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Irish solidarity

Poll Tax

Scottish politics

REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATIC NEWS LETTER

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GLORIOUS REVOLUTIONS

Welcome to Republican Worker issue no.7. in the year following the 300th anniversary of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and now the 200th since the beginning of the French revolution in 1789 and the twentieth since the troops went into Ireland in 1969. All these events are connected in one way or another with the historic struggle of republicanism and democracy, which despite everything that has happened in between, is part of the UK political scene to-day. This is notwithstanding the fact that most people are too polite to mention republicanism. We include most of those who call themselves socialists and who should know better.

It has become much clearer to everybody that the Tories cannot solve the crisis of British capitalism. High interest rates, a staggering balance of payments deficit and rising inflation testify to the failure of Tory policy. All Tory boasting has proven to be nothing but empty rhetoric and manipulation of the statistics. For the rich the results of failure have never been better, their wallets never fatter. But for many working class people, mass unemployment, rising poverty and homelessness show Tory greed in practice.

Meanwhile the political crisis of the Constitutional Monarchy continues to deepen. In Ireland no solution is in site as the war continues. The intensification of repression against the republican movement shows no signs of breaking the resistance. In Scotland the Tory grip always precarious looks even more so with the struggle against the poll tax and the revival of SNP fortunes at Govan. This adds a new twist to the potential for democratic development in the UK. At the same time constitutional matters continue to force themselves onto the agenda. The issue of proportional representation is beginning to gain ground in the Labour Party as is the increasing recognition that civil rights are not worth the paper they are not written on. The issue of democracy in its many and varied forms is central to understanding the political crisis in Europe's Ancien Regime.

None of these matters have any chance of a progressive resolution without the leadership of the working class. A working class which to-day must be more organised, more militant and much more politicised than in the past. The backbone of the industrial organisation of the working class are the trade unions and the independent rank and file organisations. These must be rebuilt. And likewise the political organisation of the working class is more fragmented than ever. There is no real workers party in the UK to-day which is proven by the very lack of a marxist programme. A real programme is the necessary basis for the political unification of working class forces. But such political clarity shows no signs of emerging from the Labour Party, Communist Party or the Socialist Workers Party.

This brings us back to our starting points of 1688, 1789 and 1969, revolutionary events that have done so much to shape the UK, France, Europe and the capitalist world. The future belongs to those social classes which can grasp the significance of those past events, draw correct lessons, unlock the social energy and use this to reshape the future.

In Memory of a dedicated and hard working comrade.

Phil Jenkins hanged himself at Ruskin College, Oxford in October 1988 aged 27. A memorial meeting was held for Phil at Leeds Trades Council Club and about thirty five comrades attended - many different groups - anarchists and trade unionists.

Phil's contact with the labour movement was as an USDAW steward at the Co-op. He soon learnt that working for a "progressive" company didn't mean an end to the class struggle. With the Co-op managers also USDAW officials, he found it impossible to represent his members wishes, and eventually the officials-cum-managers sacked him from the job.

In response to leafleting the dole office by the "Right to Work campaign" about six years ago, Phil was introduced to the Socialist Workers Party in Harrogate. He quickly became an active communist, and gave inspiration and support to all comrades around him.

In his early political life, Phil tended to lack discipline and often comrades held him back from very sticky situations. He had a quick temper to match his bright red hair. This combination made him stand out in a crowd, which often led to arrests; but having said this he could always be relied upon, campaigns, demonstrations and almost every conceivable picket line one can think of.

Phil left the Socialist Workers Party four years ago but he carried on as a political individual, always searching for a group to belong to. During the last year of his life Phil became a supporter of the RDG. He hated sectarianism and saw the need for democracy in a workers party. Phil's memorial meeting proved just how much he worked with other groups and was respected for his political debates and the struggle to fight for workers democracy and the working class.

Throughout his short life Phil made some very important contributions. His involvement with CND led to him being arrested whilst participating in a mass trespass at Menwith Hill, the "Spystation" outside Harrogate. In support of Greenham Common women he flew over the base in a light aircraft and released leaflets. An act of symbolism? it captured Phil's need for action and activity during a period of political isolation. His anti-fascist work in Yorkshire; on many occasions Phil photographed fascists, sometimes endangering himself (remember his

red hair). "Searchlight" used his photographs. He was continuously and deeply involved in Irish work and before his death he was pushing for the recognition and support for the IRSP prisoners aid fund. His last known activity in Harrogate before going to Ruskin College was building solidarity with the Seafarers strike against P&O.

Comrades - Phil's death is a mystery to us. As you can well imagine writing such a potted history of a dear comrade, one can only come to the conclusion we don't know why Phil and we will never know why he decided to take such a final step especially when he was an atheist and communist. We can only conclude he must have felt so tired trying in such a political climate. But this climate must end and we must end it!! In numbers we can do things, alone we are nothing.

Phil was an international communist and is missed by all his comrades and friends.

A. Watkinson and P. Viney.

STOP THE EXECUTIONS

This year is the tenth anniversary of the Iranian revolution in which the Shah was overthrown by a general strike, massive street demonstrations and an armed insurrection. It was a massive blow to US imperialism and an inspiration to millions of oppressed peoples. However the popular revolution was very soon transformed into an Islamic Republic by a counter revolution against the Left, the workers organisations and the national minorities, especially the Kurds. This in turn was transformed into the Iran/Iraq war waged between the capitalist governments in Bagdad and Tehran for regional dominance and greater oil profits

US imperialism encouraged the war to further its own interests and then imposed peace terms for the same reasons. The war achieved nothing except the death for millions of Iranian and Iraqi workers and peasants. This fact threatens the social and political stability of the Islamic Republic. A reactionary war has produced a reactionary peace, in which stability depends upon repression

Within the past four months between 3-5000 political prisoners have been executed in Iran. Recently we received a letter from the Association of Supporters of the Communist Party of Iran.(CPI). "Dear comrades, thank you for your support of the campaign in defence of political prisoners in Iran. As you are aware the Iranian government has not ceased its brutal mass executions of political prisoners. Despite many condemnations and protests, including the TUC, Amnesty International and M.P.'s, the British government is silent regarding mass executions in Iran. It seems rather necessary to pressurize the British government to protest against atrocities of the Islamic regime, calling for an end to such inhuman measures, and breaking all links with the Iranian regime until these executions are stopped. We would be grateful if you could send a letter of protest to No 10 Downing Street, the Foreign Office, national press or any other body you consider relevant. Furthermore we would appreciate it if you could sign our petition and inform us of any other measure that could be helpful in advancing this campaign." We will be doing what we can to assist the Association of the CPI and urge all our readers to do the same. You can contact us or them direct at **BM Box 1919, London WC1N 3XX.**

ROYALISTS AND REPUBLICANS - THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN SWP RIGHT AND LEFT WING

Liberalism and the bourgeois monarchy

In 1688 a pre-emptive revolution from above created the basis of Constitutional Monarchism, the political system that has kept the country safe for capitalism ever since. The bourgeoisie are committed to the monarchy as a useful anti-working class institution to hide behind.

The liberal bourgeoisie defend the monarchy on the grounds that (1) the monarchy is irrelevant (2) it was abolished years ago (3) the bourgeoisie have already tamed it (4) the monarchy is powerless (5) if we ignore it will go away (spontaneous disappearance). (6) that it is only entertainment not politics. The question of the monarchy is trivialised, personalised, and depoliticised. That is good for business.

Royal marxism.

The tradition of Royal Socialism and Marxism goes back to the 19th century. Marx and Engels had to constantly denounce Lassalle, the German socialist leader as a "Royal Prussian socialist". Later the Royal Russian Marxists, the mensheviks were attacked by Lenin for dropping republicanism. And in our Dis-united Kingdom we have the monarchist Labour Party matched by the ultra leftism of the SWP.

Royal socialism and marxism is nothing but Economism. According to this theory the working class should avoid politics and confine themselves to trade union issues. So whilst the monarchy may be horrible it is irrelevant and should be ignored. In other words the working class should accept all the liberal-monarchist arguments.

The SWP's 1688 Faction

"If we cannot have a Workers Republic lets keep the Constitutional Monarchy" sums up the basic politics of the SWP Right wing. Of course they don't say it like

that, otherwise their rotten conservative opportunism would be obvious to everybody. What they say is "we want a Workers Republic" and lets not mention the rest of our slogan.

For Royal British Marxists 1688 holds special importance as the year when the monarchy was finally tamed by the bourgeoisie. In 1688 the monarchy became "democratic", lost its power and became acceptable. Yes, they say, we don't like Charles and Di but we can tolerate them for the time being. Therefore say the 1688ers, we do not want us to abolish the monarchy now. Either it will eventually disappear by itself. We will wake up one morning and find it has vanished. Alternatively we should wait until capitalism is abolished, for the monarchy are "creatures of capitalism and they will fall when it falls, or it will not fall at all". (SW13/8/88). Try telling that to the French, Russian, German, and Italian workers.

Forward to the 17th century?

Recently, Tom Nairn, a republican and socialist has written a book called "The Enchanted Glass" which argues that the monarchy is the central issue for socialists." Nothing could be more guaranteed to provoke the SWP's 1688 faction. In Socialist Worker (13/8/88) a major article by John Rees "Forward to the 17th century" puts forward their Royal Marxist counter arguments.

