

Socialist Organiser discussion bulletin

The Common Market: discussion article from SO 56

Socialist Organiser and Greenham Common
- Dave Spencer

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COMMON MARKET - A WORKERS' ANSWER

THE WORKERS of Western Europe face as opponent a capitalist class united in the EEC. We face the same bureaucratic EEC apparatus, operating to integrate and homogenise rules, laws and national government policies affecting the workers of ten countries.

Go-it-alone national solutions, such as that which the majority of the British Left proposes, are simply not adequate to the situation: little-Britain socialism is not a possibility.

There is only one alternative to choosing to try to perpetuate the national division of the working class, which is increasingly absurd (and reactionary) in face of the evolution of capitalism in the EEC and the common front of the EEC capitalist states. That alternative is unity of the European workers.

We must appeal to the workers of Europe, and unite with them to hammer out a common workers' programme for a Socialist Europe and for common action in the class struggle now.

The basic ideas which express this belief are these, spelled out for brevity (and, I hope, clarity) in the form of 'yes' and 'no' statements.

NO to the bosses' Market: NO to bosses' Britain. YES to the Socialist United States of Europe.

NO to the reactionary utopia of an independent Britain. **NO** to the delusion that there is or can ever be a purely British solution to the historic decline of British capitalism.

YES to a workers' government to replace Thatcher and begin to reconstruct society in the interests and according to the needs of the workers — a government which will cut through the vested interests of the British ruling class and, as necessary, defy and repudiate the rules, dictates and institutional and constitutional constraints of the IMF and the EEC, etc. This workers' government should appeal to the workers of Europe over the heads of their rulers for a common programme and common action against the capitalist class in the entire EEC.

YES to the economic and social reconstruction of Britain as part of the Socialist United States of Europe.

NO to all variants of — unconditionally reactionary — British nationalism, insularity and isolationism; and war on their malignant manifestations in society and especially in the labour movement — on chauvinism, xenophobia, and racism.

NO to import controls — the core of the Left's 'alternative' to the EEC — and to similar reformist ideas which point away from the struggle for socialism, because they necessarily



'Our united Europe can only be a united workers' movement to fight the bosses' EEC and national governments'

point away from international working-class unity. These policies are retrogressive and reactionary even within the post-war development of capitalism. YES to the economic and social reconstruction of Europe in the interests of the working class — by way of building on the post-war integration of the West European economy, seizing control of it rather than

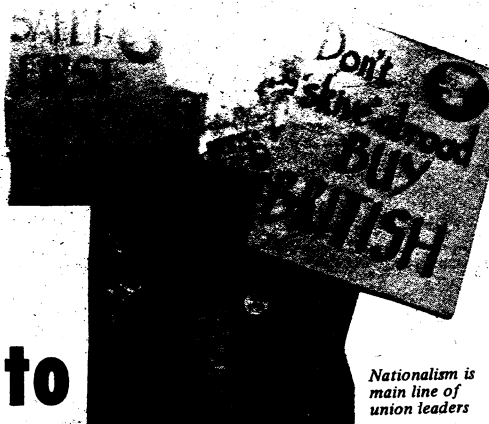
seeking to unscramble it. It is neither possible nor desirable to reverse the inadequate steps already taken by the capitalists towards realising one of the prerequisites of socialism — the integration of the European economy. NO to the suicidal British-nationalist policy of pitting worker against worker by seeking an advantage for one section of the European

working class (via import controls) that can only be had at the expense of another. It is nationalism that blinds the British labour movement to the fact that in socialist working-class terms, pitting Welsh against Ruhr steelworkers (for example) is not seriously different from setting Yorkshire steelworkers to compete with Welsh. In

Europe as inside Britain, any advantage thus gained — in living standards or jobs — would be paid for ruinously by a massive destruction of class solidarity without which no overall working-class political action can emerge.

The central concern of socialists is to promote and develop that class solidarity and class identity within and across state bound-

CONCLUDING his discussion article on Tony Benn's analysis of 'Britain as a Colony', JOHN O'MAHONY suggests a political platform of ideas and slogans to allow the British labour movement to fight for a socialist alternative both to EEC capitalism and to British capitalism.



