

Enough AWL bluster and lies - *Time for politics!*

CPGBers are distributing this statement in response to an internal AWL background briefing distributed by Martin Thomas to Alliance for Workers' Liberty members on October 10 ahead of Sunday's debate between Sean Matgamna and Moshe Machover. (See document at end of this text).

We do this in the interests of political hygiene. We want to give the space for some substantive politics to be discussed on October 12. Thomas' briefings are an insult to the intelligence of the people in his organisation who are meant to take them as good coin. He reiterates the lie - already comprehensively crushed several times by the *Weekly Worker* - that we have "**evaded**" a debate with his organisation on Iran. This statement puts the record straight again. After it, there is no excuse for AWLers to treat the rest of us in the same contemptuous manner by wasting the time of the debate's audience by regurgitating Thomas's bilge.

Martin falsifies the history of this debate with a cavalier regard for truth that would have kept Stalinists awake at night with a bad conscience. His briefings imply that everything started on August 3, when Matgamna "**challenged the *Weekly Worker* to a debate on the issues around Israel and Iran**".

Nonsense. In fact, the CPGB first approached the AWL to provide a speaker at our Communist University on Iran *on May 30*. After several prompts, AWLer Tom Unterrainer eventually wrote to tell us that they still had no confirmed speaker to offer us, but that, instead they were "**keen**" to debate "**Imperialism and Afghanistan: then and now**" (email, June 13).

So, the *AWL* ducked a proposed debate with us on Iran and suggested a topic we have discussed several times before - including at CU! After a few more exchanges, we suggested a "**compromise**" where a "**space is made for a debate with us**" at the AWL's July school on either Iraq or Iran ("**you choose which one**" we wrote). With that covered, "**we would be more than happy to debate you on Afghanistan once again**" at CU (email, June 27).

This is dishonestly referred by Thomas in the October 10 briefings where he says we make a "**reference to cases where we didn't specially want a speaker from WW, on their chosen subject, at our summer**

school". Remember, this "**chosen subject**" was Iran and the war drive! Remember, this is *the* issue we are meant to be terrified of debating with the AWL! And we offered it in exchange for a space at *our* school for the AWL to come to debate us on its "**chosen subject**" - Afghanistan!

On July 5 - at the SWP's Marxism 2008 - we were verbally informed by AWLer Tom Unterrainer that this arrangement was not acceptable to his group, as the timetable for the AWL's event had been "**settled**" for some time. In other words, it and similar questions were much too sensitive for the AWL. (It was instructive that Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan did not feature as topics at their school at all!)

So the AWL central office was originally approached for "**an AWL speaker**" on the question of Iran on May 30. *The AWL declined this invitation.*

After Matgamna's "**discussion piece**" excusing an Israeli attack on Iran appeared in *Solidarity* on July 24, this paper savaged him the following week (July 31). He was soon demanding "**a public and unequivocal apology**"; "**the same space as that taken by their libellous fantasy-piece about me to reply**"; and a debate on ... Israel-Palestine! (www.workersliberty.org/node/11011). Note the almost desperate attempt to discuss any question *other* than the one the AWL was invited by the CPGB to debate at this year's Communist University - Iran, the prospect of war against that country and the attitude Marxists should take.

In fact, we actually phoned the AWL office several times *during* CU (August 9-16) to offer the organisation a slot: we were either fobbed off or ignored, despite the fact that the leaflet AWLer Mark Osborn distributed on the first day of our school challenged the CPGB "**to debate us [on Israel-Iran] at a time and place and with a chair acceptable to both sides**".

Thomas mentions his August 19 email where he suggests "**a Thursday late-ish in September**" for a debate. He fails to mention that he also asked - surreally - in the same email: "**Am I right: that you are willing to debate the issues about Israel and Iran?**" Yes, we were willing Martin Thomas ... good guess.

After that, there was some tedious toing and froing over a date for the debate - apparently Matgamna and the AWL were unavailable for a weekend debate until mid-

October. The London Campaign for a Marxist Party had agreed at its September 5 meeting to try to host a debate between the CPGB and the AWL. Then, on September 12, Martin Thomas directly approached comrade Machover to debate Matgamna, initially in an AWL meeting.

