

S. No. 1 (Filmy)

**METROPOLITAN POLICE**

(COPY)

Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH

S.D.S.

day of 11th May 1977

SUBJECT

Socialist  
Workers Party

Reference to Papers

L00/77/67

1. Herewith is attached a copy of the Socialist Workers Party Bulletin No. 1 of February 1977 which was obtained from a reliable source.

2. Contents include articles from various individuals and branches of the Party. In addition there are statements from the Central Committee and Control Commission.

3. References of individuals mentioned in the document are as follows:-

Tariq ALI

RF.L02/65/140

Privacy

Duncan HALLAS

RF.L02/68/863

Privacy

TO

P.A. IN

M.P. 75-90672/200 L130-3

G.T.M.Craft  
Chief Inspector

HN332

CONFIDENTIAL

No. 1 February 1977  
10p

# Socialist Workers Party — Bulletin —

For members only

---

## CONTENTS

- 3 Time to change gear
- 4 Womens rights campaign
- 5 Devolution referenda
- 6 SWP fraud
- 7
- 8 When is a party not a party?
- 9 Why we are the Socialist Workers Party
- 10 Socialist Worker
  - Miracles and pipedreams
- 12 Training Report
- 13 Organising a public meeting
- 14 Organising SW in new areas
- 15 Control commission statement

## Time to change gear

Central Committee

This document was written for the Industrial Advisory Committee which was held on Saturday 29 January.

The lull is over. The upturn in struggle we have been predicting for three years is now taking place.

When we used to speak about an upturn, even only a few months ago, it was something we spoke of in the future. Now it is in the present.

The one day stoppage called in telecommunications by Frank Chapple, the Scottish one day strike called by NALGO and NUPE, the series of one day stoppages taking place in locality after locality of NUPE, the disputes in Rubery Owen, Ford He' 'ood, Massey Ferguson, Balfour Davins, the strong opposition to the Leyland deal, the mass demonstration of Glasgow busmen, the effort the CP are putting into the revival of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, are all expressions of a change in mood—particularly, but not exclusively in the public sector. So too is the growing opposition to renewal of the social contract.

This growing upturn provides massive opportunities to our party. But to take advantage of them we have to change our tactics. Otherwise we can be left behind by the movement and see the bureaucrats and the Stalinists reap where we have sown.

For nearly three years, we were virtually alone in insisting on the need for a fight. Those layers of the bureaucracy, of full-time convenors, etc. who went along with verbal opposition to the contract, almost never translated that into deeds.

We rightly insisted on steering to the left, even if our members risked seeming to be a bit cut off from the broader movement. We said that our relative isolation would rebound to our benefit when the movement picked up. We would be seen as the people who argued and agitated for a fight all along.

That was an absolutely necessary approach, in a time when merely to defend basic principles of trade union organisation, let alone oppose redundancies, could put you out on a limb.

Now the situation is changing, however, our approach has to be rather different.

We are no longer the only people talking about a fight against unemployment, the cuts, the social contract. The resentment of their own members is forcing even many sections of the trade union bureaucracy to speak in these terms. When Frank

Chapple calls a one day strike, things are changing fast.

This does not mean, of course, that Chapple has changed his spots. It does mean that he is aware that the mood of the rank and file is changing and he has to take certain actions so as to preserve his control over them.

That is why the CP is able to make an apparent 'left turn' over the Liaison Committee without putting at risk its links with sections of the trade union bureaucracy.

The problems we face in adjusting to these changes are twofold:

1 We are subject to a certain conservatism when it comes to taking up issues within the factories and unions; partly this takes the form of our organisation not responding to struggles that take place outside our immediate orbit. We carry on in our routine way without seeing the opportunities available.

Partly it means that when our branches do respond to new struggles, they do so merely by 'servicing them', by treating them as simple trade union struggles, without raising the question of generalising, of spreading the struggles, of upping the odds, that alone can lead to victory in the current period of crisis for the system.

The result is that often our best comrades, comrades who really proved themselves during the long lull, are lagging behind many of the 'non-militant' workers in their own industries and workplaces.

This is particularly dangerous, since now a section of the trade union bureaucracy is prepared to fight certain struggles along routine trade union lines, as they weren't in the past.

2 The second danger is that instead of the fighting energy of our party going into fighting for leadership within the struggles that are taking place, it goes into activities that take place outside and apart from the upturn in the class. The greatest danger in the period of upturn is being a routine trade unionist in the workplace and a revolutionary on Sunday afternoons.

Now is the time, if ever there was a time, for revolutionary initiative to be taken into the workplaces, into the campaigns that are taking place independently of us, against the cuts etc. We don't have to be able to control things in order to be able to fight for the leadership within them.

We can expect the 'left' trade union leaderships to behave over the cuts rather as a previous set of lefts behaved in the fight against the Industrial Relations Act. They will go along with token struggles, even with one day stoppages. But they will stop short the moment the movement takes on a real life of its own. The CP will follow in their tracks on these manoeuvres. Our job has to be involved in the actions that are taking place now, so as to be in a position to pull large numbers

of workers away from the bureaucracies the moment (and it will not be too distant) when they shy away from action.

The impact we have made in the past period, particularly through the Right to Work Campaign, will give us considerable prestige as we intervene in the rising struggle. But only if we adjust our tactics as is necessary. Neither the leadership nor the membership has made that adjustment yet. Indeed, the newer sections of the party are reacting better than most of the older sections.

### The tactics of the Right to Work Campaign

To be the only people who fight against unemployment when no one else is, is a fantastic achievement. Even if the numbers taking part in the fight are very small, it can gain you enormous prestige. It was this that brought success to the two marches last year. All of our members, all of the supporters of the Right to Work Campaign felt a couple of inches higher as a result.

But once there is real action being taken against unemployment, involving tens of thousands of people, then marches of a few score, even a few hundred, necessarily seem much less significant. We always argue that strike action, even one day strike action, is at a higher level than demonstrations. All out strike action is the highest of the lot. When the whole telecommunications industry is being stopped against redundancies for a day, when there are a succession of one day strikes and overtime bans against the cuts, relatively small unemployed marches no longer raise the political level.

That does not mean that unemployed demonstrations and marches no longer hit workers' consciences, or that they can no longer be a means of mobilising sections of the unemployed but it does mean that they can no longer provide the central focus by which a revolutionary party operates within the broader movement.

If the party is small, as ours is, and if it is faced with a broader movement that is on the boil, to put too much resources into such activities can actively prevent the party intervening effectively.

It is the opinion of the Central Committee that in these changed circumstances the long march proposed from Skelmersdale to London in April would not raise effectively inside the movement the fight against unemployment (at a time when many thousands of workers will be involved in strike action and demonstrations against the cuts and sackings in the public sector).

The dangers would be that our members would try to differentiate themselves from the bureaucrats on the basis of support or otherwise for this march, not on the basis of how to carry forward the mass struggle

against the cuts.

For these reasons, we will be asking our members in the Right to Work Campaign to urge that the Skelmersdale to London march be called off and be replaced by large-scale mobilisations of unemployed workers—particularly young unemployed and school leavers—in Scotland around the STUC in the spring, and from Skelmersdale to Blackpool for the September TUC. And by mobilisations around a possible recall TUC and the possible TUC public sector conference, if they should take place.

Also by a campaign of the Right to Work Campaign in support of, and for the extension of the various one day strikes and demonstrations against the cuts and redundancies.

This does not mean that the Right to Work Campaign loses its strategic importance for us. But now it has to differentiate itself from the bureaucrats and their urges on not by being identified with a march (in the new climate, the bureaucrats may well see identification with marches as a lesser evil to identification with real struggles), but by raising the question of wider action against the cuts and redundancies than that envisaged by the bureaucracies.