Of course Rees is against the monarchy. It goes without saying. And the comrade tries very hard not to say it. Only at the end of the article do we find out that "of course socialists want to get rid of the monarchy. But...." This "BUT" comprises of all the thousands of preceding words. Words spent sneering at republicanism in the bourgeoisie fashion and "proving" we should ignore the monarchy, trivialising and personalising the issue. For example we are told that Charles is "a thoroughly nasty piece of work - yes. But our main enemy - No".

Naturally 1688 is singled out for special praise "when the monarch tried to reimpose his authority, Parliament and virtually the entire ruling class united to re-

place him with a King nominated by them" How wonderful! In case we are still worried we are assured that "not only was the monarchy under the thumb of the bourgeoisie after 1688, but by the early 1800's it had practically fallen into disuse."

Rees says that "Nairn's confusions lead to some desperately misleading political conclusions. His new republicanism sounds just like old reformism". This may be fair comment. But does Rees offer us revolutionary republicanism instead. Not at all. His craven defence of liberal-monarchism is equally misleading. His anti-republicanism also "sounds just like old reformism", that is old economism, liberalism and menshevism. He concludes of Nairn's analysis "like the monarchy it lacks substance". But it would be better politics if he had said "that like the SWP's republicanism it lacks substance".

Republicanism or as Rees calls it "forward to the 17th century", is for him "not a slogan likely to appeal to many socialists living under late 20th century capitalism". Fortunately for the rest of us, the SWP slogan "forward to 1688" is likely to be even less appealing. Unless you are a liberal or Royal Marxist of course!

The SWP's 1649 faction

If we must go back to the 17th century then 1649 is the revolutionary, democratic and republican tradition. A revolutionary tradition carried on by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. While the opportunist Right wing of the SWP are harking back to 1688, the left wing look to the revolutionary republicanism of 1649. The problem with Nairn's analysis is not militant republicanism. It is that he doesn't connect it to workers struggle and the need for a marxist party. We don't hesitate to say "if we can't have a workers republic lets at least get rid of the corrupt, class ridden, anti-democratic bourgeois monarchy" Instead of clinging to the monarchy like the Right wing of the SWP, lets fight for a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales

D.Simpson

GOVAN, REPUBLICANISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The Sunday Express (Nov 20th) reported on events at a banquet attended by the Queen, Thatcher, Kinnock, Callaghan, Wilson, Heath and other "worthies". Apparently the Queen was so alarmed about the Govan by election that she sought out Mr Kinnock.

"Surprised guests heard the Queen speak of "poor Mr Gillespie" in reference to the defeated Labour candidate" She then "expressed her worries over the dangers of a nationalist tide in Scotland and asked what he (Kinnock) intended to do about it. Mr Kinnock told he had ordered an urgent inquiry into Labour's poor showing and that he was sure his party would recapture the seat at the next general election".

The article explains that the Queen is not too worried "that Scotland would go republican with independence" because the SNP is monarchist but rather "the possible break up of her Realm, (is) an issue of such constitutional significance that she feels it proper, in private at least to make her feelings felt"

A copy of the following letter has come into our possession. We think it is a forgery. But as far as we can tell the political facts in it are true.

FROM THE SWP CENTRAL COMMITTEE
TO BUCK PALACE

Your Royal Highness

Most Gracious Queen and Protector of our Liberty, we your humble servants were very upset to hear of your worries about the danger of republicanism and a constitutional crisis.

The very idea that there is a connection between republicanism and the national question is ludicrous. You have no need to worry at all. We know that a few lunatics, like Marx, Engels and Lenin and more recently our very own Republican Faction have suggested this nonsense. But we have sent them packing.

When the Republican Faction started causing trouble we ordered Alex Callinicos to attack them. He produced some of the best Royal Marxist arguments since the days of Lassalle and the Mensheviks. The good news is that the Republican Faction has disappeared. Good Riddance. But the bad news is that now the RDG have appeared calling themselves the republican left wing of our party. Let us assure that they are only a tiny minority. They have virtually no support at all. So please don't worry. Mr Kinnock is a loyal chap and he will be doing his best at the next election to wing the seat back and to buy off nationalist sentiments with the offer of a Scottish Assembly under your constitutional leadership. We'll be supporting him in every way we can to win the election and get an assembly. You can count on us.

Your most Loyal and Obedient Central Committee

On behalf of Your Majesties SWP

P.S. Your Majesties Revolutionary Communist Party is also doing its best to help you out in Scotland.

Permanent Revolution.

The RDG supports a theory of Permanent Revolution as summarized in the following propositions.

1. International Capitalism or imperialism has developed into a world wide system of exploitation and oppression shaped by the law of combined and uneven development.

2. The world revolution is the revolt against imperialism. It exists to-day in the uneven and combined development of national revolutions.

3. The world revolution, in so far as it is led by and based on the political power of international working class, is transformed into the international socialist revolution. (i.e. the international transformation of capitalism.)

4. There can be no national socialist revolution. Capitalism cannot be abolished in one (or a few) country, nor socialism built in one country.

5. The National Democratic Revolution is an integral part of the world revolution. It signifies the fact that in every popular national revolution, or revolution "from below", the oppressed mass of the people struggle for self determination, expressed in new forms of National Democracy.

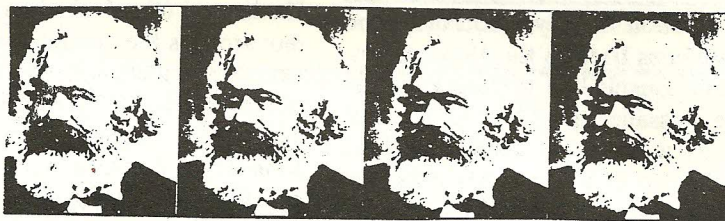
6. The class nature of the National Democratic Revolution is defined as bourgeois or proletarian depending on

- i) the political (ie class) leadership
- ii) the class nature of the State that is established.

This cannot be known for certain before the revolution. (It cannot be established a priori). Any view of the future revolution can only be conditional.

7. National Democracy may be based on either bourgeois democracy (Parliamentary or Peoples' democracy) or on workers (Soviet or Council) democracy. These States represent the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie OR the dictatorship of the proletariat.

8. Bourgeois (parliamentary) democracy can take a variety of political forms. These include constitutional monarchies, federal republics, centralised republics and dual power republics. These forms reflect the historical development of National Democracy by the class struggle.



9. The Dual Power Republic is a special type of Bourgeois Republic. It is politically unstable. It is the form taken in the transition from Bourgeois to Workers Democracy.

10. The Workers State is the highest, most advanced or most democratic form of National Democracy.

11. The bourgeoisie may rule without National Democracy by military and bureaucratic means, as for example under fascist or military dictatorships. The military, police and bureaucracy are an essential feature of all forms of bourgeois State whether parliamentary or not.

12. There are no intermediate States between the Bourgeois and Proletarian. There are no petty bourgeois states or Bourgeois Workers States. (These are usually called Degenerate Workers States, or Bureaucratic Workers States.)

13. The political or class leadership of the National Democratic revolution can only be provided by the petty bourgeoisie or the working class.

14. The bourgeoisie, including its so-called "progressive" or "anti-imperialist" wing is counter-revolutionary. There are no bourgeois led National Democratic revolutions.

15. The working class must fight for and win political leadership of the national and world revolution in the struggle for international socialism. To achieve this aim the working class must create its own independent party.

16. The Permanent revolution is the theory and practice of the ongoing or uninterrupted revolution, developing through various stages of struggle, until the working class holds power on a world scale.

BUILDING A SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

Last year saw encouraging signs in the UK mainland on Withdrawal and Solidarity work. On the Withdrawal front we saw the launch of the Time To Go charter (TTG) and the return of the SWP to Irish activity. In terms of solidarity work, Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid has been set up. More recently the Leninist took the initiative to bring some of the smaller marxist groups together, resulted in setting up of the "Hands Off Ireland" and the "Committee for an Irish Solidarity Forum" (CISF). We asked Mick O'Farrell to explain the origins of the CISF, from the first meeting called by the Leninist.

"I am not sure if I can remember every group present, but amongst them were the Leninist, the Internationalist Faction, the RCG, Workers Power, the RDG, Revolutionary Internationalist League, the IRSP and Red Action. It appeared that all those present were agreed that the

course exactly the same two that the Troops Out Movement bases itself. As I and others pointed out if the aim was to build an ongoing campaign with a far more militant character, then how would it be possible to create such a movement by adopting exactly the same politics as the Troops Out.

Eventually after a good deal of discussion it was decided it would be best to adjourn the meeting in order to allow those present to digest the discussions aired and report back to their organisations, and to allow those who wished to draw formal proposals for amendments or alternatives to the Leninist draft statement. The Leninist representatives undertook to arrange this (next) meeting.

At this there were three new documents for those present to consider. A proposed amendment to the original founding

statement proposed by the Leninist from the RCG, a proposed alternative statement from the RDG, and a proposed alternative from Workers Power. Debate then commenced over the respective merits of various proposed statements. Eventually it became clear there was no clear consensus or significant majority for any one statement.

Those groups that proposed statements were asked if they would be prepared to negotiate and/or compromise on their statements. Both the RDG and Workers Power intimated that they would

be prepared to explore this possibility. However the Leninist representatives stated quite categorically that they were not prepared to compromise on in any way or accept any amendment to their proposal.

At this point, one of the representatives suggested that there should be a vote on the various statements. The chair then



Leninist proposal that there should be a joint intervention into the TTG.

The Leninist had themselves brought along a prepared statement and demands that they proposed that the meeting should adopt and the political demands of the proposed movement/campaign. There were just two "troops Out now" and "self determination for the Irish people as a whole". These two demands are of

qualified this call by stating that he did not intend that this be a binding vote. With this clear understanding a vote was taken. Three people voted for the Leninist statement, three for the RDG statement, and one for the Workers Power statement.