Nationalism is main line of union leaders

An action programme

AN ACTION programme for the workers of Europe will have to include the following points:

- Internationally-coordinated action to defend jobs through occupations.

- A Europe-wide campaign to eradicate unemployment by winning work-sharing at full pay.

- A Europe-wide workers' movement to beat inflation by the sliding scale of wages. Unite the European labour movement to fight for a price index calculated by workers' organisations as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class.

- Defend all jobs. Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers, bankers, linked companies, and branches throughout capitalist Europe.

- Nationalisation without compensation under workers' management, and the beginning of planning and integration in our interest.

- For the trade unions in cars, steel and other industries to prepare for a European workers' government by working out their plans to develop and reorganise their industries throughout Europe. Build and develop international combine committees.

- Immediately, our united Europe can only be a united European workers' movement to fight both the bosses' EEC and the bosses' national governments.

The West European labour movement must develop links with Solidarnosc, the pioneer labour movement of the Stalinist states. At present no real labour movements exist in the Stalinist states apart from

Poland: they were destroyed by the ruling bureaucrats who inhabit their shells.

The West European labour movement should use its strength to support the call from Solidarnosc's recent congress for the creation of real labour movements in the Stalinist states.

The first act of fraternal and sororal solidarity must be to break off all collaboration with the police-state 'trade unions' of the Stalinist states, and to express support for the real — savagely persecuted — trade unionists in the Stalinist states: with, for example, the USSR's 'psychiatric' political prisoner Vladimir Klebanov.

Unity

That is the way to prefigure the unity of all Europe, east and west, which will only be achieved by overthrowing both capitalism and totalitarian bureaucratic rule.

- Against the existing institutions of the bosses' EEC, which bring the general irrationalities of capitalism to the level of murderous absurdities, bureaucratically administered (for example, food mountains amidst poverty), we must fight for the creation of Europe-wide democracy and public accountability, at least such as exists in the component parts of the EEC. Equal political rights for all workers in the EEC: full voting rights for immigrant workers.

- For a labour movement campaign to expel all US bases and remove all nuclear weapons from Western Europe.

- For a workers' government in Europe and the Socialist United States of Europe.

aries. We must oppose and fight everything in the labour movement that undercuts it, repudiates it, or works against it.

Delusory

The 'option' of the restoration of Britain's 'independence' is delusory. It necessarily points the British labour movement away from facing up to the fact that no working-class policy today can be a solution to Britain's problems if it does not pose the working class reorganisation of the European economy (at least), and build European working-class unity to achieve it.

YES to the maximum solidarity and organic political

and industrial integration and coordination of the European labour movement, which means mainly collaboration and integration of the labour movement' of the EEC (since, outside of Solidarnosc, there is no labour movement in Eastern Europe). YES to labour movement unity in Europe, as the prefiguration of the Socialist United States of Europe and the replacement for the EEC. For the elaboration of a common programme of action by the European labour movement — initially by its left wing — for a European workers' government.