Concretely this means:

- \* The Right to Work Campaign being the body that is seen as calling for a stoppage on all unions in telecommunications on 14 February, not just the EETPU and TASS.
- \* The body that produces leaflets and posters, nationally and locally, stressing this.
- \* The body that calls for a national stoppage of all public sector unions on the same day.
- \* The body that makes propaganda now for an all-out public sector unlimited strike against the cuts.

These demands are demands raised within the existing upturn, yet they are demands that go far beyond what the bureaucracies would really like. They will enable us to polarise the situation, bringing over to active support for us many newly angry workers.

#### Time to change gear

The tactical changes have implications for the behaviour of our cadre, both nationally and locally.

The Central Committee must be much more involved in intervening in particular disputes, helping the local comrades to raise the political issues, the question of generalisation of the struggle, which is the key to each and everyone of those local disputes.

At the local level, there is going to have to be much more independent initiative. We have to watch for every sign of movement and relate to it. It is no good the

districts waiting for leadership from the centre, or the branches from the districts. The centre or the district leadership will not know of many of the activities that are taking place in the class. It is necessary for our individual branches and members to use their initiative to relate to these movements without waiting for the word on high.

One step forward by the mass movement is worth a hundred perfect resolutions from the District or Central Committee. All we have to remember is that within the rising movement, we have to raise the question of generalisation, of spreading the struggle in a way that the bureaucracy cannot.

## Women's Rights campaign

### Privacy

Women are being hit hardest by the economic crisis; part time women workers are losing their jobs in thousands because of the cuts; equal pay is being sabotaged by the industrial tribunals and the unwillingness of the unions to fight for it; maternity leave agreements are being undermined. Nurseries and nursery schools are closing down. Hospitals, old peoples' homes, mental hospitals, schools, are sending the sick, the old and the young home to be looked after. The anti-abortion lobby is on the warpath again with a new bill. Prices are going up. Wages are being held down.

All the promises are coming to nothing. The Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Employment Protection Act are all major pieces of legislation affecting women workers, all of them have only just come into operation after years of shilly-shallying since 1968. None of them are worth the paper they are written on.

Women's equality will not come through reforms. The Labour government has reneged on every single promise it has made to women. The Social Contract has been a con for women in particular.

We have to argue the alternative case for revolutionary socialism—that is how women's rights will be won. To do that we have to be seen to be the fighters for women's rights and women's liberation.

The best explanation of the campaign is to take some examples. This is not a campaign for some members of the organisation only—it involves all of us. But especially it involves the women.

**Hospitals:** women work in hospitals; they also spend hours queuing in them. All over the country there are examples of maternity wards, baby hospitals, small maternity hospitals being axed in the first round of cuts. Britain now has a higher infant mortality rate than any other European country.

Our women members should be taking the lead in organising around the hospitals campaign. In Newcastle and South London, successful Women's Voice street meetings have been organised, along with petitions. There have been large sales of Women's Voice around the hospitals. Cuts: school dinner ladies and school cleaners are being kicked out of their jobs now, by the hundreds, in every area. Women are the majority on most of the NUPE stoppages and demonstrations. We should be producing leaflets about the cuts, taking them and Women's Voice round the schools—just knocking on the doors and seeing who we meet. We should have leaflets for the demonstrations.

Prices: again leaflets, street meetings, petitions.

A campaign against prices is part of the campaign against the social contract. Go into the big supermarkets and leaflet about the bread prices rises, the reasons for the high price of coffee—and then make the same arguments to the factories.

Abortion: another amendment to change the abortion act is before Parliament. This time we will run our own Women's Voice campaign against the bill, as well as supporting demonstrations etc organised by NAC. Whoever can organise for our demonstration on Friday 25 February should do so—particularly students and women not working during the day. Local pickets, street meetings, public meetings, should be organised during February.

After the bill goes through, every trade union member should move a resolution against the bill through her/his trade union branch, exercising some discipline over union sponsored MPs, getting national executives and national conferences to commit themselves to opposition to the bill.

All of these activities will involve sales Women's Voice, and should bring us into contact with large numbers of women. We want to recruit those women into the Socialist Workers Party. Each branch or district should organise a Women and Socialism recruiting meeting during March. Contact the Women's Department at Cottons Gardens for speakers.

The women's committee also discussed the possibility of organising a Socialist Worker/Women's Voice rally for women's rights in May. It would not be a repeat of the last rally, but more a working meeting with workshops and meetings on how to fight round specific issues—the cuts, maternity leave, equal pay etc. More discussions and details will follow.

In the past year we have stood a number of members as rank and file candidates in elections—none of them women. Every time we discuss putting up candidates we should think of pushing our women members to stand. That way we will focus attention of rank and file women in the unions on what we are doing.

Besides all these issues which involve every member there are many examples of women being unfairly discriminated against which need to be taken up. For example: there is a story in the February issue of Women's Voice about women not getting jobs on the track in the Rover car plant in Birmingham. We should be putting leaflets into all the other British Leyland plants, our members who work in the plants should be raising it in their union branches, on the shop stewards' committees. We are absolutely in favour of all jobs being open to women.

You should check the findings of the industrial tribunals in your area—every week there will be cases of women, or groups of women, whose cases of discrimination or equal pay have been rejected without cause. Many of these will involve women from large factories; they are by no means all individual women in small offices. All of the unions are using the industrial tribunals to settle claims.

The case of the Glasgow woman whose invalid allowance was cut on the grounds that she was a married woman and would not therefore expect to work, (even though she had given up work to look after her sick husband) is just typical of the way women, particularly married women, are increasingly being discriminated against. We should be fighting all those battles, as a part of our continuous battle against the Labour Government.

If every branch and district begins to take up these sorts of issues now, feeding stories into Socialist Worker and Women's Voice, we will recruit women; we will be able to organise a successful rally, and we will begin to be seen as the organisation that really does fight for women's rights.

## The devolution referenda

Tony Cliff Duncan Hallas

17.1.77

1. The SWP has to take a position on the referenda proposal for Scotland and Wales on the devolution issue. Of course it is not a question of our reconsidering our attitude to the Scottish and Welsh nationalist movements as such. We are opposed to them. As the Notes of the Month in IS 68 stated (referring to the Scottish case):

'Scottish nationalist agitation, whoever carries it out—whether the SNP, the Communist Party or even the occasional revolutionary—does not strengthen the real force for socialism, a united class-conscious working class, but fragments and weakens it... Revolutionaries do not, of course, defend the present centralised bourgeois state. When a real struggle takes place against British imperialism, as in Ireland, we have to support that struggle regardless of our disagreements with its political leaders... But we ourselves should give no support to encouraging separatist trends in Scotland. There is only one real alternative to the present centralised and bureaucratic state—a united and determined revolutionary workers' movement—leading to a united workers' state.'

The argument is developed in detail in the pamphlet 'Nationalism or Socialism: The SNP and SLP Exposed'. And essentially the same arguments apply to Wales.

2. On the question of devolution, as opposed to separatism, our position has been as stated in IS 86: 'Our attitude to devolution, like our attitude to local government reform—devolution writ small—is that no fundamental problem facing working people can be solved, or even seriously alleviated, by tinkering with the state structure. The role of all elected assemblies, including the one at Westminster, has been shrinking and will inevitably shrink further as capital is more and more concentrated into giant units and is more and more intertwined with the state... The power of the working class is its organisation in industry, its power to disrupt production. Elected assemblies can only be used, at best, for propaganda purposes. Propaganda is important: but in the specific situation in which devolution is being advanced by reformists as a solution to workers' problems it is essential to expose it as a false solution...'

