

BULLETIN

SPECIAL

THE INFORMA- TION ALL DELEGATES NEED

WHO IS JOHN ARCHER?

WHO IS BETTY HAMILTON?

THE FULL AND UNALTERED TEXT OF JOHN ARCHER'S LETTER TO HIS SON,
BOB ARCHER.

A LETTER ON THE SUBJECT OF HONEST DISCUSSION, ADDRESSED TO THE
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WORKERS' REVOLUTIONARY PARTY.

PRODUCED FOR THE FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE WORKERS'
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY BY THE BULLETIN GROUP, DECEMBER 1974.

WHO IS JOHN ARCHER?

Since it seems that I have got to - let me show you who John Archer is.

I joined the Trotskyist movement just over forty years ago. Being slandered and witch-hunted is, therefore, nothing new. The Labour Party expelled me, and got me hounded out of a full-time job in the Labour movement. Now I earn my living in higher education, like Comrade Slaughter or, of course, Comrade Bob Archer.

The set-up is always the same. In every witch-hunt, what they say about you is intended to divert attention from your politics. Every comrade who has been attacked in his union knows. They are afraid of you and want to shut you up, so the Right-Wing confuse the members by saying that you have broken some rule or had contact with someone.

There is nothing new, either, in having lying leaflets put out about me, though this is the first time people claiming to be Trotskyists have done it. It was always the Stalinists before. Who else but the Stalinists showed someone how to cut documents about and piece bits together to distort them? Who was it that junked the awkward parts of the minutes of Lenin's Central Committee? Read my letter. A copy is attached. Read the whole of it and don't rely just on bits stuck together.

Healy knows perfectly well that all through my political life I have fought implacably against the politics expressed by the I.S. and the I.M.G. To say now that I am politically associated with them is like saying that Trotsky was politically associated with the Social Democrats or the Fascists. Trotsky called it an unprincipled amalgam.

Supposing that I had been involved politically with the enemies of Trotskyism, how does Healy explain away his contacts with me over the years? He has come to my house and accepted my money. We have discussed the problems of the movement and exchanged letters. He was once good enough to say that he never came to see me without going away with a new idea. Only a few months ago he welcomed me to the centre, as Sheila Torrance can bear out, because she was there, and opened the Party's archives to me. So why isn't he expelled for being in contact with me?

And what will happen to Cyril Smith? Only a fortnight ago he telephoned to ask me to do some notes for the third volume of Trotsky on Britain - which, as he knows, I helped Clinton to provide when he had satisfied me that the job was being done properly and not by amateurs.

About "outside contacts" - get Healy to tell about his, when he was in a minority in the Workers' International League. He chose some fine ones. One of them was John Lawrence, who became a leading Pablo-ite and then an anarchist. Then there was John Goffe, who earns his living as an efficiency expert. We threw these people out of the British Section of the Fourth International.

Slandering me may come in handy, when he needs to divert your minds from the election results, but the slanders themselves are so flimsy that it is impossible to believe that Healy believes them himself. One wonders which incompetent hack thought them up. They are as stupid as the tale about the Hotel Bristol, in the first Moscow Trial, where the G.P.U. got someone to confess that he had met Trotsky's son, in Copenhagen, in 1932, when it was proved that Trotsky's son was in Berlin all the time, and the hotel had been burned down in 1917.

Healy might tell you about the fight we had against Brian Behan in 1960. Behan challenged Healy to say whether, if the conference voted him into a minority, he would hand over the party press to the majority. The odd twist of history is that, back then in 1960, Healy was in his own way defending the ideas which Thornett now holds, while today Healy is defending the ideas which he was then attacking in Behan.

Healy said: of course, he would not hand over the press to the majority; great political questions are above organisational discipline. That is what Healy said. If this is your first big fight inside the movement, you may well be shocked.

Being shocked does no harm, if you then ask what the crisis in the Party is really about. Comrades will not get the answer if they do not take the trouble to read the documents of the Opposition. You will not understand if you read only the documents against the Opposition, the real one.