"Socialist Organiser" and Greenham Common - an Object Lesson in Sectarianism

Dave Spencer

1. It is my view that the coverage in 'SO' of the Greenham Common demonstration (i.e. SO Dec. 9 & SO Dec 16) shows some very disturbing sectarian attitudes both to CND and to the Women's Movement. The fact that 3 previous articles on the "Women in Struggle" page do not show the same attitudes must mean that we are unclear and we need to make up our mind. The sharpness of my contribution is intended to provoke a discussion to this end.
2. What is Sectarianism?
 - a) By Sectarianism, Trotskyists do not mean slagging off other Left groups or being sharply critical of our opponents. There is nothing at all wrong with having disagreements with other groups provided we are prepared to unite in any limited objective. We can argue our politics in the course of that struggle.
 - b) What is meant by sectarianism as Trotsky put it in "The Transitional Programme" is at root "a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands". Sectarrians do not need transitional demands as a bridge to the masses, since they have no intention of crossing to the other shore. Political events for sectarians are occasions for comment not for action.
 - c) Trotsky was mainly attacking those who turned their backs on existing Trade Unions and on the struggles within reformist organisations like the Labour Party. Clearly we are not dealing with quite that situation in 1982/3. What we are faced with, however, are a number of movements which have sprung up over the past few years to which we have failed to pay enough attention. In general these movements have grown up in response to very real problems and oppressions and in the absence of a mass revolutionary party. The problem with most Left Groups is that, being small and under attack, they have stuck jealously to various traditions and texts and failed to develop these traditions or to learn creatively and self-confidently within mass movements.
 - d) The most obvious examples of recent movements are the Women's Movement and CND - other smaller examples might be that of Black Youth as expressed in Brixton and Toxteth and the developments of the Left in the Labour Party. What we need to do, it seems to me, is to participate enthusiastically in these movements and argue our politics in the process of struggle, drawing fresh layers to our group. What we have tended to do is to look on and comment from afar - a sectarian stance. Greenham Common is one such example, as I will try and show later. What is at stake here is the method of the Transitional Programme - the road to the masses, using firmness of principle, flexibility of tactic - the United Front tactic, supporting and fighting for each partial struggle and transitional demand at the same time as not abandoning or disguising our political programme.
 - e) Can the CND demands for unilateral nuclear disarmament and an opting out of NATO be seen as transitional demands? It would seem to me that they quite clearly can.
Can the anti-sexist demands of the Women's Movement be seen as transitional demands? Again it would seem to me that they quite clearly can.
The fact that these movements are not fully-fledged revolutionary ones should not surprise us. Our role should be to draw the links and point out the next steps, as we involve ourselves loyally in the various struggles that take place. There will obviously be various documents on the Women's Movement and other aspects of our work, so I will deal in more detail at this stage only with CND, which I think will probably otherwise be neglected.
3. The Importance of CND
 - a) The recent Gallup Poll in "Sanity" shows that over 50% of the population support CND. In a General Election year, we can campaign and recruit to make sure a future Labour Government actually carries through CND policy.

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- b) CND policies are the official policies of the Labour Party and unlike the early 60s, the right wing are keeping quiet about these policies. They are certainly not openly opposing them. This is important for the fight in the Labour Party for democracy and socialist policies.
- c) It is official policy in many Trade Unions and we should fight to make it more widespread. Infiltration can be called for to implement the policy. Also the question of Defence spending should be raised in industrial struggles involving wages, spending cuts and so on.
- d) Most Labour Councils support the nuclear free zone concept and again demands can be made at local level for publicity campaigns, displays, festivals and so on.
- e) There is a whole European and internationalist perspective to the CND campaign. In particular the Soviet government are frightened about the effects of CND campaigns on dissident movements in Eastern Europe. Comrades may have read the interesting letter from a Czech dissident to Edward Thompson published in the Christmas "New Statesman". The point there is to stress the link between the Peace Movement and human rights movements in the Eastern bloc.
- f) The Tory government is very worried about the effectiveness of CND. They are using a lot of media time trying to combat CND ideas.
- g) We could also learn a few things from CND. Some of their methods of campaigning and raising money are very professional and effective. For example the presentation of talks in CND is often of a high standard with slides, handouts and so on - whereas our speakers tend to write their notes on the back of an envelope on the train. A small group like Llandidrod Wells CND produced far better Christmas cards than we did on a national scale.

