

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

371234

Role of a radical centre party

From Dr C. B. Phipps

Sir, Those of us who are currently active in laying the groundwork for the formation of a new party of the radical centre in no way see it as a rival to the Liberal Party. Indeed, we accept the crucial importance of the Liberals to the ultimate emergence of a genuinely new force in British politics.

The Liberal Party must form a vital component in the success of any realignment which we contemplate. History may well conclude that our failure to match the economic and social advances achieved by our European neighbours since the war resulted from our inability to produce the kind of government that Liberals in power might have provided. However, it is this very history of failure to acquire power, and especially to build upon the advances achieved in 1974, which make the participation of a new party essential, albeit temporarily.

Any analysis of the election results since 1959 demonstrates that the "swing" between the two major parties passes through the Liberals, either from right to left or vice versa. The essential ingredient for success in the centre is that the "swing" should come from both directions, ie, from both the right and left into the centre. Only in this way will the vote accumulate and produce dividends in the way of seats.

We see it as our essential task, in forming a new centre-left party, to provide the "swing" from the left to the centre which will be the counterpart of the expected "swing" from Conservatives to Liberals in the next general election. To take maximum advantage of this dual effect, an electoral pact between the Liberals and ourselves is needed; but we do not see two centre parties as being permanent. If the tactic is successful there is every reason for the two parties to combine to form the true party of the radical centre, so long missing and so long desired.

We acknowledge that there is only room, and need, for one such party. Two parties are only needed now in order to break the two-party deadlock. Far from being in danger of losing its identity, the Liberal Party can, if it has the vision and courage, become part of the government of Britain. It will find very willing allies in us if it chooses to make the attempt.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN PHIPPS,
Mathon Court,
Mathon,
Malvern.
September 9.

Welsh television

From Professor D. Simon Evans and

American nuclear deterrence strategy

From Mr R. Henderson

Sir, May I make three points in reply to your leader today (September 4) on Presidential Directive 59? To say that the likelihood of reprisal is the essence of deterrence is not necessarily true. The scale of that reprisal is also relevant.

The problem with the "limited nuclear war" idea is twofold: first, it apparently removes the sting from any reprisal (we're safe at least from full-scale war), thereby beckoning on the first aggressive act; secondly, it lowers the nuclear threshold in response to even conventional attack by its central assumption that you can be sure of containing such a war, of keeping it limited. It is possible that such a war would remain limited, but it is pretty unlikely: most people don't bet their lives on such chances.

Secondly, if, as you point out, the American President, under no immediate threat of attack, decides not to bother telling his Secretary of State about the decision, how sure can we be that if the cruise missiles get here, they will not be launched, at a time of tension, without consultation?

Thirdly, the recently announced "stealth" system of avoiding radar detection has provoked little comment. What could be more likely to increase international tension than such an "invisible threat"? What could be more likely to provoke a pre-emptive strike than the idea that "they can hit us without our knowing"?

Yours faithfully,
R. HENDERSON,
33 Harborne Park Road,
Harborne,
Birmingham.
September 4.

From Mr W. E. Catling

Sir, There are many of us who fought and bled in the last war—patriotic and responsible—who have very real misgivings about the policy which is being pursued in respect of armaments generally and nuclear weapons in particular.

Lord Chalfont in your paper quite recently (August 4) questioned the wisdom of the vast expenditure on Trident.

Having due regard to the new American doctrine of "limited nuclear war", can we believe that our own small capability will deter? Knowing of the new American doctrine, are the Russians likely to be deterred from wiping us out by the deployment of cruise missiles in our country but under American control?

You castigate the TUC, the Labour Party and the Liberals for doubts and divisions in their ranks on this subject. It is surely hopeful that someone is thinking about this fearsome problem rather than accepting the sterile policy of the

ment to tell us all what efforts are being made to halt and reverse this arms race.

What is the level of our representatives in Geneva at the Committee on Disarmament? Are we making any positive contribution to the formidable agenda prepared after the 1979 UN Special Session on Disarmament?

The net UNSSD in 1982 is likely to be our last chance of avoiding self-annihilation.

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM E. CATLING,
Little Briers,
5 Barrs Wood Road,
New Milton,
Hampshire.
September 4.

From Mr R. J. Horesh

Sir, A "limited" nuclear war (today's leader (September 4)) is impossible for one simple reason: the participants would not be able to agree on whether an equal amount of suffering had been inflicted on each side. All those hundreds of dead and mutilated civilians-who-happened-to-live-near-missile-silos complicating the issue!

No, Sir, the logic of the nuclear game dictates an *unpredictable* response—one which threatens unknown numbers of Russians—as the optimal deterrent to a Soviet attack. It says a lot about this logic—and incidentally helps to vindicate the American system of selecting presidential candidates—that the interests of Western civilization are best served by ensuring that the finger on the button belongs to a man who is incompetent, irrational, or both.

Yours, etc.
R. J. HORESH,
Emmanuel College,
Cambridge.
September 4.

From Mrs J. R. Beakbane

Sir, When Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister, there must have been many people like myself who thought that because a woman was in charge there was more hope for world peace.

Instead, there has been what appears to have been an increasing obsession with military preparation. Now, the British people are being encouraged to make money by selling even more weapons abroad.

Unemployment is alarming, and unpleasant, but the encouragement of people to kill should not be tolerated at any price.

Please, will a man or woman committed to peace come forward to lead this nation?

Yours faithfully,
JOAN BEAKBANE,
Jacob's Ladder,
Low Habberley,
Kidderminster.

Futu trans

From Mr

Sir, Your a meeting Labour I the exhib ing the anaesthet public tra

Since a travellers foreign can have it include contribute

No me report of it is the resisted. Yours, CECIL G 6 Palace

From Sir

Sir, Cong Wright on our de port. An all is a n

The ru of the co paid for licensing greater p train and passenger journey.

The G do all it dily by only at encourage National the card passenger Yours fa CHRISTO The Che Castle H Guildfor Surrey.

Footba

From Mr

Sir, All ments, l sures, ha the indiv ball mat side the remedies who mus culprits, clubs and

The p has little grounds, of those clubs ha they can selves; l share of the exte significant the crow disturbat

rather than put in the British highly unlikely which remained hands would allow shift, though Mr presumably be considerable way rection.

plies to his deter- ut down govern- n in the economy. stresses, regula- re introduced for motives can often of effects. They a barrier to th, reducing the ss to provide the r living standards targets of econo-

fourth point is in most important. o, to restore the e, to balance the bring down in- is not just an res. Inflation in es spills over into world, upsetting tionary plans of s.

fact practical to cuts on the scale sustained military a balanced budget. able that in office ould have to trim ill. of his policies Still, the strategy shows a clearer of the needs of the world than the cession of emer- ges which have the Carter years.

to distort and piece of bad news the temptation to rtle whatever does is plays into the opponents. In a rously monitored almost everything the end. If, when harge of conceal- made, attempts at ill be suspect in well founded they

the lost needles eemed much less had been made time; the case of