The crisis in the Party is due to the healthy reaction, responding to the rising fighting spirit in the working class, against this sectarian degeneration, the architects of the disaster in the elections, but not of that alone. The official line consists of a series of mistakes. These are not new mistakes. They can be identified. They are the same hoary old sectarian tendencies that helped Hitler into power in Germany, and have greatly damaged our movement in Britain in the past. In the W.R.P., they are a rough copy, somewhat disguised, of the policies followed by the Communist Party of Great Britain, between 1929 and 1934, where Healy was getting his early training.

Tom Kemp knows perfectly well all about this. Let him speak up! Where is Geoff. Pilling? Has he got lost again somewhere? He should be able to tell you all about the "Third Period" of Stalinism. Why doesn't the Party reprint the great historical writings by M. Woodhouse and Brian Pearce. Then everyone could learn about sectarianism, and what it can do to destroy a party.

Trotsky wrote: "Sectarians always operate a regime of terror in their own organisations". It is quite rational to find the methods of Stalinism reproduced in this Conference. You cannot have a democratic life in a party led by sectarians. Obviously; the leaders have all wisdom in their heads to start with, and do not need to learn from the workers.

How are such people going to lead workers in struggle? I ask this question because, in 1961, I smashed the Stalinists' faction in the National Union of Teachers in London, even with Healy and Banda jogging my elbow all the time. I helped to organise the first unofficial marches and strikes of the London teachers. Thanks to their sectarianism and ignorance, the whole benefit of this work was enjoyed by the I.S. We got nothing out of it. But Healy and Banda gained something. They confused me, and silenced a critic of their incipient sectarianism.

If my letter can be cut about and garbled, and nobody protests; if Thornett can be slandered, without evidence, trial or defence, then the bureaucratic faction that controls the party apparatus can do the same to any other member. What good does it do the party, that you should be defenceless before the party apparatus, Where will they lead you next? What redress will you have? These methods not only disgrace you, they endanger you. Is this what you joined the party for? What hope is there that people who behave like this can ever lead a genuine struggle?

Before you swallow what you are told about Thornett, don't forget the Moscow Trials. Members of the Communist Party believed what the party hacks told them. For instance, they believed that Healy and I, among others, were Fascists! They accepted a few plausible lies, and then tried to chase us off the streets (in which, let us agree, they did not succeed!) But when the truth all came out in 1956 - were there some red faces? Of course, by that time, twenty million people had lost their lives in the world war for which the trials were a preparation. The Old Bolsheviks had been in their graves for more than two decades. A lot of people were very sorry - when it was too late. It is no good being sorry afterwards. History always presents the bill sooner or later.

What about this letter of mine to my son? Have you read it IN FULL? If you have not, you should do so. It is attached. You will see, when you get past past the trimming of it, that there is not an ounce of evidence in it of contact with anyone. It is totally concerned with political ideas. Let Healy make what he can of it!

My letter mentions the name of Thornett in one paragraph, and the name of Blick in another, some twenty lines away. The two passages have no connection with each other. They are evidence of nothing. I have never spoken to Thornett in my life. I have only seen him once, and that was from the audience at a public meeting where he was one of the main speakers. My letter shows only that I have thought of Thornett and of Blick. What a crime! Bring in the thought-police! Did you join this party to have your thoughts policed?

So don't fall for the old dodge of the Right-Wing, copied by Healy and his apparatus. The accusations based on my letter are nothing but a smoke-screen to frustrate a discussion of the political questions. In any case, the accusations do not stand up. My letter is not evidence of any of the things it is supposed to prove.

Is this really the best that the apparatus can produce. It is all so like what we expect from the Right Wing or the Stalinists. Genuine Bolsheviks will laugh it out of the Conference.

All I can do is to warn all who read this against people who try to avoid fighting out the great political differences which face the Party, and who defend their sectarianism by Stalinist methods. Do not take for granted what I or anyone else tells you. See that you get the documents of the Opposition, and read them as well as Healy's documents.

Get in touch with us for discussion. You will find that we represent the traditional tendency of British Trotskyism, which the present leaders have revised. Why is Healy so afraid that you might so much as talk to us?

