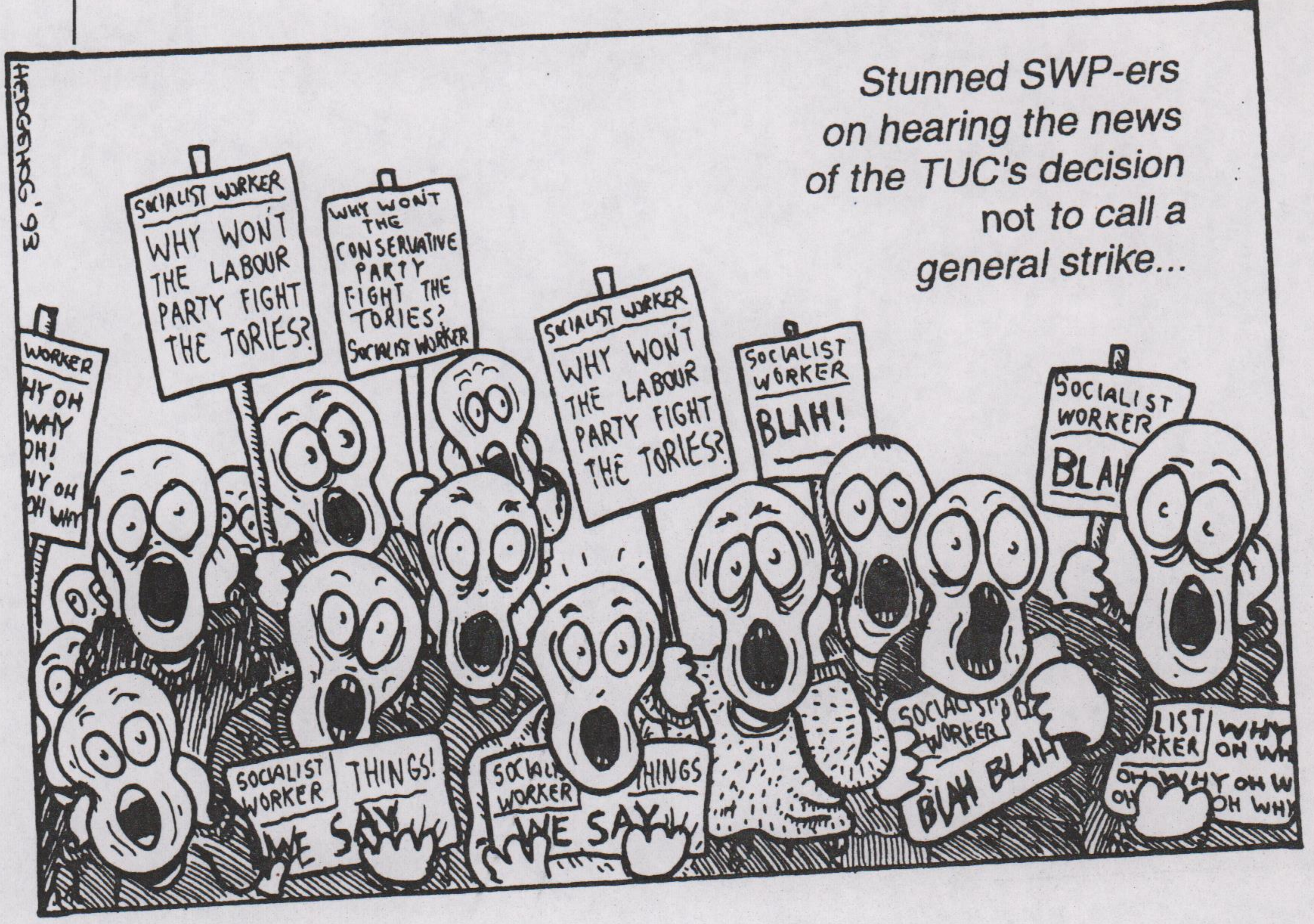


T r o t w a t c h

the reviews



Carry on Recruiting
and
Trotwatch #1

Why You Should Join the Socialists. By Paul Foot. Bookmarks. £1.00.
 Carry on Recruiting! Why the SWP dumped the "downturn" in a "dash for growth". By Trotwatch, AK Distribution, 22 Luton Place, Edinburgh. £2.95.

Whatever else can be said about Paul Foot, he's a good writer. The trouble is that he employs his talent in a bad cause: writing books to recruit people for the SWP, an undemocratic Leninist outfit which goes in for manipulative politics.

The SWP sees the mass of workers as just that - as a mass, capable only of being passive followers. On this analysis, politics becomes a struggle for "the leadership of the working class", between their present leaders - Labour MPs and councillors and trade union bureaucrats - and their would-be leaders, the SWP.

The strategy of the SWP is to discredit the Labour and trade union leaders so that the workers will desert them and follow instead the leaders of the SWP. The tactic is to call on the Labour leaders to "fight" on some issue of concern to workers and, when they don't, to denounce them as weak or bad leaders or as traitors and sell-outs.

All this presupposes that workers do follow the Labour leaders; if they don't, the SWP strategy doesn't make sense. So, at the same time as it denounces the Labour leaders as weaklings and traitors, the SWP calls on workers to follow them and in fact actively carries out pro-Labour propaganda by blaming the problems of capitalism not on capitalism but on the Tories. In effect, the SWP's position is "follow the Labour leaders until you're ready to follow us".

Socialist Standard,
Feb 1994, p28

Carry on Recruiting! Why the Socialist Workers Party dumped the 'downturn' in a 'dash for growth', Trotwatch/AK Press. A useful and informative analysis of the bizarre and often risible antics of the SWP. Whilst not a definitive study, it documents "the miserably cynical behaviour of party apparachiks," using as examples the recent struggles over pit closures and the poll tax, and the experience of the last Labour government in the 1970s, drawing on the party's own publications as evidence. A timely critique of the 'indispensable role' of the SWP, now the largest left-wing party outside Labour. A5 pamphlet, 50 pages, £2.95.*

Freedom 27 Nov 1993, p5

Paul Foot's book reflects this approach though, to be fair, genuine socialists will find little to quarrel with in the first two chapters: "A World in Chaos" and "The Robbers and the Robbed". In fact, the first in particular is a powerful criticism of capitalism. The tragedy is that, to the extent that Foot's book does attract people who want to get rid of capitalism, it will divert them into the dead-end of Leninist politics.

