent.

The *Leninist* has consistently warned of the impending sellout. Now even the most wooden-headed 'pro-Soviet' has the fact staring them in the face. The original agreement talks of "a government of national unity". This would be retreat enough. But all the various leaders within the Mujahedin have made it clear that they will accept no truce, no national reconciliation; nothing short of the smashing of the Afghan workers' state and the instillation of their own particular brand of 'Islamic republic'. This is a very, very grave threat to the Afghan revolution. Hekmatyar, the best armed and one of the fastest growing Mujahedin leaders, has as his model a state which would make Khomeini's Islamic Republic look like Thomas Moore's Utopia.

The *Leninist* has always defended the Afghan revolution, while warning of this very danger. The Soviet intervention in December 1979 was necessary for the defence of the revolution. But the murder of comrade Amin and 97 other leaders of the *Khalq* wing of the PDPA and the reversal of much of its land reform, which went hand in hand with this crippled the Afghan revolution and swelled the ranks of counterrevolution. The Soviet intervention therefore, while all communists should support it, was a contradictory affair. It both defended and undermined a living revolution, led by *Khalq* in April 1978.

Those who dismiss the Saur (April) revolution as no more than a coup have no understanding of the world revolutionary process, which puts world wide social revolution on the order of the day. Yes, the PDPA took power while in a minority. But to condemn the revolution on this basis is pure liberalism. By this logic, the October Revolution should never have occurred. But, nevertheless, this is the attitude of most Trotskists and many in the communist movement, such as the Euros.

The other favourite, which is

argued by the Trotskyist Spartacist League in their US *Workers Vanguard* (March 25), goes along the lines of; "a social revolution in this profoundly backward country could only be introduced from without, through the agency of the Red Army ... The Leninist is forced to conjure up a dictatorship of the proletariat in a country where there is no proletariat to speak of."

Like in Mongolia in 1920, for instance. Or maybe in China, where the proletariat played no direct role in the revolution? The existence of a world proletariat enables any country to embark on the road of socialist construction, so long as it can integrate into the world socialist system. This was precisely the intent of *Khalq*. Inability to recognise this is to renounce the world revolution in practice. But, then, that's the Sparts for you, isn't it?

And Afghanistan should not be taken as some 'one off'. Other revolutionary states reliant on Soviet aid are looking over their shoulders warily. The US magazine *Newsweek* of April 18 puts it in bourgeois terms: "Moscow will not throw away money in an attempt to prop up faltering client regimes. The new Kremlin doctrine instructs such regimes to move towards more open economics and seek more Western aid." This obviously has the bourgeois *Newsweek*, along with world imperialism, gleefully rubbing their hands.

Afghanistan is on the frontline. Angola is already on the bargaining table, and noises from the Kremlin have already been sounded on the possibilities of a Nicaraguan deal. Pressure has been put on socialist Vietnam for a withdrawal from Kampuchea. Again, the *Economist* says what the left dare not: Gorbachev, it states, "may go on to liquidate other dubious assets of the Brezhnev days (Ethiopia Angola?) on the best terms Russia can get."

It is therefore imperative that communists the world over demand that the Soviet Union defends the Afghan revolution directly, through a continued military presence, and that the revolutionary transformations initiated by *Khalq* be restored and extended. This is the only victory Afghan socialism, and the world's working class, can have in Afghanistan. Revolutions are not for sale! No sellout!

Alan Merrick

The left in the National Union of Teachers has made much of its 'victories' at the NUT Easter conference. Yes, Nelson and Winnie Mandela are now honorary life members, and delegates clapped speakers on gay and lesbian rights, instead of slow hand clapping, as happened last time. But such 'victories' cannot hide the fact that the NUT has moved to the right. Amazingly, it was the 'moderate' teachers' union, the NAS/UWT, not the 'militant' NUT, which provoke the wrath of Tory education minister Kenneth Baker. It voted to continue the campaign for pay for marking the new GCSE exam coursework and sanctioned possible strike action on the pay question. In contrast the NUT leadership has retreated demoralised from any form of militant action. Publicity and lobbying will apparently take over from strike action. This earned Baker's praise. Nevertheless the 'new realist' NUT leadership did not have everything its own way. Delegates gave the thumbs down to moves to centralise power in the hands of an inner cabinet. Also, the disgraceful appointment of McAvoy to the post of Deputy General Secretary with a salary of £42,000, following a ten minute discussion by the executive, was referred back. Likewise, attempts by the executive to impose further disciplinary action against the militant Inner London Teachers Association leadership, was overwhelmingly rejected. Clearly there is a militant minority in the NUT. What it lacks is a strategy.

Having worked overtime to sabotage the health workers' struggle, the cowardly and venal bureaucrats of the TUC, headed by Norman Willis, have now added insult to injury with their latest plans for the campaign. July 5, the 40th anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service is to be turned into a "family fun day", complete with bonfires, fireworks and bedecked flotillas on the Thames. In between now and the day of this fiasco, nothing is planned to up the dispute, to really take the battle to the Tories. The misleaders at the head of the TUC and the Cohse and Nupe health industry unions have attempted to divert the militancy and dynamism of the health workers fight into this type of tokenistic, insulting stunt. In the lead up to the July 5 carnival however, rank and file militants in the industry must decisively take the running of this dispute into their own hands if it is to have any chance of success. July 5 must become the property of the strike committees and be used as a massive a springboard to win for all action in the industry.



•The militant rank and file must take matters into their own hands. Health workers must create their own agenda. Tailing the bureaucracy will prove fatal

Predictably, the ITV companies have pressed home their advantage won over the unions in the industry by the isolation and defeat of the TV- am technicians. At the time of that fight we argued for the generalisation of the dispute as "if the company can force through its attacks on the technicians ... then the way will be open for other companies ... to force through attacks on the pay and conditions of all workers in broadcasting". Now the bosses, in contrast to the sectional craft-type broadcasting unions, have concerted their action and launched an attack against the nationally negotiated agreements. Several companies have taken the setting up of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into "restrictive labour practices" in the industry as a cue to prepare local packages of changes which effectively smash national agreements. At the moment, there seems no prospect of the official leaderships of unions like ACTT or Beta organising industrial action to spike this attempt by the bosses to fragment and defeat the workers in the industry. This underlines the importance of the call we made for militants in the broadcasting unions to form joint action committees to beat off the attacks. The central task remains to spread the resistance to the attacks to encompass all workers in the industry, including those in the BBC. The bosses have shown that they are operating in a united front in this fight: its time the workers responded in kind.

## Fill the breach



So far our £600 monthly fighting fund stands at just £348. This is clearly not good, but there is still time to reach our target. This is very important. *The Leninist* has no rich backers, no big subs from various socialist countries on the look out for a diplomatic arm, no source of finance except for you our readers and supporters. The fact that our paper comes out is not a fortnightly miracle. No, there is nothing mysterious behind the appearance of our paper. It comes out because of the dedication and self sacrifice of our readers and supporters. Our Summer Offensive is approaching – then our best supporters will be aiming to raise a minimum of £500 each. This will inevitably hit our monthly fighting fund. We earnestly appeal to our readers to fill that breach now.



**L**ENIN SAYS in *Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism* that "The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction and bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism."

That philosophy which Marx and Engels developed, as part of this 'world outlook', from the most valuable elements in nineteenth century thought, in particular the work of Hegel and Feuerbach in Germany, is known as dialectical materialism. This system underpins all the investigations of Marx and his successors into nature and society.

Both aspects of our philosophy have deep roots in the history of western thought. Within ancient Greek philosophy materialism and dialectics constituted important strands, the former given coherent form by Democritus, the latter put forward in a primitive way by Heraclitus.

In modern times, the mechanical materialism formulated prior to and during the French Revolution, the monistic idealism of Hegel and the humanistic materialism of Feuerbach were all important precursors to, and formative influences on, the philosophical views of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marxist philosophy is usually considered in its two aspects, philosophical materialism and materialist dialectics. Materialism holds that nature, the external world, is prior to and independent of consciousness. Human consciousness is the highest product of the natural world, and as such is determined by it.

