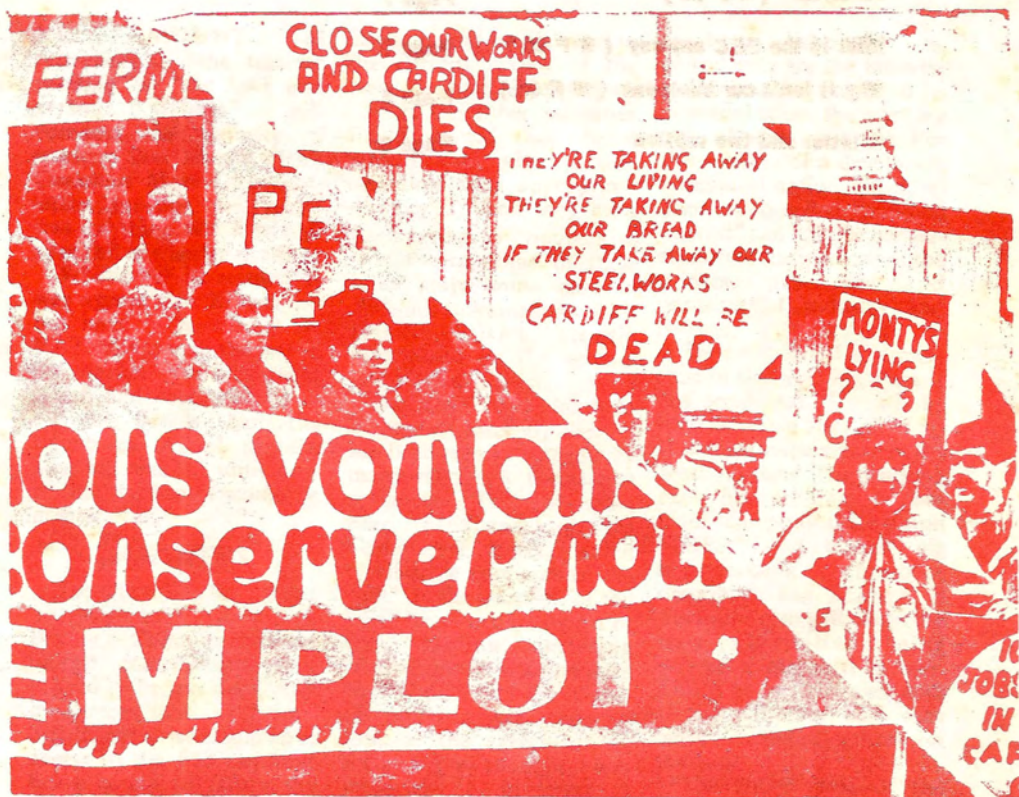


THE EEC IN OR OUT



THE FIGHT GOES ON

5p

A WORKERS' FIGHT PAMPHLET

EDITORIAL 'YES' OR 'NO' - IT DOESN'T MATTER

CONTENTS

Editorial (W F 90)	Page 1
What is the EEC anyway (W F 90)	Page 3
Why It Isn't our business (W F 91)	Page 6
A letter and two replies	Page 9

NO AMOUNT of references to "the historic meeting" or "the long and serious debate" will convince the majority of workers that March 11th's Common Market renegotiation meeting in Dublin was anything but a trivial, ritual bit of wheeler-dealing.

What were its results? It was agreed that Britain did not have to harmonise its VAT rulings with the rest of the Market — an agreement which had been reached in all its details bar the signatures several months ago, but was left until now so that the impact would be greater.

Summit

The Summit also agreed to pay back some of Britain's Common Market budget contribution if it proved to be too high. And it agreed that Commonwealth countries would have access to the EEC without being bound to return the favour.

And that was it.

