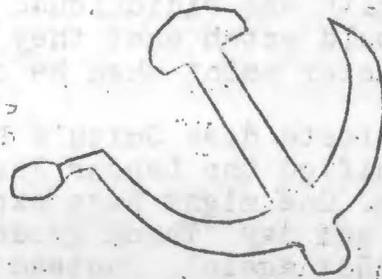


# Finsbury Communist



AN ANTI-REVISIONIST JOURNAL

Nº353 JUNE 1994

---

## DAUGHTERS & SONS

The successful Liberal Democrats in Finsbury distributed a pre-election leaflet saying that they "want to guarantee more housing for local families and give everyone a greater say in what the Council does" (Their underlining, not ours).

Not to be outdone, the Labour Party, on election day, May 5th, also promised, through the front page of the Islington Gazette, that sons and daughters of local people would get more consideration in future. A "sons and daughters" policy had previously been regarded as racist. However, there had been very few immigrants for many years now. The immigrants had settled in and wanted somewhere for their sons and daughters to live just as much as the natives did.

The timing and nature of the Labour declaration will not have done them any harm as regards votes. Labour lost in Finsbury because the party has practically vanished here anyway.

In the past, a "daughters and sons" approach would have confined immigrants to the few areas of the country where there is a surplus of council housing. No provision could have been made for the victims of redevelopment. Upwardly mobile daughters and sons often wanted to put some distance between themselves and their parents anyway.

There is not much immigration now. Massive redevelopment schemes are uncommon. But so is council housebuilding. If a "daughters and sons" policy is adopted, there have got to be losers. The losers would be the homeless.

A "daughters and sons" policy has a lot to recommend it. The parents would be able to help with the babysitting. Aged parents would not be isolated. Places like Finsbury would remain as communities instead of just collections of people. This would prove valuable in developing resistance to ruling class attacks.

However, Labour and Liberal Democrat should not just state the positive side in order to win votes. Let them come clean and say what they propose to do about the homeless. If this is likely to cost money, let them say where the cash is to come from.

## ST. JOHN

The saying goes "Of the dead, say nothing but good". But the treatment

of John Smith was ridiculous. It is sad when anyone dies young. People should watch what they eat, drink and smoke. Nobody should be made a plaster saint when he or she dies.

Whose interests does Smith's canonisation serve? He was a right-winger who had unified the Labour Party behind a slightly different variation of Toryism. One might have expected the Labour Left to give a sigh of relief and say "Thank goodness he's gone, we don't want another one like that again". Instead of which Benn, Skinner and Co. were as fulsome in their praise as anyone else. The media and the right wing naturally used the occasion to campaign for Smith think-alike Tony Blair.

### WHEN EVERYONE WENT TO THE DOGS

The physical presence of large scale opposition scuppered the British National Party council candidates on the Isle of Dogs. Not only did this enable an unprecedentedly thorough Labour election campaign to be run with massive assistance from outside the party. It also forced the BNP to go around in numbers. Drafting 300 rabid British nationalists on to one council estate on a Saturday is not the best way to win friends and influence people.

Such a campaign cannot always be relied upon. Nor can calling the BNP "nazis". British nationalism needs to be countered for what it is, not what it isn't.

### WAS THIS IN LABOUR'S ELECTION ADDRESS?

"A plan to sack the council's 6000-strong workforce and rehire them on less generous terms is expected to go before the new ruling Labour group next month. (Camden New Journal, May 12th, 1994).

Labour and Liberal Democrat councils are quite as good at carrying out ruling class policies as Tory councils.

### PRIVATISING THE POST OFFICE

There are three good reasons behind every privatisation

- 1) Getting more work done
- 2) Getting the work done by less people
- 3) Getting the work done for less money

Basically, privatisation of the Royal Mail will lead to one set of losers. Not the customers. Not the public. Not the "nation". Not the shareholders. No, the losers will be the postmen.

The opposition talk about letters to the Isle of Skye possibly costing £7, etc. This is not really opposition. It is criticism, warning the government not to get it wrong.

Work at the Post Office has been speeded up in recent years. Thousands of jobs have gone at Finsbury's Mount Pleasant sorting office. King

Edward Street is likely to close before long.

However, everybody knows that there is still plenty of slack to take up, as the employers put it. Chats and cups of tea go with the delivery postman's job. Communists do not oppose such perks, viewing them as part of the postman's remuneration.