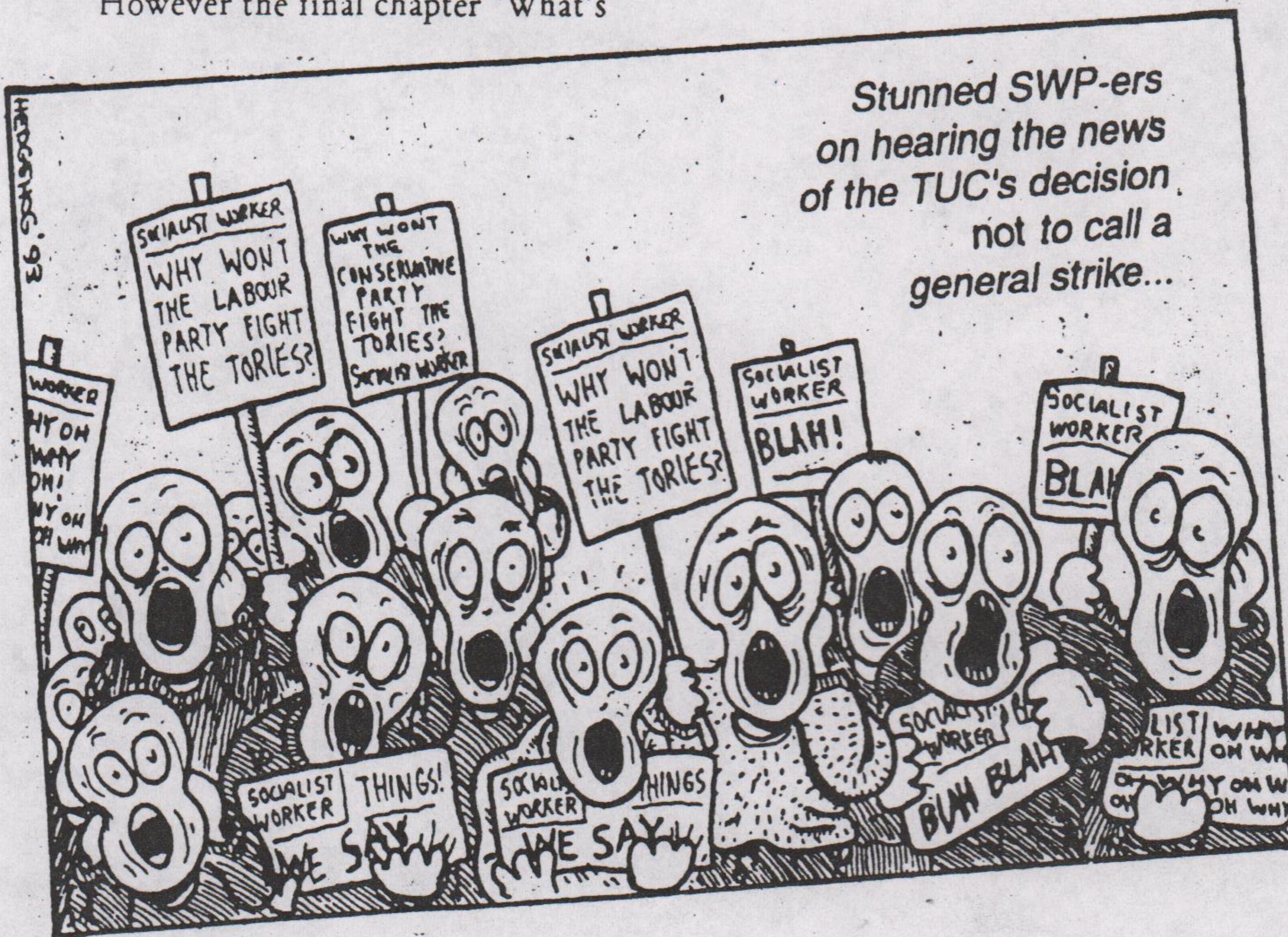
Foot calls on people to join the SWP but he doesn't tell them what they will find if they do. For this anyone impressed by his prose should get hold of the Trotwatch pamphlet. This is mainly devoted to describing the SWP's manipulative politics in relation to the anti-Poll Tax campaign and the protest against the recent (now largely achieved) pit closure programme.

However the final chapter "What's

Wrong with the SWP" documents the undemocratic internal structure of the organization, where a self-perpetuating leadership dominates with the ordinary members playing the passive role of followers:

The party's line is handed down through the pages of the party's press from the Central Committee via the editors of the different journals. The branch cadre organise and deploy the new troops and orchestrate their activity. The bulk of the work involves simply selling the party's journals . . . A Leninist party simply reproduces and institutionalises existing capitalist power relations inside a supposedly 'revolutionary' organisation: between leaders and led, order givers and order takers; between specialists and acquiescent and largely powerless party workers.

ALB



Here and Now 14

Trotwatch c/o Box NDF 72 Radford Road, Hyson Green, Nottingham NG7. Grisly chronicle of which sect took which absurd and/or cynical "position" on which issue and when it switched. This is a **must** for anyone who has to deal with those depressing vanguards, and presented with delicious humour. The research is meticulous, and a vital resource for revolutionary groups wanting to gen up on each other's follies.

Due out this summer is Trotwatch Report No. 1: **Carry On Recruiting! Why the SWP dumped the 'downturn' in a 'dash for growth'**, which examines just how the policies of this party are actually determined. (They should keep better control over their internal documents).

★Trotwatch

PAMPHLETS

CARRY ON RECRUITING. £2.95
FROM TROTWATCH, BOX NDF, 72
RADFORD ROAD, HYSON GREEN,
NOTTINGHAM NG7 5FT.

A serious look at the SWP analysing the opportunistic, inconsistent way it works. In October '92 during the surge of anger at the pit closures, Trotwatch argue that SWP leaders dropped their pessimistic analysis of class politics through the 1980s as a 'downturn' and adopted a pie-in-the-sky delusion that class-anger had intensified. This change had little to do with any real alteration of political mood but everything to do with a cynical marketing strategy which allegedly moved the SWP up from 6,000 (September '92) to 8,500 (March '93) on the SWP's own figures. This 'dash for growth' was also achieved at the cost of loosening the definition of party membership and also by

creative accountancy. 'All we have to do is recruit' is to be understood in the context of the SWP's rivalry with Militant for the domination of the revolutionary Left.

The SWP is parasitic and deferential towards the labour movement. Typically it asks for Smith or the TUC to mediate the disputes. 'TUC GENERAL STRIKE NOW!' The anger over every TUC and Labour sell-out is illogical even under the SWP's own flawed analysis. Trotwatch exposes this, and also shows how the party is hierarchical, it "simply reproduces and institutionalises existing power relations inside a supposedly 'revolutionary' organization" (p.41).