The capitalist press, which is generally in favour of entry, has been trying to dress up this irrelevant small talk as if it were a hard fought and crucial political victory. "Despite heavy political pressures", records the Financial Times, "Mr. Wilson failed to secure that

cheese would be included in the current review of the New Zealand arrangement. ... But the other countries finally agreed that cheese would be given 'due attention' with appropriate urgency..." And they have been trying to convince us that the outcome of these talks plays some part in Wilson's thinking! As if his thinking isn't strictly determined by the general will of the capitalists.

But what ought plainly to be seen as farce by the left has been seen as 'tragedy' by many who call themselves socialists. The *Morning Star*, newspaper of the Communist Party, which typifies the approach of the "left" on the question of the EEC, headlined its report of the Dublin meeting "Surrender of UK interests by Wilson". Not the slightest pretence was made to look at the agreement — seeing as they thought it was important — in terms of how it affects the working class.

Litany

Instead what we have is a litany of references to "a complete surrender of British interests" and other such nationalist clap-trap. The only interests British

workers should be considering are the interests of the working class and its potential allies, the working class of other countries. For the workers of a developed, imperialist nation, consideration of so-called "national interest" can only be consideration of the interests of the princes, profiteers and parasites of industry and finance.

The omission of any reference to the working class is not accidental. The whole, tired debate is after all of no relevance to the action of the working class. The working class has nothing to gain from a capitalist Common Market — a bosses' big business club, as it has been described. But likewise it has nothing to gain from the only alternative being offered: a capitalist Britain. This is no less a bosses' club — just a bosses' club with 'aliens excluded' written on the door.

The entire issue of the EEC has been a diversion where it has been taken up at all — from the real problems of the working class. And it has been one element in the strengthening of nationalist currents within the working class and within the left of the labour movement.

The 'Get Britain Out' campaign has been fought in the way it was bound to be

fought: boosting illusions in the importance of parliament, boosting insular national pride and boosting the kind of patriotic pride that would normally have brought hoots of laughter from a left wing audience.

WORKERS FIGHT alone has said from the beginning: the choice is not a choice for workers; it is a choice for the bosses — let

them make it. Wichever way it goes our class will be fighting to rid itself of capitalist exploitation and it will be doing that in cooperation with our brothers and sisters abroad.

That was the position of many other groups claiming to be revolutionary ... until the tide started to turn the other way. One after another these groups

trimmed their sails to the prevailing wind.

So much so, that today the common idea is that "Out" is the slogan of the left.

We unequivocally recommend **DON'T VOTE**. A vote one way or the other is a vote for one or another solution for capitalism.

WHAT IS THE EEC ANYWAY?

BY SIMON TEMPLE

WORKERS were suspicious from the start about Britain's attempts to join the Common Market. If the bosses were so keen to go in, surely it must be in our interests to stay out?

Unfortunately, it isn't as simple as that.

As Leon Trotsky put the problem in 1938, "The policy of the proletariat is not at all automatically derived from the policy of the bourgeoisie, bearing only the opposite sign — this would make every sectarian a master strategist: no, the revolutionary party must each time orient itself independently ... arriving at those decisions which correspond best to the interests of the proletariat."

So we must look at the fundamental nature of the EEC, and on that basis we can develop a real understanding of what it is and what to do about it.

Task

At the end of the second World War, the USA emerged as the dominant imperialist power, on a world scale. In Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union extended its power, and later, by military-bureaucratic methods, smashed

capitalism. In Vietnam, China, Korea and Malaya there were powerful national liberation struggles. In France and Italy the armed workers of the Resistance movements held effective power, and only the treacherous politics of the Communist Parties — describing strikes as "the weapon of big business" — enabled capitalism to survive.

The USA itself was shaken by the greatest strike wave in its history in 1946/47. But the US capitalist class soon set itself to the task of reviving the capitalist economies of western Europe, and, in the process, extending their own profitable interests. From 1947 onwards the Marshall Aid programme, and other American investment, led to millions of dollars flooding into Europe.

American investors found Europe more attractive than the 'third world' countries (to which the advanced countries had traditionally exported capital) because of its larger and more developed market; and there seemed to be rather less threat of social and political upheaval.