It was clear that out of the three proposed founding statements on offer the RDG's was the only one which could have been in any way described as constituting the basis for solidarity work, the inclusion in it of the two demands calling for the release of all republican prisoners of war and victory to the republican movement. Whilst in my opinion these were certainly better intended than worded, the RDG it should be pointed out had already stated that they were prepared to negotiate upon and accept amendments to the actual phrasing or wording of any part of their statement, as long as the spirit of it remained intact. Whilst the other two statements refused to go beyond the minimum programme demands of the TOM of "Troops Out now" and "Self determination for the Irish people".

The obvious conclusion was that there was nothing like a consensus or even a recognisable majority. It certainly seemed to me that the only possible thing to be done now was to adjourn to allow more discussion and reflection, and reconvene later. After this two things of relevance occurred.

Firstly a document was produced by the RDG which attempted to analyse and define the theoretical roots of the debate which had occurred over the choice of founding statement. The reason I call this document significant is because it described two different approaches between what they term as a withdrawal movement and a solidarity movement. The conclusions reached are very similar to those reached by Red Action.

The second thing of significance which occurred was that unbeknown to the majority of groups and individuals who had attended the meetings, the Leninist group convened a meeting to which only representatives of the other two groups who had supported their proposed statements in the vote were invited. As far as I and most of the others who had been attending the meetings were concerned, the first indication which any of us had that something other than the supposedly agreed course of action was occurring, was when we read a copy of the Leninist paper which announced that the "Hands Off Ireland" initiative had been launched under the Leninists own founding statement. This action by the Leninist group was to

This was submitted by the RDG to the discussion around the Hands Off Ireland initiative

ALTERNATIVE DRAFT STATEMENT

The coming year will be the twentieth anniversary of the latest phase of Britain's colonial war in Ireland. It has seen thousands killed and many more thousands jailed for resisting the British imperialist oppressor.

The level of resistance to the British occupation of the Six Counties of the North of Ireland by the nationalist masses there has been inspiring. Britain has tried many different ways to break the intransigence of the nationalist people, from Internment to Ulsterisation; from "Criminalisation" to shoot-to-kill and the London-Dublin Accord. It has failed: the struggle for Irish freedom continues unabated.

But there is one aspect of the Irish war that Britain has so far won. It has maintained the allegiance of the majority of the working class in Britain, against the Irish people. Successive solidarity movements have failed to change this.

Whilst we recognise the need to unite and mobilise all democratic forces in England, Scotland and Wales who want Britain to withdraw from Ireland, we believe this is not enough. It is also necessary to unite and mobilise those who support the Irish people in their long war against British imperialism.

We reject the arguments that Britain should withdraw simply to save the lives of British soldiers or to save the country money. We are not neutral in this war. We do not support British withdrawal for pacifist or patriotic reasons. As internationalists and socialists we support the struggle of the republican movement against British occupation as a progressive struggle against imperialism. Victory in that struggle will assist all democratic and working class forces in Ireland and Britain in their struggle for freedom.

Consequently we stand in solidarity with the republican movement, call for the immediate withdrawal of troops, uphold the principle of national self determination and demand the release of all political prisoners.

The Republican Alliance is a democratic campaign based on those individuals and organisations willing to fight for;

1. To free all republican prisoners of war.

2. Victory to the republican movement.

3. Troops out now

4. Self determination for the Irish people as a whole.

We call on all anti-imperialists and supporters of Irish freedom to join us in this fight.

RDG(OC) Faction of the SWP.

me a totally reprehensible act. Just to cut of all discussion in arbitrary fashion was totally unprincipled. It was further unprincipled for them to state that some organisations were "unable to support" their statement, without giving some explanation of why.

The next development was that I was contacted by a member of the RDG and informed that they were attempting to organise a meeting of all groups who had been excluded from the third Hands Off Ireland meeting to try to establish a united response. Discussion at the meeting obviously centred around the actions of the Leninist, what the basis of it was, and what the response should be. It seemed to me that there was general agreement amongst most if not all there that what the

Leninist had done was not commendable but perhaps not quite such agreement as to why they had acted the way they did or how serious a transgression it represented. Some, I leaned towards this view, felt that it was a very serious breach of principle, based on definite political calculation. Others tended to see it as more a case of impoliteness committed out of haste and lack of thought, an indiscretion rather than a calculated political manoeuvre. Eventually it was agreed amongst all present that the best thing to do was to attend the next Hands Off Ireland meeting and basically see what the Leninist had to say for themselves.

In the event I could not attend the next meeting. I understand that the RDG called upon the Leninist to withdraw their

arbitrary imposition of a founding statement of their own, and reopen discussion and debate on this issue. This the Leninist refused to do. At which point the RDG declared their intention of withdrawing from Hands Off Ireland. I understand they were supported in this by the Internationalist Faction.

(M. O'Farrell Red Action in a personal capacity)

Red Action and the RDG have agreed to begin fusion talks. The RDG has prepared a document and submitted it and we are now waiting for an initial response from RA. We hope to publish any relevant material in future Republican Workers.

Fund

We intend to publish Republican Worker on a more regular basis. But to do this we need your help and support.

First of course we lack the finances of the bigger organisations especially those tied to the monarchy and the establishment. No matter how small we need your financial donations.

If you want to take a regular subscription or take and sell a few copies to friends and workmates, please get in contact with us at the address below.

The Revolutionary Democratic Group



Seventeen years since Bloody Sunday...

THE COMMITTEE FOR AN IRISH SOLIDARITY FORUM.

The aim of the CISF is to promote discussion and clarification of the politics of Irish Solidarity, and encourage the organisation of a solidarity movement.

We believe that the solidarity platform should be along the lines of - Victory to the Irish liberation movement, troops out now, self determination for the whole of the Irish people, and release the prisoners of war.-

We believe that a solidarity movement should be built as a united front.

We believe it is necessary to develop a joint perspective of work, leading to unity in action.

DISCUSSION PAPER: BRITISH WITHDRAWAL AND IRISH SOLIDARITY.

The following is an extract from a discussion document drafted for the Committee for an Irish Solidarity Forum. It is intended as a contribution to a class analysis of developing withdrawal and solidarity movements in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Unionist Bourgeoisie - For peace, democracy and the Union.

The British bourgeoisie are committed to maintaining control over Ireland for a variety of reasons, historical, economic, political, ideological and military. This commitment is "bi-partisan", that is to say is supported by the two main bourgeois parties, Tories and Labour.

The bourgeoisie have never been able to explain the real reason for their presence in Ireland. Nor have they ever told the truth about their methods of oppression, that is bribery, corruption, lying, terror, discrimination, harassment, brutality, torture, assassination and the denial of democratic rights. Nevertheless their governments have always needed popular support or at least acquiescence.

Consequently bourgeois politicians and their media seek to explain the denial of democracy in the name of democracy. Two major arguments underpin the Unionist case.

1) The British presence is an expression of the will of the majority of the Northern Ireland people.

2) The British Army is merely there to enforce that democratic mandate by keeping the peace.

Therefore the conclusion is that reluctantly the British must stay at present.

This does not mean that there are no differences between conservative and liberal brands of Unionism. The Tories are out and out Unionists. By contrast, Kinnock and Co. present themselves as liberals who have not ruled out withdrawal, providing of course it has the agreement and consent of the Unionist majority. In terms of practical politics Kinnock is just as opposed to withdrawal as Thatcher.

The dangers of having illusions in liberal Unionism is no where more clearly demonstrated than the Anglo-Irish deal. It offers the promise of better times for Catholics and even the nod and a wink to eventual withdrawal. But in practice it is aimed at destroying the nationalist movement.

The Opposition - withdrawal and solidarity.

Fortunately not everybody goes along with the reactionary policies of successive bourgeois governments. Every struggle generates an opposition, which in Britain takes two forms. Opinion polls have shown that millions of people think that Britain should withdraw. A much smaller number, perhaps thousands, sympathise with or support the republican nationalist and socialist movement.

These two forms of opposition are not limited merely to attitudes and political opinions. There have been conferences, demonstrations and pickets organised around these themes. For example in 1983 the "Co-ordinating Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland" organised a demonstration of 3000 in London. In January 1986 a Bloody Sunday demo of 10,000 was held in London, calling for withdrawal. There have also been local initiatives, for example recently the Glasgow Ad hoc committee for British Withdrawal appealed for support for against a ban on demonstrations by the Strathclyde Regional Council. But equally there have been solidarity demonstrations, most notably the Manchester Martyrs annual event. Organisations have been set up to provide support for Irish Prisoners.

Withdrawal and Solidarity are forms of opposition created by the Irish War. They have their parallels in the first World War, which produced both Anti-war and Defeatist movements. Whilst the Anti-war movement was more broadly supported, defeatism was supported by a revolutionary minority around the Bolsheviks.

What is to be done ? - Consciousness versus sponteneity and tailism.

These movements are developing spontaneously, without a correct political direction. Our task is not to start, invent or set up withdrawal or solidarity movements. The problem lies in the "consciousness" of what needs to be done. Consciousness has not kept ahead of the developing movements. A consequence is ineffective political leadership, more confusion as to the political tasks, resulting in less organisation and less capability for mobilising people. Activity in the unions, in elections and on the streets is less than it should and could have been.