This outlook is the theoretical underpinning of all scientific investigation into nature and society, whether this is acknowledged by the practitioners of science or not. The great expansion of scientific knowledge in modern times has been accomplished on the basis of materialist assumptions, and is itself the best confirmation of this philosophical outlook.

### The Leninist approach

A real grasp of Marxism-Leninism is impossible without a study of its philosophy. Historically, philosophical differences within the revolutionary working class movement have been linked to profound conflict over basic issues such as reformism, the nature of the bourgeois state, the character of the October Revolution, and so on which have split the working class movement down the middle. Incorrect theory always results in incorrect political practice.

Lenin's career, especially in the years of fiercest controversy with the Mensheviks, was marked by an intense belief in the importance of fighting for the philosophy of Marxism, and he laid great emphasis on combating the smallest deviation from the method of Marx and Engels in this field. A dialectical understanding of the development of ideas shows that apparently insignificant differences over what many would regard as abstruse points of detail can be the kernel of profound disagreements.

Perhaps the highest example of this is the polemic between Lenin and the 'empirio-monists' of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party, as formulated notably in his work *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1908).

Bogdanov - formerly Lenin's right hand man - and a group of other 'left' Bolsheviks, had tried to 'adapt' the bourgeois, sceptical philosophy of Mach to Marxism. Lenin showed that Mach's ideas were the most modern manifestation of bourgeois idealism, and therefore wholly incompatible with Marxism.

The attempt of the 'Marxist' Machists to separate the social and economic elements of Marx's thought from dialectical materialist philosophy was an example of bourgeois eclecticism, which by 'cutting up' Marxism and retaining what is seen as useful, vitiates the entire doctrine. This is a lesson which would seem to have been lost on many self-styled Marxists today.

The practical implications of the Machist attitude to philosophy were revealed by Lenin's struggle to combine the illegal work of the Party with legal work in the aftermath of the defeat of the 1905 revolution. The 'left' Bolshevik Machists, who were for boycotting all legal possibilities, were in fact no better than the Menshevik liquidators who wanted to stand aside from all illegal work. These two deviations were actually two sides of an opportunist coin and had to be fought and defeated if the Party was to survive the post-

1905 reaction and go on to make revolution. This Lenin did, on the one hand with *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* and the expulsion of Bogdanov and Co from the Bolshevik faction on the other.

Bogdanov, though he was an honest and committed revolutionary, deserved this fate because his philosophy led directly to liquidationism. Lenin understood this full well. Studying and grasping the essentials of Marxist philosophy is, in other words, indispensable for any serious communist practice.

### CCG philosophy

In this light we must give consideration to the 'hardline Marxist-Leninists' of the Communist Campaign Group and their 're-establishment' of the Communist Party of Great Britain. An essential part of any group which would be the Party must be a real commitment to Marxist philosophy. Let us then examine the CCG's attitude to this indispensable aspect of communism.

The first point must surely be the dearth of material on philosophy in the pages of the *Communist Campaign Review*. This is no mean point: after all, it is not so long ago that a certain CCG spokesperson on philosophy, Irene Brennan, proved unable, when questioned at a public meeting, to give a Marxist definition of matter - or indeed any coherent definition at all!

Perhaps the fact that she is an ex-nun and still a *practising Catholic* might possibly have some bearing upon this strange lapse. Surely we might justifiably expect reassurance from some CCG thinker (assuming one exists) as to the orthodoxy (communist, not catholic) of their philosophical outlook?

Well, indeed we might; but such reassurance has not been forthcoming. The reason for this of course is that, the CCG being a heterogeneous collection united only by opposition to Eurocommunism, any real debate on anything would be sure to open up a whole series of fissures.

We around *The Leninist* have of course no difficulty in providing a Marxist definition of matter. Matter is that which is outside, independent of, consciousness. Consciousness, as the highest product of matter, is dependent on and determined by the material world.

Historically, philosophy has been divided into two great schools, those of materialism and idealism, with a third outlook, that of agnosticism or scepticism, being in practice an apology for idealism.

Idealism holds that the external world is dependent on the human mind, and lends itself to all sorts of reactionary conclusions. Idealism was, of course, the philosophy of the ruling class under feudalism, and although the revolutionary bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century attacked it with its own philosophy of mechanical materialism, as the bourgeoisie became reactionary it in general retreated into variants of idealism, in particular those disguised forms of this mystifying dogma known variously as 'positivism', 'analytical philosophy', and 'linguistic analysis', in which an uncritical acceptance of the primacy of the individual human consciousness goes hand in hand with a rather primitive empiricism.

### Undialectical idealism

So if the CCG are not consistent materialists, they must logically be some form of idealists. Let us give them the benefit of the doubt for a moment, and examine their official programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. Just look at this wretched document. Can it be said to be based on a revolutionary philosophy - or indeed any consistent philosophy at all?

Although it is formally based on the philosophy of dialectical materialism, the actual content of the damned thing is a negation of scientific socialism. Indeed, if it can be said to have any philosophical basis, it is that eclectic utopian Labourite outlook which resembles nothing so much as a jumble sale (that institution so beloved of CCG fund raisers) of the odds and ends of bourgeois philosophy.

The lack of real materialism stands out on every page of the *British Road*. Apart from a purely formal allegiance to "Marxism-Leninism", the basic application of materialism to history, as concentrated in Marx's famous formulation, "it is not consciousness that determines being but being that determines consciousness", is in fact denied.

The overall assumption is that the transition to socialism takes place when we convince enough nice people that our nice ideas are so nice that they should vote us - or rather the Labour Party - into office, whereupon our

# Marxist philosophy revisionism

nice ideas will be put into effect and will magically stage by stage transform society into a nicer place to live in. Does this remind anyone of Eurocommunist idealism? It damn well should!

The *BRS* is the programme of a Eurocommunist party, it represents an attempt to portray a programme of petty bourgeois social reform as Marxism. It is in fact an example of eclecticism, which by 'cutting up' Marxism and retaining what is seen as useful, vitiates the entire doctrine. Any serious study of the *BRS* will confirm this.

This demands of all genuine communists a rejection of the *BRS*. Honesty to Marxism demands that all attempts to hoodwink communists who reject the *BRS* into the CCG 'party' on the grounds that it needs 'updating' must be rejected. To fall for this 'technical' objection to the *BRS* is to reject Marxism-Leninism and fall for petty bourgeois eclecticism.

The most consistent materialism, and therefore that philosophy most in tune with the scientific outlook, is dialectical materialism. Dialectics is what makes our philosophy qualitatively different from the crude mechanical materialism formulated alongside of the first great wave of scientific discoveries. Developed to a high form by the great German philosopher Hegel, it is a general theory of development which opposes its understanding of the universal and continuous nature of change to the static metaphysical outlook which in the hands of the mechanical materialists became such a block on the progress of human knowledge in the nineteenth century - and is indeed still the most characteristic feature of bourgeois social science which infects the *BRS* and its CCG defenders.

There is no salvation for the CCG 'party' in the field of dialectics. Its most notable feature is evolutionism - anyone remember Bernstein?

Opposed to the dialectical concept of a revolutionary break from one epoch of history to a more advanced one, the *BRS* sees socialism in Britain as something that creeps in gradually, stage by stage.

Dialectics as a theory of change of course recognises the existence and importance of evolutionary, ie quantitative, change, but it is sheer absurdity to apply the behaviour characteristic of change in quantity to qualitative change. Qualitative change by its very nature occurs in the form of a leap. While this does not mean that it therefore occurs overnight, so to speak, it does imply discontinuity and sharp transition rather than the smooth merging of one quality into another through an endless series of left, left and ever lefter Labour governments. Applied, in the theory of historical materialism, to the study of a developing human society, dialectics shows the necessary nature of revolution and the impossibility of the evolution of capitalism into socialism.