Communists are in a minority in recognising the right of workers to take it easy under the capitalist system. People generally see no harm in speeding up other people.

The postmen, then, are for the high jump. How can they stop privatisation? The simple answer is to strike, not for a day, but indefinitely. It is no use the postmen relying on their trade union, Labour, Liberal Democrat, or the occasional friendly Tory. All the postmen will get from these people is a lot of optimistic, friendly, twaddle. The postmen will have disarmed themselves. The government will give the necessary "assurances". The anti-privatisation struggle will collapse like a poleaxed blancmange.

The only friends of the workers these days are those who honestly tell them how bad things are. Only then will they take effective action.

#### WHERE DOES THE PROLETARIAT WORK?

There has been a tendency to identify the proletariat solely with the manufacturing working class rather than with the whole industrial working class. A recent survey by the GMB union enables us to put the record straight.

At September, 1993, 36.8% of the working population were either employed in basic industry (Agriculture, fishing, mining, quarrying, construction, gas, electricity, water, transport, communication) or in manufacturing industry. This amounted to about 8,871,000 workers. This is probably an underestimate, as catering workers and the providers of scientific services are not included.

The figures for individual local authority districts have had to be derived from the 1991 Census. The best 19 areas, out of 365 in Great Britain, where the percentage of workers in basic and manufacturing industry exceeds the percentage in service employment are shown below.

Ashfield (59.9%), Port Talbot, Tewkesbury, Sedgefield, Corby, Alyn & Deeside, Copeland, Fasington, Roxburgh, Pendle, Selby, Amber Valley, Ellesmere Port & Neston, Barrow-in-Furness, Teesdale, Hinkley & Bosworth, Knowsley, Bolsover, Annandale & Eskdale (50.7%).

No London district figures in the best 50 percentages for basic and manufacturing. Barking & Dagenham, however, shows 39.5% of the workforce in manufacturing. For comparison, Islington & Finsbury have 18% of their workforce in basic and manufacturing industry.

#### WHAT IS A SOCIALIST MARKET?

On May 23rd, Dr Photis Lysandrou gave a lecture at Marx House on

"The Role of the Individual in Marx's Economics". He said that capitalism was the first commodity system. Socialism is also a commodity system. The only difference is in who controls the system. The market is as essential to socialism as it is to capitalism. Without the market we would move back to feudal barter, which would fetter the productive capacity.

Photis' view is very close to that of China's Wang Zhuo:-  
"The market regulates the operation of enterprises like an invisible hand, but the visible hand of government controls the market. The government controls market supply and demand by regulating the total volume and the allocation of resources".

This view is welcome since it concentrates attention on which class is running society rather than on the forms of ownership and planning. Even in the most tightly regulated society, the market operates at the individual level every time somebody decides to buy, say, an apple instead of a pear. Photis appeared to be in favour of market regulation going way above this level but stopping at the commanding heights of the economy which would definitely be owned and run by the state.

This fits in with the programme of the Communist Party of Britain. It is also very nice for the employees of the commanding heights. However, it removes the commanding heights themselves from market discipline.

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME OR WHO'S SCARED TO BE A STALINIST?

For 40 years or more, the British people have been brainwashed to think of Stalin as someone who operated through a fearsome bureaucracy, and who liked nothing so much as to send people to Arctic Circle and Siberian slave labour camps or to their deaths, particularly if they were innocent of any crime.

If someone is a stupid oaf who operates bureaucratically and gives one the impression that, in different circumstances, he would have one blotted out, he is likely to be labelled a "stalinist". Somebody does not have to agree with Stalin to be called a "stalinist".

There is no sense in worshipping Stalin, or Marx, or Lenin, or anyone else. But there are things that we can usefully learn from Stalin that we cannot learn from Marx or Lenin, if only because they were not around between 1924 and 1953. The Stalin Society is therefore rehabilitating Stalin by presenting a positive account of his achievements. The Stalin Society is England's most useful contribution to revolution for some time.

However, while "stalinist" and "stalinism" are commonly regarded as words of abuse, all efforts to do justice to Stalin will have only a little more effect than snowballs in hell. Stalinism needs to be positively redefined as "extending the revolution while preserving its gains". Anything less is to accept the slander of Stalin contained in the current use of the word "stalinism".

Printed and published by Finsbury Communist Association  
72 Compton Street, London, EC1V 0BN