3. Our attitude to the devolution bill follows from this. Essentially, it is irrelevant and a diversion. We have to use whatever increased interest in politics

arises from it in Scotland and Wales to reach as many people as possible with the ideas of workers' power, planned economy and internationalism. The question is how best to do this and, specifically, what to say about the actual vote. This is a tactical matter, in no sense a matter of principle and it is the least important part of what we have to say. Nevertheless, it has to be decided.

4. Given that the *main emphasis* of what we say is as above there are three possible positions on how to vote in a referendum.

a) Vote no. The difficulty of this position is that it appears to line us up with the defenders of the status quo, the unionists, in Scotland with the right wing of the Tory Party. Moreover it gives a false emphasis to our line. It is not that we are actively opposed to assemblies in Edinburgh and Cardiff *as such*. It is that we think that it hardly matters one way or the other. What we are opposed to is the reformist illusion that creating such assemblies can advance working class interests.

b) Vote yes but critically. In other words, put the emphasis in propaganda on the irrelevance of devolution and on class struggle, internationalist politics but say vote yes, and you will see for yourselves. It is argued that this position avoids cutting the SWP off in advance from the great majority of the working class on this issue (in Scotland, the Welsh situation may well be different) and makes it easier to get a hearing for our positive ideas. Its disadvantage is that it inevitably blurs the sharp edge of our hostility to nationalism and that it makes it harder to counter the inevitable development (if the assemblies are created) of the separatist argument that their ineffectiveness is due to lack of powers, that separatism is the answer.

c) Abstain. The argument for abstention is the one that follows most naturally from our basic position and, without putting us in the unionist camp, makes easiest to mount an aggressive campaign — socialist propaganda. If the question was a class question, even in a distorted way, we could not abstain. If the devolutionist and anti-devolutionist camps were basically the working class camp and the bourgeois camp (as was the case with the Common Market Referendum) we would have to take a critical position *inside* the working class camp. But this is not the situation.

5. We believe, therefore, that our political intervention can be most effective if the SWP advises abstention. It should be clear from all that has been said that the issue of how people vote is *not* the main thing we stress. We stress the crisis of the system, the need for working class unity, the fight against unemployment, against the Social Contract, against the cuts, the need for a planned economy, for workers power. But, as a party, we do not run away from any concrete question facing workers and on this question we set ourselves apart from both pro and anti devolutionist camps.

## More than a mistake

### Privacy

Aberdeen Branch

I HAVE written to the IB because I feel that our lamentable lack of coverage of Scottish nationalism and, in particular of its left variants have signified more than an error of judgment on our part. It seems to me that our SW and ISJ contributors in England have largely ignored the question perhaps for fear of being labelled 'big nation chauvinists' if they attack nationalist aspirations too strongly. On the other hand, members in Scotland have until recently stayed off the subject as far as possible except to make heavy-handed jibes about the more obscure personalities in the SNP. Again, I feel that this is partly explained by fear of the epithet of 'petit bourgeois nationalism'.

That nationalism is a serious question facing us can easily be proved. There is no doubt that the majority of Scottish workers, in particular women and youth, support some variety of separatism. The vile Ian Sproat sits for my own constituency, South Aberdeen/Aberdeen, an area largely made up of massive council estates at Torry, Balnagask Kincorth and Kaimhill. He gets few votes there but won because young workers and women voted en masse for SNP putting Labour into third place in a seat that was formerly theirs.

Of course, the popularity of nationalism among the working class does not mean we should support it any more than we support racism if it is popular, but it does mean that we must give space to counter the influence of these ideas and with more than caricatures of Hugh Fraser.

The realisation in certain quarters that Labour faces an electoral collapse and that the politics of the SNP are a bit too transparently anti-working class have coalesced to provide a series of left alternatives to the unadulterated liquor of 'Tartan Toryism'.

If this threat is not taken seriously I can only point out that Lenin's pamphlet on the national question has recently displaced the 'Herb Cookery Book' as best seller in Aberdeen's radical book shop. The underswell of radical nationalism has also achieved the unimagined feat of breathing fresh life into the long moribund corpse of the Scottish paboites.

Having established the gravity of the question and suggested a few reasons as to why our reaction was insufficient it must be asked, what could have been

done and what should we do?

On the SNP we just need more of the same, attacks on Fraser, Noble etc, also some analysis of why some Scots capitalists want independence. Why independence won't solve the crisis and why capitalism throws up single issue parties at such periods. On left nationalism we must realise our error in not covering events more comprehensively. (The laggardiness of Scottish comrades in not sending copy can't be entirely blamed. SW allegedly hung up when a report of the SLP conference split was phoned in.) We should hammer left nationalism on the specifics. Do they want to split the trade unions, NUS etc? More coverage of Scottish revolutionary traditions including John Maclean who, despite the nostalgia, is nearer to our side. Use Harry McShane, a non-IS state capitalist and MacLean's right-hand man at one time. Five times in one day the IMG begged him to come and speak at the left-SLP conference. He refused them but, as far as SW is concerned, we haven't attempted to use him. Get him or someone else to review the 'Socialism or Nationalism' pamphlet for SW. Ask the CP or SLP to say something in our press on the national question so we can answer. The pamphlet and the proposed Scottish page will help but we must not regard this as a question for the Scottish comrades. We must use our national resources and use the issue to educate our whole audience. We can make gains through a principled stand, we will lose out if we choose to ignore developments.

## Devolution— A concession to Nationalism

### Privacy

If we accept, as Duncan and Cliff state, that our basic position on Scottish and Welsh nationalism has not changed, then it is necessary to ask why we are for abstention and not a No vote in the referendum.

This is summed up by the comrades when they restate from ISJ 86 that 'our attitude to devolution, like our attitudes to local government reform - devolution writ small'. In other words, devolution is basically the equivalent of local government reform.

This is their fundamental mistake. It may be the case that the practical effect of devolution is no more than local government reform; it may also be the case that the government, the Labour Party and Tories would like to confine the debate to local government reform, but is this actually the case?

Is there a separation in the minds of Scottish workers between nationalism and devolution? Has the SNP, the party responsible for making the running on the issue, dropped the idea in favour of local government reform?

Quite clearly, the answer is no. The debate cannot be separated by the mere fact of government intentions. To suggest that devolution is irrelevant is a nonsense, and is to abstain from the political arguments on nationalism. In the eyes of a substantial proportion of the population, devolution is seen as a concession to the nationalists - the thin end of the wedge - one step nearer separation.

The abstentionist position seeks to avoid the nationalist argument. It goes roughly like this: What does your party say about devolution? Answer - It's irrelevant - Fight for the Right to Work, or - It's irrelevant - Stop the Cuts, or - It's irrelevant - Smash the Social Contract. Implicit in this position is that the argument is only one way - from the SWP to our audience, and not the other way round.

What happens to this argument when the audience says: yes, Fight for the Right to Work - Stop the Cuts etc, but what does your party say to the arguments advanced by the SWP on Scottish Nationalism, devolution, the raising of taxation and increased ability to legislate? We cannot shrug our shoulders and plead that the debate is about local government reform.

How, under such paper-thin arguments, do we raise, as Duncan and

Cliff outline, 'the ideas of workers power, planned economy and internationalism' - note the last word, 'internationalism'.

It is not possible to combat prevailing ideology with the slogan 'Fight for the Right to Work'. If devolution is seen in any way as a step towards national independence, then it is utterly wrong for our organisation to abdicate responsibility to oppose such nationalist arguments and we should say categorically No to Devolution.

If the issue is about nationalism as opposed to local government reform, then the tactical argument about which camp we would find ourselves in is largely irrelevant.

However, because the majority of comrades on the CC take the opposite view, then the tactical problems, quite rightly, assume significant importance and have to be examined.