### Laws of dialectics

Engels, in his *Dialectics of Nature*, outlines the three laws of dialectics. The first is the transformation of quantitative into qualitative changes. This holds that change always occurs in two ways, quantitative change which does not alter the nature of the thing but only the amount, and qualitative change which involves an alteration of some essential aspect of the thing, changing it into something else.

A certain degree of quantitative change, different in each concrete case, will result in a leap into qualitative change. This is a universal law of phenomena. A simple example of this is that common physical phenomenon, the boiling of water. Here, heat is added to the chemical compound Hydrogen Oxide until when a certain precisely quantifiable amount of heat has been added, the transition to another quality, steam, takes place.

A dialectical understanding of change sees development as brought about by the working out of contradictions. All phenomena have 'being' through the unity and struggle of the particular opposites inherent in them. The

Lenin never gave an inch to the revisionists

dialectical opposites are not cut off one from the other, but rather are polar, always occurring together. Indeed, their very opposition is always only relative. This is the law of the interpenetration of opposites.

One part of an opposition will eventually prevail, in the process negating itself and giving rise to a new set of contradictions. For example, the major contradiction in the world today is between socialism and capitalism; with the victory of the proletarian revolution - resolving the main contradiction in capitalism between the social nature of production and the private nature of expropriation - this contradiction will be negated to give way to communism.

The third law of dialectics is the 'negation of negation'. The famous example of this, given in Engel's *Anti-Duhring*, is that of the development of a seed: a grain of barley, for example, which falls on suitable soil will germinate and so negate itself, producing a young plant; this in turn will mature and, having produced more grains of barley, will ripen and die, the new grains being therefore the negation of the negation. We are back at the original state, but in a more developed form: where once there was one grain, now are produced hundreds. The crude evolutionism of the *BRS* contains not a trace of this concept. Its communist society is the product of evolution, not the revolutionary negation of class society.

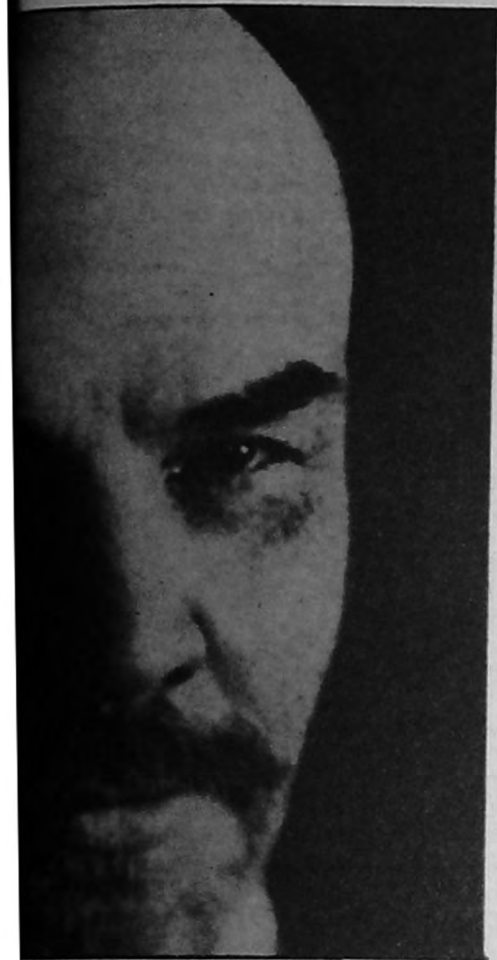
A further characteristic of change is that it can occur in either directional or non-directional ways. For example, water which is boiled into steam undergoes qualitative change; this change can then be reversed by a reduction in temperature. Thus the change is said to be non-directional, ie reversible. On the other hand, the final victory of the socialist revolution on a world scale will be a directional change, a development from a lower form of society to a higher, and will be an irreversible progression.

In general the dialectical method demands that we consider phenomena not as isolated events but in their connection with other phenomena, in their relationship with the world. The *BRS* takes as its starting and finishing point the national economy of Britain, it is a *British road* in every sense of the word, as is its communism.

As Engels said in *Ludwig Feuerbach*, "the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things but as a complex of



# Philosophy and Marxist theory



This attitude is reminiscent not so much of Marx as of Hegel: and this is to insult Hegel. Nonetheless he saw the Prussian state of his day as the realisation of the Absolute Idea of The State, and therefore as perfect. The CCG repetition of Hegel is a farce. These hapless sycophants hail the existing Soviet Union as the incarnation of heavenly socialism on earth. Rather than use the method of dialectical materialism to subject existing reality to ruthless and penetrating criticism, this Holy Family of CCG misleaders impose their rigid predetermined schemata onto the real world.

So it is not sufficient to simply criticise the CCG in isolation. As communists, we must strive to understand the causes of such a still-birth. The CCG originated in the CPGB, an organisation which, as Lysandrou and his cronies seem never to tire of telling us, is now a Eurocommunist and thoroughly opportunist body. If, as we have shown, the CCG leaders are not dialectical materialists, then let us see what they share with their one time stablemates in the Communist Party.

Eurocommunism, the child of centrist opportunism, is of course rooted in the objective conditions of the post-war boom and the ideological degeneration of the Comintern pre-dating this, but it is very interesting to note the philosophical presuppositions of this trend.

Its main feature is a capitulation to bourgeois empiricism in more or less 'sophisticated' guise. An attack on the *Dialectics of Nature* was one of many attempts to deny the relevance of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and, by gutting it of the dialectic ("in its rational form a scandal and abomination to bourgeois professors...and in its essence critical and revolutionary.") - Marx in the preface to *Capital* to reduce it to an appendage of an eclectic and bourgeois-radical 'system' of 'thought'. Because of the essentially bourgeois attitudes of these opportunists, their opposition to dialectics was naturally justified in terms of bourgeois philosophy. Attributing dialectical forms to physical reality, we are told, is 'anthropomorphic', 'teleological', and so forth, an imposition of the categories of human thought onto the external world.

The very phrasing of these objections exposes the philosophical presuppositions of the revisionists. Their attitude arises from the long tradition of philosophical empiricism, that of Locke and Hume, of Russell and Ayer. This basically dualist approach abstracts on the one side the isolated consciousness of the individual human being and on the other the external world, and then attempts an undialectical examination of their interaction.

Such an examination is typically atomistic: items of sense-data link the physical world with consciousness, and result in single ideas of the world which combine according to the laws of association or language (depending on the century of origin of the philosophy). This regards language and the world as separate entities which interact in more or less crude fashion in the human brain in the form of thoughts and sense-data.

Thus, since in formal logic contradiction is a property of concepts - for example, A is C and A is not C are contradictory propositions - it is seen as nonsensical to attribute contradiction to physical processes rather than to the propositions about these. Since this contradiction is not inherent in the physical phenomenon, it can have no effect on its development.

Such a philosophy has ultimately arisen from the nature of bourgeois society, in which the isolated individual is seen as the basic element of reality, the social relations of capitalism are projected onto nature. The separation between man and nature symptomatic of the alienation contingent on capitalist society is objectivised into a facet of nature.

## Epistemology

In contradistinction to this bourgeois

approach, the Marxist theory of knowledge takes reality as it exists, avoiding reductionism and simplistic abstractions. The philosophy of the proletariat is the first to be able to grasp reality fully, since the movement of this class, in transcending itself, transcends alienation, and introduces truly human existence. The intellectual vanguard of the working class, being at one with this essential movement, can apprehend reality in all its concreteness.

With the recognition by materialism of the primacy of matter over mind and the realisation that consciousness has developed out of the material world and is a property of its highest level of development, comes the problem of the relation of consciousness to the external world, and how human beings come to know nature.

The basic statement of Marxism on this is the 'theory of reflection'. Marx says in Vol I of *Capital*, "the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought." There is a correspondence between our consciousness and the external world. This however is not an absolute identity; rather the reflection is more or less distorted. What is absolute is that all contents of the human mind have their source in nature and society: there are no 'innate ideas', no 'human nature' which transcends experience.