Fewer

Throughout the history of capitalism, smaller enterprises



immigrants. Enoch Powell has, predictably, turned out to be the star turn on many a Get Britain Out Campaign platform. And those Labour MPs who thought it might be possible to have a "broad" campaign without making common cause with racism were rudely brought face to face with reality when Powell, in the midst of the Get Britain Out campaigning, took a night out to hold forth on his other favourite subject — "Get out of Britain" or, as it is politely called, repatriation of

Some of these MPs have now said they won't share a platform with Powell: that is, an actual physical platform; they continue to support the same Get Britain Out campaign.

Others are unrepentant. One, named Michael ENGLISH, defended his position to speak with Powell.

As did Clive Jenkins, leader of ASTMS, whose members will no doubt have some strong words to say about that...

have been squeezed out or eaten up by larger ones. The centralising and concentration of capital into the hands of fewer and fewer firms has accelerated since 1945, primarily on account of the speed of technological advance. This has meant that the amount of capital necessary to compete effectively has grown faster than ever before.

This centralisation and concentration has occurred in three main ways. Firms and whole sectors of industry have been bought out by foreign competitors. This need not be a very large proportion of the economy as a whole to have great strategic importance. Thus, even ten years ago, 80% of the Common Market computer industry and 24% of the motor industry were US controlled.

Secondly, there has been the growth of companies based in more than one country, where a process of "interpenetration" of their economies has gone on, as with the Dunlop-Pirelli link-up for instance.

Finally there has been the creation of very large national firms, large enough to make them viable internationally, such as GEC and the recent Peugeot/Citroen merger in France.

However, American firms have been able to keep their relative superiority. This has mainly been due to their sheer size (General Motors has about the same turnover as the 13 largest German firms), which allows massive economies of scale and the creation of huge profits for re-investment.

Drain

This has been backed by government subsidies for arms research which has provided a spin-off in high technology industries, especially computers. It has also led to better opportunities for scientists in the USA,

stimulating the brain drain from Europe.

The founders of the Common Market hoped to break down the outworn national boundaries in Europe which hindered the growth of economic units capable of competing effectively on the world market. The separate European economies are incapable of supporting development in some industries, such as aircraft, on their own. In others the need to spread risks and avoid flooding a restricted market has led to international amalgamations. For instance, one European computer firm might have a hope of competing with IBM; separate French, British and German industries have not.

Even where amalgamations have not been essential, the promise of greater efficiency — and greater profits — has spurred them on. An example here is the merger between the major photographic concerns in Germany and Belgium to create Agfa-Gevaert.

Although, were it fully successful in its logical aim of creating a European super-capitalism, the Common Market would harm US interests, American big business has generally supported the EEC. This is because it has helped widen the scope for American subsidiaries in Europe.

Britain refused to join the Community at the start, because the Commonwealth seemed to provide a much greater prop for British capitalism than, say, the French Union did for France. Also, British firms such as GEC and ICI were generally larger than their continental rivals and thus did not feel the pressure so strongly to amalgamate.

Brake

Nonetheless British firms found themselves too small to be internationally viable, and this began to force Britain into the EEC. In fact,

cooperation developed even prior to British entry; the most obvious example being the long strong of joint aircraft projects: Concorde, Jaguar, the MRCA.

The state, today, plays a vital role in financing and developing national capitalist progress — by government investment and such organisations as the planned National Enterprise Board. The EEC is a halting step towards a European super-state, carrying out these functions in relation to the growth of "Europe-wide" capitalist concerns. Purely national states are a brake on their development.

In fact, progress towards economic integration has been remarkably slow since 1958. The various capitalist classes in Europe still compete vigorously with each other, and specific national interests take precedence over general European ones. If this has been the case during a period of general prosperity, how much more will it be true during the present crisis?

