

# MARXIST STUDIES

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## NEWSLETTER

No.1 April 1970

The publication of the newsletter of Marxist Studies marks another step forward in the progress of the journal. The aims of the newsletter are modest and designed to allow an exchange of ideas and experiences among comrades who subscribe to Marxist Studies. Just how this will develop will be determined by those who read the newsletter, because it will be up to them to send in the reports of meetings, activities, discussions and comments. We hope that in this way there will be some continuity between the quarterly issues of the journal.

The newsletter will appear at the beginning of each month, so comrades are asked to send in material by the last week of each month.

The main activities in which comrades associated with Marxist Studies are engaged are four areas of work: 1. Workers' Control, which we believe to be central to our work as Marxists. 2. Womens liberation, this is an area that has been neglected in the past because of the oppressed position of women in society and the ritualistic manner in which it has been treated within the Marxist movement. Today women are on the move, and our task as Marxists is to be a part of that movement. 3. Youth, we have witnessed since 1964 the emergence of a revolutionary base among the youth, even though it has been mainly confined to students. 4. Work in the Labour Party and other traditional organisations of the working class. Despite the manner which the present Wilson Government has acted as the spear-head of the attack upon the working class, the Labour Party remains the only viable alternative to the Tories in the eyes of the working class. This remains so despite the apathy displayed towards this party by large sections of the working class.

The newsletter will, we hope, play a small role in helping comrades to co-ordinate their work in the various localities. If comrades need leaflets producing quickly we shall be able to do this for them.

Having taken the first step, the ball is in your court comrades to assure the success of the newsletter.

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### Labour and the next General Election

There seems to be some uncertainty among some sections of the revolutionary left as to what attitude Marxists should take towards the Labour Party at the next general election. This uncertainty arises out of the dilemmas and dis-oriented state of the revolutionary left induced by the experience of the present Labour Government. Pre-1964 there seemed to be little doubt as to where revolutionaries should work, and what was the class position to be taken in any contest between the Labour Party and the Tories. Flowing from the class nature of both parties there seemed to be little difficulty in coming down on the side of supporting the Labour Party, despite all its faults as a reformist one. This reformist nature of the Labour Party in no way deterred Marxists from understanding their class duty, even if at the same time warning that the Labour Party could not solve the problems

facing the working class.

Today the position does not seem so clear cut. Since 1964 we have seen the development of a strata of revolutionary youth who completely reject any idea of supporting the Labour Party and some will even see such support as a betrayal of revolutionary Marxism. It can be argued that support for the Labour Party at the next General Election is either a betrayal or is irrelevant. Both attitudes are wrong.

Despite the decline in active membership of the L.P. and the decline in votes that has occurred in by-elections, this party still remains the political expression of the working class. That this is so explains on the one hand the low political level of the class generally, and secondly something that needs to be hammered home time and again, that is the working class will not abandon its traditional organisations without a tremendous struggle taking place in which a new and authoritative leadership emerges.

The IS group seems to have come to the conclusion of supporting the Labour Party in the coming general election, but in a half-hearted and shamefaced manner. In the editorial of IS 42 it is stated "A Labour victory will indicate support for capitalist policies disguised to varying degrees so as to gain working class votes; a Tory victory will mean support for open and undisguised ruling-class domination ....For these reasons, although our main aim in the election period should be to make propaganda against the policies of the Labour Government and to indicate the source of these in reformist theory and practice, it would be a mistake, although not a major one, for the Left to call for a vote 'against both Tories' and to urge abstention... It would be to accentuate precisely what differentiates us from most workers, not what we have in common. If there were anything like a credible alternative to offer this would be justified; if there is not it only makes the long term task of relating revolutionary politics to the aspirations of ordinary workers that much more difficult." Although, as I have said, this statement comes out for a correct policy, it does so for the wrong reasons, and in a rather shamefaced manner, as well it might considering the way in which the IS Group have abandoned the traditional labour movement over the last year or so in favour of 'rank and file' activity. To realise just how far IS have travelled along certain roads in recent years one has only to compare the above with what Tony Cliff wrote in International Socialism No.9 (Summer 1962) "Marxists should not set themselves up as a party or embryo of a party of their own. They should remember that the working class looks to the Labour Party as the political organisation of the class ....Marxists should never forget that consciousness of the aims of socialism on the part of the mass of the workers is a necessary prerequisite for the achievement of socialism."