With the development of science and society, mankind can approach a perfect correspondence of its ideas to the world, but such absolute truth can never be reached: the contradiction between the striving of people to attain perfect knowledge and the objective limitations of these people is one of the motive forces of progress in the intellectual sphere.

Most of our knowledge is therefore relative, since it is an approximation to reality. For example, the Newtonian model of the universe has nowadays been superseded by the Einsteinian one; but this does not mean that the old ideas are definitively false and the new ones absolutely true. Rather, the modern view of the universe corrects and expands the classical model, comes closer to reality, and so is *more true* than its predecessor.

On the other hand, a proposition such as 'Ronald Reagan was the President of the United States in 1987' can be considered as absolute, being a simple statement of historical truth.

Man develops his knowledge of the world through practice, through interacting with the world. The way in which this interaction takes place is ultimately determined by the level of the productive forces and the relations of production. Thus in capitalist society all areas of knowledge are marked by the specific form of alienation characteristic of this type of society.

## Soviet centrism

The deterioration of the communist movement in Britain which has produced both Euros and CCG is linked to a wider process in the world movement with its roots in the ideological changes begun by the Stalin trend in the 1920's.

After the death of Lenin, Stalin championed a centrist doctoring of Marxism which resulted in either the isolation of serious philosophy from all practical affairs or the betrayal of the scientific approach by such charlatans as the biologist Lysenko.

The forcing of scientific study into the straitjacket of a purely formalistic understanding of dialectics was precisely what Marx, Engels and Lenin had always vehemently resisted. There can be no doubt that an acquaintance with dialectical materialism helped, and continues to help, many Soviet scientists, but the rigid treatment of the subject by official party experts in the 1930s and 40s, and its subordination to the 'party line' ever since, has undoubtedly led to a tarnished reputation for Marxist-Leninist philosophy in the Soviet Union.

Stalin's reductionist treatment of the transition to communism, in which the overthrow of capitalism is *ipso facto* the solution of all social problems, was undialectical in the extreme. After the official declaration that socialism had fully triumphed in 1936, the complex struggle of opposites under socialism, which is the motive force of the development to communism, was replaced with a voluntarist doctrine posing the problem simply in terms of a struggle against subjective 'capitalist survivals'.

The task is to suppress these, whereupon everything will roll smoothly on towards communism in one country. The "real human

individual" (Lenin) was blotted out by the formal categories of an idealistic model of a socio-historical phase. History and reality become in the Soviet Union what the party line says it is, obviating the real existence of individuals and society which was for Marx, Engels and Lenin always the starting point of every investigation.

The very essence of bureaucracy is formalism, authoritarianism, and rigid hierarchism. As the force in direct control of society, it must seek to impose its nature on society if it is to have a *raison d'être*. Its imposition of idealistic categories on the real world, while being an outcome of material conditions, becomes a distorting and fettering influence on the essential movement of a socialist society towards communism.

Soviet centrism ignored aspects of Marxian thought that did not correspond with its preconceptions. Some of Marx's earlier writings, important not least because they give us the philosophical reasons that Marx had for concentrating his life's work on political economy, did not fit into the straitjacket of centrism. The whole concept of alienation, notably worked out in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, is dismissed by these 'authorities'.

Marxism is often accused of ignoring the individual, of burying the person in the historical process. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth, and this is nowhere better exemplified than in philosophy. What have, especially in post war philosophy, become popular as 'existential' problems are very well covered by Marx.

The central concept here is that of alienation or self-estrangement, which refers to the way in which the human being is cut off from his own essential nature and thus from his own 'natural-sensuous' existence. Man is considered as a self-mediating being, that is, one which while part of nature, as a naturally occurring organic being, is also separated from nature by his consciousness (both individual and social). Yet this same consciousness mediates between the natural world and man himself (since it is a reflection of same).

Historically this mediation has taken several unsatisfactory, distorted forms due to socio-economic conditions, the particular problems tackled by Existentialism, for example, far from being universal aspects of the 'human condition', are on the contrary historically specific forms of alienation contingent on particular forms of the organisation of labour.

To quote Meszaros, "Marx's concept of alienation has four main aspects as follows: (a) man is alienated from nature; (b) he is alienated from himself (from his own activity); (c) from his 'species-being' (from his being as a member of the human species); (d) man is alienated from man (from other men)."

The Marxist treatment of ethics is closely connected with the idea of alienation. While recognising that, as Engels puts it in *Anti-Duhring*, "all moral theories have been hitherto the product, in the last analysis, of the economic conditions obtaining at the time, and as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality has always been class morality; it has either justified the domination and interests of the ruling class or, ever since the oppressed class became powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed", we hold that a truly human morality can only arise with the superseding of alienation, that is, the arrival of communism.

The only way to reach this goal is through building a working class revolutionary party which is based solidly on the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, of which the philosophy of dialectical materialism is an integral part. Our great heritage of Marxist philosophy must be recovered from the deadening hypocritical allegiance of centrist toadies.

The "dialectic...in its rational form is a scandal and an abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary."

So says Marx in the preface to *Capital*. Our task is to replace bourgeois eclecticism, the adulation of 'common sense', and sheer indifference by this inspiring doctrine.

Peter Clancy

matters of philosophy

processes ... One no longer permits oneself to be imposed upon by the antitheses insuperable for the old metaphysics ..."

Marx himself testified to the influence the evolutionary ideas of Darwin had upon Engels and himself, seeing in them the scientific confirmation of Hegel's brilliant intuition into the essential nature of change. The development of science since their time, especially the discoveries in physics in the earlier part of this century, have confirmed the view that in nature as in society change is paramount, reality a process which involves leaps in the form of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state and the emergence of a dictatorship of the proletariat which lays the basis for the negation of all states.

## CCG and CPSU

The lack of a practical application of dialectical materialism by the CCG is not limited to its bankrupt position on the forthcoming revolution in Britain. Its world view, summed up by its worship of the USSR, is wholly undialectical, being based on uncritical tailing of the present leadership of the CPSU. The voices of the CCG tops echo back to us from over the years: hurrah for comrade Stalin ... Khrushchev (who denounced Stalin), hurrah for comrade Brezhnev (who denounced Khrushchev) ... hurrah for comrade Chernenko ... Andropov; and now, hurrah for comrade Gorbachev, who denounces Brezhnev and Stalin. The CCG tops followed every twist and turn just like lapdogs. This has nothing to do with Marxism or, for that matter, honesty in politics.

To uncritically accept the concrete philosophical attitudes of the centrist leadership in the Soviet Union, opposed to their formal allegiance to dialectical materialism, means to divest the working class movement of real revolutionary impetus and divert it into a prop for a sideline of history, the Soviet bureaucracy, that must be returned to being a servant to the working class, not its master, if history is to advance.

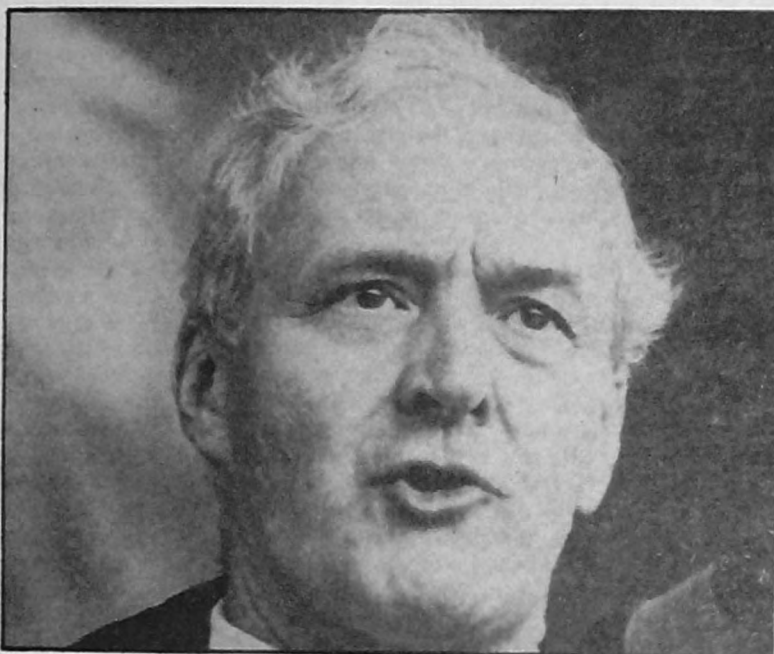
In place of a materialist analysis of Soviet society in all its concreteness and its contradictions, they substitute this, the summit of their mastery of dialectics: the USSR leadership can do no wrong - or at least not until the incumbent general secretary of the CPSU says it has.