Demand a full and open debate, based on the documents of both sides!

Demand that the history of the movement be written for all to see!

Down with Sectarianism! Down with Stalinist Methods!

Build the Party the way Trotsky taught us! Turn the Party towards the Labour Party and the Trade Unions! Get after the reformists where they are!

Comrades! We shall meet again. A new stage in the history of our struggle for Trotskyism is opening.

WHO IS BETTY HAMILTON?

Readers of "Bulletin No. 4", issued in June 1974, will have seen my full statement on the act of hooliganism, by which I was excluded from a London members' aggregate meeting of the W.R.P. in the previous month.

This Bulletin described the background of this shameful and scandalous incident, together with my record in the Trotskyist movement. The present note is merely to provide a summary for those who, for whatever reason, may not have seen the original "Bulletin No. 4".

I came to Britain in 1929, already an old member of the Communist Parties of Switzerland and of France, and a supporter of the Trotskyist Opposition. I did not join the British Communist Party, because I believed Lenin's appreciation of the tasks of the Communists in Britain to be correct, and, therefore, joined the Labour Party. After some years of work in isolation, I discovered the British Trotskyists, and joined the Labour Party "entrism" "Militant Group" in 1936, bringing in several engineering shop stewards whom I had won to Trotskyism.

In 1938 a number of us split from the "Militant Group" to form the Workers' International League, which tried until 1941 to continue the "entry" tactic. In 1940 I advocated that it should make a "turn" to industry. For this, the majority of the W.I.L., including Comrade Healy, expelled me on the absurd

pretext that I had formed a faction with the American ultra-left Oehler!

During the war, there was little or no possibility of active work in the Labour Party, but I remained opposed to those who believed that "it is necessary to come out as an open party or group..."

I worked during the war in a large engineering factory in the Midlands, where I organised several thousand women workers into the General and Municipal Workers' Union, and was a shop steward. Re-admitted to the W.I.L., I worked for it as a full-time organiser for Yorkshire and the Midlands, and was later a member of its Central Committee.

From 1943 onwards, with the effects of the end of the war in view, I agitated in the W.I.L. for a return to the Labour Party, and built a faction on this basis, which became part of the minority in the R.C.P. Comrade Healy, when he was re-admitted to the W.I.L. after being expelled (for "outside contacts" with the I.L.P.) in February 1943, joined this faction.

I was a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party throughout its existence, and on its full-time staff in 1945 and early 1946, continuing to fight, as a member of the minority, for "entrism", until the inevitable collapse of the Party. From then on I worked for many years closely with Comrade Healy, in the "Socialist Fellowship", the Labour Party "entrism" group which we called "The Club", and the Socialist Labour League. In the later 1940's and early 1950's I was engaged in work with colonial revolutionary movements, but did not seek a place in the leadership of our movement in Britain on account of temporary ill-health.

After the split with Pablo, I was on the Central Committee of the "Club", and a founding member of the "International Committee for the Fourth International", the meetings of which I continued to attend, even after formally deasing to be a member, as part of the British representation.

When the S.L.L. broke with the "International Committee", following the counter-revolutionary coup d'etat in Bolivia in August 1971, I told the British leadership that I thought their action was a mistake, and that I claimed the right to reserve my position, as a minority in the League on the question. My husband was ill at the time and my activities were somewhat restricted, with the result that I was not able to struggle for my minority rights; the request for which was evaded.

In 1972 I attended a meeting of the "Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International", as an individual, claiming to represent no one but myself. Healy and Mike Banda were well aware of my action at the time. They continued to visit me afterwards, to discuss with me all the affairs of our movement, to accept my contributions and to treat me in every respect as a full National Member in good standing. They notified me of London aggregates and other meetings, and invited me to attend, which I often did. Mike Banda actually brought to my flat by hand a ticket for the founding meeting of the W.R.P., a function which I attended with grave misgivings about the political correctness of the course being taken, but not at all in the capacity, as Healy has tried to suggest, of a representative of a tendency separate from the S.L.L. or the W.R.P.