Already, the capitalists in several countries are retreating from Europe, trying to barricade themselves behind import restrictions of one sort or another, saving what they can for themselves. Examples of the trend away from integration are the Italian import deposit scheme, Britain's re-negotiation of entry, and the total failure of attempts at a common oil policy.

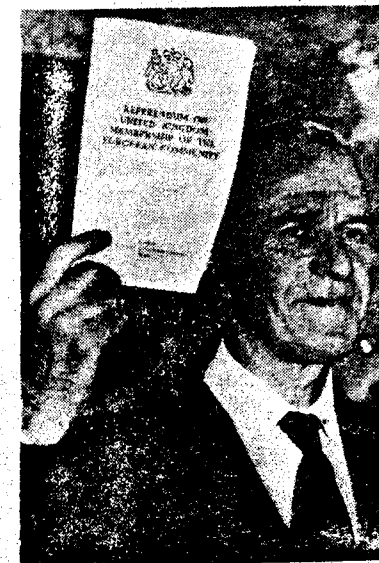
Growth

In its youth, in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the capitalist class, fighting against feudalism, formed today's nation states. Where before there were dozens of petty princedoms, all sorts of local taxes and customs barriers; and restrictions on free trade, the capitalist class created a unified national market, a unified system of law, and uniform national

tariffs. These measures of national unification, carried through by the capitalist class when it was a revolutionary class, were essential for the further growth of industry and commerce.

Today the giant productive forces created by capitalism are making those national frontiers obsolete. Industry can only develop on an international scale. The capitalist classes, hesitantly, slowly, try to break through the limits of those national frontiers. But today the capitalist class is no longer a revolutionary class fighting against feudalism. It is a reactionary class concerned above all with keeping its profits and its system going somehow from day to day, without much view to the future.

Its attempt at "internationalism" — the EEC — is a miserable, botched effort. Only the united socialist working class of Europe will really be able to carry through the international unification of Europe.



Short waves the referendum flag

WHY IT ISN'T OUR BUSINESS

by SIMON TEMPLE

FREE TRADE and the breakdown of national frontiers have generally been supported by socialists in the past, as helping to develop the productive forces. This is what the Common Market claims to stand for. So why not support it?

The problem was outlined in last week's article: capitalism is no longer able to do this to any real extent, and the EEC will not help unite the working class as did, for example, the unification of Germany in the 1870s.

Indeed, although the world economy has become far more integrated over the last hundred years, nationalism has been strengthened rather than weakened. The basic reason for this has been the ability of the capitalists in the advanced states to buy off their workers, with the proceeds of the ruthless exploitation of the rest of the world. They made it appear that, say, British workers had a common interest with British bosses against the people of Africa — and also against the people of France, as a whole, lest they should threaten Britain's share of the loot.

Abstain

This process long ago affected large sections of the British left. Since the anti-Market campaign got going, it has come to the surface and infected not only the Labour left around Tribune and the Communist Party, but also

revolutionary groups such as the International Marxist Group.

But before dealing with them, it is perhaps best to restate Workers Fight's position.

We say that it will mean no fundamental advantage to the working class whether Britain is in or out of the Common Market. The choice between the Little England of the bosses and their attempt at unity is not a real one. We believe that workers should abstain in the referendum.

Many of those who advocate voting 'No', say that they are for a United Socialist Europe. But this isn't what we are being asked in the referendum: it isn't asking what sort of Europe we want, but what British capitalism should do in relation to a capitalist European organisation.

The only way to fight for a United Socialist States of Europe is to abstain in the referendum and to fight against the effects on the working class of economic crisis and capitalist rationalisation, whether they happen within the EEC or out of it. The key to this is the building of stronger links between workers throughout Europe (inside and outside the Common Market), through international combine committees, aid for strikes of workers in other countries and the calling of a European Congress of Labour.

Divert

The real problems, for us, which surround EEC entry must be answered with real, living solutions. Thus, to rising prices we reply with the demand for a rising

scale of wages tied to a working class cost of living index. Where possible, we must fight for parity on a European scale, demanding, for instance, German wages, Italian holidays and French family allowances. However internationalist the intentions of the campaigners for withdrawal may be, the whole logic of their campaign is to divert from that class struggle.