Essentially, the argument against voting no is that we will align ourselves with the right wing Tories and cut ourselves off from a possible audience. Again, it is worth recalling what our answer will be when we are asked by someone not in the SWP why, when we say that devolution is no solution whatsoever, do we then abstain - it is not possible to turn around and whisper, it's a tactical question - we don't want to be in the same camp as Maggie Thatcher - what opportunism, when what is required is an explanation of our position on Nationalism.

Even if an abstentionist position were adopted to avoid the No camp, it is not just the SWP that determines which camp we are in.

What will the pro-devolution Morning Star and CP say about us? They will say, and quite rightly on this occasion, if you are not for it you are against it. They will push us into the No camp anyhow.

The propaganda, it was argued in Glasgow, would be centred around the theme 'No to Edinburgh, No to London - Fight Unemployment' etc.

Even at this propaganda level, the assumption is that we are addressing ourselves to a highly sophisticated audience.

This is not the case; the referendum is about Edinburgh alone, and under such conditions the conclusion that would be drawn from our propaganda would be No.

The audience argument is largely a red herring. Duncan and Cliff do not explain the very substantial measure of agreement between all comrades at the meeting in Glasgow.

Each and every one of us agreed that in the run up to the vote that whether the position of the organisation be Yes, No or abstain our job would be to use the debate to mobilise activity around Unemployment, Cuts, Social Contract etc. It is clear to me that if we have a principled stand of No, while actively campaigning around the issues mentioned, then we would be in no danger of cutting ourselves off.

On the question of immigration controls we have no hesitation whatsoever of campaigning against them despite the fact that, particularly in the case of import controls, we find ourselves lining up with right wing Labour trade unionists. Of course our position on such issues would be substantially weakened if we did not campaign positively around unemployment.

On both accounts - nationalism v devolution (local government reform) and the tactical question, the CC is mistaken to draw the abstentionist conclusion.

We should firmly say that we are against devolution because it is a concession to nationalism; we should meet that argument head-on and then we are in a strong position to actively campaign and wage war in the movement against Unemployment, bad Housing, Social Contract etc.

## The SWP fraud

Peter Sedgwick

Leeds District

The decision by the CC, endorsed by a Party Council with the most hasty District discussion and in a period without factional rights, to move towards the launching of a 'Socialist Workers Party' jointly with the putting forward of 50-60 candidates in a General Election, is a confirmation of the terrible disorientation which has hit the revolutionary left in the current Right-wing climate.

To take the question of the candidates first, it is humbug to suggest as the CC does in its resolution, that the number of votes obtained will be irrelevant to the success or failure of the tactic. When we participate under our own party banner in a general election in the bourgeois parliamentary system, we are fighting on the terrain of the enemy and at a time of his choosing. This would be fine if we were strong; but we are, in electoral terms, quite insignificant. On election day all the media will show comparisons, constituency by constituency, between the mass electoral support of the Tories, Labour, Liberals, Nationalists, fascists, CP, various freaks and ourselves; we will be on or near the bottom of each list, numbered in hundreds when the bourgeois parties are in thousands. What an advertisement of ourselves for every worker! Better to grit our teeth and admit that this is the class-enemy's day, one day only.

Moreover, the issues in a General Election in the British system (by-elections are a little different) are always posed in terms of a choice between the major bourgeois parties. The fact that IS has led the anti-fascist battles will mean little to an Asian or West Indian voter faced with the choice of a Tory government with tighter immigration controls and a 'central register' of black people or a Labour government with the status quo. The immigrant vote will be Labour. Of course the Labour traitors have pushed the question even further to the right; but that is how the choice will be posed temporarily. The SPD in Germany is even worse in its record than Callaghan and Healey on civil rights, but the alternative was between them and the party of Franz-Josef Strauss, who is a semi-Nazi!

Those of us who have argued since 1970 for an independent electoral strategy for IS now see choices in this direction being made in a vacuum of industrial militancy, with little feedback from the class to guide us. How easy it is in these circumstances to shoot off-course, trusting to the 'intuition' which Comrade

Cliff has celebrated in the life of Lenin but which is, at its worst, impressionism mingled with emotion. The number of votes an IS candidate obtains will make a fantastic difference to our own perspectives, as well as to our supporters. Suppose for example, that a candidate gets 200 votes in Stretford and another gets 500? If we put a large number of candidates in a general-election field, and are shown up as another fringe group, the chances are that elements of the membership will over-react in despondency with their fingers burnt. Look how demoralised the Italian revolutionary left got when they only obtained 1/2 million votes compared with their previous total. If you want to make propaganda at general election time, you can (i) stand candidates with a chance of an impressive vote (preferably winning, like Berradette Devlin); (ii) conduct political propaganda in constituencies without standing candidates or (iii) back left candidates on a broader base than IS, but building our own organisation in the campaign. All of these have drawbacks, but not that one of a deliberate, well-publicised, reversal, at enormous expense.

The case made out for the SWP was partly an element in this 'electoral strategy'. Otherwise there is no particular reason to start an SWP at this moment; there is no particular reason, on the other hand, not to start an SWP. Since we cannot, in the present bad political climate, change class reality very much, the conclusion is drawn that we have to perform changes on the name of IS itself, in the delusion that this is some step towards the actual construction of a revolutionary socialist workers' party. If the CC decided that we should walk around with our bottoms painted bright green, doubtless it would have an electrifying effect on the morale of our membership (for a short time at least). There might even be a case for some such publicity venture, joking apart, we can always do with fresh propaganda on party questions. But what would anyone think of a Party whose Central Committee produced its suggestion for Green Bottoms in a few rather badly argued paragraphs, circulated, without real District discussion, before a Party Council, got a resounding 99 per cent vote for the proposed face-lift from the Council with virtually no argument on this or the obvious points about the election, and proceed to give us six months to declare ourselves to the world in this new disguise. This is not a party, but a circus. It does not form the basis for a democratic workers party but for a bureaucratic charade, sanctioned by plebiscite without discussion.

What we are short of, comrades, is not new initials but a new phase of class action. When the struggle rises, will it help that we have made ourselves electorally ridiculous and given ourselves a somewhat more inflated name? One cannot often quote the late Chairman Mao with total approval, but what he

did say, in a letter to his wife, was 'When there is no tiger in the mountain, the monkey is king'. The tiger of working-class struggle has retired, only temporarily, from these mountains of ours. Meanwhile, we must recognise this monkeying for what it is worth.

From being an industrially based combat organisation in 1969-74, we have now moved to the role of a militant propaganda-action group. Most of IS's main activities—anti-NF, Right To Work, electoral candidates—now fall within a propaganda perspective. This is at once an extension of our work and a forced retreat. It is no use bemoaning this turn— even though many of our industrial cadres and contacts have felt, understandably, that propaganda, making its impact primarily outside the workplace, does not assist their present isolated position. We have to work within the propaganda-politics of industrial weakness and social-democratic confusion, until we can wage battle on new fronts.

However to declare the Party as a propaganda-act, which is all it can be at present, is tantamount to declaring the Fourth (or Twenty-fifth) International. It is a silly filing, which loses us our good name.

International Socialists are not yet a Socialist Workers Party, and will not get one whit nearer to that position in the working class by some fancy rallying and pseudo-inauguration. Forward with the IS!

December 26th 1976

## When is a party not a party?

### Privacy

Aberdeen Branch

'THE whole situation forces us to act as a party while our forces are still slender'. It is not co-incidental that this CC quote has already reappeared several times. It sums up our current situation and implicitly poses the tasks facing us in the coming period.

The Aberdeen branch typifies our national position. Here we have about 20 active, conscientious members, far outdistancing any other left group. While being far from mass membership we do feel the need to act as a party,

putting forward initiatives, taking action on the widest range of issues. In recent months this has certainly been the way we have been operating, pushing the Right to Work, South Africa Solidarity, picketing the Womens Peace Movement, mobilising for November 17 and so on.

