

An open letter to Enoch Powell

No room for racism!

FORMER Tory Cabinet Minister Enoch Powell became notorious in 1968 for high-profile agitation against black immigrants. Dockers and Covent Garden meat porters who agreed with what Powell said went on strike to protest against his dismissal from the Tory Shadow Cabinet.

In 1972, when British passport-holding Asians were expelled *en masse* from Uganda, their arrival in Britain allowed Powell and other racists to stoke up a great new wave of racist agitation.

This open letter to Powell was published on 9 August 1972*.

THE Tory Government and the bosses it serves now desperately need all the help you can give it. We have — so far — thwarted its plans, and defeated it again and again. We have spat on its laws. And we will drive it from office before long.

We? The working class. The men and women of all creeds and colours who do the work in Britain, who man the factories, drive the trains, clean the streets, erect the buildings, care for the sick, build the ships and load and unload them, stoke the furnaces and dig the coal. 'We', the real people of Britain, the "lower classes", on whose backs your class stands.

Millions upon millions of workers hate and despise this Tory Government. They recognise it as their most bitter enemy, and they demand its immediate resignation.

And that's where you crawl out of your rat hole.

You see the tragedy of the Uganda Asians as another chance to whip up racist hysteria in Britain. Wrapped in the cloak of a far-seeing "patriot", a man who speaks for "the People", your service to the bosses is to try to get the Tories off the hook by dividing worker against worker, white against black; to deflect the anger of the working class, to head off its discontent and to pit one part of our ranks against another, to our common injury and to the benefit of your class.

Your message is the sick message of hatred and division. In the name of averting a "national catastrophe", you want to promote a working class catastrophe — that of racial conflict. You harvest race hatred and you sow it. You have become the prophet of a race war which you do your best and

worst to set alight.

After your 1968 speeches, fascists organised anti-black demonstrations, and racist gangs took to assaulting black workers and youths — *in your name*.

That, Powell, is where you link arms with the Mosley fascists and the National Front, that sick and obscene gang of misfits and Hitler-lovers who get their kicks from hatred of blacks and Jews, and who want to destroy the trade unions and the labour movement.

That is why you are one of the most dangerous enemies of the British working class — black and white — right now. You are the carrier of a disease of racialism that could ravage the working class and cripple its ability to go on standing up to the attacks of Heath's Government.

YOU are also the biggest fraud and con-man in the whole Tory Party. You are a shameless, habitual, barefaced liar. *And we can prove it.*

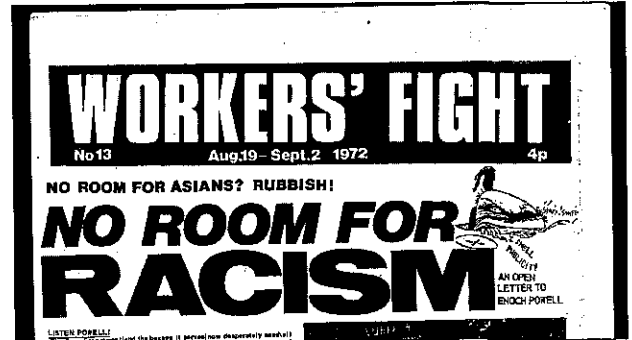
You say: immigration equals national catastrophe. Why? How? For whom? Immigrants to any healthy society are an asset

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and a 'bonus'. They are fully grown, educated (and they are educated) and capable of working, whereas additions to the population by natural increase need years of education, care and social benefits.

You play on the fears and the insecurity of workers under capitalism. But you, Powell, are a fanatical defender of capitalism and an enemy of socialism, which is the real solution to the problems of the working class.

You believe in the 'free market', even if it means 3 million unemployed. You care nothing for the working class, or for the effects of capitalism.



Workers' Fight, August 1972

You are against the trade unions. You were a minister in a Tory government whose every anti-working class act you supported.