4. The Importance of the Women at Greenham Common

1. The nuclear arms race is an important European political issue because of the planned siting of American Cruise missiles in Europe. Throughout Europe there are Peace Camps at the proposed sites. Greenham Common is the first main site in the UK, where Cruise will arrive in 1983. The Greenham Common Peace Camp was the first Peace Camp in Europe, has been going for over one year, has always been women only and has a European and international fame in the Peace Movement.
2. The question of "women only" with men playing a subordinate role is a vital one for us to come to terms with. In the past "women only" politics have concentrated on "women's issues" like "Reclaim the Night", nurse provision, Rape Crisis Centres and so on. Greenham Common is the first occasion on which women have insisted on taking the leadership in a central political issue. The fact that 35,000 women responded to the call to "ring the base" and that the demonstration has gained mass public sympathy should make us look at our traditional methods of political activity.
3. I think we have to admit that much of Left protest over the last 2 decades has been carried out in a male, violent, abusive manner. On demonstrations we tend to chant strident slogans which nobody watching can understand, involve ourselves in inevitable clashes with the police or with the odd fascist we can find. There are other ways of making a political point not necessarily better but different. The women of Greenham Common have found an alternative formula based on feminist protest which has gained popular support. We have to acknowledge this. In the past, the ANL found a different but successful formula.
4. Some women at Greenham Common have espoused extreme feminist ideas, looking back to "women's hidden history" and to the essential spiritual and emotional integrity of women. This is not really very surprising, given the past and recent record of the Left. And these women are a small minority of the 35,000. To preach to them that only industrial class struggle and socialism are the answers to women's oppression or to anything else for that matter may be true in the abstract, but it is very much in the abstract. Our problem is that we have been bypassed by events and developments beyond our control. We have to seek a dialogue with those involved in struggles like Greenham Common. A dialogue assumes listening and learning as well as putting our own point of view. In general this was done in the articles on the "Women in Struggle" page. When it comes to "Men in Struggle" - the rest of the paper?! - the response was almost a stereotyped male, Left one.

"Socialist Organiser" on Greenham Common

- a) SO Dec. 9th After encouraging women in 3 previous papers to give full support to the Greenham Common demo on Dec. 11th, we have here the paper that will be sold by our supporters on the actual day. Remember there were 35,000 women present including many women from abroad "probably the biggest women's demonstration for decades" reports SO the following week. What did our national intervention consist of? There was one third of an editorial devoted to Greenham Common. There was, as far as I know, no national mobilisation, no SO Special explaining our particular position on CND, no pamphlets, no badges, no leaflets. Even from the point of view of our poor finances, surely something could have been organised! The same applied to the mass CND demo of June 6th in London attended by over $\frac{1}{2}$ million people. Even the Sparts were everywhere giving out leaflets and selling papers. Our national intervention was virtually zero. No doubt at branch level, as with Greenham Common, comrades were active in organising coaches and contacts, but nationally both demonstrations might just as well not have taken place.
- b) The paper should have given full support to the demonstration on the front page, explaining in detail why the women-only call was correct and why links with the Labour movement are so important for CND and how these are to be achieved. Something should also have been written about the development of Cruise Missiles, Peace Camps elsewhere, etc.
- c) The one third of an editorial asks, "Is the Peace Camp Separatist? Is the sort of non-violent direct action it exemplifies diversionary? These are the sort of objections raised on the Left." Who on earth is the paper talking to? Certainly not to the 35,000 women at Greenham Common. It can only be to the few jaded sectarians "on the Left" (what a libel on the Left by the way), possibly even in our own midst, who could not recognise a mass movement if they saw one. There is no excuse for such mealy mouthed sentiments in an editorial. There is after all a letters page. Our support should have been unequivocal - our argument for links with the Labour movement made boldly and in detail. We should have spoken directly to the 35,000 women - not looked over our shoulder to those raising sectarian objections "on the Left".
- d) SO Dec 16th
 Headline: "Women shut down Greenham Common. Labour must Shut Down the War Machine".
 Colleen Molloy: "Now is the time to turn to trade unionists and build on their struggles."
 Anon: "If the Labour Movement mobilises its forces on the scale that the women's movement mobilised for Greenham Common, then the nuclear war machine can be shut down."
 In his article on p.4 of the same issue of SO, John O'Mahony puts his finger, quite correctly in my view, on what is wrong with "Militant". "In between sub-political industrial issues and the political maximum, the socialist revolution, there is a great void." Hence "Militant's dismissal of CND and the women's movement as middle class diversions - only Socialism can cure all. But what are we saying in SO? "The organised working class can stop it". This is no less an abstraction than Militant's socialism. There is a massive void between a demo at Greenham Common and the working class stopping the war machine. Precisely how does Labour shut down the war machine? Why not call for a General Strike - it would be equally as meaningless and laughable in December 1982. We can't even shut the hospitals or the mines over basic living conditions!
- e) Colleen says the women of Greenham Common must turn to trade unionists and build on their struggles. As it stands this can only be crass workerism - from IS in the early 1970s understandable but at a time of 4 million unemployed and the sacking of militants absolutely crazy. I can see no reason why at this stage industrial struggles should take precedence over all others.
 In the early 60s most of the SLL youth cadre came from students via CND, recruited on the basis of building mass LPYS branches on the Council Estates to transform the Labour Party for CND and for socialism. In the early 70s most of the IS cadre came from students involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement, recruited on the basis of taking the message to the factories via factory bulletins and so on. In the early 80s, we should recruit from CND.

