

Letters:

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Brooks is on the Communist Party Southern Africa Committee.

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Dave Priscott is on the *Marxism Today* Editorial Board and represented the CPGB at the recent PCE Congress.

Eric Hobsbawm is on the *Marxism Today* Editorial Board.

Stephen Sedley is a practising QC and a former visiting professorial fellow at Warwick University.

Richard Jewison is a NUPE officer and a member of CP Hants and Dorset District Committee.

Robbie Gray teaches History at Portsmouth Polytechnic and is on the Communist Party Theory and Ideology Committee.

Jonathon Porritt is co-chairperson of the Ecology Party's Political Committee and is speaking in his personal capacity.

Bob Dent is a freelance journalist and researcher.

Anthony Arblaster writes occasionally on opera for the *Guardian*.

Michael Cross is on the staff of *New Scientist*.

Malcolm Barry teaches music at Goldsmiths College, London.

Cynthia Cockburn is author of *Brothers: male dominance and technological change*.

Tricia Davis is on the Communist Party Executive Committee.

Betty Matthews is on the *Marxism Today* Editorial Board.

Kathy Myers is editor of *Camerawork*.

Ann Sedley is women's rights officer of NCCL.

THE LEFT AND THE MARATHON

I hope never to have to run 26 miles, but Mark Perryman's letter (Feb issue) strikes a welcome chord.

One other form of sport, actively under threat at present, is even more popular than marathon running. I refer to fishing — the green umbrella sort, not your chalk stream gentlemen with tweed hats — which attracts more people each Saturday than does football, and has impeccable working class credentials.

The Anti-Bloodsports League, helped by massive coverage in the capitalist press, have been making quite a stink, highlighting such emotive points as the supposed torturing of fish in catch-nets. Is it too much to hope that the Broad Left will speak with a united voice on this subject, and defend the contemplative afternoons of so many working people?

Unlike marathon runners, fishermen may not be 'activists', but they seem to me equally good political material — 'pacifists' perhaps?

Ron Collins, Melksham

ANNA COOTE'S CHALLENGE

Hooray for Anna Coote. At last someone has the courage to challenge the smugness of the new orthodoxy which has enveloped *Marxism Today* over the last year. So many of the recent articles — dare I say even Hobsbawm's 'Labour's Lost Millions' — have a blandness and level of abstraction which weakens their value to those involved in the increasingly sharp struggles currently being waged down at the grass roots.

As a socialist-feminist I search the pages of MT in vain for ideas and support for anything that relates to my politics. Outside the women's movement publications, where are the left debates on strategies for tackling pornography, around prostitution, reproductive rights, the development of women's committees? We urgently need a discussion on how to begin campaigning on the re-evaluation of skills associated with women's work. I could go on. Debates around racism and black people's politics have also received short shrift. For example, how does the expansion of racism awareness programmes for white workers relate to a strategy of political change which emphasises the role of struggle in challenging the dominant ideology?

It won't be easy to find people willing to write about these issues for the journal given its current format. The length of most

articles is daunting for any but the most practiced. Working out new ideas publicly may be better done by a series of shorter pieces around a single theme. Sharpening up the debate will bring more political pressure on the editorial board. They will have to put their faith in new and untried contributors. Perhaps MT could organise some discussions/workshops for people interested in writing for the journal. Unless Anna Coote's challenge is taken up positively, MT is in danger of becoming marginalised from many aspects of progressive politics.

Nathalie Hadjifotiou, London

THE ANTI LABOUR VOTE

I write to the theoretical journal of the CP as a double outsider. I am a former Labour Party member who stood as a Social Democrat at the last election. There is, however, much that I respect and accept in the election analysis by Eric Hobsbawm (October 1983). But, herewith, two fundamental reservations:

Hobsbawm suggests that Thatcherism won because the anti-Thatcher majority was split. Quite the opposite. For the first week on my council estates I thought I was fighting the Labour candidate for the anti-Thatcher vote. Then I discovered that the debate was about where the anti-Labour vote was to go — Tory or SDP. Nobody talked to me about how best to register an anti-Tory vote. The issue was how most effectively to vote anti-Labour. Until this point is recognised — with embarrassing overtones for both the old Left and for the Alliance — the rest of the Hobsbawm analysis falls.

Hobsbawm writes 'We cannot abandon this tradition of being a broad people's party for if Labour . . .' What use? Hobsbawm remains a Communist. In my years in the Labour Party we had to deal with Communists standing against Labour candidates and with Communist attacks on most of the things we did and stood for. Yet he now writes of the Labour Party as being the joint possession of some mysterious we. The Labour Party no more belongs to the CPGB than it does to the SDP and it is as insulting for him as it would be for me to write as if we owned it. Why pretend otherwise?

John Torode, London

BUSINESS ALIENATION

As a capitalist businessman with some knowledge and much sympathy for many of the ideas of Marxism I read Bertell Oilman's book (reviewed in *Marxism Today*, January) with much interest. When Oilman ventured from the groves of academe into the world of people doing business he took as his lode stone, he tells us, the maxim that 'honesty is the best policy only when it pays'.

It was therefore hardly surprising that

only a few months later, and his friends' inherited wealth and savings nearly exhausted, he was told 'Not only was our credit nil but — according to Parker Ullger, the president of Lanzer — I had a reputation as a "ball buster".'

Notwithstanding the inherent and unavoidable conflicts between ethical responsibility, equity and self interest in capitalism and the world of business; indeed perhaps because of it, the ethos of 'my word is my bond' is still — fortunately

— of importance to most people in the day to day conduct of their affairs. It is sadly ironic that one whose academic reputation is based on a study of 'Alienation' should seemingly have learnt so little from his academic studies.

C J Fell, Essex

We welcome your letters for the April issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday 9 March.

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Friday, 16th March at 7.30 pm
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Marxistmind

Your chosen specialist subject
is 'British Political Parties'.
You have 2 minutes,
starting from... NOW!

● 'Which party organised the biggest political festival of 1983?'

'The Communist Party' 'Correct'

● 'Which was the only party to campaign against the Falklands War?'

'The Communist Party' 'Correct'

● 'Which party was described by CND leader Bruce Kent as our "partners in the cause of peace in this world"?''

'The Communist Party' 'Correct'

● 'Which party has a tall, dark, handsome, charismatic leader?'

PASS...

● 'Which party publishes, as well as *Marxism Today*, magazines on the women's movement, economics, young people, health, the countryside and education?'

'The Communist Party' 'Correct'

● 'Which party has links with revolutionary and liberation movements worldwide?'

'The Communist Party' 'Correct'

SINCE YOU'VE STARTED, WHY NOT FINISH?

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