

## THE LEFT AND THE MARATHON

It's always like a breath of fresh air to read Stuart Hall on politics. But, with his latest piece *The Culture Gap* (January *Marxism Today*), he has not only written a brilliant essay but has opened the way forward for a massive diversification of left politics, breaking free from the economist strait-jacket Eric Heffer *et al* have ready for us to wear.

I would like briefly to elaborate on Stuart's comments on sport. I am a keen marathon runner; this year hundreds of thousands of like minded souls will be taking part in this supreme athletic challenge. And what has the Left to say about this phenomenon? Nothing! Yet here is a section of the population that are certainly 'activists', are already deprived of facilities, and will be hard hit by attacks on local government; they have a particular interest in defending the NHS (who else is going to care for our tendons and our ligaments?). Sport is patently political but we only seem to comment on it when it takes place in South Africa.

We need to be more than just aware of culture, but to intervene in it too. I hope that this year's marathon runners will have a little more offered to them by the Left than a symbol to attach to their vests.

*Mark Perryman, Dudley*

## LORD ROTHSCHILD

The December 1983 issue of *Marxism Today* carried a *Focus* feature called 'Trouble at the Poly' which contained a sentence that might have been read as suggesting that the Industrial Relations Research Unit at the University of Warwick was now 'supervised' by the banker Lord Rothschild. Such a suggestion is entirely incorrect. The IRRU is an independent research organisation funded by the Social Science Research Council. Its only connection with Lord Rothschild (the scientist, not the banker) was his report on the SSRC. This reproduced an allegation made by Lord Beloff that the IRRU was 'unfairly biased in favour of the unions'. That allegation was fully investigated by a committee under Sir Kenneth Berrill which completely exonerated the IRRU.

*Mike Terry, University of Warwick*

## COMMUNIST FINANCES

It is no comfort to members of the Communist Party to read of some of the difficulties arising out of the Labour Party's acute financial problems, as described in Jim Mortimer's letter in the January issue

of *Marxism Today*. It will, I am sure, be no surprise to, and, I hope, equally no comfort, for, members of the Labour party, to learn that the Communist Party also has acute financial problems. These have also led to reductions in full-time staff, both at the Party Centre, and in the District and Area organisations of the Party.

For the past nine years, the Communist Party has organised an Annual National Fund Appeal, which has raised in total over half a million pounds. While this is a magnificent achievement, the money raised has not been adequate to meet the Party's requirements.

Readers of *Marxism Today* could be of great assistance, by responding generously to the Tenth Annual National Appeal of the Party, with a view to eliminating any shortfall this year, and thus creating the possibility of a substantial increase in the public presentation of our case and in our capacity effectively to present it.

The Appeal period will run from 20th February to 26th March. Early donations will be welcome, and can be sent to Gordon McLennan, 16 St John Street, London EC1.  
*Gerry Cohen, London*

## LISTENING TO THE PEOPLE

I am delighted to see the discussion taking place in your columns on *Labour's Lost Millions*. A whole lot of problems are being exposed to the light of day. Two issues where we are totally out of tune with ordinary people are home ownership and the police.

There is nothing anti-socialist about wanting to own one's home; workers who want to do so have not been infected with a capitalist virus. We can encourage the move towards home ownership, whilst at the same time pointing out the appalling housing crisis now facing the country, and the vital need for more public house building in a variety of forms. We will not get a hearing, or deserve one, if we appear as a bunch of middle-class socialists, owning our own homes, but wanting for 'obscure' political reasons to deny the same right to the majority of voters.

On the question of the police, the Tories have been given the issue by default. We have no clearly thought out policy, and one has only to mention the word police at certain left-wing gatherings to produce a state of collective apoplexy. This won't do. Our people want their homes and families protected; we should be at one with them here. Having established our credentials, we can then explain to people why we don't

want the police acting in their various political and security roles. We will then get a lot of support.

Bert Munro and Des Walshe are right (*Marxism Today*, Jan 84); we have got to start hearing and listening to the people we wish to represent. For many on the Left this will be a new and, I suspect, painful experience.

*John Hodgson, Chairman, Peacehaven, Telscombe & East Saltdean Labour Party.*

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Ron Peters** is a journalist.

**Jane Harris** is a trade union researcher.

**Avi Ehrlich** is one of the editors of *Khamsin*, a Marxist journal on Middle Eastern affairs.

**Jean Gardiner** is a member of the *Marxism Today* Editorial Board and is a lecturer at Leeds University.

**Michael Meadowcroft** is Liberal MP for Leeds West.

**Paul Olive** is a journalist with NALGO.

**Sarah Benton** is deputy editor of the *New Statesman*.

**Dan Finn** is research officer of the Unemployment Unit.

**Martin Myant** is the editor of *Scottish Marxist* and author of *Poland: a crisis for socialism*.

**John Mellroy** teaches industrial relations at Manchester University.

**John Lloyd** is the Labour Editor of the *Financial Times*.

**Michele Roberts** is a poet and novelist.

**Richard Dyer** lectures in film studies at Warwick University.

**Roy Armes** is a Reader in film at Middlesex Polytechnic and author of the forthcoming book *Third World Cinema and the West*.

**Christine Geraughty** works for NALGO.

**Fred Halliday** is the author of *The Making of the Second Cold War*.

**Andrew Gamble** is the author of *Britain in Decline*.

**Dave Cook** is a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party.

**Roger Poole** is a national officer of NUPE.

**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 3 February.**