Comrade Machover - a CMP member, who was present at the September 7 meeting - was understandably less than keen to engage with Matgamna on his home turf, and so the CMP agreed to host the proposed Matgamna-Machover debate (and also agreed to move it from October 5 to October 12 after the AWL com-

plained that the original date was inconvenient). The haggling was cut across by the organisation of a meeting on the same subject - broached by the AWL itself - between Moshé Machover and Sean Matgamna and hosted by the CMP.

The sorry story of our attempt to organise a debate with the AWL on Iran underlines that organisation's fear of direct confrontation with our ideas.

It illustrates beautifully the desperate straights of this organisation. Unable to confront the issues honestly, it has tried to throw sand in peoples' eyes - don't believe a word.

AWL briefing paper by Martin Thomas ***Background for Sunday 12th: WW's evasions***

On 3 August, Sean Matgamna challenged the *Weekly Worker* to a debate on the issues around Israel and Iran.

In mid-August, we had some phone messages from Mark Fischer which indicated that the *WW* was ready to debate. So I wrote on 19 August: "We propose a debate in London, on a weekday evening, preferably a Thursday, late-ish in September to allow adequate time to prepare".

About two weeks later I phoned Moshe Machover to suggest a debate with him. Moshe had published an article in the *Weekly Worker* of 28 August denouncing Sean's original article on Israel and Iran.

As Sean noted in his reply to that article of Moshe's, "Most - not all - of [the] contribution is a perfectly legitimate piece of polemic against what I actually wrote". In other words, it argued actual political positions (which we disagree with), rather than just using "political" jargon as verbal makeweight for propping up ridiculous lies, in the old Stalinist style which Mark Fischer obviously learned so well in his long time... as a Stalinist. (See not only the original lie about Sean "excusing" an Israeli nuclear attack on Iran, but Mark Fischer's series of articles in *WW* 738, 739, 740...).

So we wanted to debate. The proposal to debate with Moshe was distinct from the proposal to debate with the *WW*. Had to be, if only for the reason that Moshe has a different position from *WW* on Israel/Palestine. *WW* nominally agrees with AWL on "two states" in Israel-Palestine, and Moshe never has done. Also, Moshe, while offering some contorted aim and comfort to the *WW*'s libels, has notably refrained in his articles from directly repeating them. So, a different debate.

On the phone, Moshe said that he would debate.

But... then he said that we would have to approach Hopi to fix up the debate, because on the issue of Iran he regarded himself as committed to Hopi rather than a freelance.

A problem that, because Hopi had told us, some time back, that it would not debate with AWL.

Long negotiations were meanwhile proceeding between Sacha Ismail, for AWL, and Ben Lewis, for *WW*, over a debate. As noted above, we had suggested a weekday evening in September; they insisted on a weekend in October. We conceded. But in the meantime, in response to our challenge for an AWL-*WW* debate, *WW* had (without explanation) started talking about quite a different debate. They were proposing dates, times, and venues for a debate... between AWL and Moshe Machover, with Moshe speaking under the auspices not of Hopi but of the "Campaign for a Marxist Party".

On 16 September, Sacha Ismail wrote to Ben Lewis asking for a straight answer: "What's happened to the proposal for an AWL-CPGB debate?". What was the *WW*'s answer? Why were they evading the question by proposing a different debate instead? Sacha also asked for confirmation or denial of the Hopi refusal to debate.

Ben Lewis replied: "Yes [i.e. yes, Hopi won't debate], and we have chased you for that [AWL-*WW*] debate ever since".

Surreal, when approached for a debate, to say: "Oh, you can debate someone else instead - someone we don't agree with" - and then to claim that you are "chasing" for debate? Yes, surreal, but typical *WW*.

Long article by Mark Fischer in the *WW* recently, if you're interested, trying to take like: no explanation in that article about why *WW* has evaded the August proposal to debate.