# Labour leadership contest

**During the last election Benn and Co made themselves scarce. Effectively, because they have placed their loyalty in the Labour Party the Labour left made themselves accomplices in Kinnock's abandonment of left reformism. What then has provoked the leadership bid?**



Benn: desperate

**B**en Elton, the trendy left compere of *Friday Night Live*, jokingly speculated that it was in fact Tony Benn and Eric Heffer who threw that brick through Neil Kinnock's front window. We think probably not, but he does have a point. The two pretenders to the Labour leadership have made it very clear that their campaign has quite a lot in common with the afore-mentioned brick: an empty gesture rather than a serious attack intended to get rid of the right moving Kinnock.

Benn has already promised that he intends to limit his campaign to an intellectual joust with the ideas of Kinnock and Hattersley. As he puts it, the whole affair will be quite "low key. I have no desire to hot it up".

Yet even on the level of 'ideas', the Benn/Heffer platform is totally vague. Heffer outlined its main planks: "An extension of public ownership ... women to have genuine equality ... abolition of nuclear weapons ... and a much more realistic attitude towards Eastern Europe", an area of the world which, by the way, that Heffer believes to be capitalist anyway.

Such vacuous proposals amount to a plea for everything in the world to be nice, not nasty. This is in political terms akin to pissing in the wind. Their platform indicates the extent to which the left of the Labour Party has in fact been thrown into crisis by the stagnation and signs of a new general crisis of capitalism in Britain: their half-baked schemes to slowly reform a stabilised (by the left Labourites) capitalism into 'socialism' (or rather their bureaucratic model of it) are now at total variance with the needs of capitalism and for that matter reality.

The Labour left found itself on the horns of a dilemma. If it does not fight it risks irrelevance, if it fights it risks being purged. Having decided to fight all it can offer is yesterday's politics which have no practical relevance to the struggles of the working class in Britain today to defend their rights and living standards. Indeed, the only people in the Labour Party who have been enthused has been the likes of the SWP and the hordes of Trot groups who infest the swamp. Predictably, all have rushed to pledge their support.

Yet dissent has come from within the ranks of the Campaign Group; three have even resigned. Clare Short made a telling point when she declared that "there isn't a credible candidate, there isn't a left programme and there is absolutely no chance of winning."

How true! Prescott's decision to enter the fray has totally undermined Heffer's position and Ron Todd - whose T&GWU was supposed to have been captured by the far left - has promised Kinnock and Hattersley his support. Benn underlined his desperation when he said of the Labour left that: "we couldn't be at a lower point than we are, and so in that sense there is nowhere to go but up."

Clearly, Benn and Heffer's decision to fight is an expression of the crisis of Labourism. The left of the party, marginalised since its heyday of Benn's near miss bid for deputy leader and the constitutional reforms of 1980, has launched his campaign in order not so much to present a serious challenge, but in order to hold together their dispirited and increasingly atomised forces.

This poses important questions for all revolutionaries and working class militants. The Benn/Heffer

campaign is an attempt to forestall any major potential hemorrhage to the left from the party's ranks. Heffer has spelled this out and drawn an apt historical analogy: "The campaign will ... help to mobilise people who have voted Labour in the past - good socialists who are getting a bit disillusioned. Nye Bevan's campaign in the 1950s helped to keep millions of workers in the Labour Party at the very moment when they were getting fed up with things." Exactly!

The relationship between the two wings of the Labour Party is contradictory but at the end of the day it is also symbiotic. The right need the left to secure what has been the traditional base of the organisation, the militant working class, while the left wing - Benn, Heffer *et al* - also need the right. For without the likes of Kinnock and Hattersley, the Labour Party would never even hope to pose as a credible alternative party of government, to convince bourgeois opinion that the British state is safe in its hands.

It could thus never hope to win majorities in the bourgeois parliament and the rationale for being in the Labour Party - that it is the only realistic vehicle to bring socialism in British conditions - would be shattered.

Kinnock's anti-left campaign within the party has been an attempt to alter the balance between these two wings of British social democracy; to reassert the Labour Party's role as an acceptable alternative party of government in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. However successful Kinnock is in cowering his left - and it is about the only thing he has done with any degree of success - it will not mean that Labour will again swings and round-a-bouts alternate with the Tories in government.

The Labour Party, no matter how much Kinnock tailors it to suit the needs of the boss class, has in the political conditions of today's Britain, reverted to the role it played prior to World War II: that of a party of crisis.

Capitalism in decline can no longer afford steadily increasing wages and social reforms. It requires austerity and attacks on existing rights and conditions - it is this which lies at the root of Labour's crisis - it is after all a party committed to running capitalism but unlike the Tories relies on working class votes and the finance and support of the trade union bureaucracy. A 'bourgeois party of the working class' as Lenin called it.

Thus, the only chance Kinnock has of ever getting hold of the keys to No.10 is if the bourgeoisie puts

him there; if he is placed in office in order to defuse and disorientate an aroused proletariat and then to press home the attacks the ruling class are wary of implementing themselves.

Given the fact that there is no pressure from the masses, no revolt from a combative and well led working class to contend with, why on earth should the ruling class in this country rule any other way than directly, through its own party, the Tories?

Little wonder then that the left of social democracy is in crisis. The fact that the Labour Party no longer is a credible alternative party of government implicitly undermines it. Similarly, the absence of mass pressure from the working class, despite the current relative upsurge in the class struggle, leaves the left all the more vulnerable to the attacks of the right.

Frankly, the right of the Labour Party simply do not find itself with any pressing need to promote the left at the moment. In fact there is a pressing need to attack the left in order to gain respectability in the eyes of the bourgeois media. This does not mean that the Labour left is dead as the right moving former 'left' communists of the RCP would have its supporters believe.

No, the Labour left will remain as long as the Labour right does. And although the right will bash the left it will always keep it in reserve for a rainy day.

So what will come from the defeat of Benn and Heffer? We predict that the attacks on the left will be stepped up and the low vote Benn and Heffer will secure will precipitate a crisis of confidence in the Labour left. Already Heffer has been pleading for tolerance and mercy from the Kinnock/Hattersley regime. Fat chance. Kinnock has already issued the veiled threat that "election contests have results and results mean mandates".

Clearly, a victory for the openly pro-capitalist wing of the party will be used as a pretext to up the attacks on the already hopelessly prone left wing, probably utilising Kinnock's *Aims and Objectives of Democratic Socialism* as a loyalty test with which to purge the left.

This document originally saw the light of day as an anti-*Militant* device. We warned at the time, in contrast to the myopic dunderheads of the New Communist Party who revelled in Kinnock's 'Trot bashing', that the purge would not stop with Ted Grant and the editorial board of *Militant*, but would inevitably spread to encompass more of the 'mainstream' left of the party. Recent moves against *Labour Briefing* shows what is in store.

Militants within the party are thus faced with a choice. The no hope project of changing the Labour Party that has absorbed and wasted the talents of so many honest partisans of the working class has been starkly exposed.

We call on all genuine working class partisans in the Labour Party to put the interests of our class first: to break from the party of traitors and defeats and join *The Leninist* in the fight to build a party that will lead our class to socialism - a Leninist Communist Party. Comrades, stop wasting your time: there is real work to be done!

