SOCIALIST LABOUR

*ACTION*

A bulletin for Socialist Labour Party members

**Special issue:** SLP Conference December 1997

# SCARGILLISM OR SOCIALISM?

Arthur Scargill's campaign against Cardiff Central SLP and the fight for a revolutionary Socialist Labour Party.

**WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE**

**ONE SOLUTION - REVOLUTION**

# Contents

1. Introduction by Socialist Labour Action supporters

2. The Cardiff SLP Election Manifesto

3. Letter from Arthur Scargill to Cardiff SLP demanding they withdraw their manifesto

4. Letter from the Cardiff Branch Secretary, Pete Ashley, (in a personal capacity) replying to Arthur Scargill

# Introduction

Today's congress of the Socialist Labour Party is poised to destroy the organisation as a genuine socialist alternative to Tony Blair's New Labour. In the space of a year the hopes of many socialists that the SLP could become such an alternative have been dashed by a sustained witch hunt of the left, conducted by Arthur Scargill and his Stalinist supporters in the SLP.

At the same time as banning political opposition Scargill and his allies in the various Stalinist factions of the party, like the Stalin Society, Lalkar and the vile homophobes of the Economic and Philosophic Science Review, have blocked any possibility of this second congress changing the party's programme from the left reformist mish-mash that it is today into the revolutionary programme the working class needs. They have done this by using a constitution that nobody has ever voted on to rule any resolutions that challenge their politics out of order. At the same time Stalinists are allowed to peddle their anti-working class positions, such as defending the butchers of Tiananmen Square, in the party's paper, *Socialist News*.

Socialist Labour Action has consistently fought Scargill's witch hunt, and consistently fought for a revolutionary programme. One of our supporters, Pete Ashley, was involved in producing a clear revolutionary programme for the general election campaign in Cardiff Central. The candidate standing on this programme got the second highest vote of any SLP candidate anywhere. Undeterred by this fact Scargill set his witch hunt against Pete and other Cardiff socialists into motion.

This pamphlet contains the Cardiff election manifesto (including a foreword to it by Terry Burns, who is not a supporter of Socialist Labour Action), Scargill's letter denouncing this manifesto, and threatening the comrades with disciplinary action, and Pete Ashley's reply to Scargill. Together these documents show clearly the gulf that exists between the revolutionaries in the SLP and the Scargill led Stalinist clique who now run the party like a medieval fiefdom. We are reprinting them here to expose that gulf and to outline the policies that revolutionaries today need to fight for if they are to build a real alternative to Blair.

This congress is the last chance to build such an alternative from within the SLP. Supporters of Socialist Labour Action will give it our best shot at the congress, arguing for our policies and challenging the bureaucratic leadership. The scale of the witch hunt, the voiding of so many members, the dissolution of dissident branches like Vauxhall, the ban imposed on comrades discussing policies together, the bureaucratic manipulation of this congress itself all point to the fact that the Scargill leadership are determined to come out of the congress with an organisation to their liking - a bureaucratic Stalinist sect.

Such an organisation will hold no attraction to workers and youth moving into opposition to Blair. They will remember what Stalinism really means - dictatorship over the workers, the crushing of all workers' democracy - policies that have not only failed but that discredit the very idea of socialism.

If this conference proves that the SLP will not tolerate revolutionary socialists in its ranks, then all those within the party who stand for revolutionary socialism will have no alternative but to prepare for independence.

The days are long gone when revolutionaries like Trotsky could be silenced by Stalin's assassins, when bureaucrats could rely on the prestige of the USSR to mislead the working class all over the world. By embracing Stalinism in the epoch of its destruction the SLP is choosing to relive a tragic page in working class history, but this time around as mere farce, without the hope of winning mass influence. Meanwhile, the real alternative to Blair will be built, not by bureaucrats or by left reformist policies, but by class fighters committed to socialism and by a revolutionary programme that answers the present needs of the working class and links them to the necessity of socialist revolution.

**Socialist Labour Action supporters 13 December 1997**

# Cardiff Central Socialist Labour Party

# Election Statement May 1997

TORIES

The Socialist Labour Party

New Labour

Liberals

# FOREWORD
# BY
# TERRY BURNS
## SLP CANDIDATE CARDIFF CENTRAL

New Labour has abandoned the very people who created and nurtured the old Labour Party. Blair and Co. do not talk of proper or real - jobs. Jobs with decent pay and prospects - no its to be more "slave labour" schemes and dodges. Work for your dole.