However each new success brings new problems. On the one hand, members became too arrogant in relation to other leftish forces and on the other hand the intensity of work, with no new recruits to show for it, took its toll of group morale.

Pride comes before a fall, and our particular fall came, in my view, at the 11 December STUC demo against unemployment in Glasgow. Latest in a long series of mobilisations, no enthusiasm could be generated within the branch, no contacts could be brought along, only six of our members turned up for the bus (admittedly at 6.30 on a freezing Aberdeen morning).

As for the rest of the coach, it was fairly full. Composed of older CP members, some bureaucrats, three YCLers and also some surprises. The two indigenous IMG supporters had brought along about half a dozen SLP members. The two Workers Revolutionary Party members brought two contacts and recruited both (one a UCATT steward). We were relegated. Just another grouplet. So we settled down and spent our disconsolate journey arguing the toss about 'French turns', James Cannon and 'Ordine Nuevo' etc. Our depression all the more intense for our greater pretensions. We sold a few papers but made no real gains, no good impression.

What are the lessons? Comrades must realise that acting as a party is not a maybe now, maybe later affair but, because we have put ourselves out on a limb, a make or break decision. Every occasion we do not prove ourselves a party will make it more difficult to convince our audience the next time.

There is a tendency, perhaps strengthened in Aberdeen by our physical remoteness to think that the party is being built or has been built somewhere over there. The building concerns every branch. We can't all be supporters clubs for Manchester or Glasgow or the big union fractions.

Lastly, while realising that we and our group alone are faced with the task of laying the foundations of the revolutionary party, we must recognise that we do not at the moment consist of that party.

It took epoch-forming events to overcome the petty antagonisms of the pre-1920 revolutionary movement in Britain and if IS has gone a long way to becoming the hegemonic force on the left it nevertheless remains true that the legacy of decades in the wilderness and the resultant sectarianism cannot be overcome at a stroke.

While keeping a firm concept of scale at the front of our minds and therefore recognising the CP-left Labour as our main competitors we should think twice before writing off all other possible rivals in every field. Without ever dropping to the chatty or slagging levels of the sects we must not ignore significant events. Silence on the SLP split was particularly obvious. Other events like the Engineering Voice re-launch and the witch-hunt on Militant should also be mentioned.

## Why we are the Socialist Workers Party

Duncan Hallas

IT IS A pity that Peter Sedgwick's objections to forming the SWP were not advanced last September when the decision was taken in principle but never mind. Perhaps it may be useful to go over some of the arguments.

To start with basics. Most workers, students and so on who come close to us take it for granted that we are a party—and have done for years. We used to be regarded as the 'IS party'. The argument about when is it a party, when is it not a party, is not real to most contacts—or to most new members. Of course they can see that we are very small compared to the Labour Party, that we have to put the emphasis on *building* the party, but the whole party/not party argument does not usually arise unless we raise it.

This is not in the least surprising. The circumstances which made it a live issue have passed away. As Peter knows, it arose at a time when the revolutionary left was considerably smaller than it is now and when some groups of a few dozen people or, in one case, a couple of hundred were proclaiming themselves 'the vanguard', 'the leadership' and so forth.

IS said then: look, this is ridiculous—you can't be a vanguard unless you are actually leading at least some sections of workers. It is stupid to 'talk big' when you are tiny. All the groups (IS included) are no more than small propaganda groups because they are not able to *intervene*, as organisations, in the actual class struggle. Only when this is changed can you really talk about leadership, the party etc. As a matter of fact you can't even understand what leadership really *means* unless you are involved in real struggles.

This emphasis was right although, as so often happens, it was sometimes exaggerated. To some comrades the whole idea of a combat party became suspect or else postponed to the far distant future.

We are now well past that stage. We do intervene in an organised way in the class struggle—and have been doing so for years. We have industrial and union fractions—some moderately effective, some still far from efficient, we have workplace units—far too few certainly but we have some. And the activity of some of these fractions and groups has, on occasion, affected what actually happens. That is the test of course.

Moreover the class struggle is not *only* the struggle in the workplaces. The

Right to Work Campaign, the campaign against hospital cuts, the fight against racism, all these, in which we have made and are making major organised interventions, are part of the class struggle and so is our quite big scale and organised work among students and a number of other things too.

Certainly, we have to guard against being arrogant. We are still a very small party and we still play a very small role in the labour movement. We have to grow. But we are a party and we do play a role, we intervene.

When did the change take place? Not at the December Party Council. That was only the change in name. The change in fact had taken place earlier. That is why Peter Sedgwick is wrong to see it as 'a revision'.

Peter Sedgwick says that from 1969-74 we were 'an industrially based combat organisation'. If that were true we became a party sometime around 1969! Those comrades who wanted to change to SWP in 1971 (I was one of them) were right! Of course it was very far from true. In 1969 we had comparatively few worker-members (and the total membership was less than a third of what we have now). As late as 1972 the annual conference reflected the whole idea of workplace branches! In those years we were struggling to become a party by trying to intervene, by recruiting manual and white-collar workers and by developing a cadre, a core of members who had mastered the essentials of communist politics and learned how to operate in the movement.

In the process we lost a lot of people who could not make the transition from small-group propaganda politics to party politics. We had breakaways, splits. Some people couldn't accept the idea of a democratic-centralist organisation, some couldn't break from the purely propagandist approach. Others had 'programmitis' or believed that all wisdom was contained on a set of stone handed down by Trotsky in 1938 and so they had nothing to learn from workers in actual struggles. Some good people simply got discouraged with the wrangling and dropped out. We are past all that too. The present membership is vastly better politically than was the membership of four or five years ago. We have made the transition.

That doesn't mean we can be in the least big complacent. Over the next months we need to recruit hundreds and hundreds of members, to strengthen and improve the fraction, to take every possible initiative. We have to make good in practice the claim that we are the only serious force on the hard left.

We shouldn't pay too much attention to the fact that the WRP has recruited a couple of people in Aberdeen or that the IMG brought out more than us for a particular demonstration. The WRP has declined enormously and no longer counts for anything much—even in Aberdeen, once their strongest Scottish branch, they are now only of nuisance value. As to the IMG, it will

never build anything of any substance because its whole approach is to parasitise other organisations (Labour Party, SWP, SLP and so on), to reap where others have sown. Parasitism is a way of life harms the parasite as well as the host. The parasite eventually becomes incapable of an independent existence. This is not arrogance. There are some good people in the grouplets and splitters. But the way to win them is to build the SWP in the workers' movement and to do that you must turn your back on the squabbles of sects.

Peter Sedgwick thinks that the decision to contest the next general election is a mistake because we will get a small vote. Of course, if comrades get the idea that we can get a big vote then they will indeed be disappointed or even 'demoralised' like 'the Italian revolutionary left got when they obtained only half a million votes'. Only half a million! We are not going to get anything remotely approaching such a figure: still less are we going to elect six MPs as the Italians did.

It has been said, over and over again, that votes are not the prime consideration for us. The object is to make contacts and members, to reach more people, to build the sale of Socialist Worker and so on. And incidentally, although not without importance, to show that we can do as well or better than the Communist Party in this field. The members will not 'over-react' in despondency with their figures if these limited and realistic aims are made clear to everybody in advance. Nor will we 'make ourselves ridiculous'.

There will be big problems in mounting the kind of electoral intervention that has been spoken of but this is not the time to discuss them. Parliamentary elections are never the most important activity for us and this election is some way off.

The priorities now are recruitment, the fight against cuts, the RTW, expanded fraction work, developing the sale of SW and, probably, some other interventions that we cannot, at the moment, foresee. There really is very little value in debating again whether we should be called IS or SWP—for the vast majority that is decided—or focussing on a general election in maybe 1978. The point is to build now. Recruitment figures for the last months of 1976 show that it is possible, that the climate is turning in our favour. We have to exploit that for all it is worth.

