



## THE LABOUR PARTY

First, congratulations on instituting a letters section — pity it's been such a long time coming.

Sam Aaronovitch reveals (*M T*, April), in what must be one of the great ironies of history, the spectre now haunting the Left of the Labour Party, its destruction by the ultra-Left and its subsequent marginalisation in British politics.

In response he calls for 'a coherent strategic perspective which can defeat not only the perspective of the Right but also that of Militant and other Trotskyist groupings'. I put it to him that even if such a perspective existed it would take a lot longer than the intervening time between now and the next election to diffuse such a view (in the absence of any socialist mass media) within the Labour Party and a substantial proportion of the electorate.

Unpalatable though it is, is there really any alternative in the present drastic situation but to make concessions to the Right in the Labour Party? — and thus cut the ground from under the feet of the SDP/ Liberal Alliance.

The alternative may well be the domination of British politics for a generation by a social democratic alliance a-la Sweden — in which case there would be no 'centre of gravity to shift to the left'.

*Simon Partridge London*

## TV TIMES

Given the present political situation, which *Marxism Today* should be as concerned with as any other Communist Party publication, would it not have been more appropriate to have published an article by a member of the El Salvador Communist Party rather than an interview with the Chief Constable of Cornwall? The front cover gave me the impression that I was buying a copy of the TV Times.

*G. Baker London*

## FASHION AND THE LEFT

I was surprised and pleased to see a short article on fashion in last month's *Marxism Today*. I cannot think of anywhere on the Left where fashion is considered worthy of discussion — for this reason alone I feel it was a good thing.

However, I couldn't help feeling that the author was only addressing herself to a small minority of sophisticated feminists and a number of serious weaknesses seem immediately apparent. Surely there is still a mass market in clothes which doesn't come only 'from the streets' and surely there are many women (including feminists) who are not so defiant and happy about the dictum that dressing to please yourself is so easy and pleasurable. There are also some men (probably a much smaller number) who actually take an interest in their clothes but there are, no doubt, many more who would like to, but who do fear being 'laughed at'. To claim that this shows an unwillingness to change is, I believe emotive and simplistic.

I still feel it was good to have the piece — but let's have more discussion — perhaps even an article.

*Pauline West Birmingham*

## THE DARWIN DEBATE

According to Robert Young, we should not unreservedly oppose the fundamentalist obscurantists who deny the facts of biological evolution, because some evolutionists hold extremely reactionary views which they justify by distorted conclusions drawn from Darwin's ideas on natural selection. As a non-scientist I should like to express a point of view.

No reputable biologist or palaeontologist, rejects the ideas of evolution and there doesn't appear to be any material alternative to the principle of natural selection. Any alternative to selection must rely on some idealist conception like Bernard Shaw's 'life force'. Neo-Lamarckian ideas such as those put forward a few decades ago in the Soviet Union have no contemporary support.

Non-materialist theories are by their very nature easier to use for the purpose of justifying reactionary political ideas than materialist ones. Materialist theories may be misused by those pursuing reactionary social and political goals, but they can at least be countered by scientific argument.

It seems to me that it is just as valid to deduce from a natural selection theory that humankind has evolved and survived because of the highly developed forms of co-operation within the species and because of the greater care over a longer period expended on the young, as it is to accept ideas such as that of the late Sir Arthur Keith who once declared that war was nature's pruning knife, or Eysenck's ideas which help to feed racial and social elitism.

There may be times when humanists and

Marxists may find themselves with some allies with whom they disagree philosophically and politically. Surely, however, those who call themselves scientific socialists could not think twice when it comes to publicly ranging themselves with other Darwinists against the 'born again' fundamentalists of the 'moral majority' whether it be in the Bible belt of the USA or anywhere else. Surely this is a battle on which there can be no compromise.

*N. G. N. Kelsey London*

## THE DARWIN DEBATE

Robert M. Young, in his otherwise excellent and timely article in the April '82 issue 'The Darwin Debate' gives three impressions which need some clarification.

Firstly, although Darwin was a 'theist' during mid-career in later life he became a materialist agnostic. This can be seen in his private 'M' notebook and in his letter to Edward Aveling of 13 October 1880, which was originally thought to have been to Marx. Darwin's reticence on the subject of religion was motivated by not wanting to upset his family.

Secondly, Marx and Engels were fully consistent in their support of Darwinism. The apparent disparity that Mr Young alludes to is merely the result of their appreciation of Darwinism as central to a materialist world-view.

Thirdly, I can only imagine that the suggestion that it would be a mistake to side with the establishment scientists fighting Creationism is due to a tragic misprint. Stephen Gould the scientist cited is an anti-racist, feminist, vocal critic of Sociobiology and other form of reactionary internalism, and is part originator of an interpretation of the fossil record which has shattered the establishment (gradualist) view of evolution, supports work in palaeontology done in the USSR since the war, and can accurately be described as dialectical. To suggest that we should join forces with Reaganite, misogynistic, homophobic, fundamentalists against a sincere radical scientist of great integrity, for no stated good reason, is unforgivable stupidity. To attack scientists purely because they sell their labour to the establishment of bourgeois society is extremely short-sighted. It is also not guaranteed to ensure a good wheat-crop as Lysenko and his mates found out.

*Alan Lewis London*

**We welcome your letters for the June issue. They should be no longer than 250 words and arrive at the office by Friday, May 7th.**