The lack of activity is not because the masses won't respond (as for example the SWP suggests) but because of the lack of political clarity among the core of activists. From this comes the lack of unity and

the lack of organisation. It is no good coming and saying, as worshippers of sponteneity do, "activity, activity, what we need is more activity". On the contrary our slogan must be "consciousness, consciousness, what we need is more consciousness".

The sponteneistists come in different disguises, but they agree that the weakness of the movement is because of a "lack of action" rather than a "lack of consciousness". The SWP for example blames the lack of action on the masses. There is a downturn, the masses can do nothing, therefore we can do nothing. This sums up the sponteneism of the SWP in the last eight years of Irish work.

If as marxists we want to influence and shape the withdrawal and solidarity movements rather than simply relect all the weaknesses, the most practical task is to clarify the aims, programme, and tactics which the working class must have in relation to these movements. Clarity on these questions will do more to broaden and deepen mass action than any number of calls for activity from those who tail end the movement. This is why the call for a solidarity forum is a very practical suggestion.

ORGANISING A POPULAR WITHDRAWAL MOVEMENT.

Whilst there is popular support for British withdrawal, a mass withdrawal movement has not yet been properly organised. What political ideas will be necessary to build it?

A class alliance.

The basis of a Withdrawal movement must be a class alliance of petty bourgeois and proletarian forces. In political terms this means an alignment of forces to the left of Kinnock, such as Bennites, marxists, pacifists, radicals, anarchists, civil libertarians, left nationalists (e.g. Plaid Cymru) etc. Such an alliance has the potential win mass support away from the dominant bourgeois line

The programme of the alliance.

The Withdrawal alliance must pose its programme against that of the bourgeoisie on the three key issues of peace, democracy and British presence\withdrawal. It must present an alternative peace programme.

- (i) for peace
- (ii) through self determination for the whole Irish people
- (iii) and British withdrawal.

The message must in essence be that peace, that is an end to the Anglo-Irish war, can only be achieved through self-determination for the Irish people as a whole, and British withdrawal.

A Popular Front With Kinnock OR a United Front against Kinnock.

It is necessary to specify the nature of the Withdrawal Alliance as a United Front not a Popular Front. A popular front is an alliance which adapts itself to the left or "progressive" bourgeoisie (i.e. Kinnock and Willis) hoping to gain their support. The idea that a Kinnock led Labour government might bring about withdrawal in defiance of the Bourgeoisie is a hopeless and utopian illusion. Kinnock would only do this if the bourgeoisie, for some reason, changed policy. Meanwhile Kinnock liberals are adept at deceiving the masses as to their real intentions.

The issue of self-determination rather than withdrawal is therefore crucial. Labour's policy of withdrawal by consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland violates the principle of self-determination. It is this which exposes Kinnock's policy. Therefore those who see the Withdrawal movement as a popular front will downgrade or even abandon the question of national self-determination.

The Withdrawal movement must endorse the principle of self-determination for the whole of the Irish people, and must therefore be built as an anti-Thatcher\anti-Kinnock united front.

The Withdrawal movement is a reformist movement.

Like the trade unions, the Withdrawal movement is a reformist movement. Its programme is not a revolutionary one, regardless of the consequences of withdrawal. Support for the platform does not require any commitment to revolutionary politics.

Should the working class support a withdrawal movement?

The answer is yes. The international working class has nothing to lose and a lot to gain from supporting British withdrawal from Ireland. It will help to build unity between the British and Irish working class, which has been soured by the role of British imperialism in Ireland over the centuries.

Should the working class lead the withdrawal movement?

It is not sufficient to suggest that the working class should support the reformist movement. The working class must

lead it. Without the principle of working class leadership, the movement would be left under the domination of the petty bourgeoisie. However working class leadership is not something to be declared, it must be fought for and won in practice. This means that the working class must form an independent Left wing, that is a revolutionary wing in which marxism would necessarily have a crucial role. This brings us to the question of the Solidarity movement.

Ultra left sectarianism defined.

The issue of the relationship of the revolutionary marxism to the reformist movement has been posed many times before. One example was the attitude of (revolutionary) marxism to the (reformist) trade unions. Lenin in "Left Wing Communism" shows that a characteristic of sectarianism is its refusal to fight for working class leadership of reformist movement. This refusal takes the form of either outright abstentionism or passive propagandism. The most important factor for the sectarian is to maintain your political purity so as not to be tainted with reformism. This means either not joining the struggle or turning up to sell marxist propaganda. What it means in practice is giving a blank cheque to the petty bourgeoisie to mislead the movement and all the workers in it. In this sense sectarianism assists the petty bourgeoisie.

ORGANISING A SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT.

A solidarity movement is a revolutionary movement. Its basis of support comes from all those who support the revolutionary struggle in Ireland. This would include Irish republicans (both nationalist and socialists), marxists and anarchists. Marxists support the national liberation movement in upholding the policy of revolutionary defeatism. In a struggle between an imperialist power and a revolutionary movement we support the revolutionary movement, even more so against "our own" bourgeoisie.

The programme of a solidarity movement.

First the solidarity movement must not be shy of stating with whom it is in solidarity. It must have as one of its slogans "Victory to the Republican (nationalist & socialist) movement or national liberation movement". It must also demand the immediate withdrawal of troops, self-determination and the release of prisoners of war.

The solidarity movement as a united front.

The solidarity movement must also be built as an alliance of revolutionary forces, that is as a united front. Within it, each organisation must maintain its own autonomy and the right to criticise its allies. It must not be a Front for any particular party or group. This is important when there is no single marxist party but a fragmented movement.

The solidarity movement and the working class.

The solidarity movement represents the best internationalist politics in the revolutionary working class tradition. The First World War gave rise to mass Anti-War movements supported by workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors. It also produced a revolutionary minority campaigning for "Defeatism", that is the defeat of your "own" government. The solidarity movement is a revolutionary defeatist movement, towards which all the best fighters in the working class will gravitate.

The relationship of Withdrawal to Solidarity movement.

What should be the relationship of the revolutionary to the reformist movement? Just as revolutionaries may begin as a minority in a reformist movement, so Solidarity is a minority in a Withdrawal movement. It is the Left wing of the united front. It is the proletarian wing. As such it should fight for the leadership of the withdrawal movement. At the same time it must be prepared to act independently and if necessary against the withdrawal movement. Part of its task is to combat the influence of Kinnock popular frontism, with working class internationalism. In this sense a strong Withdrawal movement goes hand in hand with a strong Solidarity movement, just as a strong marxist movement creates a strong TU movement. The complex inter-relationship of the two movements must be the basis for marxist tactics. We reject any crude counterposing of one to the other.

Opportunism defined.

Opportunism in relation to Ireland can be defined as attempts to build Withdrawal and Solidarity movements on the basis of something less than the minimum slogans. For example building a withdrawal movement without self-determination or a solidarity movement without supporting the liberation movement.

RDGOCDEC88.

GOVAN AND THE WORKING CLASS

On September the 13th, the Labour Party in Scotland held its Special Conference in Govan Town Hall they officially confirmed their new found role as the Tories chief poll tax farmers in Scotland. On November 9th, Jim Sillars, standing as the SNP\No Poll Tax candidate, wiped out a Labour majority, to become the first nationalist to unseat Labour since 1976.

There is no real Nationalist culture on Clydeside, unlike in the Six Counties or even North Wales. The SNP had no record of fighting the Poll Tax in the Govan constituency. They had officially shunned Govan anti-poll tax group, which enjoyed widespread support and was the largest in Scotland. Dewar and Kinnock had removed Larry Flanagan, Glasgow councillor and Militant supporter from the list of candidates. Militant meekly accepted the anti-democratic manoeuvre and declined to campaign with an independent candidate. All the growing resentment towards the Tories and their collaborators was channeled towards the SNP.

Despite a lack of positive support for the SNPs nationalism, they were undoubtedly able to capitalise on the widespread concern, amongst Govans worker as. SNPs jibe at Labour, feeble fifty struck home. Believing they were saying no any more Tory policies. By November 1988 they were saying no to Labour collaborators too. The most depressed part of Govan became a "No go area" for Labour canvassers, who felt the contempt of working class youth.

The lack of mandate for Tory policies is now a vital issue. The linking of the poll tax and the national question is no longer abstract political coupling. The workers of Govan have shown this. Already throughout Scotland, thousands have refused to register for the poll tax. This is in the teeth of opposition from Labour and the SNP and despite the leadership from the Militant dominated Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Many, many more now refuse to pay the tax in April. The lack of a Tory mandate is opening up the possibility of a mass civil disobedience campaign. From a crisis of legitimacy there could develop a constitutional crisis.

WHICH CLASS WILL SOLVE A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

The issue will then be, which class will take the lead in resolving this crisis. The ruling class's preferred leadership, the Tories are already preparing. They hope to repeat their success of a Century ago when the growing national movement in Ireland created a constitutional crisis. Reactionary Tory Unionists forced the long dominant Liberals and their hangers on into retreat and division. A large section of the Liberals deserted to the Conservative Unionists. Rifkind hopes the repeat this in Scotland, by dividing the Liberal ruling class's main party, the Labour Party, into Unionists and Nationalists. He has a powerful ally in Kinnock, who has stridently asserted his Unionism, dismissing self-determination as "talking point between the chattering classes in Scotland"

However the ruling classes liberal wing has also been stirred by the Govan by-election. They sense the danger of declining support for the state, with its legitimacy endangered and the growth in support for mass civil disobedience. Divided by Thatchers radical Right offensive, they have desperately tried to cobble together a Popular Front, stretched from ministers to miners. The Campaign For a Scottish Assembly (CSA) has published a "Claim of Right" and is attempting to set up a Scottish Convention. The main support for this comes from the Scottish middle class. A combination of economic devastation and the blocking of career opportunities, once enjoyed under Labours benevolent state patronage, has made many of the Scottish middle class hungry. However they are divided over how much of their remaining privilege they are prepared to hazard, in the attempt to achieve all the career opportunities a Scottish Assembly under the Crown would offer them. The most cautious opt for Dewar's devolved Assembly under Westminster. This still leaves open the traditional career moves to London. The more radical support the SNPs "independence" under the Brussels bureaucracy.