During the February 1974 election campaign, I gave Mike Banda a considerable sum of money (considerable, anyway, by my standards), on receiving his undertaking that it would not be used to finance candidates, since I was opposed to the whole policy of intervening in the elections in the way determined by the Party leaders.

It was in May 1974 that Healy arbitrarily deprived me of my right to attend a London aggregate, with threats of physical violence - at the age of 70! For him to pretend that he had just discovered my relations with the "Organising Committee" is a piece of bureaucratic hypocrisy, worthy of our enemies in the Labour bureaucracy whom I have fought for so many years.

For forty-six years I have fought, without ceasing, for the principles of Trotskyism. I have no intention today of giving way to today's sectarians, who will be tomorrow's opportunists!

Study and Discuss the Documents of the Opposition!

Here is, in full and without any alteration, the letter which John Archer wrote to his son, Bob, of which the apparatus is trying to make so much!

December 3, 1974

Dear Bob,,

Clinton and Chappell, with me as consultant, have now produced a set of notes which they have, I believe, now sent to the press. I cannot have made clear my point in my last letter. There was something wrong about it all along. What other name is there but "mis-management" for, first Smith's idea of rushing the whole job through, without allowing time for the notes to be properly worked on, and, secondly, taking you off the work you can do properly and wasting your precious leisure on something you know little about?

What particularly made me think about what was going on was Smith's attempt to use you as the stalking-horse to get me to get him out of the jam that his masters have put him in. I did not know at the time that Clinton had been suspended from the party, when he was the obvious man to be in charge of the work. The key to the whole business was given to me later, though not by Clinton, who has acted with greater loyalty than is deserved.

So much for your phrase about "an atmosphere of gossip". There is an atmosphere all right, but politically a much more sinister one. It is a product of the party crisis. You are involved, and I was to be involved. You may well find some aspects of the present party crisis "extremely distasteful" - this is your first big fight. So don't start, as Trotsky says of Simone Weil, by "pursuing your lips at history". This fight is about great matters and Communist principles; we shall see worse yet, indeed we have already seen worse.

Why did I send you the "fatras" from "New Society"? Did you not recognise what it is? If not, may I elucidate? It is a statement of the theory of "Corporatism". This is an ultra-left position on the bourgeois state, a revision in fact based on the rejection of dialectics, which raises its head periodically on the fringes of the Communist movement. It raised its head in the German "Left" in the 1920's, where I am sure you will find it when you know what to look for. It appears in the "Third Period" in Britain, conjured up by Palme Dutt. Today this "fatras" is the policy of your party, with all the pessimism, defeatism, contempt for reformist workers, put into sophisticated language. Hence the crack about lecturers joining hands with lumpens. We fought this stuff in the 1930's.

As we know, there was a long time when I could not explain politically my hostility to the course of the W.R.P. leadership and the practices which flowed from it. Wretchedly condemned to calling them "adventurers" - which we both well knew to be inadequate - I none the less recognised symptoms, which I believe now that I can characterise politically.

I believe that today and for some time past the W.R.P. has been sliding down into Centrism. This down-sliding, at this stage, takes an ultra-left trend. Hence the co-incidence of views between the W.R.P. on "Corporatism" and the decaying petty bourgeoisie. What happens next, however, will depend on the forces which the crisis will bring to bear on the party; it may well make a lurch to the right.

It was the disastrous results of the elections, following my inability to get any political explanation of the political justification for proclaiming the "Party", which forced me to think. I had seen all that stuff before - even Gale's business about how, even though they did not get many votes, they got a lot of sympathy from Labour voters! Particularly I was moved by the absence of discussion after the election results, which seemed to be passed over as unimportant. What can your financial supporters have thought they were giving their money for? No wonder you had trouble with the fund.

Meanwhile my work on the documents of the history of our movement in the

1930's attracted the notice of a group of workers and scholars, neither so large nor so wealthy as the W.R.P., which is fighting its way towards the politics which I have always regarded as Trotskyist.

