

# Letters

## EXPANDING DEFICITS

Ben Mowbray (Af 7, Feb) takes me to task for being too generous to Reagan over his economic policy. What I pointed out was that unemployment had fallen rapidly in the States and that this had been the result of the expansion of the Government financial deficit.

When the Americans started to expand their deficit, the Tories said that it would end with no extra jobs and galloping inflation. In the event the British economy, which continued with the low deficit policies of which Ben Mowbray presumably approves, continued with rising unemployment, low economic growth, higher inflation and interest rates and a collapsing pound.

It is certainly true that high US interest rates are a contributory factor to the problems of industrialised countries and they are a disaster for Third World debtors, but it is not true that the deficit was more than one factor in the high interest rates. It is the pursuit of tight monetary policies in most industrial countries which has done that.

The main reason why the savings of the industrialised countries are attracted to the US are because the Americans - both Government and private sector - are using them. Restrictive policies in other countries have ensured that investing in other countries is not a productive circuit of capital.

The remedy for other industrial countries is not to moan but to introduce exchange controls and expand their deficits also.

Henry Neuberger, London NI

## GRAMSCI FOR LABOUR

George Daveysmith (letters, MT March) requests evidence that the Labour Party has been influenced by Gramsci. Sadly, I have little to offer. But those of us who draw our analysis and inspiration from Gramsci have an important role to play in Labour's reconstruction.

Regrettable civil war ensued in the wake of Labour's catastrophic defeat in 1979. This was not, as Austin Mitchell puts it, 'four years in the death of the Labour Party'. It was a period of ideological renewal when Labour sought an ideology radical enough to revitalise Britain and credible enough to defeat Thatcherism at the polls. The party still hasn't found this formula. Gramsci is possibly the key. There is a pressing need to weld onto Labour's traditional working-class base the issues which appeal across the spectrum of Britain's changing class structure. These issues must include peace, ecology, feminism and decentralisation. Many of us on the Labour Left, particularly in the LCC, take every opportunity to

point the party in this direction.

I am sure that much of this is old hat to *Marxism Today* readers. My purpose in writing is to show that Mr Daveysmith has missed the point: the question is not what Gramsci has contributed to the Labour Party but what his ideas can contribute in the future.

Peter Grosvenor, London W4

## LAZY COMMUNISTS

Built around first-class articles and interviews, the March issue of *Marxism Today* was magnificent, demonstrating once again that it is Britain's outstanding Marxist publication, and makes nonsense of the wild charges of 'deserting the class position'.

What amazes me about many of those defenders of 'class politics' is the way they refuse to discuss what is happening to *our class*, the working class. Aren't they interested? Don't they care?

Why did such a big section of miners refuse to fight? Why were the best, most capable and militant among other trade unionists unable to deliver practical solidarity action? Why are former powerful 'left unions' (AUEW and EETU) now such pillars of the Right? Why is it that areas often weak in mass response are so strong in left sectarianism in the Communist Party as well as the Labour Party? eg the North East, North West, Notts, Derby-Leicester, to say nothing of the New Communist Party that sprang out of the Surrey stockbroker belt?

When we have examined these questions in depth we will understand better the value of the broad alliance so effectively demonstrated in South Wales. Otherwise we will become what Dimitrov described as lazy communists shouting general slogans but unable to formulate strategy and practical policy to meet the specific conditions, problems and needs of the hour.

Tom Mitchell, Luton

## THORNY QUESTIONS

Further to Matthew Gandy's letter (MT, March), I have experienced amongst comrades on the Left, a reluctance, when pressed, to define 'economic growth'. An increase in the arms programme would, I presume, constitute economic growth. This would not necessarily be followed by an improvement in living standards. A switch of resources from arms to goods for peaceful uses could, on the other hand, bring about improved living standards without any economic growth.

Another example of language proving a barrier to constructive thought on the Left is the manner in which the term 'incomes policy' is used. Everybody, without excep-

tion, supports an incomes policy of some kind. Increases in wages at the expense of profits with free collective bargaining is an incomes policy. But the Left, reasoning from experience of right wing governments, gives incomes policy only one definition, wage restraint. This dogmatic insistence inhibits constructive discussion on a policy for all incomes that could win public support, and in the process undermine right wing economic theory and isolate the right instead of the trade unions.

Bert Ward, London SE26

## ARM-WAVING

There is a startling omission in Dave Cook's article (MT, Feb). The main leverage which opponents of the current CP leadership possess is that since 1977 the membership of the CP has declined precipitately.