The most obvious move they have made towards the Tories is in relation to the the economy - acceptance of the "Market Place". But it doesn't stop there. On crime New Labour proposes punishment. For young offender New Labour offers curfews, electronic tagging and stiffer law enforcement. Failing to recognise that society creates crime. Stopping crime requires a better way of life, better and more educational, social recreation facilities with decent jobs - in short - a change in society

The Socialist Labour Party is committed to changing society and this election statement is issued as part of the discussion about how to bring about change.

- Our first aim as a Party in Cardiff is to present a SOCIALIST alternative to New Labour.
- Secondly we want to win recruits to socialism and to the SLP.
- Our third aim is a dual one of entering into discussion with other SLP members around the programme the SLP should have and to convince members and supporters of other socialist and progressive organisations and struggles that SLP is the way forward.
- Our fourth aim is simply to make money from sales to assist the election

It is in this sprit that this statement is issued -

We believe that Democratic Discussions the way forward for the SLP!

The statement was fully discussed in a democratic manner at Cardiff SLP Branch meetings and this final Election Statement has the support of the active members of the branch - subject to the following comments :-

- as with any statement of this size some of us would question this phrase or that word - but in general and most importantly the general direction of the statement was endorsed.
- not all of the statement is national policy, some of the issues have yet to be fully discussed both locally and Britain wide..
- As a Party we are still very young. In fact the Party celebrates its first birthday on election day, its too early to expect a rounded out programme.

I left the Labour Party 8 years ago during Kinnocks attempt to move the Labour Party towards the German SDP nod the Democrats in the US of A. Blair has achieved many of Kinnocks goals - Clause four gone, structure of the Party changed and even greater concentration of power to Blair himself.

When I left the LP I was unable to see any commitment to building a better society, to represent the interests of working people it needs socialist aims. I am convinced that the only solution to the problems facing the peoples of the world is Socialism. A Socialism that is linked to the general programme contained in this statement by the Cardiff Branch of the SLP..

As this old time socialist puts it:-

*"The capitalist class has been indicted. It has failed in its management and its management is to be taken away from it....(by women and men) ... of the working class ....they ...say that they are going to get the rest of the working class to join them and take the management away. The revolution is here, now. "*

from REVOLUTION by Jack London 1905

The World has been over ripe for socialism for a generation. On the one hand it has the means - to send men to the moon, to overcome almost all production problems, the ability to produce goods and foods stuffs to satisfy worlds demand. ***On the other hand millions face starvation while their countries try to pay off loans and debts to the banks. In the most advanced countries such as Britain and America thousands live from week to week on low wages, inadequate benefits and thousands***

## The alternative to this barbarism is Socialism!

Terry Burns
SLP Parliamentary Candidate Cardiff Central March 1997

## Join the SLP and the fight for Socialism!

# CARDIFF CENTRAL
# SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

## What we stand for:

We are standing in Cardiff Central because we believe that if New Labour forms a government after this election it will offer nothing to working people who have experienced declining public services, mass unemployment and growing poverty under the Tories. The SLP was formed by brothers and sisters in the Labour Party who would no longer put up with Tony Blair's attacks on everything Labour had stood for in the past. he SLP in contrast is an unashamedly socialist party. We reject the idea of the `free market" - the capitalism system that produces poverty, injustice and war. The SLP is fighting for an alternative society, one that utilises the wealth created by workers to abolish class distinctions and meet human needs through a rational and democratic plan.

## In the coming election we will fight for:

## Jobs for all -
## for an end to unemployment

Millions of people are forced to live on poverty benefits while other workers are driven to work as much as 70 hours a week overtime. British wages are some of the lowest in Europe. Over he last 17 years, the Tories have turned Britain into a low wage economy, where workers are expected to live on wages as little as £3-4 a hour.

**We need:**

**A massive programme of public spending on new factories, housing, schools, hospitals and public transport.**

- **The SLP demands that everyone in Britain has the right to a minimum wage of £6.**
- **The SLP will scrap the Job Seekers Allowance and replace It with state benefits at the**
- **level of the minimum wage.**
- **For a 30 hour working week with no loss of pay. Divide the necessary work between all those available to do it.**

# Squeeze the profiteers

Private industries have made billions in profit by exploiting workers and customers. The Tories have sold off state industries and utilities such as gas, water and electricity to their friends in the city at knock down prices. The gap between rich and poor is greater than ever - our bills increase while the fat cats get fatter. The SLP will take the utilities, the banks and industry back into the hands of working class people.

We do not want state bureaucrats running these industries as they did in the past. All industry taken over by the state should be run by workers and for working people, according to need, not profit. The SLP would use any surpluses to slash charges and improve services.