## Socialist Worker

Privacy

Outer East London

The advent of the New Year and the Socialist Workers Party gives us an excuse, if one were needed, to take a critical look at the Socialist Worker.

Three points can be made:

1 The paper fails or is slow to pick up issues.

### a) Scroungers

After immigrants and immigration, 'dole queue scroungers' have been the topic of shop floor argument during the second part of 1976. When the race issue became too hot, the press made scroungers the number one scapegoat of the day.

They have sustained a campaign against the unemployed ever since attempting to drive a wedge between employed workers and their unemployed brothers and sisters.

Despite Socialist Worker's commitment to the Right to Work Campaign, and our work around dole queues, the paper has not applied itself to a consistent and angry fight against these attacks.

### b) Education

The education of our children has been another big talking point throughout the autumn. Despite the fact that everyone is concerned about his/her children's education, Socialist Worker's contribution to the 'Great Debate' initiated by Callaghan has not been adequate, and it is still necessary to clarify the issues amongst parents on the shop floor and counter the media's propaganda.

### c) Pay and Prices

Finally, the question of pay and prices has had little coverage. 18 months ago, Socialist Worker developed all the arguments against the Social Contract at some length. At that time, our arguments had little influence. Indeed, faced with inflation and the government's propaganda, many workers rejected Socialist Worker and its policies.

Now, however, after 18 months of wage restraint, those same arguments are being taken up and used on the shop floor.

Thousands of workers are now faced with annual pay awards of as little as £2, and this, combined with continuing price rises, means that the arguments of 'wage rises don't cause inflation' and 'if it's their crisis' are ringing absolutely true.

Socialist Worker cannot afford not to campaign on Pay and Prices. There is a large and growing audience for our arguments against the Social Contract.

It's not difficult to think of other issues which Socialist Worker could have taken up with more vigour—IMF and the

Privacy

All the issues above are projected through the media. To a marked extent, it's the issues that are pushed by the Sun and Mirror which determine the tea-break conversations up and down the country.

It's easy to think that we are more important than we are, but the fact remains that it's the editors of the bourgeois press who decide what is going to be 'The News' and not the editor of Socialist Worker.

Only exceptionally do we make news; usually our job is to counter the biased reporting and anti-working class arguments that appear in the popular press. And yet, very often, Socialist Worker fails to do this.

The question needs to be asked; does the editorial board accept that a major task for the paper is to sustain a debate against the Mirror and Sun in order to counter the ideas they expound?

3 Socialist Worker talks too much in generalities—too little in specifics. When the News of the World wants to attack the unemployed it doesn't print Sproat's latest speech but rather uses a big picture of a large and gruesome family who, it claims, are receiving £105 for doing nothing. This is devastatingly effective. Millions see it and are outraged.

Socialist Worker replies with an editorial, which is very correctly argued, but is also long and boring and so makes minimal impact.

A good example says more than a million words and if Socialist Worker is to succeed, it needs an effective style which utilises specific examples.

Nowhere is this more necessary than in the cuts campaign. The phrase 'Public Expenditure Cuts' excites no one, but we all get annoyed at stories of a school child without a text book or a wait of three hours at a casualty department.

Remember the headline 'Stop the Cuts' which was not so good. Then 'Hands off our Hospitals' which was much better. And best of all 'The Cuts nearly killed this girl'.

It's the specific examples that people remember and repeat to their friends and we need to feature them very big.

There was the story of the unemployed seaman in East London who, after a long time on the dole, came under pressure from the Social Security because he would only accept an outdoor job. He was so depressed and upset by this that he killed himself.

This appalling story which gives the lie to all the nonsense about scroungers more effectively than any editorial was much repeated by those who saw it, yet it only rated a couple of inches of tiny print in Fifth Column on page six.

#### Conclusion

There's no shortage of specific examples; every district has them, and every district and every branch know what issues are being talked about at work.

And yet, the journalists remain isolated, overworked and cocooned in their offices. If the paper sometimes appears as if it has been written entirely by five tired journalists who have produced the same stuff

hundreds of times before, for years, then it's because this is the case.

Communication is as bad as ever. We write to the paper with all the enthusiasm of a shipwrecked mariner putting a message into a bottle. Will they get the message? Will they reply?

Members feel little incentive to write for the paper, and even if they do they probably don't know how to go about it.

There has always been much pious talk, even resolutions, about building a workers' paper and the districts taking the paper seriously, but nothing changes.

The initiative has to come from the workers on the paper. The journalists have to stop writing a large portion of the paper themselves and begin to see their job as building the links that develop a working relationship with the districts.

Only the journalists are in a position to do this. They have to accept the responsibility for building links with the districts; of establishing a network of local editors and writers; of initiating and commissioning articles. Unless they take the lead, nothing will change.

As a first step, one comrade should be established as responsible for nothing but communication with districts; and second, the London review panel should be re-established to ensure that the journalists are accountable to at least some of their readers.

## Miracles and pipedreams

### Privacy

Cambridge Branch

A GOOD indication that the level of class consciousness and struggle, and the opportunities for IS's growth are increasing, is that even in Cambridge, one of the most backward areas in the country, things have really started to move. What follows is not a dazzling success story, though, but rather an account of what has been happening, and of the rather different problems we face.

The political backwardness of Cambridge is due mainly to the presence of the University (the 'Gown' is mistrusted, but bow-scraped to, by the 'Town'), and to its rural surroundings, with little industry and even less working class tradition.

The level of right-wingness and spathy is quite appalling; unionisation is low; wages very low (but of course they stand up to comparison with agricultural wages). Unemployment is also still very low.

Until recently, our IS branch membership (mainly workers, not students) has oscillated between 7-15 people. The turnover is high, as very few of us stay for more than a few years before moving to politically more exciting places. Our average periphery has been two people at a time; they either joined or disappeared. Paper sales in town on Saturdays have been quite good; estate sales poor; factory sales nil (not for lack of trying!)—and very demoralising due to insults and worse.

#### PYE'S

In the last few months things have really changed. The first break came last winter when a 'Pye' factory had a small strike (over the £6). I spoke to the workers on the picket and was appalled at their ignorance of the most basic trade union facts. Their convenor, a management toadie, had tried to stop the strike happening. When it took place in spite of her, she told the strikers it couldn't be made official till management had had ten days' notice—this was 'AUEW rules'. They believed her! Only a minority of the workforce was in the union anyway—and many of the women who were union members tore up their cards when the strike decision was taken, as they wished to have nothing to do with militancy or strikers. Over two-thirds of the workforce worked normally. The strike was lost after a few days, of course.

However, a few contacts were made and we tried morning factory sales. Soon three people were buying SW every week

(a few Engineers Charters were sold, but it never really caught on). Some time later a reader and another worker came to an IS meeting and asked for help and advice on how to go about things. None of us is or ever has been in the AUEW, so we could give only general guidelines. Our advice is in general valued and we are respected. One reader has recently joined. They are now selling 10 SWs inside the factory.

However, a crucial argument which we have not yet won with them is their attitude to union recruitment. The apathy and right-wingness of all around them has made the few militants reluctant to recruit to the union any non-militant non-left wing members! We're better off on our own in the union! This attitude has been reinforced by an apparent victory, the resignation of this awful convenor (however this was probably due to personal reasons).

The level of unionisation is thus still very low at that factory—and unlikely to rise through our efforts! Some of us even have serious misgivings about the only IS member at Pye's having this attitude to unionisation; however he has been wanting to join for months and is a good socialist and anti-racist. We hope to win the argument soon, and will ask AUEW comrades from Hitchin/Letchworth to come to discuss things with him and others.