This division has already caused a political split. Whereas the Govan by-election forced a reluctant Dewar to give his support the cross party Scottish Convention it simultaneously increased the SNP's appetite. They are prepared to ditch the



convention and go it alone. Labours own nationalists, whether in the STUC leadership or in the Scottish Labour Action, are incensed at the SNPs desertion. They sense their own weakness.

If the working class doesn't intervene, on its own account, in the growing constitutional crisis, then the SNP gamble that politics in Scotland will gamble between Thatcherite Unionism and full blown Scottish nationalism may well prove correct. However, this would be a very one sided struggle. The SNP may well attempt to reassure Scottish capitalists that any fears they have of losing their safeguards under the Westminster constitution will be more than compensated for, by the protection of the blatantly pro-capitalist EEC rules and regulations. However, the British ruling class as a whole has no intention of economically losing the revenues from North sea oil, or politically allowing the break up of the UK..

The SNP is pushing the illusion the British ruling class would meekly concede to an SNP majority of Scottish MPs at Westminster. According to Kenny MacAskill, a leading left winger and party Vice Convener on Policy, the British ruling class have a "sense of fair play and justice instilled at an early age" in public schools and that "Leon Britan amongst others has recently made it clear that those traditions" (of abiding by democratic virtues" would be adhered to" furthermore "colonial disengagement.....stands up well in contrast to other nations". (The Scotsman 2.1.89) Maybe the Indians, Palestinians, the South Yemenis to name but a few would disagree! But maybe this is too far away how about Ireland! How about the British ruling class's response to the nationalists in Ireland! In the early 20's the, when the break up of the UK was threatened, they drowned the Irish revolution in blood, sponsoring a neo-colonialist ad-

ministration in the South and a sectarian Unionists administration in the North.

A study of the recent phase of the national struggle in Ireland, shows there are lessons to be drawn, from those who would try and trap workers in the CSA and the Charter88 popular fronts. The early Irish Civil Rights Movement tried to reform the Six Counties statelet. It wasn't the bigoted Orange Establishment that ultimately blocked this strategy. It was British Army bullets, sanctioned at the highest level, that ended their illusions on Bloody Sunday, 1972.

Further more, unlike most of the supporters of the CSA and Charter 88, supporters of the Northern Irish constitutional reform were prepared to involve themselves in Civil Disobedience to achieve their ends. Tokays UK constitutional reformers allow their movement to be dictated by what is permissible under the Westminster rules they are trying to reform. The Tories don't hold to such niceties, When Deputy Chief Constable John Stalker or Conservative Lord Windham upset the government's attempt to cover up a shoot to kill policy, they were unceremoniously pushed aside. Meanwhile Tory Minister Douglas Hogg gave a nod to the loyalist death squad that murdered nationalist lawyer Pinucane. Perhaps the nationalist lawyer, Kenny MacAskill should take note!

Today Labour and SNP tell Scottish workers the same thing wait until 1992! The Tories lack of mandate isn't to be used by Scottish workers to take the initiative now. Just be patient and await deliverance. By 1992, Dewar thinks Kinnock will have made Labour so acceptable to the Scottish Establishment, they will back Labour once more. Thatcherism will be replaced by Thatchnockism. No wonder David Owen thinks he may have made a mistake leaving Labour! The SNP, however, need to supplement the wait until 1992 with some token action now. Hence their support for a middle class moral protest campaign against the poll tax - well for 3 months after its introduction anyhow!

When working class anger grows, Labour's nationalist wing will also organise token actions, to prevent any civil disobedience getting out of hand. The STUC

have become masters at the art of token actions, from 11 minute tea brakes stoppages to one day 'general' strikes.

Even Labour's latest split - the Movement for a Socialist Scotland - looks like acting mainly as the moral conscience of well meaning but disillusioned Labour Party members. Their leading spokesman, Alec Wood (Ex-leader of Edinburgh District Council) and Jim Young (college lecturer and author) disapprove of Leninism on one hand and labour collaboration on the other. Not surprisingly, they look upon the old ILP as their model. They are mainly concerned with drawing up policy statements to put before the electorate. Significantly, they play no role virtually in their local anti-poll tax groups or the federation.

However when it comes to the revolutionary, they offer no lead to Scottish workers either. Right up to November 9th, both Militant and the SWP were telling workers to vote for Dewar's glove puppet - Bob Gillespie - a vote for undisguised Tory Labour Collaboration. The RCP, normally quick to take advantage of a by-election chance, failed to field a candidate. This followed the disastrous

"There isn't going to be a constitutional crisis in Scotland" - Andy Anderson (Edinburgh SWP) addressing the Lothian Federation of Anti-Poll tax unions on Nov 7th 1988

"The Govan by-election has sent shock waves through the working class movement in Scotland.... Surely the most effective way of taking the fight to the Tories is for 49 Labour MP's and 4 SNP MP's to convene in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh and declare Thatcher has no mandate in Scotland" - "Socialist Worker" Open Letter to Socialists in Scotland published on Nov 9th.

"We have the same position to-day, we'll have the same position tomorrow, and we'll have the same position.... until we change it" - Willie Black SWP National Committee addressing a "What now for the left in Scotland Public Meeting in Edinburgh on 27/2/89.

failure of their sectarian party front - Smash the Poll Tax Campaign.

after November, Militant calmly forgot about their support for Bob Gillespie and called the result a "crushing condemnation of the Labour leadership. Yet Militant still offer advice to Kinnock and Dewar. "Govan is a warning to the leadership not to take the Scottish vote for granted". (Militant Editorial 18.11.88) The SWP also expects its members to have very short memories. The "dramatic swing to the SNP" now became a "sign of deep anger of many" that could "not be dismissed as a vote for the "Tartan

Tories". "the 3000 SNP majority shows a massive frustration with Labour" (Open Letter to Socialist In Scotland") despite this the SWP leadership try to resurrect the same Lazarus policy that has done so much to discredit and to marginalise them in the anti-poll tax campaign. They call on the "49 Labour MPs and 4 SNP MPs to Convene a in the Assembly hall in Edinburgh" and "organise defiance of (Thatcher's) Laws". At least Christ had to resurrect a prone body. Dewar and co have fought tooth and nail, on behalf of the Tories, against any moves towards civil disobedience.

Revolutionary Left - Unionist or Nationalist.

The truth is that the majority of the revolutionary left are also split into "unionist and "nationalist" camps. On the "Unionist" side we have the RCP and the "Leninist" denying the existence of a Scottish nation. We are all true Brits. "Workers Power" concedes the existence of a Scottish nation, but workers need the protection of a UK constitution against divisive Nationalism.

In the nationalist camp, both Militant and the SWP now support devolution, whilst at present supporting separation. They believe this arms them against Scottish Nationalism. But devolution only forced its way onto the political agenda, due to the upsurge in support for the SNP. Militant and the SWP leave open the possibility of support for separation later - if the majority of the Scottish people support it. In other words either the ruling or middle class call the political shots. (If the radical right have the upper

hand and silence the political demand for self-determination - that's all right. Workers can get on with the real job fighting for better pay and conditions. If the liberal devolutionists have the upper hand then workers can act as cheer leaders for a Scottish Assembly under Westminster, whilst getting on with the real job - trade union struggle. If the radical nationalists win out, then workers can cheer them too, not forgetting of course the real job - the economic struggle)

Defence of Democratic Rights In Ireland And Scotland

And of course the one thing that all the reformists and revolutionary unionists agree on - the situation in Ireland has no relevance to the struggle for self-determination in Scotland. For the reformists the Irish are.....well Irish! Jim Sillars told the electorate in Govan, "I think the people in Scotland should ignore Sinn Fien". For the revolutionary unionists and devolutionists, Scotland isn't oppressed like Ireland. Oppression isn't the denial of democratic rights, like the denial



of an Assembly in 1979, or the or the continued use of Scotland as a testing ground for the Tories reactionary laws undermining legal rights, comprehensive schooling, local authority autonomy or introducing the poll tax. For these revolutionary arbiters of oppression, Scottish workers will have to await their first baton round!

In the last century land was the economic and social issue which drove Irish politics along the republican road. James Connolly warned of the danger of leaving the solution of the resulting constitutional crisis to the representatives of other classes no matter how radical they might

appear. They would use their power to ensure an outcome of the constitutional crisis favourable to themselves.

In the late 60's it was the issue of housing discrimination which led to the breaking of the Ulster Unionist stranglehold. But like the SWP and Militant of today, focussed on the economic issue. As the constitutional crisis developed they left the politics to the Civil Rights leaders. Only the half forgotten republicans pointed out the impossibility of reforming the Six Counties statelet. Thus it is now the revolutionary nationalists of Sinn Fien who hold the leadership of the democratic movement in Ireland.