You are no "friend of the ordinary man". No — you have nothing but a spiv's contempt for the working class.

You have one concern only — to divide our class on the idiotic basis of skin colour, so as to cripple us in the real fight. Keeping out immigrants will not solve unemployment or any other problem: if workers listen to you, they will be less able to fight unemployment. Instead of attacking its real cause they will start attacking each other.

You are not the exponent of a cure for our ills: you are an ulcerated carrier of the disease — capitalism — which afflicts British society.

You say Britain is overcrowded. But what about the thousands who *leave* every year?

You say that immigrants differ in culture and background. Yes, they do. (So do the Welsh, English, Scots and Irish, and the large numbers of European workers who came here after the war.) But not nearly so much as the culture, life-style and values of the British workers differ from those of "our" British boss class.

The breadth of understanding, the real culture, even the general knowledge, of the British working class is in fact all the better, is all the richer, for the mixing. Our understanding of a common interest with workers of other countries is sharper for the experience. Our grasp of the need for *international* working class solidarity is stronger for the contact.

In the Common Market the working class will only be able to defend itself by cutting across narrow nationalism and forging strong links with European trade unionists.

That's what worries you, Powell, and

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Home Rule all round?

your class — as does the sight of black and white and Asian workers united on flying pickets.

The working class maxim *unity is strength* applies outside the country, as well as in it.

You say the British people are denied the facts about what is happening in their country. But whose country is it, Powell?

Two or three per cent of the people — those you represent — own all the substantial wealth of the country. They contribute little or nothing to the wealth of the country, to the well-being of the majority of its people.

50,000 coloured immigrants who work for just so much as one year (and they do work) will contribute more to the common wealth of the British people than will the whole gaggle of spivs and parasites that make up the ruling class during all the natural lives of a whole useless generation of them.

Black workers have more right to live in the country than all the winter-in-the-Bahamas set, all the Reggie Maudlings, the Arnold Weinstocks, the Lord Vesteyes [rich capitalists] and the Enoch Powells — they have earned that right through hard work. And one day, quite soon perhaps, they will help 'us' make it really *our* country by taking it out of the hands of rats like you.

In 1968 some muddled workers joined with fascists in supporting you. Since then the working class has felt its own strength, it has got a clearer picture of its real enemy now than for a long time past. It has the experience of a series of victorious struggles in common with tens of thousands of black and Asian workers.

Militant workers must and will rally to protect our black brothers if the fascist gangs and backward workers of '68 once again try to use the 'respectable' cover you provide for those who want to attack blacks and Asians.

This time working class militants, black and white, can create defence groups to drive your fascist followers back into the sewers from which you encourage them to emerge.

If they don't, they are allowing you, Powell, and your class to inflict a wound on the working class which can turn septic.

With all our hearts we, working class militants from the port and steel industries, pledge ourselves to fight to root out, and to wipe out, the racist poison you represent for our class.

The black workers are our brothers in the struggle of the working class. You, Powell, contemptible gutter-rat that you are, are one of the most diseased representatives of everything we are struggling against.

Tony Duffy (editor, *Real Steel News*),
Harold Youd (editor, *The Hook*)

In the Gladstonian Liberal Party, which fell from power in 1895, there was much talk of giving each nationality in the United Kingdom — English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish — Home Rule. It came to nought. The Marxists of that time commented in an editorial in their paper:

ONE of the Tory opponents of the abstract resolution passed last week by the House of Commons in favour of "Home Rule all round" hit the nail on the head when he said that the discussion had about it an "ineffaceable air of absolute unreality". But Radicals [Liberals] are for ever grasping at shadows and letting the substance elude them. They are for ever pursuing shadowy political reforms while making no effort to secure substantial social reforms. When it emanates from Radical supporters of the capitalist system there is a flavour of insincerity about the proposal to make a large addition to existing political machinery, seeing that they are opposed themselves to the idea of the extension of the functions of the State. They still profess the most profound faith in "private enterprise" and strenuously oppose the Socialist contention that the community ought to organise its own industries, to take control of its own affairs, instead of leaving them longer at the mercy of that conflict of private interests from which, according to the Radical axiom, general well-being results. When we point out to them that ugly facts confront and confound their theory, "so much the worse for the facts", say they, "the theory is a sound one".