#### THE HOSPITALS

Only three months ago I wrote a long despondent cry-from-the-heart for the Health Fraction Bulletin about the misery, hopelessness and desperate isolation I've felt for three years.

Suddenly, contacts have appeared from all over the place (I take no personal credit), and a week ago six of us had the founding meeting of 'Cambridge Hospital Worker'—a first issue should be out in January. It will be interesting to see what happens—I am the only one in IS, and only one of the others can be described as politically close.

Union-wise, the NUPE-CoHSE rivalry is as bitter as anywhere in the country. Branch officers have successfully blocked any attempt by the rank and file at inter-union cooperation to fight the cuts or anything else. At the main hospital, ancillary unionisation is very high; but among nurses very low. At the smaller hospitals unionisation is generally low.

This Cambridge Hospital Worker faces several difficult important tasks.

Attacking the local branch officers, and the National Union officials, for lack of militancy, inter-union rivalry, divorce from their members, undemocratic manoeuvring, etc etc, while at the same time asking people to join these organisations run by horrible people. In addition to the usual HW fare we will need articles on 'What are Trade unions' at the most basic imaginable level. If we are successful, CHW will be a stepping stone to union membership/involvement etc for

most of our readers.

#### THE UNEMPLOYED

Because none of our members are unemployed, we have found it rather difficult to do Dole sales—besides, in a city with very low unemployment, and an unusual class composition, most of the unemployed are probably so out of choice.

The last 4-5 weeks, three contacts (two have now joined) have been selling at least 15 papers every Tuesday morning. We hope to organise a meeting of dole readers soon—not necessarily to form a RTW Committee (given what I've said above).

#### ANTI-FRONT WORK

There is a parliamentary bye-election due to David Lane's resignation. The Front are standing a candidate. There are few immigrants in Cambridge. Our anti-Front campaign has been fairly successful, though necessarily low-key (mainly estate leafletting, flyposting, picketing and disrupting Front meetings). In the latter we have been helped enormously by the Front's total incompetence. They have done everything wrong, and now even the Police appear to dislike them! Among other things, we hope to take them to court for breaking the Representation of the People Act in three different ways.

#### IN CONCLUSION

For the first time we have a periphery (at present larger than our membership\*). Socialist Worker Supporters Cards, Readers Groups, etc have only just become relevant to us. (We have also sold out of SW for four successive weeks.)

The low level of consciousness and working class traditions means that ideologically we must start at a more basic level than most IS branches might have to: What are Trade Unions; Why You Should Join; Why you must recruit all your workmates into the union, not just those who agree with you (Don't confuse the TU with the Cadre Party!). A day school on this theme for new members and contacts is urgently needed.

The new members and contacts have an infectious enthusiasm which many of us tend to lose through years of hard work and no results. Although when the bye-election was announced, it would have been wrong and impossible for us to stand a candidate, I can now say (in a strictly personal capacity) that if the bye-election were in six months instead of next week, I'd be all for us having one.

\* 10 'old' members; 4 new members; at least 25 contacts, most of them fairly close. 10 of the contacts are Health Workers.

## Training Report

Duncan Hallas

THERE has been a fine response to the request for information about what basic training and educational work is actually in progress in branches and districts.

On the basis of the returns, it seems a great deal is being done although quite a few branches replied (with commendable candour) that they had no training activity at all or that new members are 'developed by integration into the work of the branch', which amounts to the same thing.

Some of the reports were very detailed and helpful. It is not possible to reply individually, but due note will be taken of both requests and suggestions, even if not all of them can be realised due to lack of resources.

A common problem is time. How can it be found? Some districts and branches are running (or have planned) series of public meetings under the title of marxism, revolutionary politics or some similar theme. These serve both as a focus for contacts (and chance attenders) and as a means of developing the knowledge of members. There are some obvious advantages in this approach. It minimises the number of internal meetings. Speakers, whether from outside the district or otherwise, tend to take some care over their preparation and not to take too much for granted. But the big weakness of this method is that it does not really lend itself to the informal discussion atmosphere of a small group. The pattern is almost always speaker then questions and a lot of new members are a bit shy of participating. These series are often successful in attracting sizeable audiences, which is an excellent reason for holding them, but they need supplementing with occasions where smallish groups of new members (and contacts) can discuss with the help of a tutor rather than be lectured to.

Quite a number of districts have run (or planned) special day schools or weekend schools for new members. If well-prepared these can be very useful. An example: a weekend school with these three sessions (Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon), what is marxism?, what is a revolutionary party?, the SWP and the current situation. Of course, it is not possible to do more than make a few key points about each topic. The important thing is to stimulate discussion rather than attempt to cover as much ground as possible.

Another plan is to run fortnightly Branch meetings with a major discussion

topic on the agenda which is geared for our periphery and lasts about an hour'. It is an excellent thing to insist that no branch meeting is without a political discussion of this sort. It may be that in isolated branches this has to be the main way in which education is carried on. Wherever possible though, and it is possible in nearly every district, there ought to be special provision for new members over and above the normal branch discussions. There should be a class, on a district basis, which takes up a connected series of topics covering the essentials of our politics. The time so used is well spent.

For example, to take a version of the scheme given in the last printed set of basic education notes (1973): Marxism and the working class; what the revolutionary party is; the Labour Party and reformism; the unions and how we work in them; racialism; the crisis of the system and the SWP.

There can be many variations in such a basic course. Personally I am not especially keen on these notes but at least they give some sort of framework. Tutors should experiment and learn from the classes. Whether or not we need a new set of basic notes is a matter on which comments are invited. Interestingly enough, hardly any of the letters I received mentioned the matter.

One very obvious deficiency, again judging by the reports, is the sparseness of practical training. Very few districts or branches seem to be currently providing it. It should be possible for every reasonably big district to run a class or a couple of schools on speaking, how to work in union organisations and so on using the 1976 Training Series No 1 pamphlet as a basis. There are plenty of comrades fully competent to run these and they always pay off if properly handled.

By the time the next bulletin appears I hope to have something to report on training.  
Duncan Hallas  
17.1.77

## Organising a public meeting—some suggestions

### Privacy

Merseyside

1 **DECIDE** (a) Who is the meeting aimed at—ie which contacts, which audience.

(b) What is the purpose of the meeting, ie to gain new contacts/publicity, or to publicise a particular strike or event (eg Trico, racialism etc, or as a morale booster for members etc). If at all possible, relate the subject of the meeting to local or national talking points. Keep the title of the meeting short and snappy.

2 **BOOK SPEAKERS** Name an approximate date—never less than five weeks hence. Best is six to eight weeks preparation time, for big public meetings. Get the speakers to give you several dates, if they can.

3 **FIND VENUE** Aim for pub room, which you can safely fill, that is better a packed small room than a half-empty enormous room. Pay the landlord the fee and get a receipt (this stops late cancellations). Tell the landlord it is for an SW public meeting and how many you expect. Make sure the landlord will close the bar while the meeting is in progress, if the bar is in the same room.

4 **CONFIRM** time, date and place with speakers. Tell them what you want them to cover, who you are aiming at. NB: Always confirm speaker and room again a week before date of meeting.

5 **PUBLICITY** (A) First priority is a leaflet giving directions and details, and a bit of stuff on what it's all about.

(i) Get these out with the papers to all buyers—particularly to town sales.  
(ii) Mail them to contacts on the mailing list. Contact invites are usually the most productive.

(B) Print tickets (10p) with details/directions on. Print 2-300. Get them to all members (keep a check on the numbers) and ask all SW supporters to take a few to sell. This results in (i) a bit more money for us and (ii) our supporters identify more strongly with us and we get to a wider periphery. This is probably the key to a successful public meeting.