- **Open the books of companies to inspection by the workforce., like Ford, who threatening thousands with the sack and "Lucky Goldstar" to expose the massive subsidies - bribes- to set-up in Wales.**
- **Nationalise all companies declaring workers redundant and those that refuse to pay the minimum wage.**
- **Nationalise all the banks and the major industries under workers control - without compensation.**



**OUR DEMANDS ARE MOST MODEST**
**WE JUST WANT THE EARTH**

**WE DO NOT BEG FOR BREAD**
**WE DEMAND THE BAKERY**

# Where will the money come from? Tax the Rich!

The Tories and Labour tell us they can't afford to spend money on the NHS or education. They say we have to 'tighten our belts' and accept poverty wages and unemployment to make Britain `competitive'. They are liars. The bosses and their hangers on have millions in assets and bank accounts. To fund a programme for social change the SLP will implement a steeply progressive tax system.

- **Tax the rich, not the poor.**
- **Abolish VAT and all indirect taxes.**
- **For a steeply progressive income tax - high rates for the rich not for the better paid workers**
- **For a steeply progressive wealth tax on the bosses property, land etc**

# Free education for all

Everyone should have the right to a free, decent education, no matter what age. The Tory and Labour councils have done nothing but cut back on education. Our schools are rundown and badly funded while Tony Blair and Harriet Harman send their kids to the best selective schools. The introduction of the loan system and now tuition fees for university students is yet another attempt to exclude working class students from the right to education.

The bosses tell us they can't afford to fund schools properly, and yet they throw millions into private schools for the rich like Eton and Harrow.

**We fight for:**

- **No course or school or college closuresA fully funded free state education system run under the control of teachers students ancillary workers, parents, the community and labour movemnt**
- **Open the schools and colleges for adult education, recreational& community use**
- **An end to the privileges of the rich - abolish all public schools.**
- **Abolish state funding for religious schools**
- **Abolition of all religious practices in state schools.**
- **A living grant for all students at the level of the minimum wage.**




# Defend and extend the NHS

The Tories are trying to introduce the 'market into the NHS. They want to create a two tier health system - where those than can pay get the best treatment.

**Cardiff SLP is committed to:**

- **Stop all closures of hospitals, wards and clinics.**
- **Support for the fight to keep the CRI.**
- **A free NHS available at the time of need and free of all charges Including prescriptions, dental care etc. Nationalise the drug companies, take-over the private hospitals.**
- **An end to NHS waiting lists.**
- **The abolition of all private health care.**

# A Secure future for all

The Tories have robbed the state pension scheme. earnings related pensions are a thing of the past. Now they want to force us into private pension schemes. And New Labour says the same! Remember Robert Maxwell who plundered workers pensions for private gain. Why should workers be forced to rely on the roller coaster of the stock market to give them a decent pension.

**Cardiff SLP campaigns for the:**

- **Nationalisation of all pension schemes and the introduction of a single state scheme under trade union control.**
- **Fix pensions at full working wages**
- **Allow voluntary retirement at 55.**

# Stop the war against youth

Youth are being targeted by both the Tories and Labour as a "problem". Both parties want to introduce repressive laws that deny youth their basic democratic rights.

The SLP will take up the struggle for youth rights:

- votes at 16.
- **Restore rights to benefits for 16-18 year olds.**
- **Repeal the CJA; stop bans on raves and festivals.**
- **Decriminalise the use of drugs; for a massive campaign of education amongst the youth giving full**
- **information about the effects of drugs.**

# Restore workers rights

The SLP stands in solidarity with workers in struggle against the bosses. We support the actions of the Liverpool dockers who have been on strike for over a year to defend jobs on the Liverpool docks. We support the actions of workers at Glacier in Glasgow who occupied their engineering plant when the bosses threatened to sack the workers. Their determination paid off - the bosses caved in and reinstated the workforce. The SLP think this is the best way workers can defend their jobs and conditions.

**We will:**

- **Guarantee recognition of trade unions.**
- **Abolish the Anti-trade union laws - for the right for workers to strike and picket, including solidarity and secondary actions.**
- **Support all strikes and occupations to fight job losses and cuts.**

# Racism

Britain is a racist country. Black people suffer discrimination in housing, education, jobs and pay. At the same time they suffer harassment and violence from the police. The police , including the South Wales force, are racist to the core. In London we see in the last two years the murdered two black men, Brian Douglas and Wayne Douglas. Locally the jailing of the "Cardiff 3" for a murder they did not commit and the death of Mark Harris from Butetown - killed in a Bristol police cell.