A couple of points ought to have been examined in more depth:

(1) The futility of playing the numbers game. We laugh at Tony Cliff's naivety in thinking larger numbers of angry students outside Parliament could topple a Tory government, but what about the wider implications? What use is the SWP upping its membership

and at the same time making the idea of its own identity fuzziest and demanding less commitment from its members? The SWP is thoroughly cynical here - only numbers count, individuals do not. "The SWP work on the expectation of a high through-put of members" If it had anything real to offer members they would stay in it.

(2) How important is the SWP? Some of the wider assumptions of Carry On Recruiting need looking at. What is the overall relevance of the early 1970s type class politics with 4 or 5 million unemployed at the whole Labour and trade union movements with nothing to offer? If the SWP is a parasitic plant grounded in the labour movement then we can be sure that it has its roots in contaminated soil.

Even so, this booklet is a sincere, informative and critical attempt to analyse the SWP and it clearly and unequivocally shows its counter-revolutionary function as a dead end to syphon off dissent...

Green Anarchist
Spring 1994, No 34, p12

REVIEW: CARRY ON RECRUITING!

Why the SWP dumped the "downturn" in a "dash for growth" and other party pieces.

TROTWATCH. c/o Box NDF, 72 Radford Rd, Hyson Green, Nottingham NG7 5FT

No, this is not a little-known carry-on film with Sid James as Tony Cliff, but a new pamphlet by Trotwatch which carries on from where our predecessor group Wildcat left off with the pamphlet 'How Socialist is the Socialist Workers' Party?', written at the time of the Miners' Strike.

Many of our readers will know just how disgustingly reactionary, deceitful and hypocritical the SWP are; that they spend half the time contradicting what they say the other half of the time; that their paper-sellers' memory extends no further back than the last zig-zag of the party line etc., but this pamphlet explains why they behave in the way they do.

The main points covered are:

1) The reasons for the "downturn" policy a decade ago and the "upturn" policy more recently. The pamphlet argues that, rather than a change in the material circumstances of the class struggle, as the SWP argue, it is purely the differing needs of the SWP apparatus that determined these turns (in particular the presence or absence of a significant rival in the shape of the Labour Left).

2) The relationship of the SWP to both the T.U.C. and Labour Party bureaucracies, showing how the SWP criticises them (indeed even says at times that the TU leaders are incapable of changing because of their position in society) and yet never countenances a break with them, nor fails to call on them for leadership.

The reasons for this inconsistency (perhaps the most consistent feature of the SWP's policies) are explained.

3) The initial lack of interest by the SWP in the anti-Poll Tax movement (which was reversed when this latter grew to become a mass movement) is located (according to the pamphlet) in both sectarian hostility to Militant (which was doing well out of it) and its refusal to take seriously any struggles not based in the workplace.

4) The thoroughly undemocratic internal structure of the SWP. The well-known division between immovable leaders and an obedient, passive mass of paper-fodder is discussed and explained.

A possible criticism is that the pamphlet is unclear as to what significance workplace struggle has - is it just the same as struggle in any other arena? Subversion believes that, although the workplace is not the only arena of class struggle (the anti-Poll Tax having been one of the best examples in recent years), none the less it is on the whole more important, the first among equals. If you like.

Another possible criticism is the extent to which we can really say that the Poll Tax was defeated. But, quibbles aside, we recommend our readers without hesitation to get hold of this excellent pamphlet.

Optimism of the will, confusion of the intellect

Kenny Coyle looks at the Socialist Workers Party claim to be the leading left group in Britain today.

The Socialist Workers Party now claims a membership of around 8,500 and is certainly the largest left-wing group in Britain to the left of the Labour Party.

Yet the role of the SWP in such recent actions as the "relaunch" of the Anti-Nazi League has contributed to the fragmentation of the left and has brought confusion rather than clarity to the political struggle in this country.

Needless to say, the old jibe about the "Splitters and Wreckers Party" has been resurrected.

Carry on Recruiting, a pamphlet issued by a group called Trotwatch, turns its attention to SWP policies in the past couple of years, years which have seen significant growth and a 180 degree about-turn in its domestic political perspective.

The period following the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 saw the SWP adopt the idea of "the downturn," which was described by some critics as an "ultra-left new realism."

The "downturn" emphasised the defeats and retreats of the labour movement.

The SWP pessimistically felt that significant labour movement advance was virtually impossible.

The revolutionary party simply had to sit it out and wait for the "upturn."

Even the miners' strike was seen as "an extreme example of the downturn."

But the SWP found new life in the late '80s and early '90s.

The basis for this is obvious — the Labour left is exceptionally weak, the influence of communists is at its lowest for generations, traditional competitors on the far left, such as the International Marxist Group

and Workers Revolutionary Party, have exploded and Militant has now ruptured.

In this period, the SWP has seen a gap for itself.

The theoretical volte face it has performed is the adoption of the idea of a "new mood," the long awaited upturn, where the working class has magically regained its consciousness and militancy.

Only the small size of the "revolutionary party" holds us back from bringing down Major and opening the road to workers' power.

The solution is to join the SWP. Writing after the re-election of the Tories in 1992 — the government which went on to massacre the mines and put VAT on fuel — SWP guru Tony Cliff reassured his followers that: "the defeat of Labour opens the door to the building of the party."

So it can't be all bad then, can it? It is this rush through the open door to frantic recruitment of politically raw material which may yet be the undoing of the SWP, as it was for Militant.

The party's rather macho "build-the party" posturing has its sinister side too.

A rival Trotskyist group Socialist Organiser recently issued a statement claiming that several of its supporters had been violently assaulted by SWP stewards at the Marxism 93 event.

Ironically, for an organisation which sees itself as a "super-vanguard," the SWP regards the divisions in the working class movement as essentially between a conservative, privileged bureaucracy and the mass of rank-and-file workers.

However sophisticated the language used to describe it, the seductiveness of the SWP perspective is straightforward, it is "the leaders versus the led."

Left-wing union leaders are viewed with as much hostility and often greater suspicion as those of the

right.

In short, the SWP industrial approach imagines that the ordinary worker is somehow naturally militant and unsullied by reformism.

He or she is merely held back by bureaucratic misleaders.

This follows Trotsky's belief that leadership of the labour movement is the central problem rather than the consciousness of the rank and file, which would be unhesitatingly revolutionary if only it could be freed of its reformist leadership.

The political affiliation of Trotwatch is not openly stated, but the direction of its criticisms is from an anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist perspective.

Indeed, the pamphlet's weakness is that it accepts so much questionable SWP rhetoric and merely means the fact that the SWP carries it out inconsistently in practice.