Ian Mahoney

Once more we stand awe struck at the economism of the SWP. April's Socialist Worker Review attempts to belittle Che Guevara as a revolutionary. Why? Because: "as far as I can discover" writes SWPer, Bob Light, "Che never sold a paper outside a factory in his life." A damning indictment indeed.

There were two interesting additions to the 'deaths' column in the Morning Star of April 11. One was the Surrey CCG meeting to 'Reestablish the Party', and the other a public meeting of the Trotskyist Spartacist League. Death makes strange bedfellows.

We came across this while flicking through our yellowing collection of early back copies of various petty bourgeois leftist journals: "We want to break with the tradition of British left publications: flashy graphics, vulgar style and endless photos of demonstrations. We want to minimise distractions from [our] politics ..." Written in ...? the next step of March 1980! Then, of course, the RCP recruited a layout artist and tns became ... well yes full of "endless photos of demonstrations" and just as "flashy" and "vulgar" as the rest of the publications of the British left.

Those devilish IRA chappies have discovered a devious new way of taking out our brave boys over in 'Ulster'. The republican movement's paper, An Phoblacht reports that IRA Volunteers planted an anti-personnel mine against British troops, which they then could not detonate because of the danger to civilians. The report continues; "A British soldier who was standing on the mine discovered it and raced onto the road where he was knocked down by a jeep"! Good lord, they can now take on 'our lads' using our own bloody jeeps! Not even the expense of a round fired on their part. Clever, devilishly clever...

The SWP's position on the health workers' dispute is as confused as it is reactionary. Socialist Worker of February 6 warned against the "disastrous tactics of selective strikes, overtime bans and work to rules", but along with this opposed all out action. Conclusion: do nothing. Thanks, SWP, thanks a lot.





## Party or Congress?

League of Communist Republicans, *Congress '86*, No.3, pp20, 50p

WHAT PASSES for 'communism' in Ireland has in the past few decades been at best a caricature and more generally an absolute insult. We have on many occasions shown the reformist and economic bankruptcy of the Communist Party of Ireland. 'Alternatives' to this from the decomposing Trotskyist milieu have been every bit as much a travesty of Marxism, from the economic clones of the British SWP and *Militant*, to the appendages of Sinn Fein in the decimated Peoples Democracy, now part of the eclectic 'Fourth International' of Ernest Mandel.

Some of these groups, such as the British Workers Power's fraternal Irish Workers Group cover their own manifest irrelevancy with a mixture of idealistic dogma, fantasy and downright lies, as illustrated by the April issue of their paper, *Class Struggle*, in a review of *Starry Plough* No.1.

It denounces the 'dishonesty' of the early IRSP for using the Peoples Liberation Army "as a flag of convenience for the INLA." The INLA was actually called the PLA until 1976 - no flag of convenience. The IWG then denounce as "a patent lie" the fact that "the IRSP first denied that the retaliations taking place were by their own military wing".

The reason behind this is obvious - the IRSP has always disclaimed the INLA/PLA as their armed section for the simple fact that to do otherwise in the existing situation would mean proscription for the political wing. The fact that such a distinction exists presents a problem, but not one which can be solved through the social-pacifist sneers of the IWG.

The IWG even attacks the IRSP for defending itself against the Officials through the PLA, because instead they should have been "seeking to mobilise support ... from the anti-imperialist and workers' movement". Better dead but ideologically 'pure', is the IWG slogan.

What all this serves to illustrate is the practical irrelevance of such groups. They cover their own cowardly inability to participate in a living revolutionary struggle through platitudinous 'anti-guerrillaism' combined with the contemptuous distortions and lies as found in *Class Struggle's* 'review', which merits a hard polemical comeback from the IRSP. Yes, the republican movement may be 'green', but far from being 'red', these gutless posers are just yellow.

But in the revolutionary movement in Ireland today it is not just the case of having to deal with the lesser of two evils, between the nationalism of the republican movement or the pusillanimous r-r-revolutionary groups. A trend is emerging from within republicanism which is seeking proletarian answers to the impasse of the

struggle.

With some, it has retained the name of the old organisation with it, such as the IRSP; others are still arguing their ground within the republican movement. And there are those comrades around *Congress '86*, mainly POWs, who have split from the republican movement. What characterises this trend - very broadly, as there exist many differences within it - is the *hesitancy* with which its various components advance their conclusions, and the still only part evolved nature of those conclusions.

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to expect genuine communist cadres in Ireland to spring forward fully formed from the republican movement, given the character of the movement that they have been produced by.

The platform of the *Congress '86* journal rests on the central plank of the call for a new Republican Congress; a proposal with which we have expressed disagreement (see *The Leninist*, issues 53 and 60).

We argued that the struggle of individuals and groups of communists in Ireland should be the struggle for a Communist Party through a process of ideological struggle and clarification, and not for a resurrected Republican Congress.

The latest edition of this journal claims that "a Republican Congress could organise a vanguard party" (p5).

How can such a congress - even if it were realisable now, which we doubt - organise a vanguard party? Out of necessity it would organise many different elements. How could this be reconciled into one party - least of all a Communist Party? Such a project is more of a proposal for a latterday tower of Babel than for the organisation of the working class vanguard.

The LCR wants first and foremost unity, and through this to arrive at a Communist Party. Who is to define and fight for those unifying principles, if not a Communist Party?

Ideological clarity is the prime necessity for a Communist Party - it will not come about by throwing various disparate trends into one room, organised around a vague radical anti-imperialist platform. Soups and stews are made by this method; Bolshevik parties are not.

By virtue of the fact that the comrades of the LCR use the 1934 Republican Congress for their proposals for today, they have to undertake a critique of the failure of the last one.

In our view, the conclusions they reach are woefully inadequate: "Lack of patience was, perhaps, the greatest organisational weakness of the Republican Congress. Ireland's bourgeois democracy of the 1930s had not, in the eyes of the population, run its course. This was not quite the same by the 1950s and is very much less the case now. It is unfortunate that the Republican Congress was unable to plot a survival course which could well have begun to pay off even by the 1950s." (p3).

The question we must first ask is; why did the Congress lack this 'patience', why was it unable to 'plot a survival course'? The writer disagrees that this was because "communists didn't take a leading role" (p2) but in reality fails to put an alternative argument forward, apart from the Congress' failure to raise the slogan 'for a workers' republic'.

Again the question - why? We would answer, because of the lack of an effective Communist Party. The CPI did participate to a very great extent in the Congress, but its political position at the time -

one of rushing headlong from the sectarian bluster of the 'Third Period' to the class collaborationist 'Popular Front' - both disorientated and disarmed 'its comrades' (see the supplement dealing with the CPI in *The Leninist* no15). This further emphasises the necessity of a Communist Party armed with Marxism-Leninism if the working class is to reap anything more than disillusion from such alliances.

The LCR's analysis wallows deep in the quicksand of fatalism. This is seen again further on, where the LCR states that "Connolly and Ryan met with limited success and ultimate failure because prevailing conditions dictated it would be so." (p9). Such an attitude is erroneous and dangerous.

Connolly and Ryan met with failure because neither were communists - Connolly was a product of the left of the Second International, unable to transcend its limitations in the way that Lenin was, through the forging of a party of a new type. Ryan was essentially a left nationalist. Both lacked any conception of the importance of a Communist Party.

There was nothing inevitable in the defeat of the Irish working class, either in 1916 or in 1934. What sealed its fate was that it lacked a party.

What is needed, before all else in Ireland today, is a genuine Communist Party. It would be a tragedy if the comrades around *Congress '86* were to forsake this as an immediate task, in favour of the cult de sac of their Republican Congress.

Alan Merrick  
*Congress '86* can be contacted through: *Congress '86*, c/o De Lacy Park, Shannon, Co. Clare, Ireland.

## "Dear diary"

Alan Brien, *Lenin, the Novel*, Secker and Warburg, London 1987, £11.95, pp703

ANY BOOK that attempts to get inside the skin of the twentieth century's greatest revolutionary and most important Marxist theorist is ambitious to say the least. When the author of such a work is a bourgeois journalist one embarks on it with a certainty of being disappointed.