(C) Advertise in Socialist Worker 'What's On' column.

(D) Advertise in local press—this is expensive, but it will get to a lot of people. Worth doing for the week or two weeks before the meeting. Also try advertising in any local 'What's On' papers, publicity sheets etc.

(E) Posters—Flypost the area with details of the meetings.

(F) Try local radio stations and newspapers. If you can provide some sort of

newsworthy angle, they can run a story/interview which includes details of the meeting.

6 **REVIEW** arrangements weekly and make sure comrades are doing what they promised to do, particularly that the close contacts you expect to recruit are being talked to regularly.

7 **HUSTLE** Comrades and contacts nearer the day and make sure they have purchased a ticket. Provide important contacts with a lift, a baby-sitter etc.

8 **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES** Try and get a programme of discussion meetings arranged as soon as possible as a follow-up. Arrange speakers and venue etc and produce a leaflet with the details. This leaflet should be distributed before the public meeting starts (one on every chair etc).

9 **DON'T BE CONSERVATIVE** Cast your net as wide as possible. Invite all surrounding branches to attend. A successful meeting is a morale booster for them and, if they bring a couple of their own potential recruits to such a meeting, they can nail them on the night.

**ON THE NIGHT** Get everyone there early and wear your brown trousers just in case.

## Organising Socialist Worker in new areas

### Privacy

THE first lesson we have learnt from a year of organising in the Chester and surrounding area is that it is possible to sell Socialist Worker anywhere. It is difficult to find a more upper class and neo-feudal town than Chester, but we now order 160 and pay for an average of 110 papers a week in this area, with a current membership of 21. A year ago there was nothing on this corner of the map.

The second lesson that we have to learn is that there are many comrades in the organisation with plenty of ideas about what we should be doing to increase the effectiveness of, and organisation around, SW but there tend to be rather fewer suggestions on how to accomplish these worthy tasks.

Our suggestions fall into two categories:

- A On organising SW sales in a town in which there is a fairly immediate prospect of starting a small branch, i.e. where there are 2/3 existing members living in the town.
- B On organising SW sales for isolated comrades, isolated contacts, usually in other small towns and villages.

### A. DEVELOPING AN SW SALE AND BUILDING A BRANCH

In any city or town there is a stratum of left-wingers of one sort or another, in the medium sized or smaller towns there is a perverse advantage in that this stratum is smaller, but much easier to find.

We have found that most of the activists are known to each other, and that each activist has a small pool of contacts he or she knows. We were able to develop our contacts list and SW sales by asking everyone who took SW: (1) 'As you agree that SW is a very good paper, do you know anyone else who we can approach to see if he/she would like to try one?' We, of course, swore faithfully to be discreet and not to harass anyone. (2) 'Will you take a few extra papers and see if anyone wants to try one, or regularly take one at your place of work or among your friends?'

In the first instance we gave contacts free copies and after that, stuck rigidly to a line of 'pay me for what you sell'. Although contacts sometimes forget to

take their papers into work, and you lose a dozen sales one week, we have found it counter-productive to harass them into compensating for lost sales.

We have given some contacts a lot of free papers for a couple of weeks and encouraged them to push them round their workplace. This has resulted in regular orders at some factories (eg Vauxhall Motor, Hawker Siddeley) but nothing at others (eg BSC Sholton).

Some contacts are willing and/or able to sell further SWs others cannot or will not. We have had to be flexible, inviting and encouraging but not harassing people and *always* keeping to the principle of paying only for what they sell.

Gaining new contacts has played a very important part in building the SW sale and Branch. We have put an emphasis on wheedling names and addresses from Town sales on a Saturday. We find that if you ask an SW buyer for their name and address, they tend to run away. We have developed the following patter.

'Have you seen the paper before? You have/have not, well we sell here every Saturday between 12.30 and 2.30 and you can always buy one from us here. We also have a series of fortnightly discussion meetings and big public meetings every couple of months.

There are also all sorts of other activities going on in Chester. Would you like to be kept informed of them? Tell you what, do you want to go on our mailing list? Then, if you want to come along to something, great, but if not, fair enough. Now, I'll just make a note of your address.'

(NOTE: Get the address first then ask for the name).

The important thing is to keep talking, which keeps the buyer there, keep smiling and reassuring them that you are not a lunatic and that they won't be arrested for talking to you.

If you give an SW buyer the idea of the let-out option of being on a mailing list, they are much happier about giving their address. Once we have their address, we can approach them far more easily at home. We have gained numerous addresses this way, instead of continually losing potential contacts from town sales.

Another point, we have three non-members who sell 8, 10 and 3 papers in their workplaces on Friday; we have to guarantee that the papers arrive on their doorstep on Thursday night.

Also, when we've got to know them, we have gradually discovered the names and addresses of their SW buyers in the factories. This again prevents good contacts being lost in the future and has been very useful in knowing who we can approach over national initiatives.

### B. ORGANISING SW SALES FOR ISOLATED COMRADES AND CONTACTS

The 21 members of our Branch include a number of comrades up to 15 miles away from Chester. Obviously they are going to experience great difficulty in being fully active in the Chester branch (time and cost of travel etc). We therefore are in danger of them lapsing into inactivity. These comrades have helped us in two ways.

i When you are starting a Branch up, you can't bring new contacts to a meeting of one IS member, nor do they particularly want to travel 20-30 miles to a meeting in Liverpool or Manchester.

We either arrange transport for or persuade our dispersed comrades from 15 miles away to travel into Chester for meetings for a limited period. This gave us the nucleus of a Branch meeting to which to invite contacts. We were later able to recruit contacts and therefore did not need comrades to travel to Chester so often.

ii After this renewed contact with IS, we found it fairly easy to persuade comrades to sell a few SW. We arranged for them to be sent 6 or (later 12) SW direct from the Centre. We collected the money from them periodically, again paying only for copies sold.

We have also persuaded a few non-members to do likewise. Thus we have 5 members who order 42 papers and pay on average for 27-30 papers, and two non-members who order 30 and pay for 21 copies. This system benefits us by:

a) It prepares new areas for possible future development by giving us a limited number of regular SW buyers and contacts. They can often respond to national initiatives eg RTW. They have also been willing to travel 40/50 miles for big public meetings in Chester, which gives them an excellent introduction to IS.

b) It keeps isolated comrades in touch and keeps their hand in. They have to identify with and defend IS if they are selling SW.

c) Non-members increasingly identify with IS; they wouldn't regularly sell something they thought was useless. They are also then seen by their contacts as an IS member!

We have also tried to match wherever possible, contacts from out of the way places with sellers in out of the way places. Our sellers will usually make the effort to deliver to contacts a few miles away, which keeps everyone in touch.

These are some suggestions for organising SW sales in a backwater area like Chester. You have to start life off as a propaganda group. Selling SW and building up a good contact list is essential for

later development. SW is our best selling point, plus a lot of hard consistent work.

### Statement from the Control Commission

*[The Control Commission's] functions are to maintain and strengthen the unity and discipline of the organisation and to investigate complaints relating to disciplinary matters made by members or units of the organisation.*  
International Socialists Constitution, Post Conference IS Bulletin 1975.

At a meeting of the Control Commission held in December 1976, a report from the Central Committee concerning recent disciplinary actions was received and endorsed.

The Control Commission had not been convened as a 'court of appeal' as no appeals against disciplinary measures had been received since the 1976 Annual Conference.

However, there was general agreement that the Control Commission should be contacted by members or Districts before grievances reached levels where disciplinary sanctions or resignations became inevitable.

There is considerable overlap here between the function of the Central Committee and that of the Control Commission, but where the intervention of the Control Commission is felt by comrades to be required, contact should be made by letter to the Secretary.

Privacy