



THE NATION

Robert Gray's argument for the necessity of a socialist re-definition of the interests of the British nation (MT November issue) has serious and disturbing implications. For integral to this re-definition is the rejection of 'abstract internationalism'. Remarkably Gray seems to, in effect, reject any conception of socialist internationalism as well. Certainly, he underplays the importance of the 'nation' as an ideological tool designed to efface the central contradiction of capitalist society, that between labour and capital.

As an historical precedent for the realisation of this re-definition, Gray offers the patriotism of socialists and communists in the Second World War when 'even the national flag became . . . the property of the Left as well as the Tories'. Surely, socialists and communists should have been fighting the British capitalist class that, in part, caused the war, rather than German workers? The commendation of the AES underlines the fundamental anti-international character of Gray's proposal because import controls central to the AES, would only make workers abroad redundant.

Such a conception of the British 'nation' is very similar to Mrs Thatchers. If language determines our perceptions socialists should jettison the 'nation'. Socialism is international or it is nothing. 'Workers of all countries, unite!

Jon E Lewis, Cardiff

SECONDARY MODERNS

I write with reference to a statement in the October issue of Marxism Today in the section entitled 'Focus'. You are correct to say that 'Manchester is in favour of tertiary colleges' but that is not a 'general opinion' as you imply.

The policy of the Communist Party is for all-through 11-19 comprehensive schools, and for education and/or training for all in the 16-19 age group to receive some form of education or training, full or part time, whether in school or college.

In the present climate, the removal of 16-19 provision from schools means a return to class divided provision, with the voluntary sector (schools partially, but not wholly, funded by the local authority, eg, Roman Catholic, Church of England) remaining 11-19 and becoming the 'new grammar school' whilst the 11-16 county comprehensives become the 'new secondary moderns'.

Howard Hollands, London

BRITISH NATIONALITY

I wrote to you on May 3 criticising Paul Bew's article on the Irish elections, in which he complimented Garrett Fitzgerald on his 'constitutional generosity' and presented Fine Gael as a 'liberal' party preferable to Haughey's Fianna Fail. You didn't see fit to print my letter.

Now we have Mike Morrissey's confused article on the Northern elections in the October issue, rightly criticised by Joan Joney from Portsmouth in the November issue. (Do you have to be English to get your letters printed on Irish matters?) And to cap it all in November we have Robert Gray's incredible farrago on British 'nationality'. To what level has Marxism sunk in Britain? *Of course* British 'nationality' is a preserve of the Right. Ask Sir Oswald Mosley's shade, or the National Front. It constitutes a hegemonistic bid by the English ruling-class to subsume Welsh and Scottish nationality into a hybrid British system presided over by a British ruling class, to which the Scottish and Welsh (and indeed Irish) landlords and capitalists are recruited via the public-school/Oxbridge system. The Left doesn't have to buy this nonsense. The Irish, Scottish and Welsh national movements deserve *support* from the English working class, who should welcome them as allies in the struggle to dismantle the British Imperial State, leaving the road clear for an English Socialist Republic within which English nationality can blossom, unencumbered by hegemonist illusions.

The English Left does not have to cripple itself with a hegemonist vision of a 'Socialist Britain' as a unitary 'nation-state', thereby losing the support of those increasing segments of the Scottish and Welsh people who see control by a remote ruling class in London as the central problem.

This topic deserves analysis in depth, with

a good conference, subsequently written up, drawing on the experience of those who have been active in this field for decades, such as C D Greaves and the Connolly Association people, the Irish Sovereignty Movement and other progressive elements who have refrained from allowing their disagreement with the Provisionals' tactics to cloud their vision of nationality.

Roy Johnston, Dublin

THE ASSEMBLY

The article in Focus in the September issue of *Marxism Today* prompted some questions from Ms Joney (November issue). The article was an attempt to review the major political forces and those of the Left with respect to the Assembly elections. The starting point must be Unionism because in all its forms it has a commanding electoral position. Since the Unionist bloc has fissured into two major factions, it is interesting to compare and contrast the positions of each. Moreover Unionism as a social phenomenon has been characterised as divided between 'populist' and 'anti-populist'. Thus the two factions have increasingly tended to stereotype according to each of those categories. The Official Unionists have become integrationist and monetarist in a direct tradition from people like Shender in the 30s. The DUP expressed on the one hand sectarianism, but on the other a relative progressiveness with respect to economic issues. Thus they have a much clearer idea of what they want out of the Assembly.

The Official Unionists, with the exception of Harold McCusher, have no difficulty in endorsing Thatcher economically. In that sense, the DUP are the major anti-monetarist force.

In my view the task of the Left is to challenge Assembly members on the economy, social policy, poverty etc. Not only does this establish a politics which inhibits a huge talking shop, but it possibly exacerbates the *internal* contradictions within forces like the DUP. The impotence of the Assembly in legislative terms is not relevant since the idea is to use it as a forum in which the British state can be engaged. So, in answer to the question of who will raise these issues, they will be raised by forces *outside* the Assembly (where the Left has a marginal significance). The object of any pressure that can be mobilised will be those forces *within* the Assembly.

Mike Morrissey, Belfast

We welcome your letters for the January issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday 3 December.

The Moving Left Show

OCTOBER 29 30 31



One of the most crowded sessions was Today's Marxism.

Miner's leader Mick McGahey makes a point in one of the trade union sessions, chaired by builders' union official Pete Carter.



Photo: Nick Townsend

Would people come to an unaccustomed venue in London's East End?

Would the principal speakers turn up?

My God, two days to go and it looks as if the small creche staff will be overwhelmed by late-registering children.

In the end it was all right on the night. Full-time organisers Jo Newman and Sally Townsend, with dozens of voluntary helpers, made the Moving Left Show the most successful event of its kind for years, reaching far beyond the usual audience.

Tony Benn and Italian Communist leader Giorgio Napolitano discuss the way forward to socialism in western Europe, in a debate on the Friday evening jointly sponsored with New Socialist.

people's weekend at Queen Mary College on October 30-31.

Marxism Today is proud to have been their host.

The Moving Left Show

OCTOBER 29 30 31



photo: Pat Marshall/Moving Star

Saturday lunchtime was enlivened by the unpredictable Pookie Snackenburger.

Jackie Atkin reminds them that more than lip-service is needed for feminism.



photo: Nick Townsend

A small monster in the well-used creche.

Ex-BBC TV Programme Controller Stuart Hood speaks in the TV session, chaired by TV AM's Anna Ford.



photo: Pat Kelly



photo: Pat Marshall/Moving Star