The Cardiff SLP will fight racism on all fronts:

- **Bring the killers of Brian Douglas, Wayne Douglas and Mike Harris to justice**
- **End discrimination in housing, education, jobs and pay.**
- **Stop all deportations. Repeal the Asylum laws**
- **Abolish all immigration controls.**
- **For the right of black defence against racist violence.**

# Women's Equality

Despite making up 50% of the workforce in Britain, the majority of women are in part-time low paid work. Women still take most of the burden of child care and are denied equal access to all aspects of life because of this.

**The SLP will fight sexism on all fronts:**

- **Equal pay for equal work.**
- **Maternity leave on full pay up to 12 months to be taken by either parent**
- **Free 24 hour child care, for a massive extension of high quality state provided crèches and nurseries.**
- **Free abortion on demand**



# For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Rights

Lesbian . Gay and Bisexual people suffer discrimination under the law and at work. Other forms of discrimination are also prevalent in everyday life - including homophobic violence.

**The SLP fights for:**

- **For equality before the law including equal ages of consent, custody of children, work and housing.**
- **Abolish Section 28 of the Local Government Act which restricts education about gay sexuality.**

# Environment

In their thirst for a quick buck, the bosses threaten the very existence of our planet forests are destroyed, rivers, coastlines and seas polluted with every day waste and the large disasters such as the "Sea Empress". Chemicals poured into the atmosphere and onto the land. Most of the pollution goes unchecked and without our knowledge. The SLP recognises that the only way to ensure that we protect our environment is to take production into the hands of the majority so that we can plan production with a view to the future of our planet.

**The SLP demands**

**Public inquires based on workers and community representatives into unsafe factories, polluting industries and projects that threaten the environment.**

**Closure of dangerous plants and the re-employment of the workforce by the state in like work with full rates of pay.**

# Democracy

Our rulers love to spout about the marvels of the "Westminster model" of democracy. In fact we live a country with one of the most limited democracies in Europe. The Monarch and the hereditary aristocrats in the House of Lords still have a powerful role in deciding our laws. Britain's "first past the post' system of election scandalously discriminates against small parties. The Judges who are drawn almost exclusively from ruling class families have enormous powers to "create"

new case law are appointed by the Lord Chancellor and have little sympathy for the workers and their organisations.

**The SLP will:**

- **Abolish the the Monarchy and the House of Lords**
- **introduce proportional representation in elections by party list**
- **Election all judges & similar public officials all subject to recall.**

# Local Democracy

The Tories have systematically undermined local democracy. The GLC and other metropolitan councils have been abolished. Local authorities have been attacked and local councillors removed if they defended public services. Their funding has been slashed. Hospitals, Colleges and other public bodies are now run by unelected boards, "Quangoes". committed to a "business ethos". Many Schools and some council estates have been removed from local authority control.

**We will**

- **Restore the grants withheld by the Tories since 1979. Abolish the council tax and replace it with a steeply progressive local income tax and wealth tax.**
- **Cancel the interest charges paid to the banks by local councils. Release ail money from council house sales, stop selling council houses and start building them.**
- **Abolish all quangoes and replace them by elected bodies accountable to the community, the workers and users.**

# Self determination for Wales & Scotland

We believe the people of Wales and Scotland have the right to decide their own future, whether they want independence or autonomy within the Britain. The best way to remain a united working class is to remove any fear that the Welsh and Scottish people will be denied national democratic rights under an SLP government.

- **For a sovereign Scottish Assembly with the right to decide Its relationship with the UK.**
- **For a multi-choice referendum in Wales to determine our views on this question.**
- **For a united socialist Britain.**

# Internationalism

Capitalism is a system that exploits people all over the world. Countries like Britain have dominated the world economy and exploited its resources for centuries. When their domination is threatened, as during the Gulf War for oil, they do not hesitate to use massive military force to smash resistance to their continued power. The SLP stands in solidarity with workers and peasants across the globe fighting imperialist domination.

**The SLP fights for:**

- **Cancellation of the `third world' debt**
- **Withdrawal of British troops from overseas " "**
  **Not a penny, not a person for this system, we will vote against all so called defence spending.**
- **Defence of Cuba against US Imperialism**

# Ireland

Today the Tories refuse to allow the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future free from British interference. Today in the North of Ireland there is an army of occupation, the British army which is defending the existence of a sectarian state that oppresses the nationalist community. The SLP stands with the Irish fighting British Imperialism.

- **Immediate withdrawal of all British Troops**
- **Release all republican prisoners**
- **No exclusion of Sinn Fein from peace talks**
- **Repeal the PTA and all other repressive legislation.**
- **Dissolve the RUC**
- **Self determination for the Irish people as a whole**

# Stop State Repression

The Tories have spent the last 18 years giving more power to the repressive state apparatus. They suggest this is necessary to tight crime. In reality greater police powers have been used to smash our picket lines, evict families, attack workers demonstrations.