What, then, are the arguments of the anti-marketisers? The campaign of the Communist Party, together with the 'left' in the Labour Party and in the trade union leadership, is based on two main arguments. Firstly, that the Common Market has led to a massive growth of imports from Europe, and a decline in investment in Britain. This is not even accurate — it ignores all the other factors controlling investment and the fact that an isolated Britain would be even less attractive to capitalists. More importantly, this argument is based on the illusion that there is a national interest above all classes, linking workers and bosses — all of us sharing an interest in increasing investment and reducing imports!

The other argument is that the growth of Community institutions will weaken the 'National Sovereignty' of the British parliament. Indeed they argue that "what is at stake is nothing less than the right and possibility of the British working people to control the country's affairs". (Morning Star 25th February, emphasis in original).

But we will never be able to control society through Parliament. The real power lies with the civil service, the banks and big business — and the bosses are certainly not going to stand by and watch themselves being legislated out of existence by parliament. If it were to try, it would face bigger and more violent obstacles nearer home than

Brussels!

In any case, the material basis does not exist to construct socialism in one country in a hostile capitalist world. Ultimately, we can only succeed as part of an international movement. To campaign for British withdrawal is to turn one's back on such a movement.

Of course, opposition to the EEC is very useful to trade union bureaucrats and to Labour lefts in and out of the government. If all our troubles are due to the Common Market, then a successful campaign to get out will solve them. This is a perfect excuse to dodge a fight against unemployment and falling living standards. The Get Out campaign has also allowed people actually involved in making workers' problems worse (by championing the Social Contract, for instance) to pose as militants.

Despite a dense 'revolutionary' smokescreen, the position of the International Marxist Group (IMG) bears some remarkable similarities to that of the reformists. They argue that the Community will help impose a 'strong state', which will weaken the working class and that it must, therefore, be opposed.

Private

Certainly, increased co-ordination among the capitalists will create rather different problems for the working class, though not necessarily worse ones. Surely our answer must be to join with European workers in strengthening ourselves, both politically and organisationally. It is certainly no answer to get back to our own private hell and fight it out with 'our own' capitalists.

In fact, all this has deeply reactionary implications, including the pernicious one that the workers of Europe are badly organised and reactionary, while the British working class is

strongly organised and politically advanced. This would be a viciously nationalistic view, even were it true. In fact, of course, we have as much, or more, to learn from continental workers as they have from us.

The IMG also oppose the Common Market as part of the network of imperialist alliances aimed at the Soviet Union.

Play-acting

Fundamentally, the approach of the IMG on this question can be described as "Stalinism without the Soviet Union". The IMG leadership, sitting in a dusty back room in Caledonian Road, set themselves to "defending the Soviet Union" by forging new diplomatic/trade alliances on a world scale, Britain allying with Comecon rather than the EEC. To their "super-power politics" they sacrifice internationalist propaganda and politics. In the case of Stalinism, this sort of diplomatic politicking at least had some real basis, in the role of the Soviet Union as a real factor in world politics; in the case of the IMG, it is all ridiculous play acting.

Its reactionary essence is however only too clearly the same in both cases -- subordination of the fight for international socialist consciousness in the working class to the foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union either as directed by its rulers or, with the IMG, as conceived from the towering heights of Marxist theory and world grand strategy atop which sit the denizens of Caledonian Road.

While the International Socialists (IS) avoid the more bizarre aspects of the IMG's position, they have a lot in common with them. They too oppose the Common Market as anti-working class conspiracy, and argue that workers should oppose all capitalist rationalisation. They think that since British withdrawal

would weaken capitalism, it must strengthen the working class.

