

Dear Comrades,

The following text was printed in "Notes to Organisers," 2/27/78, an IMG internal circular.

Natalie

THE LONDON MARCH BAN - OUR RESPONSE

The following was passed by the Political Committee 23/2/78.

The decision to ban all marches in London for 2 months from tomorrow amounts to an unprecedented attack on democratic rights. By some interpretations it may even cover pickets and street meetings, but it certainly threatens the NUS Grants Demo on 3 March, the International Women's March on 4 March, the Anti-Apartheid Movement Demo on 18 March and the Friends of the Earth Anti-nuclear power demo on 19 March, let alone any other demonstrations on any question, be it trade union affairs, anti-racist demos etc until April 24. Significantly it neatly covers the major NF demo and the counterdemo planned for 23 April in Islington.

While one of the factors behind the ban is undoubtedly the growing combativity of the anti-fascist movement and black youth, and the fears of the police that this could become explosive leading to major clashes and riots, nevertheless we must be clear that this ban can in no way be characterised as a victory for the anti-fascist movement. The claims of the Ilford CP and even apparently Holborrow that the ban on the NF's Ilford march is to be welcomed must be completely rejected. The reasons are obvious. Firstly the ban does not stop the fascists peddling their racism anyway - they will still be canvassing and having a meeting in the evening. Clearly this ban does not develop the self-activity of the working class or the immigrant community against fascists but poses reliance on the bourgeois state as the strategy against the fascists. Vitally it demobilises the existing anti-fascist movement as the reformists are already doing with Ilford by calling off the demo, cancelling coaches etc - just as in Tameside.

The other factors behind the ban are the desire of the ruling class and the police to increasingly regulate the affairs of the labour movement and curtail democratic rights. In that sense it is linked into the increasing intervention of the courts into the affairs of the unions. Of course the Labour Government via Rees approved this step. The implications are enormous. If the ban is not challenged it could be re-imposed in the future, particularly by the Tories. Next time it may not be on the pretext of banning the NF. The Labour Government is using the ban to show that it can deal with 'law and order' as part of its 'responsible' face against Thatcher's explicit racist campaigning. The CP and the Labour Lefts' line is already clear; denounce the ban as undemocratic but take no concrete steps to challenge it.

Our tasks are clear. We must denounce the ban and wage a massive explanatory campaign in our press/leaflets to explain why the 'Ban them' strategy is bankrupt. We must also attempt to build the broadest possible labour movement campaign against the ban through resolutions/campaigns etc in every milieu. We have also to attempt to find the most advantageous terrain to challenge the ban through mass mobilisations.

- 1) At Ilford, we should attempt a large mobilisation and argue for mass anti-fascist leafletting, street meetings and support for the picket of the NF meeting. We should an IMG leaflet.

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THE LONDON MARCH BAN (continued)

- 2) We should carry considerable material in the paper against the ban specifically and against the reformists' strategy round bans, RR Act, counterposing our conceptions of building a mass anti-fascist movement based on the self-activity of the working class and black communities.
- 3) We should campaign in the NUS for their Grants demo to go ahead on March 3. If we fail to convince NUS Exec. (which we should lobby, if it's not illegal) we should attempt to get a massive SSA/NOISS campaign among COs to continue the mobilisation.
- 4) We should immediately issue an appeal via letter/Socialist Challenge to all left groups/civil liberties bodies/TUs/LPs/oppressed groups etc for a joint campaign against the ban, culminating in a national demo in London to defy the ban. Specifically we should we should appeal to the SWP to join jointly support this.