To argue that Marxists should merely support the 'Labour Tories' because they are marginally better than the 'Tory Tories' is to presume that one should allow oneself to be pushed into a position of choosing between the lesser of two evils. For Marxistssuch a position is ludicrous. If necessary we should say a plague on both your houses and openly stand up and argue the case. But the reality is that even now after all the reactionary measures taken by the Labour Government the Labour Party remains the political expression of the organised working class, and it is on these grounds that Marxists have to make their choice. Of course such support for the Labour Party must be carried out in a manner that indicates our own position on the Wilson Government, and we should state openly that we do not believe that a new Labour Government will solve the problems confronting the working class. But this has to be done within the context of an overall rejection of the Tory Party and the dangers that a new Tory Government holds for the working class.

Nor should we do this on the liquidationist basis that Cliff argued from in 1962, we should proclaim the need for Marxists and the Left to organise, while at the same time not allowing ourselves to be isolated from the militants of the working class.

John Walters

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### London Activities

Comrades in the North London Area are now well on their way to organising a meeting in the Conway Hall on May 8th, where it is hoped that at least two branches of the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Womens Equal Rights will be set up. Speakers at the meeting will include Audrey Wise - well known militant in USDAW and Ann Spencer of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. In the chair will be Brian Nicholson, leading dock militant. The activities of the comrades have already attracted the notice the press. The local newspaper has carried one article and the Daily Telegraph of March 25th contained extracts from an interview given by our comrades in an article on the question of womens liberation.

Currently, alongside this activity, the comrades have initiated a study class around Vol.1 of Capital which about eight people are attending. Although all concerned have found that this is hard work the majority feel that they are gaining something from the reading and discussion.

N.B. Penguin Press are going to publish a Marx Library over the next two years. This will contain most of what Marx wrote, much of it not available in English before. This will be a major publishing event and comrades are advised to keep their eyes open for the beginning of the series. We shall try to let you know when the first volume is due to be published.

On March 16th, despite a counter attraction of a Tribune meeting on Ireland, a very successful meeting of the Unity Movement of South Africa was held at the Conway Hall. Speakers at the meeting were I.B.Tabata, and N.Honono, both of them being longstanding militant Marxists and revolutionary fighters in South Africa (both now live in exile). Nearly 250 turned up for the meeting and gave a very warm response to the speakers. Members of the African National Congress were present and in a somewhat aggressive mood. But I.B.Tabata dealt with them patiently but firmly, so that they were not allowed to disrupt the meeting. Comrade Tariq Ali took the chair at this meeting, and proved to be an efficient chairman, not allowing questions from the floor to become speeches, reminding the questioners that they should keep to the point. This has been the first public meeting that the Unity Movement has put on in London, and is only the beginning of the work of organising supporters.

Ken Tarbuck spoke at the London School of Economics on March 4th to the clerical and administrative staff. The meeting was organised by the LSE shop stewards co-ordinating committee, there being a panel of speakers including Freddy Silberman, Tony Cliff and a representative of ASTMS. Each member of the panel was asked to speak on the subject of productivity bargaining for 10-15 minutes. There were about 45-50 people present, and after the platform had finished speaking, there was a lively discussion on the subject from the floor.

### BRISTOL

Up for discussion at the next N.E.Bristol Divisional Labour Party GMC is a resol-

-ution on student files, which reads as follows:

"This meeting views with concern the revelations regarding the keeping of the records of University Staff and Students political activities. It therefore calls for an independent enquiry."

On the 23rd of March the Bristol Womens Equals Rights Campaign held a meeting at which the BBC TV2 were present, filming for a programme called 'People of the Seventies'. Two papers were read and discussed at the meeting. The first one was on the family as a kinship group. The main theme of the paper was that in late capitalist society the family as a kinship group was an anachronism, but rather it was an economic unit. Because of the capitalist ethics this means that members of the family outside of the immediate nuclear family were not treated any differently from non-family members. In fact this ethic even creeps into the nuclear family leading to various tensions.

The second paper read at the meeting was concerned with the individual in society, and the increased mobility of labour that arose from the isolation of the individual or nuclear family.

There followed a general discussion in which certain points arose, e.g. do we have the answers to these problems?, economic dependence of wives. Out of this came the idea of pay for housewives and the need to break down the old concepts of maternal self-sacrifice which in effect means that wives and mothers became depersonalised.

On April 1st a march was planned by the womens group in support of the Family Planning Clinic, which many people in Bristol are still not aware of. More about this in our next issue.