This is in fact the strength of the SWP — its relatively successful attempt to straddle the gulf between Marxism and anarchism, or, to be more exact, Trotskyism and syndicalism.

The other aspect of the pamphlet's weakness is that it says nothing about the SWP antics in the anti-racist movement or its joyous celebration of the demise of east European socialism.

Socialist Worker's masthead, after all, still carries the now rather quaint "Neither Washington nor Moscow" slogan.

To be fair, the pamphlet is sharp and accurate in what it does cover but not to extend the critique further is a missed opportunity.

Now is certainly the time to return to the offensive against the sort of crude politics that the SWP represents.

● Carry On Recruiting: Why the Socialist Workers Party dumped the "downturn" in a dash for growth is published by Trotwatch.

■ Trotwatch slates SWP

■ Carry on recruiting: Why the SWP dumped the 'downturn' in a 'dash for growth', Trotwatch, 1993, 48pp, £2.95

Written from an anarchist standpoint, this pamphlet is a sharp and perceptive critique of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It details, with wit and verve, the SWP's sectarianism, its unprincipled changing of positions to facilitate recruitment, its dishonesty and its hypocrisy. It is best when exposing the SWP's opportunist grovelling before the Labour Party and TUC. The authors understand that:

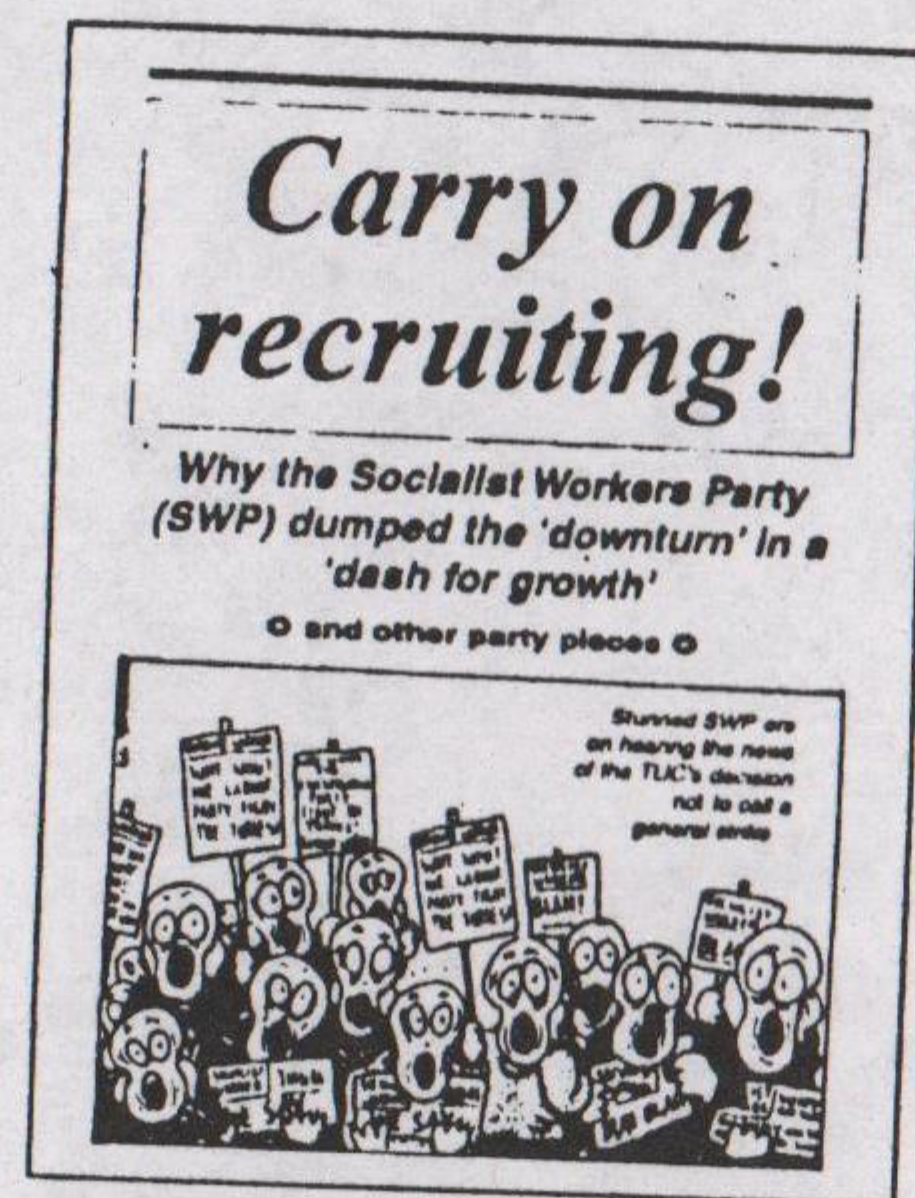
'From its earliest days, the SWP/IS has managed to combine a theoretical critique of the Labour Party and trade union officialdom, and an *actual allegiance* to both wings of the bureaucracy at every crunch point in the class struggle.'

The point is proved by citing masses of evidence, drawn from SWP publications, on the organisation's response to the 1992 pit closure campaign, the anti-poll tax campaign and the SWP's support for the Labour Party at General Elections. On a fundamental aspect of socialist strategy, the anarchists of Trotwatch are more consistent and revolutionary than the Marxists of the SWP:

'Any genuine rise in the level of class struggle requires workers, and the working class as a whole, breaking free of the trade union and Labour hierarchy and asserting direct control over the battle for their interests. A battle that

sees the barons of the labour movement as part and parcel of the enemy. Otherwise the impact of the Labour Party's exercise of class power *will* certainly be to depress the level of the class struggle.'

In contrast the SWP at every critical turning point never fails to side with the Labour Party and the official trade union movement. It has developed an inane position on elections to justify calling for the return of a Labour government. In the SWP's own words: '... the only decisive test is practice, therefore we are for another Labour government' and 'We are for everything that forces the Labour Party into a position where its



policies and practice can be tested in the eyes of millions of people.'

In 1979 these policies had been tested for five years, in the eyes of tens of millions of people! The Labour Party had resorted to monetarist policy, cut public expenditure,

had effectively, in the SWP's own judgment, 'derailed an incredibly powerful wave of industrial militancy' ... But the SWP still called for a Labour victory!

The SWP's loyalty to the Labour Party is closely tied up to its subordination to the organised British trade union movement. The SWP has contempt for the working class as a whole, reserving its 'respect' only for 'workers at the point of production'. This contempt was most evident during the anti-poll tax campaign. At first, the SWP attacked those who sought to build a community based non-payment campaign. The authors quote SWP publications claiming that 'community politics divert people from the means to win, from the need to mobilise working class activity on a collective basis ... The state machinery through fines, stopping of wages and so on can wear down community resistance ...'