But surely, the effect would be more intensive attacks at a time when our forces, far from being strengthened, would be confused and divided as a result of the, inevitably, nationalist campaign for withdrawal. In any event, we do not oppose rationalisation, the development of capitalism, as such, since it contains within itself the basis for a better life for all — given the overthrow of capitalism itself. What we do oppose is the capitalists' attempts to carry through rationalisation at our expense, through speed-up, redundancies, attacks on work-practices, etc, rather than to our advantage. This again is better fought with European workers.

Perhaps the strangest position is that of the 'Militant'. Yes, say 'Militant' supporters, a capitalist Britain outside the EEC is no better than a capitalist Britain inside the EEC. Nevertheless we should vote for withdrawal. Why? To go along with the feelings of the mass of the labour movement.... So much for the idea that it is the first duty of Marxists to say what is, bluntly and honestly.

It was a defeat for the working class ever to have got involved in the 'great debate' over British entry into the Common Market. Workers should abstain in the referendum and fight instead for the political and organisational unity of the working class throughout Europe against capitalism's attempts to solve its problems at our expense, and for a United Socialist Europe.

A Letter & 2 Replies

Comrades - One of the most important questions that will be answered in the coming months is that of Britain's membership of the EEC.

I'd like you to explain WF's position on this. For it seems an entirely bankrupt sectarian approach to stand aside from the struggle, fortified by the empty slogan "In or out, the fight goes on".

This seems to reflect the old failing of the Left to relate the demands of the immediate struggle to those of the longer term struggle for socialism. It betrays moreover an unhistorical approach to the development of capitalism, for although WF might regard entry into the EEC as irrelevant to "the fight", British monopoly capitalism is suffering from no such illusions. The British ruling class obviously considers entry as essential to its survival, as a necessary means of consolidating its power over labour. Yet WF proposes to let it get away with this without a fight, so long as some other, unspecified "fight" goes on.

I would speculate that such a sectarian position emanates from an obsessive desire to avoid the danger of falling into the type of chauvinism which the CP intermittantly stumbles into. However, I believe that a fully rounded class position would condemn the EEC as a monopoly capitalist consortium inimical to working class advance whilst simultaneously regarding defence of parliament as important in terms of defending bourgeois democracy against the trend towards authoritarianism, this time in an institutionalised form, which Houson and Lenin had exposed as characteristic of capitalism in the imperialist phase.

It is imperative that we defend those gains that our forefathers in bitter struggle have wrung from a stubborn and merciless bourgeoisie in order that we may use them as a springboard to further victories. They must be

preserved as an additional weapon in our armoury which must be reinforced, not retrenched, if we are ever to contemplate competing with the bulging arsenals of the bourgeoisie.

Defend bourgeois democracy against the attacks of monopoly capitalism; and make the transition from bourgeois to proletarian democracy through monopoly capitalism's revolutionary defeat. This, surely, is the only principled position that revolutionaries can adopt which, whilst avoiding — and in the process exposing — the twin pitfalls of chauvinism and sectarianism, guards the class interests of the workers.

In the struggle for such a class line, consciousness can be raised by bringing clarity to the confusion sown by the social democrats and the petty bourgeois "little Englanders", whose talk of "national sovereignty" in a class society means attempting to fight the battle on the enemy's ground, on terms dictated by the enemy. Our task is to take power out of the hands of the bourgeoisie — ruling either from Brussels or London — and put it in the hands of the working class.

What is WF's opinion? - JOHN LATHAM, Manchester.

replies for W.F. Martin Thomas

In answer to Comrade Latham's question, two other questions need to be asked: What are the prospects with a capitalist Britain in the EEC? What are the prospects with a capitalist Britain outside the EEC? The answer to both is: inflation, unemployment, wage curbs, capitalist attacks on the working class and on our living standards and working conditions.

The exact nature and form of the

capitalist attacks will be different: depending on whether Britain is in or out of the EEC. This or that section of workers may find things slightly smoother outside the EEC; another section will face greater difficulties. But when you've done all the sums, worked through the calculations, and considered all the possibilities, there is no basis for any definite statement that workers will find easier conditions with Britain outside the EEC. One per cent here, one per cent there — who can say for certain?