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There is obviously a case for the linking of CND and the building of the Left in the Labour Party and the Trade Unions - but it is a question of dialectically connecting and linking the struggles and of arguing for this within CND, not of subordinating CND to trade union struggles.

- f) The most disturbing aspect of the Dec 16th articles is the opposing of the Labour movement to the women's movement - as though the women of Greenham Common are not part of the Labour Movement or of the working class. All the women I know who went to Greenham Common from the West Midlands are Trade Unionists and members of Labour Party Women's Sections. The wonderful women of Greenham Common was the main topic of conversation that week in all my classes which are made up of working class women in Council Estates. The women made their point and mass support was gained. We should not be counterposing the Labour Movement to the Women's Movement but encouraging the essential interaction of struggles, as I have said already.
 - g) The article states that "sit-downs" and chains of people holding hands will not stop the giant war machine" - written in a very irritating manner as though the reader does not know how many beans make 5. Neither of course in themselves, will strikes or writing patronising articles in SO stop the war machine. The fact is that the decisive action so desired by our leader writer has to be fought for and built for. In the process of doing this, many different forms of protest and agitation are quite legitimate. The mass demonstration of 35,000 women at Greenham Common was a magnificent one - showing the strength of both the Women's Movement and of CND. Instead of frankly recognising this and celebrating it, the articles in SO read more like the SLL's sectarian declaration "Why we are not working" at the massive 1967 anti-Vietnam War demonstration in Grosvenor Square. The participants in that struggle joined IS and the IMG - we must not allow that to happen again.
 - h) Colleen laments that there were very few LP and TU banners on the demonstration, they mainly came from CND and Women's Groups. Well, we have a position of links with the Labour Movement, and we gave full support to the demonstration in 3 previous papers - where were our banners, where was our Labour Movement gate? Why was our intervention not planned nationally? How is Labour going to "shut down the war machine", "given a leadership with the necessary political will" as our leader writer describes so eloquently if we cannot even address ourselves to the 35,000 women of Greenham Common in an organised and a civil manner?
 - i) To sum-up, I think tremendous opportunities have been missed this year by our neglect of CND. You can either look at it as lingering sectarian attitudes, which is my own view, or as gross errors of judgement by the group. Either way it must not be allowed to happen in 1983.
6. Some Proposals on our Work in CND.
- a) We have a policy of turning CND to the Labour Movement but we do not counterpose this policy inevitably to non-violent action, to direct action or any other forms of action. We take each circumstance on its merits insofar as it takes the class struggle forward. The only way we can turn CND towards the Labour Movement is to be in or with CND in the various struggles it determines.
 - b) We have well-organised national mobilisations for all important CND demonstrations.
 - c) We consider the international possibilities of the Peace Movement. In particular we find various means of involvement with END.
 - d) We educate ourselves on CND issues. We have a series of articles in SO. At local level, we invite CND speakers to LP, TU and SOA meetings.
 - e) We utilise the fact that most Labour Councils support the NFZ concept - to form Peace Forums, to start campaigns in Council Estates, in schools, and so on.
 - f) We consider the possibility of "Wiganisation" using YCND and then moving into the LPYS.
 - g) We set up a CND Commission to co-ordinate activities.