The poll tax riot, because it was violent and took place outside the confines of the official movement, was regarded with some discomfort. A *Socialist Worker* editorial sermonised: 'Of course, no socialist believes rioting will beat the poll tax, but neither should any condemn the howl of rage which filled the fashionable West End last Saturday.'

But as soon as the SWP sniffed an opportunity to recruit new members from the efforts of those who did in fact build a community-based campaign, they cynically switched their position. Having begun by dismissing community resistance and non-

payment, the SWP ended by judging it the: 'cutting edge of a slow revival of combative working class action'. '(Eventually) resilient non-payment and riots in the streets brought down Thatcher.' But this new line was immediately forgotten when the pit closure campaign offered new opportunities to intervene in 'real working class struggles'.

Two aspects of this worthwhile pamphlet reveal the weakness of much of anarchist thought. A critique of the SWP's positions on the Labour Party and trade union movement cannot be fully adequate if it does not deal with the connection of British labour to British imperialism, for after all the Labour Party is a child of British imperialism. The pamphlet, however, says nothing on this question. Then there is the perennial difference between anarchists and Marxists on the question of the necessity for working class political organisation. The anarchists reject the need for such organisation. For them the SWP's reactionary positions flow from its adherence to the 'Leninist theory of the vanguard party' which is, according to the anarchists, hierarchical and anti-democratic. This debate we shall take up another time. Here we only ask comrades to consider how the RCG, whilst recognising the need for working class political organisation, has a position on the Labour Party closer to Trotwatch than that of the SWP. The SWP does have a reactionary, elitist and sectarian concept of a working class political organisation. But this should be attributed not to a Leninist theory, which the anarchists misunderstand, but to the SWP's middle class social position.

Eddie Abrahams

Carry On Recruiting! Why the Socialist Workers Party dumped the 'downturn' in a 'dash for growth' and other party pieces. Trotwatch/AK Press. £2.95. 48pp.

Trotwatch portray an SWP whose analysis of events fluctuates with the leadership's views of what will best gain them members. Far from living up to the 'ideal' of the Leninist party which leads the class through its superior knowledge and understanding, the SWP is shown to be reactive and to cynically dump policies as they become unpopular.

The 'downturn' of the pamphlet's subtitle was the SWP's analysis of how working class militancy declined with the last Labour government's 'betrayal' of the class and the rise of Thatcherism. This downturn persisted through the period in which the Bennite La-

bour left appeared to gain control of the party, and continued through Militant's and the Labour left's 'municipal socialism' and the miners' strike of '84/85. For the SWP the Poll Tax rebellion was illusory, the workplace being the only true battleground for the class struggle — that was until even Tony Cliff couldn't deny the non-payment campaign's success and claimed the SWP was in on it from the beginning.

Fall of Stalinism

But by the end of '92, Kincock had destroyed the credibility of the Labour Party. The fall of East European Stalinism had brought down many of the SWP's rivals and Militant was in schism as Taafe dumped Ted Grant along with his entryism. So

the SWP began to grow and as the revolutionary party can only make gains in times of class radicalisation the downturn was declared over and the SWP charged off in its 'dash for growth' after as many members as it could get while its rivals were out of the race.

Trotwatch quote extensively from SWP publications to show how the party's analysis of the Poll Tax riots and other events changed with time and how the party adopted a revisionist approach to its own past pronouncements. The fact that the papers contradict themselves from week to week doesn't matter — what is important is that the SWP leadership claim to lead the working class and yet much of the time seem incapable of understanding what's happening within that class. Trotwatch use a docu-

ment produced in 1991 by rebel members of the Southampton SWP, soon to join the Anarchist Workers' Group, to show how an increasingly centralised party excludes the membership from real debate and so can afford to recruit new members whatever their politics.

The above exposé of the SWP is worth making and Trotwatch are to be praised for ploughing through all those back issues of SWP magazines. However the structure of *Carry on Recruiting!* is somewhat confusing and it seems to have been started in a satirical vein only for the humour to disappear.

One Step Beyond — an examination of the Revolutionary Communist Party published in 1988 was a rather more successful example of Nottingham anarchists' mission to expose the Marxist-Leninist left. There it was clearer that the one party was being attacked just as an example. The cult-like aspects of the party were also brought out more clearly despite the fact that *Carry on Recruiting!* quotes a passage from an SWM (Irish SWP) document on recruiting which Evangelical Christians and Moonies would have been proud of. That said, COR is well worth reading for its exposé of the vacuity behind the market-leader on the (un-)revolutionary left. Whether the students and other young people most likely to be lured by the SWP will read it is another matter.