**The SLP will:**

- **Withdraw CS gas, batons, riot gear and firearms from the police**
- **Abolish the CIA and police and criminal evidence act**
- **Abolish MI5, M16 and all secret intelligence units**

# For a Socialist United states of Europe

Across Europe workers are fighting back against attempts by the bosses to make us pay for their single currency and European market. The SLP supports these struggles. But we do not line up with the little Englanders, the "Euro Skeptics", who want to defend British "sovereignty". Inside Europe or outside of it the workers will continue to be exploited by capitalism. We have another solution to the mass unemployment of the bosses Europe or a Britain outside the EU. We fight to build a **Socialist United States of Europe .** Tear up the Maastricht Treaty - reject the capitalists austerity drive against European workers

- **No to Import controls and protectionist measures**
- **No to fortress Europe and its attacks on immigrants and political refugees.**
- **Down with the Council of Ministers and the bureaucrats' European Commission.**
- **For a workers government in a Socialist United States of Europe.**
- **Solidarity with workers in struggle across Europe**



# Cardiff Socialist Labour's answer to the crisis

We are fighting this election to give a voice to those workers who are sickened by the betrayals of New Labour. Many workers have had enough of politicians and their promises. The SLP is not just another party that spouts off, but delivers nothing. We are party that believes in action. Change will only come about if we get organised. That is why our members are active in the trade unions fighting for action to defend jobs and wages, active in campaigns against racism, active in the fight against the Job Seekers allowance.

That is why our MP, if elected, will receive the average workers' wage, and donate the rest of an Maps state salary to the workers movement to further its struggle. Distribution based on a democratic method to be agreed by the Cardiff SLP.

Workers make everything. There are millions of us, without our work nothing would function - from the bus and train to the supermarkets. And yet the bosses control our lives. We can't change anything unless we take control of our work and of our society.

The SLP thinks working people are a force capable of running society. We stand for workers control at every level of society from the office, factory and school to the fight for a workers government. In this way, through workers councils, that workers themselves could control and plan production through the fullest workers democracy.

# Revolution

In the fight to achieve all these demands we can expect the Tories, the bosses and New Labour to stand in our way. The bosses will use the courts, the police and the armed services to defend their interests. The experience of every major struggle by workers from the Miners in 1984/5 to the Liverpool dockers today has shown that the bosses will mobilise the state forces to smash workers resistance.

The SLP does not believe that we can take over and reform parliament, the police, the army -the capitalist state - to act in the interests of working class people. That is because real power lies outside parliament with big business who decide what is produced and by whom. It lies

with unelected judges who make the laws up as they go along and the police and army to enforce their laws and defend the bosses state.

Any SLP government that tries to take away the wealth of the bosses will meet with violent resistance from this unelected state. In Chile in the 1970s a left government came to power that believed it could use parliament to shift power to the workers. Salvador Allende's government was destroyed by the army and tens of thousands of workers were killed, imprisoned and tortured under the brutal Pinochet dictatorship. We do not intend to repeat that mistake.

**The Socialist Transformation of society will require:**

- **that we, the workers, will need to take power.**
- **the smashing of capitalism and the state machine on which it rests - the police, courts, judges and the armed forces..**
- **the bosses state be replaced with a genuine democratic worker' state. Where elected delegates are paid the same as the people they represent.**
- **The bosses will fight to preserve their corrupt, wasteful degrading system, we will need to defend our workers state, including armed defence against their force and violence.**

**We need a Party committed to bringing about the transformation of society -**

# HELP BUILD THAT PARTY

# JOIN THE

# S.L.P.

**SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY**
**President: Frank Cave Vice-President: Patrick Sikorski**
**General Secretary: Arthur Scargill**

**9 Victoria Road, Barnsley, S70 2BB**
**Tel/Fax: 01226 770957**

AS/1

8th April 1997

Mr P Ashley,
Rear Flat,
63 Whitchurch Road,
Gabalfa,
Cardiff,
CF4 3JP.

Dear Pete Ashley,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 28th March 1997 together with the enclosed "Election Statement" which is being circulated by the Cardiff SLP Branch.

I pointed out to you at the meeting in Newport on Wednesday night that this Election Statement is in conflict with the Party's Constitution, a Constitution which all members have agreed to abide by. I would refer you to the following clauses of the Constitution;

1. Clause II(4) - Membership

Clause II(4) states "Individuals and organisations other than bona fide trade unions which have their own programme, principles and policies, distinctive and separate propaganda, or which are engaged in the promotion of policies in opposition to those of the Party shall be ineligible for affiliation to the Party."

