

LETTERS

DECENTRALISATION

Mike Rustin's article, 'Power To The Provinces' (January issue), was thoughtful and provocative. Although I disagreed with his position on Ireland, he is to be respected for taking up the question together with Wales and Scotland.

Also, it may be useful, to identify those, within the Labour Party, who are beginning to come to terms with the questions of decentralisation and democracy. I refer here to such groupings as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. Although there is considerable disagreement on the question of proportional representation, on balance, I would be in favour of replacing our present electoral system, with one based on PR.

If the next election leads to a 'hung parliament', I wouldn't be surprised if this resulted in a coalition between the Tories and the Alliance, rather than one between Labour and the Alliance (to keep Thatcher out), as Mike suggests.

The SDP is beginning to show its true colours, witness the recent debate in parliament on nuclear weapons, when they voted with the Tories. If Thatcher is defeated, but not annihilated, at the next election, we could then see a Tory/Alliance government which rejects Thatcherism, and appeals to 'National Unity', in order to 'manage' the crisis.

Steve Rose, Preston

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

Lynne Segal, in January's *Marxism Today*, argued that women did not seem in fact to be losing jobs more quickly than men during the current depression. She is dead right. So far as Wales is concerned, precisely the opposite is happening.

The Welsh working population reached its

peak in 1979, when 1,022,000 people were at work as workers, 55% of them in the service sector. Women were 40% of the total and 42% of the critical sectors of manufacturing and services, an increase of 8% since 1968.

By October 1982, the working population had fallen to 858,000, nearly 60% in services, a mere 34% in manufacturing. There were 357,000 women in this shrunken workforce: nearly 42% of the total and 43.7% of those in manufacturing and services. In the last few months of 1982, men's unemployment once more started to pull ahead and away from women's. At this moment, women are at least 44% of the workers at work in Wales in manufacturing and services.

A measure of the change: if the change-over to female labour continues at the rate it has been running since 1968, women will be a majority of the Welsh working class at work by the end of 1994; if, however, it runs at the speed it has attained during the Thatcher slump, women will be majority of the Welsh working class by the end of 1990, in eight years time.

Gwyn A Williams, Cardiff

We welcome your letters for the March issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday, 4 February.

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