It is difficult to ignore one particular feature which caused the exit of people such as myself - the complete inability of the leadership to recognise that discussion of issues like socialist democracy remained unconvincing whilst the internal organisation of the CP remained wedded to undemocratic practice. Many examples could be given but the most striking in the present context might be the manner in which the current editor and industrial editor of the *Morning Star* were appointed over the heads of the staff. Seldom has a petard been so well hoisted. Closer to home the editor of *Marxism Today* might like to analyse the democratic process underlying his appointment.

As Cook's article seeks to demonstrate with respect to other matters, the point is of wider relevance. Much of the Left concerns itself with other people's democracy whilst justifying their own political practice, if at all, by vague arm-waving or recourse to history. Once, just once, a left politician when analysing the recent past might begin by saying 'Well, I really screwed it up when. . . . ' Till then, I am afraid I must express my reservations about having to choose between the two sides so neatly carved out by Cook. You can pick the sides, comrade, but remember that the spectators may be finding other ways to play the game.

Mike Prior, London NS

## SHODDY THINKING

Dave Cook's linking of Militant's opportunist approach to that of an orthodox Marxist class analysis (MT Feb) is an act of intellectual dishonesty.

In Liverpool, the appointment of Sam Bond was not an 'interpretation of the necessities of class politics'; it was sheer political nepotism.

Moreover it is only one element in a package which has included the irresponsible posturing over last year's budget and the consideration of autonomous peace, women's, black groups as, at best, misguided Labour Party fodder, and at worst, petty bourgeois and peripheral. The latter category would also include white collar unions affiliated to the City Council Joint Stewards' Committee, the recent destruction of which has been another Militant 'success'. The worst element has been the attempt to blur the distinction between employer and employee (socialist Council = trade unions).

Communists in the city have been to the fore in attempting to stem Militant's influence and to build a genuine socialist perspective. In the current atmosphere in the party many would be, indeed certain already have been, labelled 'reductionist', if not 'factionalist' (still no evidence produced).

If that were not enough, they are now equated with the very sectarianism they have been fighting. Such shoddy thinking contributes to the unnecessary and simplistic polarisation taking place within the party on complex issues around which there is still a greater potential for unity than division.

P Murray, Liverpool

## TRIUMPHALISM

Premen Addy's triumphalist tone (MT, February) comes as something of a surprise in a journal such as yours and from an author such as he.

Yes, Rajiv Gandhi had a massive majority, but then in all elections since 1952 the ruling party has had absolute majority. To obtain more than two-thirds is quite common and Congress under Mrs Gandhi failed to do so only in 1967.

Caste, region, language factionalism may be on the wane, nevertheless, Telugu Desam is the largest opposition group in Lok Sabha and in Tamil Nadu the regionalist AIADMK won the most seats. The Communist Party (Marxist) which held West Bengal is a one region party in all but name. Further, no elections were held in the two most sensitive areas, Punjab and Assam, where regionalism may have made an impact.

India may have achieved a debt-free, nuclear-powered, agriculture-locked-into-industry economic development but up to 50% (350 million people) of the population live below the official poverty line, giving rise to persistent communal and rural violence.

There are three kinds of struggles that anyone looking at India from a left perspective must take on board.

# Letters

(1) The problem of multinationality whereby regional nationalist movements overlapping with religious conflicts can intervene in often violent ways without a clear class focus. (2) Classic class conflicts in rural areas. (3) Within Hindu society, the struggles of the untouchables which highlight the deprivation suffered by these groups despite forty years of legislative action.

Meghnad Desai,  
Professor of Economics, LSE

## WORLD BANK

In their article (*MT*, January), Sender and Smith say that the Left should back the World Bank and the IDA. But they do not question the activities of the Bank or the impact of its lending.

Bank money is lent to Third World countries on highly conditional terms. The conditions usually are that countries devalue their currency, cut subsidies for essential items, run down the public sector, promote the private sector, and liberalise export and import and currency controls. This package hits the poorest people the hardest and opens up countries to further penetration by foreign capital.

The Left should also note that the Bank is actively hostile to socialist third world countries. For example, at present, the Bank is making no new loans to Nicaragua, ostensibly because of the Sandinistas' treatment of the private sector. (In fact, in the face of great obstacles, the Sandinistas have striven to encourage and reassure the private sector.) The Nicaraguans have made enormous steps towards eliminating poverty, illness and illiteracy, but this counts for nothing in the Bank's book, in spite of the Bank's public commitment to this goal. It seems that the Bank, like the USA, fears the existence of a thriving socialist country in the Third World.

The British Left, rather than supporting the Bank, should consider advocating a British withdrawal from the Bank and the concentration of aid funds to help beleaguered socialist countries, like Nicaragua and socialist movements in the Third World.