2. Clause III(2) - Conditions of Membership

Clause III(2) states "Constituency and Local Parties must;

(a) accept the Constitution and Rules of the Party;
(b) accept the programme, principles and policies of the Party."

3. Clause III(3) - Conditions of Membership

Clause III(3) reiterates this clause in respect of individual members.

Clause III(3) states "Individual members must:
(a) accept the Constitution and Rules of the Party;
(b) accept the programme, principles and policies of the Party."

Your "Election Statement" states "Our third aim is a dual one of entering into discussion with other SLP members around the programme the SLP should have and to convince members and supporters of other socialist and progressive organisations and struggles that SLP is the way forward".

The Party has adopted a programme which is included in its Manifesto. To suggest that one of your aims is to enter into discussions with other SLP members around the programme the SLP should have is a complete violation of the Party's Constitution.

Your "Election Statement" states that "not all of the statement is national policy, some of the issues have yet to be fully discussed both locally and Britain wide", this point in itself makes the statement ineligible because it contravenes Clause III(2) and (3).

Your "Statement" calls for a 30 hour working week with no loss of pay, a statement which is at variance with the Party's policy adopted at its Congress on 1st May 1996 which called for a four day working week. There is a fundamental difference between a 30 hour week which could be spread over seven days and a four day week.

You say "Nationalise all companies declaring workers redundant and those that refuse to pay the minimum wage" and "nationalise all the banks and major industries under workers control - without compensation". This again is in contravention of the Party's Constitution which calls for public/common/social ownership and not nationalisation.

You call for the nationalisation of all pension schemes which again is in contravention with Clause IV(8). The Party wants to see Occupational Pension Schemes controlled by employees in line with Clauses IV(4) and (7).

You call for the abolition of all immigration controls when you know full well that the Party's Congress took a difficult decision on this matter after a full and democratic debate. Your Election Statement calls for proportional representation in elections by party list. This is not the position of the Party which is in support of proportional representation but has not determined the specific form of proportional representation it would like to see. As an advocate of proportional representation for over 40 years I have my own thoughts on the type of system for the British people but until and unless the Party takes a decision on this matter. I accept the Party's decision.

Your statement calling for a sovereign Scottish Assembly is not in line with the Party's policy which calls for the Scottish and Wales people to determine their own policy, it is wrong for you to step outside the Party's policy. Under your "Internationalism" section you state you "will vote against all so called defence spending" when you know that the Party's policy is for a reduction of two thirds in defence expenditure plus the cancellation of the Trident Nuclear Missile programme and of course unilateral nuclear disarmament.

I am deeply concerned at your "Statement" which calls "For a Socialist United states of Europe" and opposes import controls. This is completely against Party policy.

The policy on Europe was fully thrashed out by a Commission to which all those who wished to participate did so and our position determined was instructed by Congress.

We are opposed to the European Union and call for Britain's withdrawal, the Party we will not allow any local party, CSLP or affiliated union to support the European Union when it is fundamentally against our policy.

I ask both your candidate, yourself and the Cardiff Branch to withdraw this "Election Statement" and campaign in line with the Party's Election Manifesto, the Party's policy and above all the Party's Constitution.

I await your reply.

Yours fraternally,

A. Scargill
General Secretary

copy to - Frank Cave
Pat Sikorski

# A reply to Arthur Scargill

# Why we need a revolutionary programme

From Pete Ashley, Cardiff Socialist Labour Party
To: Arthur Scargill

*27th October 1997*

Dear Arthur Scargill,

This is a reply to your letter to me dated 8th April 1997 (enclosed).

I have delayed in replying to you but now feel that a letter replying to your political attacks on myself and Cardiff branch is important, particularly given the developments in the Party since the General Election. I wish to make clear to begin with that the following are my own personal views and do not necessarily reflect those of the branch.

Firstly, on the constitution of the SLP. You state in your letter that Cardiff branch were in conflict with the constitution in producing our own election statement, a constitution "which all members have agreed to abide by". In fact, as you well know, but dishonestly never state publicly, the membership have never had a chance to discuss let alone vote on the constitution, it was imposed on us bureaucratically. Its whole legitimacy is therefore open to challenge.

My branch produced our own Election Statement as a response to the total lack of debate allowed in the Party on the political programme we should fight on nationally. Calls for a national meeting of the membership to discuss this were ignored by the NEC. In our campaign we were honest in stating that the policies were those of Cardiff SLP, and therefore not necessarily the same as the Party nationally. We even sent you a copy making this clear. At the time of publication there was no national manifesto to sell anyway, this was not received till several weeks later.