Sums

And in doing all those sums, in all the careful juggling with the plans of the capitalist classes, you will lose sight of one important factor: the activity of the working class. There are real capitalist attacks going on, and a lot of them are linked to Common Market entry. But those attacks can be fought against — as long as we don't get caught up in the empty bluster and fury of the Common Market withdrawal campaign.

The important thing is that an effective fight should be waged — on issues like a sliding scale of wages to cover price rises; for shorter hours with no loss of pay and for less intense working conditions; for Europe-wide trade union unity to tackle common struggles, and so on. The policy of **Workers Fight**, "In or out, the struggle goes on", points towards that fight.

But John Latham accuses WF of 'standing aside from the struggle'. **What struggle?** In the 'struggle' for Common Market withdrawal currently being waged by a chorus of almost the whole trade union bureaucracy (not to mention various right wing Tories, Enoch Powell, the National Front, etc), we find not the slightest element of working class action to advance definite working class interests, but plenty of the most vile chauvinist propaganda.

We will lose our national

sovereignty and our democracy, they cry. In other words: Heaven forbid that foreigners should meddle with the sacred proceedings of 'our' British state.

This chauvinism is not just surface corruption on a basically healthy class campaign. It is the substance and life-blood of the campaign. To 'bring clarity to the confusion' would not be wiping off a little mildew, but draining a river dry. Does WF 'stand aside from the struggle'? No — we take part in this struggle — on the other side: against the chauvinist campaigners for withdrawal.

We have no reason to be anything but bitterly hostile to people like Roy Jenkins, who paint up the botched capitalist union of the EEC as 'socialist internationalism', and call on workers to renounce their immediate interests for the sake of that sham 'socialist internationalism'. But we are equally hostile to those whose backward looking "little England" campaign serves only to disarm the working class in face of the Europe-wide and world-wide interlinking of monopoly capitalism. And while Jenkins' talk cuts little ice with workers, the "little England" let's get out campaign is a dangerously popular diversion.

Of course it is true that the most important sections of the British capitalist class want Britain to stay in the EEC (though that could change with an upsurge of protectionism in the trough of a world crisis). But should Marxists always choose our policy according to what is worst for the capitalist class? We might do, if we thought socialism would come through capitalism simply collapsing under the weight of its own crisis. But capitalism will always continue to drag itself through the chaos, heaping the worst miseries on the working class, until that class organises itself and acts, consciously, to replace capitalism with a workers'



The real issue as the 'Morning Star' sees it: big business trampling on 'our' flag.

state.

The growth of monopolies is certainly wanted by the big capitalists. Should socialists oppose this and demand a return to small scale industry?

Our fundamental task as revolutionary socialists is to "tell what is", to explain and educate and help to make the real struggle more conscious and more effective. We cannot abandon that task for the sake of speculations (speculations, in this case, with a large dose of delusions of grandeur) as to how we can best throw a spanner into the works of the bourgeoisie.

We should "condemn the EEC as a monopoly capitalism consortium" says Comrade Latham. Very well. But what is the

British state, if not ... another monopoly capitalist consortium!

Lurking under John Latham's concern to defend democratic rights (correct enough, in the abstract) is a strange misconception of what the EEC is. Somehow the EEC is a "consortium" of a worse sort than individual capitalist states; some sort of foul conspiracy by the sinister bosses of European capital to disrupt the relatively cosy democratic arrangements we have with our own familiar British exploiters.

In fact, the EEC is no sort of conspiracy, but a logical product of the trend to the international concentration and centralisation of

capital. Leaving aside Tribune's pathetic complaints that EEC regulations would forbid the British parliament voting for social revolution, the main content of the complaints about democratic rights comes down to the assertion that such-and-such a question of economic policy is decided by bureaucrats in Brussels.