Organise!, Jan-Mar 1994, Issue 33
p16

IN PRINT

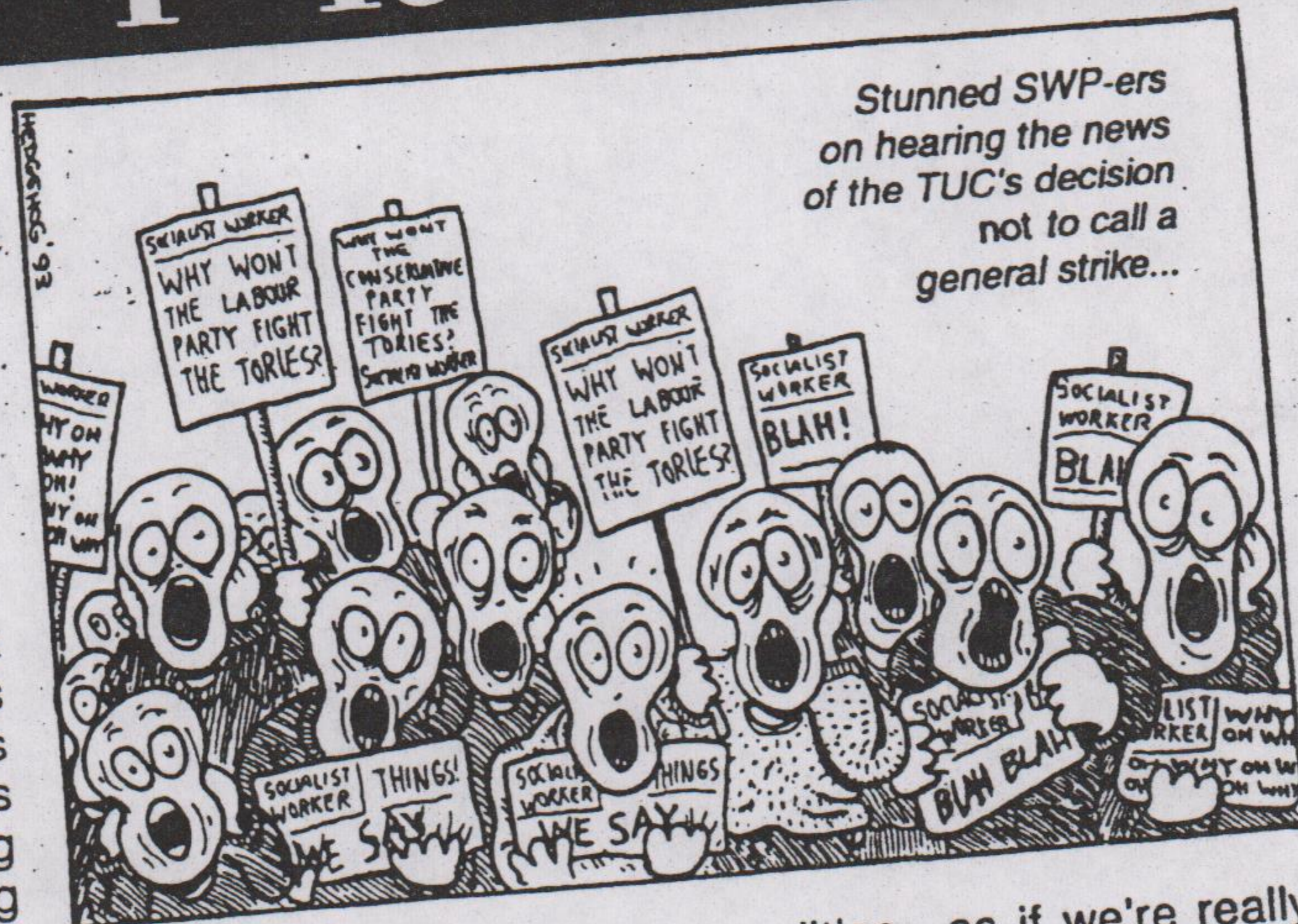
CARRY ON RECRUITING

Trotwatch

(AK Press/Trotwatch,
£2.95, c/o Box NDF,
72 Radford Road,
Hyson Green,
Nottingham NG7 5FT)

This new pamphlet is a welcome look at the antics of the Socialist Workers Party, those sad bastards who hang around shopping centres at weekends trying to flog their paper to students.

Using the SWP's own writings and actions it shows just how hollow their claims to be revolutionary are and just how patron-



ising, opportunist and self-serving the Party bosses are.

It's written in a witty way and isn't aimed just at 'politicos'. However, in places it does tend to get bogged down in the intricacies of the SWP's internal

politics—as if we're really interested! And at £2.95 it's ridiculously over-priced...

Overall, it's an excellent and useful pamphlet which should be compulsory reading for anyone even thinking of meddling in the murky world of the Left.



Class War, No 62, p15

★Trotwatch

Trotwatch #1

Trotwatch. An Anarchist Commentary on the Life of the Left. Volume 1, No.1. £1, £5 to lefties.

This droll and well documented journal puts a variety of squirming Trotskyist and other Leninist specimens on the dissecting table.

Trotwatch's probing blade reveals a mess of ludicrous contradictions, scheming manipulation and outright opportunism. Analysed in detail are the recent split that severely crippled Militant, and a "frighteningly detailed" look at the "squalid spectacle of the Left and the General Election". *Trotwatch* says in its editorial that they believe that the continuing dominance of leftism, in all its guises, over most expressions of working class resistance to "things as they are", represents a serious bloc to the cre-

ation of a truly revolutionary anti-capitalist movement.

In an accompanying leaflet they point out that many of the problems afflicting British leftism are those that are affecting the real revolutionary movement, that is because notions of class structure and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism have been under seige. As the class struggle intensifies again in the future, Leftism will once again attempt to dominate the newly emerging resistance. As they say, when that happens, it will be even more important to "know thine enemy". Loads of info, gossip and sectarianism from an anarchist communist perspective.

Sectarianism

INSIDE LEFT SUSPECTS that not a few of its long time readers rather miss out on the latest gossip on far left faction fighting once purveyed in, for example, the Clause IV group's bulletins. Fear not! A decidedly non-cuddly group of abusive anarchists have filled the market gap with a mag called *Trotwatch* (actually it covers Stalinists too).

Did you know who plumbed the depths with only 48 votes for the Revolutionary Communist Party in Oxford East? Or which faction (of the two 'Workers Revolutionary Parties') sneaked 6 votes more than the Whip-lash (Corrective) Party in Peckham?

You could also find out about the split in Militant and the fight for what would once have been the Moscow Franchise between the 'CPGB' [ie *The Leninist*], CPB and NCP (mainly written off as 'geriatrics' which is presumably 'pc' in anarchist circles).

Trotwatch suffers from its own fundamentalist/nihilist lacunae: for instance referring to the possibility of a lumpen underclass rioting in Castro's Cuba. I mean, there isn't one — that's the whole point — and why should one think its depredations would further anybody's anarchist utopia if there was?

Anyway, get your copies of the reprinted first edition from TW, c/o Box NDF, 72 Radford Road, Hyson Green, Nottingham, Notts. NG7 (£1 or £5 to 'lefties').



Chartist, March-April '93

Organise! 29, Jan-March 93

TROTWATCH

(£1.00 from TW c/o Box NDF, 72 Radford Road, Hyson Green, Nottingham NG7)

On the other hand, if light entertainment is what you want, track down *Trotwatch*: an Anarchist commentary on the life of the left. This is a brilliant one-off magazine that gives you the low-down on all those sad and pathetic left-wing groups that hang around the shopping centres on wet Saturday afternoons. These are the kind of people who make David Mellor look well-adjusted. Totally hilarious and well-recommended!



Trotwatch #1/Summer '92 (c/o Box NDF, 72 Radford Road, Hyson Green, Nottingham, England) is an amusing attempt at "an anarchist commentary on the life of the [British] left," from "a clear libertarian communist/anarchist perspective." This first issue contains a run down of the maneuverings of many of the endless trot sects up to and after last year's British Labour Party defeat. Should be a bucket of laughs for extrots, but it's a bit hard to follow for those never exposed to this socialist perversion! Copies are \$3; exchanges are encouraged with anarchist periodicals.

Anarchy (US) 38, Fall 93

Class War 57

★Trotwatch

Review: *Carry on Recruiting!*

(Why the SWP dumped the 'downturn' in a 'dash for growth'). Trotwatch. £2.95 AK. Press ISBN 1 873176 02 3.