On the particular political points you deem as "unconstitutional". It is no coincidence that these are some of the policies which pose the methods of struggle we need to overthrow capitalism and which point the way towards socialism i.e.. they are revolutionary in essence. They go beyond the left reformism of our national manifesto. For example, we stood for the nationalisation of the banks and major industries under workers' control - without compensation, not the vague call for public/common/social ownership, which can only mean managing capitalism a little more in workers' interests, and has nothing to do with real socialism.

It has been shown many times that it is not enough to simply nationalise an industry, such as happened with the NCB and the coal industry. This was merely a necessary device by government to bolster production in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, as part of a state capitalise approach to the whole economy. Although the pits were taken out of the hands of the hated mine owners (who were massively compensated), the miners themselves had no direct say over pay and conditions or over how "their" pits were managed i.e. nothing really changed. It is little wonder therefore that the call for nationalisation alone has little resonance amongst workers.

Instead of building illusions in capitalism, we should be arguing for workers' control of industry, through the building of workers' councils. They would represent all workers in a workplace and begin to take control over hiring and firing, speed of work, working conditions etc. They would begin to challenge the right of the managers to manage and start to point the way forward to the building of real workers power and towards the goal of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Next, you state that the Party took a "difficult decision" in supporting immigration controls, (does this mean you disagreed?) which is a scandalous position for any socialist organisation to take. Like many other members and branches, we were not prepared to campaign on this racist policy, hence our opposition in the election statement. There is no doubt that many black members left the SLP, and the Party found it difficult to recruit black people due this policy.

On the question of Devolution, you state that "it is up to the people of Wales and Scotland to determine their own policy". However, this doesn't seem to extend to Party members since you bureaucratically stopped the Wales region holding our conference to debate and decide our campaigning position. Not only that you are trying to prevent us from holding a Regional Executive meeting, which is against your own constitution. We are told that the NEC is to "investigate the situation in Wales", without any explanation as to what this involves, as a result of all this we were left with the ridiculous situation of having no Party position on the Welsh Assembly during the Referendum campaign. This is a complete shambles.

Your other challenges to our election statement were on Europe and Internationalism. As a revolutionary socialist I don't support any spending on defence of "our country". Such spending only serves to defend British capitalism and its profits and to strengthen nationalism. Instead we should be arguing that money spent on defence is used instead to meet the needs of workers not on the army that was used against the striking miners in 1984-85, that to this day occupies the six counties in Ireland to prop up British rule and a sectarian state and that is used in British imperialism's wars in the Gulf etc., against our foreign brothers and sisters. If defence of the working class is required then workers themselves should be organised, trained and armed under the control of the workers' movement. But of course the likely enemy that the workers will need to defend themselves against is the ruling class and its existing armed forces. That is why we should oppose any defence spending on their armed forces.

On the key question of Europe, the current position of withdrawal from the EU again takes the Party down a narrow, nationalist path. Talk of defending "British industry" ignores the obvious fact that it isn't and never has been "our" industry, it has always been owned and controlled by the capitalists. Workers are no better off in a capitalist Britain than they are in a capitalist Europe, they are exploited in both. Socialists should therefore be neutral on membership of the EU. Instead, we should concentrate on working with organisations across Europe to build a mass campaign to fight against the austerity attacks required by the Maastricht Treaty under the slogan - single currency, but not at our expense. This is already happening, for example the recent Euromarch, and our Party should be actively involved in these struggles.

As with immigration controls I am totally opposed to import controls, which once again pander to nationalism. Instead, I believe any socialist must be for full freedom of movement for all workers across Europe. Your declared support for such controls is another example of trying to impose an updated version of "The British Road to Socialism" on the Party, hence the purely national solutions. In contrast, as an internationalist, I fully support the slogan for a "United Socialist States of Europe", as part of a world federation of socialist states.

I am opposed to the building of socialism in one country, which many of SLP policies imply. We only have to look to the collapse of the former Soviet Union and other Stalinist states, and to the current difficulties in the remaining ones, e.g.. China and Cuba, to see that this approach doesn't work. The lesson from these debacles is that we need international

revolution. Only by fighting to spread the revolution internationally right from the beginning can any workers' state(s) hope to survive against the inevitable onslaughts of capitalism.