The SWP and the Militant are repeating these mistakes over the poll tax. They emphasise the economic aspect. The poll tax affects far more

people in Scotland, than either land hunger or housing discrimination did in Ireland....Tories attempt to test the poll tax in Scotland first ensures that the political nature of the UK constitution is raised. SWP and Militant's tail ending the demand for a Scottish Assembly under the Crown, amounts to complicity in keeping the revolutionary democratic alternative buried. The solving of a future constitutional crisis is handed to the political representatives of the liberal ruling class.

The RDG's support for militant defiance of the Tories imposed poll tax is matched by resolute opposition of the UK constitution. Govan has firmly linked the struggle against the poll tax with the national question in Scotland. Revolutionary socialists must push to the fore, the political implications of workers calling to the fore the Tories lack of mandate. No amount of organisational work will alone defeat the poll tax. Workers need to be politically convinced that the immediate consequence of the Tories lack of mandate is the need to organise mass civil disobedience now. This needs to involve all workers - those in well organised poorly, organised, or in no trade union at all. This civil disobedience means mass non payment, non collection and the withdrawal of any support from the Tories and their collaborators.

The resulting crisis in legitimacy would lead to a constitutional crisis. This struggle for self determination opens up a new front, after twenty years of struggle in Ireland. Genuine self determination means an end to the British Road to Socialism, either its reformist or revolutionary guises. Instead we should join the struggle for the break up of the UK constitution, with all its non elected and unaccountable officials. We need to develop a real democratic movement that would break the bureaucratic power bases of Thatcher and Kinnock, her arch collaborator. Success on the democratic front would inspire not only Scottish and Irish workers, but English and Welsh workers too.

Allan Armstrong.

A FRATERNAL LETTER TO COMRADES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The lessons of the anti-poll tax campaign in Scotland

Dear Comrades,

Since Thatcher came to power, Scotland has been used as a laboratory for much of her reactionary legislation, from the rate capping of the early eighties. Being a guinea-pig in such circumstances has been neither pleasant nor enjoyable. But it has been most informative and instructive. It has given a object lesson in, and litmus test of, the practice of competing political tendencies on the left operating within Britain. The poll tax campaign in Scotland has been particularly instructive in this area and holds many lessons for socialists in England and Wales concerned to par-

ticipate in and help lead a fightback against Thatcher and all she and her party represent. Particularly instructive on this score have been the roles of

1. The Labour Party leadership
2. The Labour dominated Regional and District Councils
3. The Scottish Trade Union leadership
4. The Left Labourites
5. The Militant Tendency
6. The SWP
7. Other less influential groups on the left

After the June 87 election the Labour Party in Scotland found itself dominating in all the major areas of political life. It captured an unprecedented 50 of the 72

Mp's. It controlled all of the most significant regional and district councils, while the Labour Party, since the appointment of Cambell Christie as General Secretary of the STUC had ousted the Communist Party from any independent influence on that body. Many of the leading lights of the Labour Party were full of bravado and rhetoric after the June election. George Foulkes MP stated,

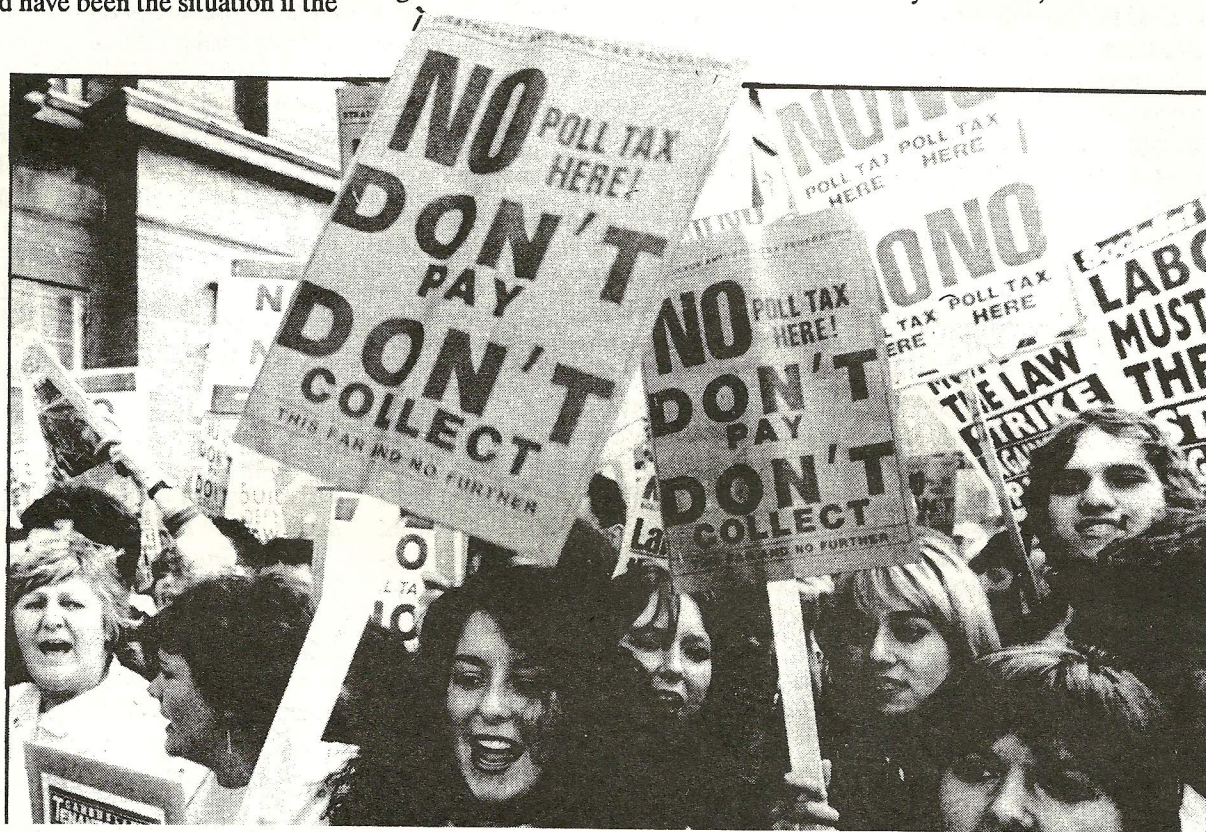
"Malcolm Rifkind is not stupid, he knows concessions are necessary, and he is likely to tell Thatcher that he will not be able to implement some aspects of Tory policy such as the Poll Tax." (1)

Bill Speirs, the chair of the Scottish Executive and Vice Chair of the STUC was moved to remark, "I don't think anyone will feel let down by Labour's 50 Scottish M.P.'s. Scottish Tories are in for a hard time. With only 10 M.P.'s the Tories will find it impossible to govern Scotland." (2)

What predictive perspicacity! Though not in the way that Foulkes and Speers intended. What they outlined was precisely what would have been the situation if the

Meetings for paying the poll tax have not been the Tories but rather the Scottish Labour Party leaders such as Donald Dewar, Brian Wilson, and John Maxton. For the political role of the Labour Party has been not to act as misguided leaders of the working class but as active agents of the capitalist class and its interests. Of course there is nothing new in that. Witness the recent revelations of Clive Ponting of how Harold Wilson's economic and

Nato, the Banks of England, America and Japan, the EEC bureaucracy, the multinational tycoons etc etc ad nauseam. On the other side of the chinese wall that the Labour Party erects within itself to shield the ruling class - the political bans, the block votes, the contempt for and sabotaging of conference decisions, the autonomy of the Parliament- lies the working class. Here we have to-day the Labour Party in essence, here we have the Labour



Labour Party had been a serious about questioning Thatchers mandate and challenging the Tories on the poll tax. Then indeed Tory concessions would have been on the agenda and the governing of Scotland would have proved a little difficult. But this alas, is not the nature of the Labour Party and what our Scottish experience has highlighted and clarified is the absolute bankruptcy of the Labour Party, its complete subservience and capitulation before the norms, needs and ideas of the capitalist Establishment. For it is important for comrades in England and Wales to realise just exactly what has been the political role of the Labour Party over the poll tax issue. It is not merely that it has singularly failed to lead a genuine campaign, which is itself illuminating. It is more essentially that within Scotland it has been the main agent for implementing the poll tax, through the Regional Councils and for attacking all those who wish to wage a serious mass non-payment campaign. Thus the main propagandists in "our" newspapers, television, at Public

defence policies were dictated by the White House! (3) What is illuminating though about the Scottish experience, given the massive decline in Tory support, and the extent of Labour preeminence, is the extent to which Labour itself is shown to belong to the enemy camp. As was pointed out in one of the recent RDG leaflets,

"At the root of socialist illusions in Labour is the belief that it is "our" party. It just happens to be in the wrong hands. This is fundamentally wrong. A chinese wall exists between "our" representatives and the working class."(4)

Behind the wall, subservience and cringing to the ossified political structures and archaic Westminster rules of the game. Subservience and cringing to newspaper editors, opinion poll makers whizz kids; to the manufactured "common sense" and heritage of the British Establishment, Royal Family, British Empire and all. Subservience and cringing before the Capitalist big power cartels of the IMF,

Party in practice in Scotland to-day. This is the lesson that the Poll tax campaign has brought home loud and clear to quote our leaflet again,

"The Labour Party is a permanent popular front, where socialists must constantly surrender working class interests to those of other classes... socialists need to start building a new working class party."(5)

It will be useful now to turn to the experience we have gained in Scotland from the main independent poll tax campaigns and how the perspectives and practice of the main political forces involved in these has matched up the requirements of the hour. In Scotland the initial campaigning work calling for mass non-payment and non-implementation of the tax was initiated in the Strathclyde before the June 87 election by a small group of political activists centred around Matt Lygate (Britain's longest serving political prisoner) in the Workers Party of Scotland. They founded the Anti-Poll tax Union. In the months that followed campaigns were initiated by

the RCP "smash the poll tax, and later the anarchist "Community Resistance". in that period the WPS and RCP campaigns have disintegrated. The Militant Tendency joined later and took up the Anti-Poll tax Union name. They now largely dominate the Strathclyde Federation. At the second Strathclyde Federation conference the Militant Tendency had support of approximately 210 of the 270 delegates and hold 11 out of the 12 executive positions. Indeed this second conference was a Militant Rally in all but name, with invited guests from Liverpool and Coventry, with no other Scottish Federation represented, with motions taken in blocks of seven or eight, with Executive recommendations and a minimum of political debate. Militant in Strathclyde gained this total dominance thanks mainly to the abstentionism of the SWP and the lack of any united front perspective from other political groups involved.