This means: organised work in the trade unions, an organised entry into the Labour Party, and the harmonisation of "open work" with entrust work so as not to compromise the latter; a split perspective. It means a programme and platform like that of the "Militant Group" in the years 1936 - 1937, or what we did in Leeds in the 1950's.

It aims at a weekly paper in which militants can have their problems discussed, and our point of view can be put to them (NOT a "Rank and File" paper); it will also produce a theoretical journal, like the old "Labour Review", in which commissioned articles by competent people can be published on the historical and theoretical problems of the movement.

Standing for the continuity of the Trotskyist tradition, this group is being built on the basis of the substantial achievements of the Healy Group and the early years of the S.L.L. It is not a coven of enemies of Healy and, indeed, it protects the traditions of previous Trotskyist organisations against the slanders of people like the "Workers' Fight" group. How else can history be honestly told, but by giving Healy his due?

My attitude to this group, the policies of which are manifestly at variance with what the W.R.P. has been saying and doing, was to try to test whether the W.R.P. could be roused from its euphoria, and whether a discussion could take place within its ranks on the principled questions involved: counter-posing "Third-Period-ism", lightly disguised, to Marxism. If I could help to get the W.R.P. back to where we were in the fight against Behan in 1959, perhaps there would be room for this tendency, including myself, within the ranks of the Party.

History has now falsified this perspective. The apparatus has silenced the opposition within the party, in advance of the Conference. Thornett, whose documents expressed principally the opposition's point of view, is expelled, and pursued with accusations of involvement with the authorities. His supporters, the industrial base of the Party, victorious survivors of a three-weeks' witch-hunt by the bourgeoisie, are expelled with him. The organisation in parts of London and the West of England is liquidated.

Having begun to trace the pressures within the Labour movement already and the sources of these mistakes, we can now pose the question: Why the heat? How is it that, within a few weeks, a discussion of transitional demands in the car industry opens up the whole (and barely studied) history of the movement, and is then sharply truncated by administrative measures? It can only be because great principles are at stake. And I believe that it is a struggle between Centrism and Trotskyism, in which Healy's faction is on the wrong side.

You will not, I hope, fall into the mistake of expecting ready-made angels on one side and devils on the other. You may well attack Blick for his first Bulletin. You would be correct to say that Betty Hamilton should have spotted a long time before what was going on. You may a thousand times say that it has taken me a long time to find my position. Et hoc genus omne. But what are these mistakes compared with a whole ultra-left deviation, buttressed by the destruction of the Party's organisation and the open flouting of its constitution?

So I may well ask you, what do you think is the political basis of the crisis? Precedents will, of course, occur to you - the 15th Congress of the C.P.S.U., the November 1932 Congress of the C.P.G.B., with Groves and Wicks standing outside protesting the persecution of Rakovsky! (Do not let anyone suggest that there is more than a superficial analogy between the W.R.P. and Stalinism; their social basis is different).

There is no question here of "parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus". The mountains are in labour, all right, but it is "For never two such

kingdoms did contend / without much fall of blood; whose guiltless drops / are every one a woe, a sore complaint". ("Henry V.", Act I, Scene 2). There are no mice being born here, but the demiurges of the new Trotskyist Party.

Comradely Greetings!

Dad.

A LETTER ABOUT HONEST DISCUSSION

December 10, 1974

The General Secretary,
Workers' Revolutionary Party,
186a Clapham High Street,
London, S.W.4

Dear Comrade,

In 1967, when you wanted me to address a meeting of members about Peter, which I did, you stated to me that I had not been expelled from the S.L.L., nor had I resigned.

Your records will show that I have regularly contributed to the organisation, by bankers' order, for many years up to the present.

You have in the past invited me to attend the Conferences of the organisation and I have accepted your invitations.

On these grounds, I claim the right to be admitted to the forthcoming conference of the W.R.P.

Since a letter written by me is to be distributed to delegates, forming one of the conference documents, I claim also the right to intervene in the conference.

Will you please confirm that arrangements will be made accordingly, and let me have the necessary details?

Yours fraternally,

John Archer