As a branch, we felt it was our duty to explain in our election material that the policies that the SLP stand for, many of which any socialist can easily support, cannot be brought about by reforms through Parliament i.e.. we did not sow any illusions in bourgeois democracy. As revolutionaries we believe that we had to be honest and state that capitalism cannot be reformed, it has to be smashed through a workers' revolution and that we need a workers' state to achieve power. This is all clearly stated in the last section of our Election Statement, yet you chose not to comment on this, why not?

As you know, Cardiff branch did not bow to your threats and continued to campaign with our statement throughout the election. Far from reducing our vote, our candidate, Terry Burns, received the second highest vote of any SLP candidate in the election (2,230 votes). There is no doubt that fighting the election on policies we were committed to made for an effective and lively election campaign.

My other main reason for replying to your letter now is to give you my concerns as to what has happened in the Party since the Election, concerns which I know are shared by many other members. I strongly believe that the Party has degenerated both politically and organisationally since May. Rather than turning outwards to build on the support gained in the election, the leadership has instead focused on continuing its attacks on members' rights.

We have witnessed a continuation of the voiding i.e.. expulsion of comrades, with no opportunity to put their case or appeal for re-instatement. Members campaigning for democracy in the Party, including myself, were threatened with "being dealt with accordingly" when we attended a meeting in London in June. It seems that it is "unconstitutional" to even meet with other members of the Party! I believe these are the actions of the leaders of a Stalinist sect, not a healthy democratic workers' organisation. The effect of your bureaucratic manoeuvres has been to spread disillusionment throughout the Party. This is particularly true in London where our Party has virtually collapsed with most branches inactive. The same is true in the South West, where members have left the Party in droves.

Another source of dissatisfaction is our paper. Firstly, it is difficult to organise around a paper that doesn't come out on any sort of regular basis, we never seem to know when we will receive the next issue. More importantly, our paper is a travesty of the open, lively and campaigning publication needed to help build the Party. There is no debate allowed, not even a letters page, and the paper is seen by members as dull and therefore difficult to sell. I know we are stretched as an organisation to produce a regular paper, but if it was more attractive then more members would contribute to it and we could sell it more enthusiastically than at present.

Even worse than this have been some of the politics in the paper recently. I refer in particular to the article on China and Tiananmen Square in Issue Number 8. The branch found this piece so offensive that, as you know, we agreed unanimously not to sell it as a matter of principle. The lies in that article show the increasingly Stalinist direction that the SLP is taking. We have asked for the right to publish a reply but no doubt this will be ignored as usual.

Another criticism, shared by comrades in the branches, is the lack of political leadership from the NEC. We are left to work in isolation as branches, or ridiculously small CSLPs, with no guidance or help on what our priorities should be. In fact, my branch has not received a single NEC report this year, partly due to the total incompetence of our NEC member Dave Proctor. There seems little point in sending any resolutions to the NEC as we don't get told when it is meeting or what it is discussing. When we have sent resolutions in the past you didn't even have the courtesy to let us know if they were even discussed. Party Notes seem to have disappeared completely. Overall it feels like the Party is directionless.

To be honest, I believe that many of the problems we are experiencing our down to your particular methods of Party building. No political opposition is tolerated, there is a total lack of genuine democracy and we are perceived ever more as "Arthur's Party". This has stopped many good socialists I know from joining the SLP, they know what is going on and quite understandably don't want to get involved. Let's be honest, the SLP is not an attractive proposition to join and hasn't been for some time, even you have stopped talking about how fast we are growing.

You may wonder why I am still a member of your Party. When I joined the SLP, about a year ago, I believed that it was an opportunity to build a new kind of Party in Britain, a mass workers' party, in which socialists could come together to democratically debate what political programme it should stand on. Well, I haven't given up on the SLP just yet. I believe our conference will be the key moment to see if our Party has any future. I intend to be there and to fight for the kind of politics I have put forward in this letter. Without a fundamental change in its political direction I believe the SLP will wither into an inconsequential Stalinist sect and an excellent political initiative will have been wasted.

To conclude, in your speeches at public meetings you often talk of how the SLP believes in a "revolutionary change in society", but this is just left talk. The political points of disagreement you raised with Cardiff's Election Statement are just further evidence of this. Your own politics and those of the leadership as whole are just left reformism, i.e.. a return to Labour Party of the "good old days", the nationalised command economy and protectionist measures. These politics can only fail, again, even if you ever get any support for them. Instead of these tired old ideas I believe we need to build a fighting, revolutionary party, this is the only way we will ever achieve genuine workers' power.

This letter is written in the spirit of debate and I hope is replied to in a similar manner.

Yours fraternally,

Pete Ashley

Secretary, Cardiff branch - personal capacity
President, Cardiff North CSLP - ditto