Diversion

Certainly we should seek to deny power to those bureaucrats, and to assert the maximum possible scrutiny and control over economic policies for workers. But a campaign for withdrawal from the EEC is no way to pursue that aim.

Most of these matters of economic policy are largely outside bourgeois democratic scrutiny in the individual capitalist state. More generally, the idea that you best defend democratic rights by campaigning to get out of the EEC falls down when you ask the question: does being out of the EEC grant any security of democratic rights? Like Spain, for example?

To the effective struggle to defend democratic rights, as to the struggle to safeguard living standards, the Common Market withdrawal campaign constitutes only diversion and confusion. For the sake of fighting that confusion, it is perhaps worthwhile putting up with the complaints of those who see 'sectarianism' as just once in a while refusing to line up behind either alternative when the capitalist class offers us a referendum.

THE LOGIC OF VOTING 'NO'

Comrades - John Latham in his letter on the Common Market (WF84) uses two words which I think make an obscure argument even more obscure. He says that: "...to avoid the danger of falling into the kind of chauvinism which the Communist Party *intermittantly* stumbles into ... a fully rounded class position would ... regard defense of Parliament as important in terms of defending bourgeois democracy against the trend towards *authoritarianism*, this time in institutionalised form, which Hobson and Lenin had exposed as characteristic of capitalism in the imperialist phase."

John Latham is thus saying that the CP 'intermittantly' stumbles into chauvinism — without saying that chauvinism is the basis of the whole argument and is therefore **always** there.

And he says that we must defend bourgeois democracy against 'authoritarianism'. And what is the nature of this 'authoritarianism' as counterposed to bourgeois democracy?

By arguing in such a manner, Comrade Latham has made himself a trapdoor through which he can fall into the same chauvinistic reformism.

To back himself up, he summons Lenin and Hobson to his aid. But unfortunately for him, they do not help his argument. In fact, Lenin attacks precisely that opinion, and quotes Hilferding's *Finance Capital* (1912) while arguing against Kautsky's counter-position of 'peaceful democracy' to the 'unnecessary' violent imperialism:

"It is not the business of the proletariat", writes Hilferding "to contrast the more progressive capitalist policy with that of the now bygone era of free trade and of hostility towards the state. The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance capital cannot be free trade but socialism. The aim of proletarian policy

cannot today be the ideal of restoring free competition — which has now become a reactionary ideal — but the complete elimination of competition by the abolition of capitalism."

"Kautsky broke with Marxism by advocating in the epoch of finance capital a reactionary ideal, 'peaceful democracy', 'the mere operation of economic factors', for **objectively** (Lenin's emphasis) *this ideal drags us back from monopoly capitalism to non-monopoly capitalism and is a reformist swindle.*" (Lenin: *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, p.108 Russian Edition.)

The thing that John Latham misses in his article is that the Yes/No argument to the Common Market is essentially a choice between two forms of imperialism — old sick British imperialism or new sick European imperialism. And **objectively** saying 'No' to the Common Market must mean that we are in favour of old sick British imperialism, in spite of any arguments for 'fully rounded class positions' because that is what it means from a **historical viewpoint**. It is no surprise that small shopkeepers and farmers should opt for this mirage of bourgeois democracy and free trade when there is no revolutionary party to expose the contradictions of capitalism. But when people who call themselves Marxists, such as the IMG and IS — and the CP, too, of course, though with less conviction — pander to such attitudes, it is astounding.

The logical outcome of such an attitude will be to hail a massive 'No' vote as a 'victory for the working class'. Of course it would be nothing of the kind.

John Latham conjures up a sort of 'permanent revolution in reverse': instead of the revolution breaking the bonds of feudalism, then bourgeois democracy and through to socialism, he sees the revolution breaking the bonds of 'authoritarianism', then smashing through bourgeois democracy to socialism!

This vain hope of going backwards to socialism through an idealised bourgeois democracy is truly obscurantist and can only mislead. - Ivan Wels, Nottingham.