Catharine Watson London

## GROWTH RATES

I agree with Monty Johnstone (*MT*, March) that the Soviet Union needs democratic reforms. However I question some of his apparent assumptions.

He lays major emphasis on the failure to achieve economic results predicted in 1961 on the basis of extrapolating earlier growth rates to 1970 and 1980. But is it sufficient to make such great play with this failure without also questioning the

validity of the process by which the CPSU arrived at such figures in the first place? Is it possible (or even desirable) for a big economy to grow at the rate of (say) 10% per annum decade after decade? Is Monty saying that such rates would have been sustainable given democratic reforms? This is what his argument, as it stands, suggests.

C Wood, London SE9

## NO SCAPEGOATS

After many months of reading endless articles concentrating on the problems and failures of the miners' strike, Hywel Francis' report (*MT*, Feb) on some of the important positive gains in Wales was a breath of fresh air.

So often the labour movement spends months, sometimes years, picking over the bones of its failures, contemplating its collective navel rather than building on those things that went well and were successful.

Over the past few years I have worked in and for local voluntary organisations and one thing that stands out above all others is the need to build on success and not to dwell on failure or apportioning blame. The search for a scapegoat, for someone to blame, can be debilitating and is never ending. This is because none of us are without spot or blemish, and therefore no sooner do you find a scapegoat than the finger of suspicion moves onto someone else.

Rev Derek Sender, Manchester

## LITTLE ENGLANDERS

I found Pete Carter's analysis of the miners' strike pertinent and accurate until he attempted to summarise what he considers to be its practical political lessons.

He views calls for a general strike as 'harmful' because they 'bear no relationship to what is possible at this stage' and considers that an image of 'miners fighting in the interests of the nation' was not conveyed by the NUM leadership.

Two questions: (1) Why was a general strike not possible? (2) Why should the miners have played Little Englanders (in the interests of the nation) when their political consciousness, generated in and by the strike, would deny the validity of any such analysis?

The TUC leadership can answer the first. The second would be better referred to those well-known theoreticians Saatchi & Saatchi.

David Waddilove, Rugby

## ENERGY FUDGE

It is time Ken Gill (letters, *MT*, Feb) realised that nuclear power is not one of the 'progressive' technologies that Marxist theoreticians

have depicted as underpinning a future socialist society. Quite apart from the economic, safety and proliferation problems, it has no long term future.

While we would be saddled for centuries ahead with the problem of nuclear waste, there is worldwide only around 40 years' worth of fuel for the current type of 'burner' reactors, whether AGR or PWR.

Surely it makes more sense to rely on indigenous coal, plus conservation while we develop the very promising renewable (ie inexhaustible) energy sources which Britain has in plenty, rather than continuing down the nuclear cul-de-sac? Even the USA has now abandoned its nuclear plans. Britain is one of the few countries soldiering on.

The TUC Fuel and Power Committee has, like Gill, continually fudged the energy policy issue by calling for 'more of everything' - coal, nuclear, renewables and conservation. This is evasive both in the short and long term.

For my money, the renewables - wind, wave and tidal in particular in the UK - are the progressive technologies for the future. In the long term there is no sustainable alternative. In the meantime we have got coal.

Dr David Elliott,  
SERA Energy Group

## EMOTIONAL RADICALISM

Can I correct a few wrong statements in Martin Ince's and Bill Ward's letters (*MT*, March) which purport to be replies to my letter in the previous issue. And can I make it clear that I write as a Communist Party member and not as an official of my union. TASS members make TASS policy through their democratic structures.

Firstly, TASS has no members in Electricity Supply and no ambitions to recruit in this area. Secondly, I challenge Ince to find any reference in my letter, or in any other of my statements, supporting a major nuclear programme.

Mr Ward also imputes motive. How does he know what I would welcome and would not? Of course I support the Communist Party's position which is outlined in my previous letter and acknowledge that the movement requires to take account of changed circumstances. But Ward is wrong to say that the Communist Party has changed its position.

The 38th Congress resolution changed nothing - it simply called for a re-examination of policy and did not rule out a role for nuclear power. Contrary to Ward's assertions I would very much welcome such a debate; unfortunately it's a

long time a starting.

We can only hope that the debate will be informed by a Communist approach and not swamped by a wave of emotional radicalism. And let's see to it that *Marxism Today* is used to promote the Communist view and not to smuggle in new changed policies through the back door.

Ken Gill, London SW11

We welcome your letters for the May issue. They should be no longer than 250 words and arrive at the office not later than 5 April. The editor reserves the right to cut letters.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**Hywel Francis** is chair of the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities and also chairs the Welsh CP's energy and mining advisory committee.

**Frances Morrell** is the Leader of the Inner London Education Authority.

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