'Many people find a critique of Bolshevism boring. Unfortunately even one's uninteresting enemies can be powerful.'- Call It Sleep.

Carry on Recruiting! is certainly not boring. The irreverent manner in which it catalogues the SWP's regular changes in line and the tortuous arguments used to justify them is undoubtedly its strength. Trotskyism still has far more credibility amongst would-be rebels in the UK than anywhere else, and needs therefore to be subjected to repeated criticism. But we need not take the Trots too seriously, as if another Krondstadt were threatening. After all, ideas which have hardly developed since the demise of the classical workers movement are unlikely to have much resonance in a modern revolutionary upheaval, for all the students that get taken in in the meantime.

Trotwatch wickedly take the piss out of the SWP's abandonment of their 'downturn' theory in October '92. As they point out, the SWP clung vehemently to the theory in the face of the '81 inner-city riots and the '84/'85 miners strike only to argue that the 'upturn' had arrived when faced with the back bench rebellion over the pit closures programme and a fifty year record low in the level of strike activity. Similar treatment is meted out to the SWP's about turn on Poll Tax non-payment and the meaning and significance of the Trafalgar Square riot.

Throughout this, plus a section looking at the SWP's contradictory positions on the '74-'79 Labour government, the underlying aim of the pamphlet is **'to examine the reality of the SWP's 'critique' of the labour movement and the bureaucrats that run it. It goes on to question the SWP's understanding of what constitutes a 'genuinely independent' working class movement. In doing so, it uncovers an organisation whose politics and practice negate its claim to be revolutionary.'**¹⁰²

Trotwatch's commitment to working class autonomy and emphasis on self activity underpins the piss-taking. But merely allowing this perspective to inform its jokes about the SWP's opportunistic inconsistencies is obviously insufficient - a point Trotwatch acknowledge in the final section 'What's *wrong* with the SWP'.

Following on as it does from a long catalogue of details this section is crucial; tying the ends together with a stinging critique of Leninism as the knock-out blow. Unfortunately Trotwatch don't quite manage it. Because of the SWP's eagerness to recruit anyone with vague anti-Tory sentiments, it is argued, the party must be structured to ensure that the Central Committee maintain a tight grip over the organisation. Generalising their critique, they state:

'In reality, a Leninist party simply reproduces and institutionalises existing capitalist power relations inside a supposedly 'revolutionary' organisation: between leaders and led; order givers and order takers; between specialists and acquiescent and largely powerless party workers. And that elitist power relationship is extended to include the relationship between the party and the class.'¹⁰³

The attack on hierarchical organisational forms is obviously a necessary component of the critique of Leninism, but is insufficient in itself. This line of argument is reminiscent of that of libertarian socialists who accuse the Leninists of employing the wrong means (the party) for the right end (socialism). And whilst it would be wrong to accuse Trotwatch of being wishy washy liberals their critique relies heavily on a paper produced by dissidents within Southampton SWP which simply complains that the party isn't democratic enough.

A thorough critique of Leninism requires a critique of representation and democracy. The advocacy of democratic-centralist 'Revolutionary Party' must be shown to arise from the fact that their programme is the capture of state power in order to abolish the 'anarchy of the market'. Not the abolition of work but a planned reorganisation of work. Not the destruction of alien 'productive forces' but their liberation from fetters. Leninists have an objectivist critique of capitalism, which is why they can't grasp its real negation. In other words a critique of Leninism must address the fact that Leninists are not communists; they have not broken sufficiently with Second International orthodoxy, which is why their relationship with Labourism appears contradictory. One cannot abolish alienation with alienated means, but we cannot just attack their 'means' without distinguishing our 'ends' from theirs.

Trotwatch's 'negative, critical and destructive' publications provide handy ammunition for arguments with Trots, sparing the rest of us the trouble of reading their banal papers and turgid magazines. And they make no claim to provide a complete or definitive critique of Leninism or even the SWP in particular. But partial critiques provide fertile ground for the forces of recuperation. We don't need better organisations to deliver socialism - we need to organise our emancipation from all forms of alienation.

'Bolshevism will remain formidable as long as it can maintain its monopoly on the interpretation of revolution.'- Call It Sleep

Anarchism vs communism: Two anarchist perspectives

I read with interest your review of *Carry on Recruiting* (FRFI 118), given you are a 'revolutionary group' and readers/supporters of your newspaper have a revolutionary perspective, and as such should be well aware that any 'left' party that supports or aligns its politics with the British Labour Party or British trade union movement is elitist and has nothing but contempt for the working class. They see our class as a vehicle to 'power' (sic). I felt your review was constructed with the customary disdain that class struggle groups have for these political parasites. But as you also take the opportunity to criticise the thought behind the pamphlet, whilst aligning your group and its readership with anarchist views on the so-called 'left', and with the promise of debate at another time, I felt that for the interest of your readers, we could open up the debate from an anarchist perspective.

As a member of an active anarchist federation, we see pamphlets such as *Carry on Recruiting* only as a reflection of the current condition of British 'left' wing politics; the 'carry on recruiting' theme being the basis of all the major so-called left wing parties. Active anarchists believe that British working class struggle will emerge from a combination of

community-based action and a reaction to state and government oppression, and not from Labour or trade union-controlled actions or strikes. We also realise the importance of working class political education - organisation will come through struggle, not through the imposition of politics from any party or group. As Marxist intention is the creation of a working class political organisation within British communities, then this objective will ultimately create a hierarchical and anti-democratic structure by political elitists over a politically uneducated working class (the masses). We as anarchists do not subscribe to the ideal that the British working class will suddenly explode into mass class action against the state or government (as the 'left parties' seem to think), but will first require education by class struggle activists and will then develop their own class consciousness, and as this consciousness develops they will then take forward the real class war.

With regard to the mention of 'weariness of thought' on the British imperialist question, we have no doubt about the effects of imperialism on the British working class. By exploiting nations throughout the world, the British working class have 'received the token crumbs from the

imperialist table', giving them a blinkered attitude that they are different from other exploited workers throughout the world (hence the minimal showing of real revolutionary action this century). We understand also that the British Labour Party and trade union movement was created by imperialists as a buffer against any real working class movement emerging in this country, whilst allowing the imperialists to rape and loot other nations under their influence. We also recognise that this form of racist attitude has been encouraged by the bosses and the state, and used as a method of control of workers for decades, bringing us back again to the urgent need for 'political education'. We also recognise the change in the imperialists' attitude to the British working class; now that there is little profit to be extorted from the workers of Britain, the imperialists dismantle the industries in this country, rebuild them in poverty-stricken countries, exploit their workers and move on. This may seem an over-simplified understanding of imperialism to well-read anti-imperialists, but as a class struggle anarchist I feel your readers should be in no doubt that we understand the higher form of capitalism.