Surprisingly, Brien has a remarkable feel for Lenin in his expertly 'forged' diaries. Hitler's were never so absorbing.

The Lenin that Brien presents us with is not the Olympian hero, cardboard thin, that more 'official' sources have carefully constructed and modified in the image of their own political ambitions. Thankfully, the author seems to have no ambitions of further deification or of self-aggrandisement in such a false god, built in his own image. He seems only to have the ambition to write a good, reasonably objective biography about a subject on which many have failed, and to do it from an unusual and challenging angle. And, by and large, he has succeeded.

Brien's *Lenin* is strong on atmosphere but weak, in parts, on politics. The portraits of characters such as Stalin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and Nadezhda Krupskaya rely partially on predictable sources such as Deutscher, as well as the imagination and writing talents of Brien himself. They appear on the pages shed of their one-sidedness, do battle as living, thinking human beings.

For political clarity it does not match up to Marcel Leibmann's *Leninism Under Lenin*. But then,

to demand that it should do so would be to judge this - a novel - too harshly. Nevertheless, the 'willing suspension of disbelief' becomes a little strained at times - eg Lenin's support for the Trotsky-Parvus formulation of permanent revolution in 1905, something even the most myopic of Trotskyists would not claim was the case during this period, is hard to fathom.

Yet Brien's *Lenin* claims it to be the case. Such obvious gaffs as this lead one to doubt other events and opinions throughout the book, such as Pyatakov, in 1922, being credited with labelling Stalin as "the gravedigger of the revolution", (the words of Trotsky in the late '20s, surely?).

Or Lenin, on pages 571-2, pondering on "Connolly and Larkin, who crooned on about the terrible beauty of death and martyrdom, the sacred intoxication of slaughter". Dear me, Alan; even Yeats' 'Rose Tree' will tell you different than this on Connolly, and it certainly was not Larkin's style, who was over in America in Easter 1916 anyway! But perhaps you could put this down to Lenin's misinformation on the Rising at the time. All the same though ...

Many important facets of Lenin's political career are skimmed in *The Novel*, such as all the congresses of the Comintern at which Lenin was present, the intense debate between Lenin and Radek and Rosa Luxemburg, or Lenin's debate in the wake of the defeat of the 1905 revolution with the empirio-monists, though the latter is understandable - a run down of the latest developments in quantum mechanics does not a good novel make.

The book is marred in places by Brien's insistence on transposing the book's 'present' on the 'future', for rather cheap ironic twists; for example, the young Lenin veiling his father's corpse, laid out, remarks; "This is how I should look, embalmed and put on show. Ha!" (p5) Ha! indeed.

This is obviously meant to transport the reader to the side of a certain waxwork-like figure in Red Square. But transported *subtly*, Alan, not dragged kicking and screaming. When Brien attempts to turn Lenin into a soothsayer or fortune teller he really falls flat on his face: not least of all the occurrence of the phrases *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the post revolutionary period. If transposing 'future' onto 'present' is a dubious literary device, then transposing Gorbachev onto Lenin is an act of journalistic dishonesty.

But if Brien's treatment of the post revolutionary Lenin is a disappointment - being rather sketchy and Russo-centric to the exclusion of almost all else - it must be judged in the light of his pre-October Lenin, which is, in the main part, excellent.

tober Lenin, which is, in the main part, excellent.

The descriptions of the 1905 revolution, Lenin's return in April 1917, the July days and October are truly riveting. What in other works is more a catalogue of events here are relived, embodied in a man not only struggling for a revolution, but fighting for his life and liberty. 'I couldn't put it down', is a not too original phrase which springs to mind.

Brien's command of Lenin's political theory and practice are strongest when it comes to the faction fighting in the RSDLP between Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, Trotsky and Lenin; the genesis, development and struggle of Bolshevik and Menshevik. Lenin's struggle for Marxist principles, the continuous striving for an effective revolutionary proletarian party - the battle of the Mountain against the Gironde of our epoch.

His comments against 'unity-mongers' are particularly enlightening: "Nobody wants to appear to be 'splitting the movement'. As if all progress did not consist of throwing out of the sleigh all those who are not going your way. As if I had not spent all my life split, split splitting ... honing, sharpening, pointing, steeling the revolutionary weapon, 'the party of a new type'." (p329)

Likewise his Lenin's statement that we "built our Party, that overthrew an Empire, upon a newspaper" (p688), and his descriptions of the nature of that newspaper, 'novel' or not, provide sound political advice which the many hues of philistine with which the British left is blessed eschew.

It may seem somewhat churlish to berate Brien where he does not agree with us and praise him where he does, but it is the simple fact that where he is at his best is where he is closest to the 'original', and it is his rendering of this we praise. Check and see in the *Collected Works*. And, as I said, Brien has captured both the essence and the atmosphere of the struggle between the different trends in Russian Marxism. No mean achievement by any standards.

*Lenin, the Novel* is not the definitive work on the man. It makes no pretence at being so, and therefore it would be a mistake to condemn it for not fulfilling that role. But neither is it the 'true and accurate record' at a minimum level that the informed reader needs to be 'convinced' that s/he is reading Lenin's secret diaries.

It doesn't, as the blurb promises, "chart the secret storms of Lenin's soul", but it still manages to get taken up by the gale, even at times being drawn to the very eye of the storm. Read it critically, but read it.

Alan Merrick

	6 months	1 year
Britain & Ireland	£5 <input type="checkbox"/>	£10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Europe	£8 <input type="checkbox"/>	£16 <input type="checkbox"/>
Rest of World	£10 <input type="checkbox"/>	£20 <input type="checkbox"/>

For more detailed rates see page two

I enclose a cheque/PO for £.... made out to November Publications

Please start my subscription with issue no.....

I enclose a donation for £.... made out to November Publications

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Subscriptions, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX



**No one can really believe that the current approach taken in the fight against the Clause has any real chance of success. The limited forces of gay and left group activists cannot win alone. This much is obvious. To turn to the mobilisation of the working class – the only alternative to the judiciary and parliamentarians – is the only way forward**

## Class Struggle and Gay Rights

**F**ROM JUNE, when the Local Government Bill comes into force, it will be illegal for any local authority to "promote homosexuality" as a consequence of the infamous 'Clause'. No resolute opposition has come from within parliament. In fact, in its initial stages, the Clause was supported by the Labour front bench MPs. Only later, when activists exposed their nasty little game, did they reluctantly voice discontent about it.

It would be too much to hope for to suppose that the Parliamentary Labour Party's stand would dispell illusions in either parliament or the Labour Party. Chris Smith, an open gay MP, is advocating trying to reverse the vote through a private members' bill, as if another vote taken with the same bunch of bigots would work.

Various proposals are being advanced, which revolve around court action in Britain and the European Community. Many activists fighting the Clause are themselves Labour Party members, and are wooed by the position of Smith, with the superficial trappings of authority imparted by the two letters 'MP', and such proposals which appeal to the 'reasonableness' of society. To most, this is the most 'realistic' approach.

But this road leads to defeat and demoralisation. Yes, opposition may still remain vocal and demonstrations large while little pieces of paper chart their course around parliament and court rooms nationally and internationally. But it remains activity without focus, other than the hoped for legislative outcome which can never happen.

Demonstrations for demonstrations' sake are a temporary moral booster, but one which will make the eventual come down even more demoralising. The movement against the Clause needs perspectives which do not rely on the good will of aging bigots in Parliament and court rooms if it is to win even this one issue, let alone go forward to take on the other restrictions on lesbian and gay rights.

Surely no one can really believe the current approach has any real chance of success? The alternative, at first glance, is not that promising. The limited forces of gay and left group activists cannot win alone. This much is obvious. To turn to the mobilisation of the working class – the only alternative to the judiciary and parliamentarians – dominated as it is by chauvinistic ideology, not only against gays, is indeed a daunting task.