In the Lothians the initial campaign was started in August 87 and initiated by RDG members and supporters with the aid of mainly ex-SWP members through the Edinburgh Socialist Forum. Here a more genuine united front Federation was established grouped around four demands of Mass Non-Payment, Non-Collection, Non-Registration, Non-Cooperation. The political complexion of this Federation until very recently was finely balanced with no political group dominating completely with Militant, SWP, Left Labour, anarchists, RDG and some individual participation. Here too, though very recently with increasing abstentionism from the SWP, Left Labour, Anarchists, Movement for a Socialist Scotland, the Militant Tendency supporters have been able to gain 9 out of 12 executive positions. Two RDG members and one Movement for a Socialist Scotland are the only others represented on this Executive.

The Militant Tendency have geared their perspective to building in the trade unions and using the community groups to pressurize the Labour Party council leaderships to take a stand against implementation of the tax. Their perspective, through and through, has been economic and traditionalist. They oppose taking direct action against Labour collaborators. They tried to sabotage the occupation of Lothian Regional Council Chambers. They oppose standing electoral candidates against Labour Party collaborators. They have made no attempt to link up the growing poll tax campaign with the growing clamour in Scotland for some form of constitutional change. They have not thought to unify and link up, the no

mandate argument with civil disobedience on a mass scale. The model they would like to follow is a Liverpool writ large, that is they have a local authority perspective bound up with the procedures of Labourism, with the need to capture these mechanisms for themselves. They see the poll tax campaign as a useful stick to beat the Labour Party leadership with, and as a useful recruiting ground. To the profounder national and democratic questions in Scotland they are deaf and blind, and are uniformly hostile to anyone who brings these up.

In the Lothians, despite greater involvement than that exhibited in Strathclyde, the SWP have offered no creditable political alternative to the leadership of Militant. Initially they played very little part and when they did become involved they argued AGAINST building groups in the communities and for an exclusive orientation on the trade unions and pressurising the official leadership to act. "Downturnitis" made independent action inconceivable. They eventually began to play some part in community activity but were neither prepared to launch a significant assault on Militant's leadership or develop an ideological critique of Militant's weaknesses. This is hardly surprising since they share the same economic perspectives with Militant. Worse still they have even less belief in the possibility of any independent activity outwith the tutelage of official leaderships. Recently after a brief flirtation with the "New Mood" (where a hundred flowers bloomed for even a shorter period than in Mao-Tse Tung's China!) they have retreated to their earlier position of dismissing community action as individualistic and bound to failure. Its back to calling on Kinnock and Dewar to fight for getting pledges of industrial action in the trade unions.

The left Labourites in Scottish Labour Action or now in the Movement for a Socialist Scotland have played little part in the Federations. Those left Labour forces who have been active are now retreating into the Softest left Labour gesture politics. Thus the 12 Lothian Councilors who signed a statement, saying they support mass non payment largely ignore those who are trying to organise it themselves. Like those socialists who voted for war credits during World War One, they are against war as an ethical principle while in practice they help to provide the human cannon fodder, machinery and capital required. In 1914 Lenin drew certain consequences from this. Its about time all revolutionary socialists here did the same!

The Labour Party (over the poll tax and denial of democratic rights for Scotland) is engaged in a similar historical betrayal. This will extend itself sure enough to our sisters and brothers in England and Wales. Our task as revolutionaries is to form a new socialist pole of attraction that will pull out of it the better elements of the Labour Party. Such a decomposing wreck will never be transformed from within. We need to create a new working class democratic party that will act as an international pole of attraction as the Soviet Republic did in its early years. This new party will take all of that is best from our revolutionary international heritage, learn from the mistakes that have been made and show that workers democratic revolution far from being an outdated relic from the past is an essential prerequisite for the present, if we are to have a future. To all who share this vision and this PRACTICAL hope,
Yours Fraternally Mark Stewart.

(Mark Stewart is a member of the RDG, Secretary of the West Lothian Anti-Poll Tax Campaign and on the Steering Committee of the Lothian Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Groups.

A Brief Postscript:

Considerations of space do not allow me to go into any basic details of tactic and mechanics of the Poll Tax Campaign, but one very simple and basic lesson we have learned on registration. Tell everyone to ignore the registration forms on no account send them back. In Lothian where no one was given this definite advice almost 100,000 out of 300,000 Final Reminders had to be sent out, and almost ten months after the beginning of registration there is still a significant minority who are not registered and have not yet been fined and the publication of the Poll Tax register has been set back six months. If CLEAR DEFINITE and PRECISE information and advice is given NOW then the registration campaign in England and Wales could be turned into a carnival of chaos! Where the Labour Party Charlatans exhort "Send it back" the resounding retort should be "Don't Send it Back" Send Kinnocks New Realist Labour Party and its spurious advice campaign packing. Good Luck and fraternal greetings for your campaign!!!

Footnotes. 1) Labour Briefing-Scotland "Labour, the Assembly and the Poll Tax P.3.3) As above Observer Sunday 19 eb 89 - Revealed Harold Wilsons Secret U.S.Pact P.4. 4) RDG Edinburgh leaflet - "Labour - Whose side is it on?" 5) As above.

THE BROAD LEFT IN THE CPSA

The Broad Left in the CPSA is, when it comes to work in the unions, the jewel in the crown for the Militant Tendency. The CPSA is the largest and most important of the civil service unions, organising the lowest clerical grades. The membership is between 130,000 and 150,000. The vast majority of members are young women and only stay in the job for a couple of years, this is because of the low pay and the pressure. Some Dept. of Social Security offices have a turnover of staff of 100% a year. These conditions allow young activists to rise through the union ranks very quickly. Within six months of starting work a young activist could be the Sub-Branch Secretary (ie Office Rep.) and within a couple of years a Branch Secretary or even a Regional Officer.

The CPSA is also a very political union, even though it is not affiliated to the Labour Party. The politics within the CPSA are a result of the different groups fighting for seats in the annual elections to the National Executive Committee (NEC). There are the moderates, Democratic Moderates, Broad Left '84 and the Broad Left.

For the above reasons it is an ideal union for the left to gain an influence. The Broad Left has 600 members on paper. Its annual conferences in Liverpool get an attendance of about 300. The Broad Left is dominated by the Militant Tendency, who use it as their electoral machine and recruiting ground. The Broad Left at the moment has the position of Deputy General Secretary in John Macreadie. The Broad Left has previously won control of the NEC. The last time was from May 1987 to May 1988. The right-wing Moderates were swept back into power in May 1988 as a result of the Broad Left's failure to fight over pay. The Broad Left had actually been voted in during the middle of the pay campaign in order to lead it. The Broad Left vacillated over calling an all-out ballot until the momentum had gone and the ballot was lost.

In May 1988 not only were the right-wing re-elected but the scale of their victory was not of the usual left-right-left swing that tended to happen in the CPSA. It was a disaster for the Broad Left, though the Militant refused to recognise it as such. In the largest section, the DHSS with about 45,000 members, the left suffered its worst result in over 15 years. In the second largest section, the Dept of Employment with about 30,000 members, the Broad Left failed to get one seat on the Section Executive Committee.

Since the victory of the Moderates and Broad Left '84 in May 1988 the Broad Left has been under almost continual attack. The largest Branch in the union, Newcastle Central Office, with over 4,000 members, has been suspended for supposed "irregularities", but the real reason is that the Branch is a strong Broad Left one. Another attack upon union democracy is the NEC's attempts to introduce home postal balloting for future NEC elections. The Broad Left was initially split over how to oppose the issue of postal balloting; the Militant were for compromising and getting members to return their address forms "Care of the Branch Secretary", while the SWP were for simply returning the forms uncompleted and thus boycotting the whole process. (The RDG supported the SWP position as being the best line of first resistance).

This issue of home postal balloting came along at just the right time for the SWP. The SWP with its "new turn" in the "new mood" was to become "part of the left" and "part of the movement". The SWP, being second only to Militant within the Broad Left, changed from simply turning up at Broad Left meetings and putting the line and then leaving before the organisational work was to be done. Now it was to play much more of an organisational/building role, especially in London where the Militant do not have a majority.

This becoming "part of the left" by the SWP was also demonstrated over the GCHQ fiasco. There was widespread anger over the Tories' banning of trade unionists at the Government spy centre. The fight should really have been years ago, but despite this there was still the opportunity to fight when the actual sackings started to take place at the end of 1988. The Broad Left had adopted a policy of indefinite strike action, which would obviously be unofficial, and was against the Militant's position of demands upon the NEC leadership. The Militant dominated Broad Left ignored its own decision and allowed the GCHQ fight to fizzle out.