There was a demonstration recently in Bristol against the visit of the South African Ambassador, who was given a civic reception. Although the police were out in force some demonstrators managed to break through the cordon. One of the demonstrators was pushed against the Mayors car and arrested for obstruction. On police advice he pleaded guilty, being given the impression that he would be dealt with leniently. When he appeared in court he was fined £50. Martin Roisier then is in need of help to pay this fine. Any donations towards this should be sent c/o E.Malos, Garden Flat, 1 Apsley Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2SH.

#### CROYDON

The last meeting of Surry NJACWER was held on Wednesday 18th March. The main item on the agenda was discussion on the education of women introduced by Barbara Wilson. This covered pre-school education upto and including university education and day release schemes. At all stages in the educational process a girl is conditioned to think of herself primarily as a future wife and mother and to fit into her conventionally defined role. This may be done through the books which are used to teach children to read and also in their play where girls are invariably nurses and boys doctors.

In the secondary schools discrimination gets into its stride more obviously. Girls are mainly trained for temporary, largely unrewarding jobs. While G.C.E. results show that there is no inborn difference between the abilities of boys and girls, the level of expenditure on each is not equal. For example, the amount spent per annum per pupil taking science

	Boy	Girl
LEA Grammar	13/6d	11/6d
Direct Grant	21/9d	11/3d
Independent	27/3d	12/0d

Incidentally, these figures also show the raw deal that working class boys get compared with those who go to Direct Grant or Independent Schools.

The Crowther report on education advocates that a curriculum should be developed which respects the different roles which boys and girls play, so things could get worse with girls being channelled increasingly into domestic and arts subjects.

On the question of university education it was pointed out that according to the Robbins Report a woman has less chance of being accepted for a degree course and that the proportion of women students has remained static at approximately 25% since the end of the last war. Also that the proportion of science students who are women is now lower than before the war.

There was some discussion on a campaign to obtain more day nurseries for working mothers in Croydon, which at present has approximately 100 council nursery places to cover a population of 330,000. The next meeting of Surrey NJACWER will take place on April 15th at 8.00p.m. at 20, Rymer Road, East Croydon. The main topic for discussion will be the Equal Pay Bill.

Carol Day.

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For the moment, a casual worker earns less money than an ordinary worker in a settled post, so he is cheaper for the enterprise that employs him, in spite of the high price of invoices. The pressure of the unemployed increases the problem. The casual work enterprises, already monopolise the employment in some branches of industry. The exploitation of the foreign workers by the bosses employing casual workers in some enterprises - most of the foreign workers are employed on a casual basis are from North Africa or are Negroes.

So, our work is to investigate in the poor areas around Paris (called "bidonvilles" i.e. shanty towns) and dormitories to try to find out the probable collusion between the "sellers of men" and the "sellers of sleep". We are connected with militant groups who are teaching reading to adult African workers and we asked them to organise meetings on casual work for us.

The creation of the association of the "Cahiers de Mai" gives an answer to our need. We first took membership on a group basis, then individual cards and subscriptions. The subscriptions give us some money which has been spent already on the advertisements for the bigger meetings. This association gave us the opportunity to overcome a doubtful attitude towards some more or less militant comrades we met in the 6th arrondissement: our activity having the same principles as the "Cahiers de Mai". This therefore, on the political analysis published in No.14, led us away from small group "activity" and the typical political debates of a "tiny group", from which we almost died.

∟ Editors note. "Courrier Militant" is a form of 'internal bulletin' of the association around "Cahiers de Mai". The article has been slightly abridged /

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We have enclosed a specimen copy of ISRAC, which we hope readers will find interesting. Details of subscriptions etc. can be found within its pages. However, we should like to draw comrades attention to the stop-press insert and act upon it.

## RED MOLE and BLACK DWARF

Maybe I am colour blind, but frankly I cannot tell these paper apart. Hearing of the split I rushed out to get the first copy of Mole and the first issue of Dwarf after the split in order to compare them and take a position, but was disappointed to find it was the mixture as before. Mole's editorial board is dominated by the IMG while Dwarf keeps Barnett, Chand, Fred Halliday, Hoyland etc.

But if there are political issues behind the split they could not be discerned in the papers which are Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Both lead off with statements claiming to be fighting revolutionary Marxists papers, the only difference being that Red Mole calls on you to set up Red Circles to sell the paper. Both report and editorialise on the student files issue. Both have pieces by anti-Zionist Jews, both have items on the anti-militarist struggle in the French Army, both have reports on the Womens Conference at Ruskin. A solid report in Dwarf on the repression in Italy can be compared with a reprint of an agitational piece from Belgium in Red Mole. One man does not appear to have realised there has been a split - one Percy Ingrams writes under the heading City Dwarf in one and City Mole in the other paper.