On our 'misunderstanding of Leninist theory', did comrade Lenin not explain that 'the working class can only ever achieve a trade union level of consciousness', therefore the worker requires the 'party' to provide political, theoretical and organised leadership? Is this not an elitist attitude? Are workers assumed to be too stupid to take the lead for themselves? Should our class sacrifice itself to revolution and replace one set of bosses for another, or to be more politically correct, 'the party'? We anarchists think not. What other tenet does humanity need, other than 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'?

As this letter is only a short reply to a universal difference of opinion, we will welcome the continuation of the debate.

ANDY DUNCAN
Dundee

Stalin and Trotsky both claimed to be true heirs of Lenin. Both supported 'the Leninist theory of the vanguard party'. Both believed in rigid adherence to a party line, though they had minor differences over what that line should be. Stalin settled these minor differences with an ice pick.

Though you in the Revolutionary Communist Group keep pretty quiet about Stalin in your paper, it soon becomes clear in discussion with RCG members that you are in fact

Stalinists. This explains your delight in 'Trotwatch slates SWP' - we anarchists criticise the Trots on principle; you see them as a rival 'vanguard'.

I accept some individual members of both the RCG and the SWP as genuine working class activists who can co-operate with in particular struggles, but I'm suspicious. How can anyone who follows a party line be in favour of independent working class action?

So far as their organisations are concerned, history shows that all varieties of Leninism have persecuted anarchists when in a position to do so.

Eddie Abrahams claims that 'anarchists reject the need for working class political organisation'. Wrong. What we say is that we, the working class, should organise ourselves. We don't need leaders. We reject the idea of a vanguard political party.

As for Abrahams' superior claim that 'anarchists misunderstand Leninist theory', all this really boils down to is that your average Leninist has ploughed his way through more boring waffle than the average anarchist.

You don't have to read every word that someone wrote to get the gist of what they're about. We understand perfectly - and disagree.

DAVE COULL
Dundee

This debate will be continued in FRFI 120. Contributions are welcomed.



How low can you go?

THE PRACTICES AND THE POLITICS OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is a self-proclaimed 'revolutionary party'. In its 'Where We Stand' column in the weekly paper, it is stated that "the present system...has to be over-

words of one disillusioned "have you ever vote on who should leader of the SWP Central Committee this is decided on a ference is very You're given a list proposed CC

THE POLITICS AND THE PRACTICES OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

The Socialist Workers Party is a self-proclaimed 'revolutionary party'. In its 'Where We Stand' column in the weekly paper, it is stated that "the present system...has to be overthrown", that "only the mass activity of the workers themselves can destroy the

heard of anyone not agreeing". ('Republican Marxist Bulletin', Nov. 1992).

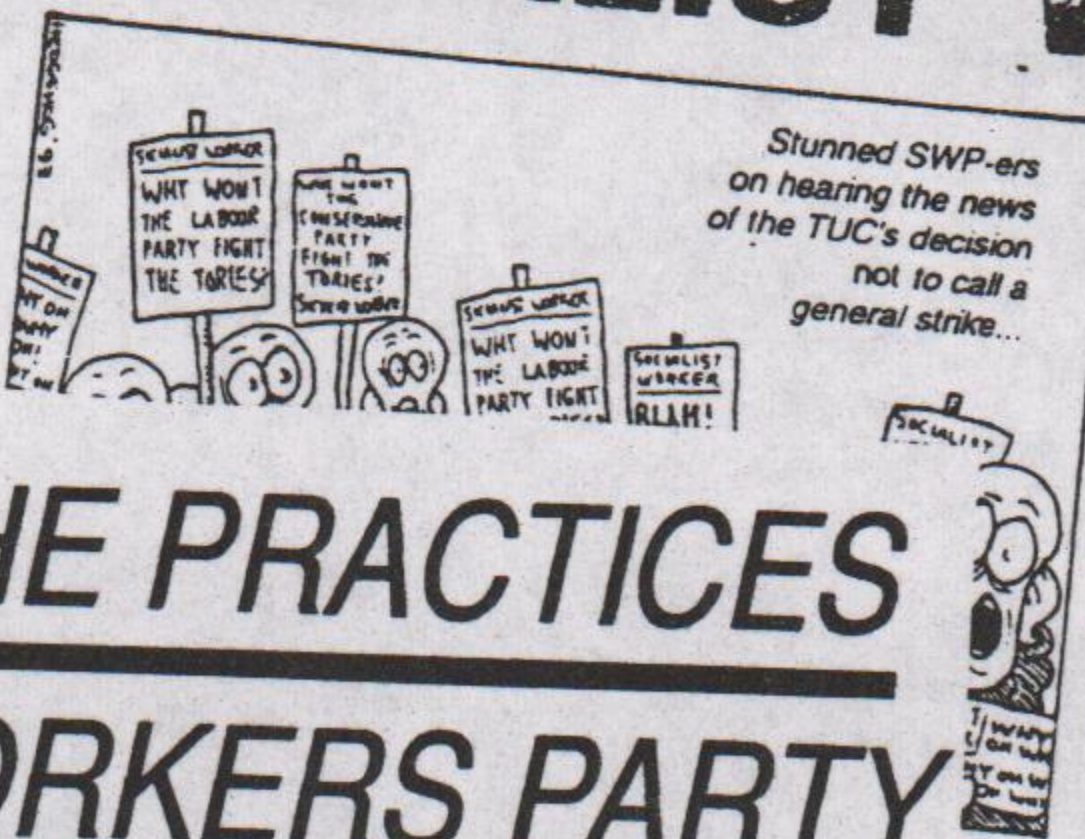
Democratic centralism is inevitably a contradiction in terms because of the psychological effects it has on the ordinary members. It results in the leadership being put on a pedestal and being virtually worshipped - so it is very

are ar- RA, at H-1012 articles to POB USA Harry ext of rop- pen is e ; from ♣ Angel Alley, London E1 7QX. How low can you go? Directed at the Bone-Scargill inspired CWO? An auto-critique of putting the organisation first CW sectarianism? No, this is an expose by London Class War (plagiarising Trotwatch) of The Practices of the Social Workers Party POB 467, London E8 3QX. Kick it Over No.33 Why Anarchists Liberate sexual harassment? Topped up by the lesbian avengers, Ted Trainer on The Conservator Society & a challenge to Power Feminism. No.32 was on Living in the ty & libertarian municipalism

CLASS WAR

VERSUS

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY.



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★Trotwatch