The Militant were attacked by the Socialist Caucus (the third grouping within the Broad Left) for their undemocratic approach, which included closing down a meeting without allowing any votes to be taken. By this time the SWP had done a U-turn. From originally demanding that the Broad Left, with its supposed control of a quarter of the union, lead unofficial strike action, they then shied away saying that the momentum had now been lost, and thus they gave some left cover to the Militant. As for majority decisions and internal democracy within the Broad Left, these were never allowed to interfere with the issue.

This brings us to the real question. Why is it that despite controlling a quarter of the union and having 600 individual members, the Broad Left can do nothing but follow the NEC and place further demands on them, ones that everyone knows are not going to be acted upon? The question, and thus the answer is one of politics. The Broad Left is a reformist organisation which exists as an electoral machine. The Broad Left believes in the need to win a majority on the NEC in order to make changes from the top. The role of union members is simply to vote the Broad Left in and to take part in token official one-day strikes to prove their loyalty to the union. All of this goes against leading unofficial strike action. Unofficial action undermines the Broad Left's strategy, which is based on electoralism.

Despite the failings of their strategy the Militant are still able to build the Broad Left. They also recruit people into the Militant, as young activists see the Militant as leaders of the Left. The SWP do not have anywhere near as much success. The SWP recruit very few people from the CPSA. The SWP's failure in all this is due to their complete lack of any strategy or tactics. If the SWP make the calls for unofficial strike action then they must be building a rank-and-file organisation that can deliver it, but for the SWP a rank-and-file movement is not possible because the

level of struggle is not high enough. But surely if a high level of struggle is lacking then national unofficial action is not on the agenda. The fact is, that to deliver ef-

fective unofficial action requires an unofficial rank-and-file movement of some kind. The SWP are constantly caught between talking for rank-and-file action but

acting within the constraints of Broad Left electoralism.

L. R.

Rank And File Or Broad Left

Fight The Labour Bureaucracy Build The Rank And File

The headline of this brief article will no doubt be seen as a political "sacrilege" by many people in the Labour Movement, including many people on the Left. Indeed such is the feeling amongst some on the need to protect the "Sacred Cow" of the Trade Union Bureaucracy that some labour movement "agitators" may start issuing decrees against the writer and publishers of this article.!

The reason being that the objective truth that these headlines spell out, hurts. It is meant to hurt. They've been hurting us for long enough. Just take the miners, the P&O strikers, the nurses to name but three groups of workers.

These headlines also beg the question what is the true role and nature of the labour bureaucracy, particularly that of the trade unions, and their relationship with the ruling class on one hand and the working class on the other? The answer to the question largely determines whether you favour Rank and File or Broad Left politics.

The answer to this question also hurts because it leaves no room for political compromise, fudging or confusion in theory in practice and in struggle.

Where do we in favour of rank and file organisation stand on this question? We

state categorically that it is the nature of the whole Trade Union Bureaucracy to compromise principle and sell out workers and particularly in struggle. I stand in the camp of one V.I. Lenin on this issue when he called the Trade Union Bureaucracy the "Labour Lieutenants of Capital". This sums up very well the relationship between the T.U. Bureaucracy and the Ruling Class on the one hand and the Trade Union Bureaucracy on the other.

Just as assuredly as the T.U bureaucrats are the labour Lieutenants of Capital, then the Labour Generals of Capital (who the Lieutenants take their orders from) are the political leaders in the Labour Party mainly, and to a lesser and lesser extent the C.P. (With the SWP waiting in the wings?)

Meaning the true nature of the Labour Bureaucracy is very much a political one.

Thus our answer, in favour of Rank and File politics, leads us to the following conclusion. The collaborative nature of the Labour Generals and Lieutenants of Capital has to be fought just as vigorously, in fact more vigorously because of the serious illusions (understandable) that millions of workers have in this leadership, than the much more easily identifiable class enemy the ruling class.

This also leads us to the all important conclusion that in order to fight and counteract this collaborative nature of the Generals and Lieutenants we must obviously organise independently from them.

The absolute need for independence from the aforementioned is fundamental to the Rank and File argument and case. Of course by independence we don't mean separation from the millions of workers organised in the unions and workplaces (The only place we have any real strength) We have to build strong rank and file independent from the political and trade union bureaucracies and capable of taking and sustaining independent action in struggle.

What of the left officials? I Hear some of you say. For reasons of space we cannot go into the Broad Left in any detail. Hopefully we'll do this in the next issue of Republican Worker. Suffice to say at present, as class conscious workers we will and must form alliances, from time to time with left officials. But only ever and always on the basis of mutually agreed policies and we must maintain our Rank and File independence from whatever officials, AT ALL TIMES.

FIGHT THE BOSS CLASS

FIGHT THE LABOUR BUREAUCRACY

BUILD THE RANK AND FILE.

Brian Higgins

(UCATT)

All comments or replies to this article welcomed. In fact positively encouraged.

Articles only reflect the views of the RDG, Organising Committee or Branches where this is stated. Other articles reflect the views of named individuals.

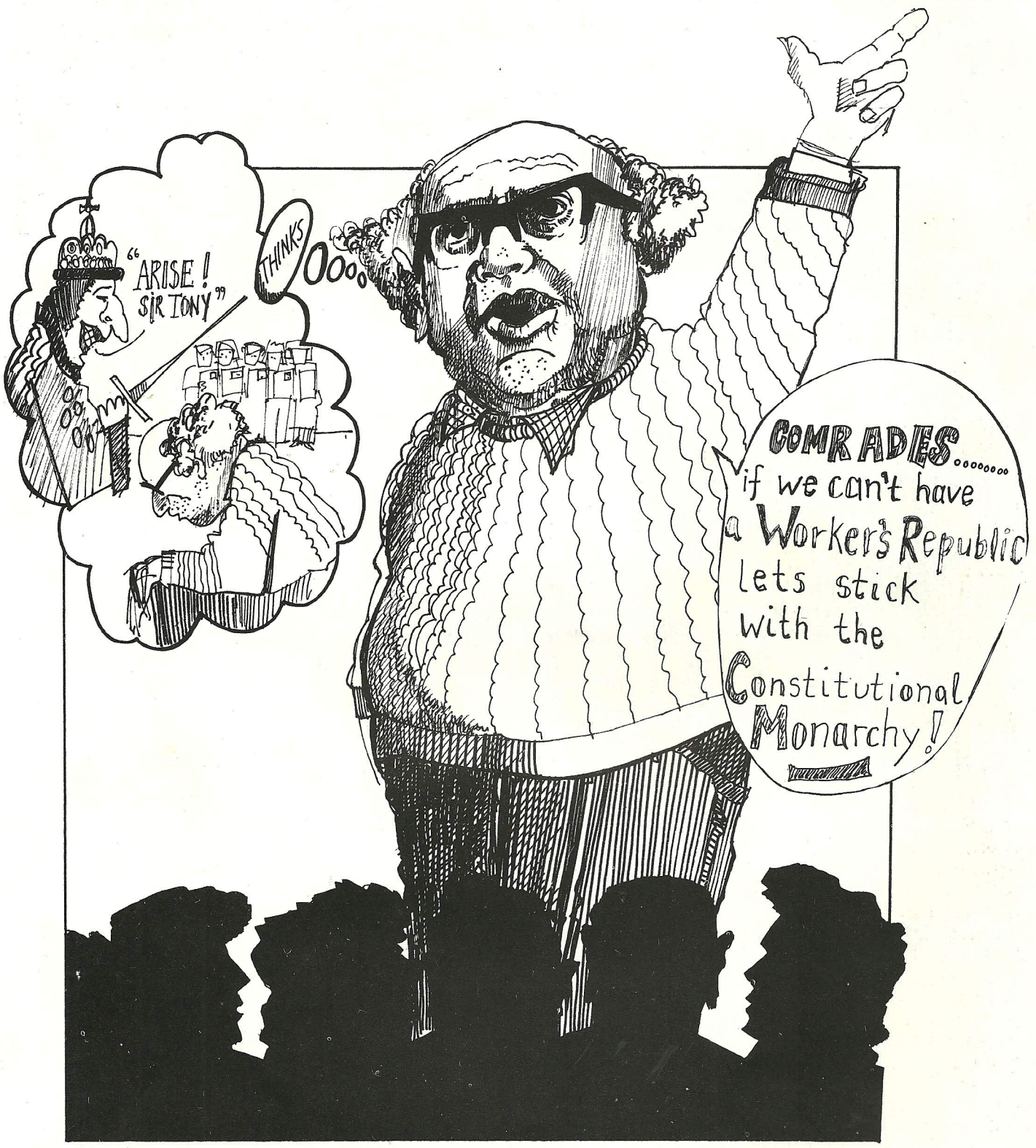
The Revolutionary Democratic Group is a faction of the Socialist Workers Party (UK). Whilst we identify with the SWP's Left, we have our own independent ideas and policies. In addition to those stated in Socialist Worker's "Where We Stand" statement, we support and defend the following:

- The theory of Permanent Revolution
- A Minimum Democratic Programme
- A Transitional Programme
- An International Programme
- The united front in the downturn
- Party democracy and Workers Democracy



FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

In the last issue of Republican Worker the "Where we stand" was incorrectly published without attributing to the Organising Committee. The statement above is now the agreed policy of the RDG after debate at our aggregate.



"ARISE!
SIR TONY"

THINKS
OOO

COMRADES.....
if we can't have
a Workers Republic
lets stick
with the
Constitutional
Monarchy!