An orientation to the working class in this way seems beyond most of the left, except in the most formal sense. Some, like the Communist Campaign Group/*Morning Star*, prefer to steer clear of the Clause: understandable when one considers the "straight as a die"

mentality of their readers and supporters, most of whom are anyway a little past the worries of the 'pleasures of the flesh'.

Others, for example the Euro-communists, are happy to jump on the bandwagon, hauling it even further down the road of petty bourgeois populism. Odd that the more 'broad' and 'popular' they strive to be, the smaller and more irrelevant they become.

For Labourites such as the aging 'children of '68' still remaining around *Socialist Action*, or the *Labour Briefing* grouping, taking the issue to the working class begins and ends with passing resolutions in trade union branches and Labour Party committee rooms. The number of resolutions that have to be passed before anything else happens, other than branch activists dragging the branch banner out on the streets for the next anti-Clause demo, is unclear.

What then is to be done is left unsaid. All the Labour entrism groups are imprisoned by CLP walls of their own making. They have entered willingly into their cell, locked the door and, in virtual solitary confinement, sneered at those with greater liberty outside for not being "where the masses are".

Of course, many workers are Labour Party members: but the working class does not end there. Besides, even workers within this party cannot be mobilised through committee room politics of this type.

A group which one would think is free from the fetters of this Labour committee room myopia, also relatively active around the Clause, is the Socialist Workers Party. But the best that this economic 'party' has been able to do is to swap one set of self made fetters for another. That tiresome SWP bogey, 'the downturn', substitutes for overt Labourism.

Since the late '70s the SWP has argued that, because of a supposed decline in the ability of workers to fight back, socialists – meaning the SWP – must batten down the hatches and wait for better times. In reality what this means is that capitalism, because of a developing crisis situation, cannot afford to pay up in the way that it could in the '70s, and therefore the economic schema of the SWP – a pound on the wages, an hour off the day – cannot deliver the goods.

So, logically, we must wait for a capitalist recovery for the end of the downturn. Does anyone want to wait for the aftermath of World War III before we can fight successfully for lesbian and gay rights?

The conclusions that the SWP draws from this is not to slash their collective arteries and sit in a hot bath. No, they say; if no fight can win, then we can at least recruit from it. As a consequence, the SWP's latest pamphlet on gay

oppression, *Out Proud and Fighting* does not advance the arguments as to why straight workers should support lesbian and gay rights, or for that matter explain to lesbian and gay rights activists how they can win their fight.

No, this pamphlet is written to convince lesbians and gays to join the SWP, no more. This is combined with the SWP's own particular brand of dead-headed economism, arguing that "when class struggle reaches particularly high levels it is possible to break down centuries of prejudice, as the struggle unites workers across all the 'normal' divisions in society." (p37)

A little further down the same page it is argued that: "Of course the change is not automatic ... That is why socialist organisation is necessary". Conclusion: join the SWP!

These economists cannot and do not explain why this change is "not automatic", nor for that matter how joining the SWP will help the fight on the ground. The best they can muster is vacuous syllogism; no answers, no matter how difficult, for homosexual rights activists through which victory can be won. Instead they are presented with a cynical and badly packaged recruitment drive.

Superficially, the most promising of the petty bourgeois left groups involved in the fight against the Clause is the Revolutionary Communist Party. It correctly argues that the fight should go beyond the limited resistance around the Clause and take up the struggle for the complete decriminalisation of homosexuality and that this should be based on an active campaign to mobilise workers, starting now. We agree.

But, for the RCP, these tactics have as their backdrop a characterisation of the present period not a million miles away from that of the RCP's parent body, the SWP. For the RCP too, the present period is one which can only provide opportunities for paper selling and recruitment.

Leading RCP'er Mike Freeman designated the current struggles in the next step of March 4 as a "minor upsurge". There is no doubt that he is right – but can we say *a priori* that this is all it can be?

Freeman answers yes. For brevity's sake I will summarise and paraphrase his argument ...

Because of the defeats over the past decade and the nature of our leadership, workers' resistance has become atomised and defensive. What revolutionaries therefore need to do is to challenge the current climate of compromise by advancing "a working class strategy" and arguing this among the most advanced activists in the various campaigns.

Freeman's conclusion from this is that the RCP "must make the most of the current upsurge to

rally a solid group of activists around the party that can put us in a position to play a more decisive role when Thatcher's economic bubble bursts." Which is not yet ... Implication: we can do no more than recruit.

At a meeting in Hackney on March 29, RCP guru Frank Richards put this explicitly: "we're in a climate where it is not possible to really win, because people fighting are isolated". The answer for the moment, like the SWP's own particular 'remedy', is to join the RCP.

Steely eyed Bolsheviks take note; it's not that we have something against recruitment. Being in a small organisation is not something our comrades revel in. But the cynical and defeatist nostrums of the SWP and RCP are an obstacle to the campaign for homosexual rights, and to current struggles generally.

The current "minor upsurge" can be taken to a higher level and be won. The RCP may be right to point out that it cannot be won with the present outlook. But it is a mistake to take the view, before the present phase of struggle is resolved one way or another, that this strategy cannot be challenged on anything but an ideological level – ie, through recruitment.

The defeats during Thatcher's term in office have taken place through the Tories' ability to isolate sections of the workers and oppressed fighting back. This has been facilitated by the sectionalist and reformist character of the leadership of the labour movement. But the present wave of resistance, not just against the Clause, has within it the latent seeds of victory, not merely opportunities for various left groups to undertake a 'primitive accumulation of cadres'.

Yes, this upsurge is fragmented; yes, it is being fought on the wrong platform, with the wrong leadership. But the aggregate of people politically active now in the different industrial disputes is greater than at any period since the defeat of the miners' strike. And, at a grass roots level, activists are looking for answers to the problems which confront them now.

This querying of the existing state of affairs by many provides an 'in' for communists, not only to sell papers and recruit, but to lead, and thereby to take the struggles to victory.

In the specific case of resistance to the Clause, this offers great possibilities. The class composition of the lesbian and gay rights movement is being altered at its base, with many working class lesbians and gays taking up the fight. The RCP and SWP may be reluctant to link existing struggles, but many of the best gay activists are not.

At the rank and file health workers' rally in London on March 14 a speaker from Trade Unions

Against the Clause pointed out the need to emphasise the need for such links, calling on health workers to support both the coming Alton Bill demo and the Clause demo on April 30. Working class activists in the anti-Clause campaign are faced both with the necessity and – as the above speaker's presence at the rally proved – the ability to take their case and their fight to straight workers.

One concrete example of this is the need to agitate in local government unions, such as Nalgo, for council workers to refuse to implement the Clause. We can be sure that, on past performance, no council, no matter how 'left', will violate court rulings and defy the Clause.

Many Labour councils are already exhibiting an equivocal attitude to support for the existing inoffensive lesbian and gay quangos that they have in the past funded. Winning council workers' resistance to this is also a *de facto* undermining of local government cuts.

That is not to say that local government workers will be spontaneously supportive of gay rights, that they can be 'conned' into defending homosexual rights on the strength of their pay packets, as the economic SWP might argue if they were more dynamic. But general attacks of this kind do present opportunities to take the issue of homosexual rights to the heart of working class resistance.

Neither can we rely on the trade union leaderships, as the cowardly betrayal of their own gay members by the NUT showed during their Easter conference, where they refused to defend lesbian and gay teachers victimised by their employers.

They, too, were totally unwilling to oppose the Clause or popular prejudice. The fact that the majority at conference went with them illustrates the magnitude of the tasks ahead of homosexual rights activists. But they are tasks which will be accomplished *against*, and not with, the trade union bureaucracy.

Militants in the anti-Clause movement and within the unions must agitate for action committees based on rank and file local government workers, teachers, and other workers where possible, to fight through and organise around this issue – both in defence of its own members in an immediate sense, as with victimised teachers, or solidarity action, or blocking action against the Clause.

If the Clause is to be smashed, the campaign against it must go from being one which bases itself on support from MPs, peers and 'Eastenders' stars to one which is based on the most class conscious and combative sections of the working class.