We do not mean to say that "Home Rule for Ireland and for all other parts of the United Kingdom", would be an unsubstantial reform. If we thought so it would not stand, as it does, on our programme. But there is something ludicrous in the notion that full recognition of the right of each country to manage its own affairs, a right shared by each city, town and village within their several borders, will be made by the mere multiplying of Parliaments.

An addition to our political machinery which would only increase the output of talk is most undesirable. We take it that it is true that politics mean no longer "the government of men", but "the administration of affairs". If so the time has come for the unmaking rather than the making of Parliaments, which were only devised as a check upon personal rule which in this country is no longer as great a menace to our political liberties as the Cabinets which exercise autocratic powers, confident of the support of the party-followers of the Ministry that happens to be in office. For the thorough administration of affairs we must appoint boards or committees of experts. It is no good establishing more Palaver Palaces like the one at Westminster.

We do not seriously entertain the opinion that the House of Commons is useless, dangerous, and ought to be abolished. Let it be democratised, and the institution may still serve a very useful purpose, provided it is made widely representative, not of something less than Great Britain but of Greater Britain, and provided its members are guided in their deliberations by a sense of communal instead of particular interests.

We shall take another step forward when we convene that Parliament of the Nations which will assemble as soon as — Capitalism and Class Rule overthrown — the solidarity of mankind receives recognition. But instead of being a step forward it seems to us that the proposal to establish four Parliaments within the British Isles is a retrogressive one. What useful purpose could they serve which Provincial or National Councils, composed of members of local administrative bodies, would not serve still better! Practical experience would indicate to such bodies what legislative reforms are necessary. They could initiate legislation, and Parliament would hesitate to reject measures emanating from such a source. But if the multiplication of Parliaments would serve no useful purpose they might do very real mischief by fostering national prejudices and national jealousies, by accentuating differences it is desirable to efface; and anything which might in this way check the growth of internationalism it is our duty as Social-Democrats, to oppose.

We advocated Home Rule for Ireland long before it was prosperous to avow oneself a Home Ruler, but we refused to endorse the claim of Radical converts that it had become a matter of paramount importance because, forsooth, they had tardily embraced it as an article of their political belief. We still believe in Home Rule for Ireland, in Home Rule for Sussex for that matter, but we know how hollow the phrase "Home Rule" must sound to every intelligent workman of Irish or any other extraction, who comprehends that as long as a class controls access to the means of livelihood that class rules him. You might as well quote the proverb which affirms that every Englishman's house is his castle, with the idea of comforting the man who tells you the bailiffs are in possession of his home, as endeavour to convince any thoughtful worker that his economic conditions will be changed for the better, by shifting the venue of parliamentary assemblies. To the extent that his class can gain representation in Parliament, he is interested in preserving, not restricting, its international character (if an assembly of English, Irish, Scottish, and Welshmen can be called international?) for the workers will be able to emancipate themselves only by uniting their forces. Divided they have always been defeated. Only by healing the division of nations will the workers be able to shake off class-rule. Home Rule, or no Home Rule, as long as the capitalist landlord class is in possession, the labour-force of the worker will be "sold-up" day by day, he will still be despoiled of the wealth he creates.

Every extension of the principle of local self-government increases the political power of the worker, which will be a valuable weapon in the struggle for social freedom, therefore we, as Social-Democrats, will do all we can to extend the application of the principle. But under its cover and cloak do not let us permit the reactionary nationalist spirit to be revived. Our hope lies, not in Home Rule, but in internationalism, and we must guard it jealously.

Editorial, Justice, 6 April 1895