As a paper Dwarf perhaps has the edge this time with an important scoop interview with Eldridge Cleaver. It is well worth reading and pondering this piece to realise at what a rate the Negro struggle has developed in the last ten years. We have gone from Christian forgiveness to a Marxist Leninist Party. The latter, being so new still has plenty of rough edges, as Cleaver frankly admits - but I am 100% in agreement with his confidence in the future of his party compared with traditional outfits like the C.P. He correctly points out that his group is the first to try to grasp the specificities of America in Marxist terms, rather than repeat formulae that fail to come to terms with reality. Unfortunately however in his healthy reaction against blanket schematising Cleaver perhaps goes too far the other way in taking up Kim Il Sung's doctrine of national Marxism. He points out that the Koreans were forced into this position by the overbearing behaviour of Russia and China but he does not realise that while this may be an explanation it is not necessarily a justification.

The revolution today is a world revolution and the long struggle to build a real international revolutionary movement cannot be avoided by appeals to "local conditions" etc.

Both Red Mole and Black Dwarf are overwhelmingly concerned with reports from abroad and the student struggle - the only exception being one little article on a union struggle in Mole. To put it another way - there is nothing in these papers that deal with the problems facing the British working class today. This is a truly remarkable lacuna - and mirrors the dreadful weakness of the British revolutionary movement which has yet to break out of its student/teacher ghetto. The struggle to create a paper that will be useful to the British work is a long hard business - it is only too easy to make a commercial venture of a paper tilling the lush pasture of the universities.

B.Biro

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## CASUAL WORKERS IN FRANCE

(Translated by Marie-Paule Duverger from "Courrier Militant" published by "Cahiers de Mai".)

Nearly a year ago a commission was constituted inside the Action Committee of the 6th arrondissement of Paris connected with a small group of revolutionary

militants who were casual workers themselves. We took this decision after we had read about the work which has been done by the Action Committee of l'Haye -les- Roses about the Health Service, this work pointing out the orientation we should give our activity.

So, we started collecting documentary material and the few statistical documents available. In relation to the work we realised that we were like everybody, full of pre-conceived ideas about this activity, which were very far from the real situation. Losing heart because of the immensity of the task, only three of us were still taking an interest in it.

Because we were going to the meetings of the "Cahiers de Mai" regularly on Thursdays, in October we gradually became more confident when we read the inquiries that militants of the "Cahiers de Mai" had made. So, we restored the more or less interrupted relationship with a casual worker whom we knew well.

From this new problems appeared:

- work out the basis for a project of a law by the Ministry of Social Affairs
- the signing of an industrial agreement with "Manpower"+ only by the CGT.
- none implementation of the agreements of Grenelles (made during May/June 1968) about trade union freedoms.
- an extraordinary increase in the number of casual workers etc....

We agreed to publish an inquiry in "Cahiers de Mai". Therefore, we organised several meetings with a group of casual workers we knew. With their help, we tidied up our documents, we researched the missing statistics. We tape-recorded the discussions. (Talking of tape-recorders, it is extraordinary how a taped conversation can fix important points which would have otherwise been forgotten). We also organised bigger meetings with workers who did not belong to any trade union, with 'settled workers' (i.e. ordinary workers), with CNRS (an organisation specialising in inquiries) which has just finished a great deal of work about this matter.

We also met the branch of the CGT which organises casual workers, who told us of the improvements in law they wanted for giving status to casual workers.

This inquiry should be published in the "Cahiers de Mai" No,18 But we must examine everything thoroughly because of the immensity and the complexity of the problems: there were 100,000 casual workers in France in 1967, there are now 400,000! They are working in every sector of the economy, 65% of them are young and unskilled. Our casual worker comrades are already overloaded with specific militant tasks, particularly inside the CGT, so they must be helped, not only by forming work sessions about particular aspects of the problem, but also by establishing connections with groups in the provinces, Lyon, Bordeaux for instance. Some people are interested in these problems in Lille, there are certainly more elsewhere

Examples of the problems that must be examined thoroughly without delay are:

- whereas the wages of the settled workers rise, those of the casual workers decrease,
- casual workers are used for forcing an untenable pace of work.

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+"Manpower" is a company that employs workers and then hires them out to other firms, rather like employment agencies in Britain except that the worker is employed by "Manpower" and not the actual employer he is working for.

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