

A message from our chair; we need your views too!

Dear members,

Let me begin by wishing you all a happy new millenium year. Let us also hope that in 2000 a positive turning point is reached in the fortunes of the Palestinians.

Campaigning after Oslo

The aim of Palestine Solidarity Campaign is, of course, to support the Palestinians in their struggle for a just resolution of their conflict with Zionism. For many years, especially during the time of the *intifada*, this was a relatively straightforward, if arduous, task. A significant part of public opinion was open to recognising that the Palestinian cause was just and needed to be campaigned for. The problem since Oslo, it seems to me, has been that Western public opinion has become convinced that a just resolution is on the point of being achieved. It is therefore disinclined to become involved in a campaign which appears to them superflous. The same applies to Western governments and international institutions which now feel free to wash their hands of the whole situation. There is a feeling that anyone who is still beating the old drum of Palestine solidarity must be an extremist.

Of course we all know that this perception is terribly naive. But we are intimately affected by it. If you have tried to recruit people to PSC as I have done for a couple of years now, you will know what I'm talking about. Your Executive Committee have in these difficult circumstances struggled to find ways of keeping the Palestine solidarity flame burning. There is a clear need for scrutiny and debate of the post-Oslo situation; the question is how best to organise ourselves for this purpose.

The magazine and the bulletin

One way in which we hoped to achieve something was by improving the quality, size and frequency of our magazine. I hope you will agree that the result has been impressive. It was thought that we could cover part or all of the extra costs by producing more than double the number of copies required for members and selling these off to the general public. It was further anticipated that we would thereby attract more members to PSC and that this would ease our financial problems. Unfortunately it transpired that we were over-optimistic and we recently found ourselves in the embarassing position of having to arrange terms with our printer for payment of a £750 debt. Clearly we need to improve our housekeeping. The Executive Committee is now urgently reviewing the situation in the hope that we can at least maintain a quarterly circulation. We intend to keep in touch with members in the intervening periods with bulletins like the present one.

What do you think? What could you do?

It is now time to ask you what you think. How do you think we should proceed? Here are some ideas which come to mind about what PSC and/or individual PSC members *might* usefully be doing in present circumstances. *Please* send us your comments.

(a) Put the Palestinian case to those in power in specific instances where the British or other governments (including the EC) appear to have overlooked it. For this purpose we need to collaborate with other pro-Palestinian groups both at home and abroad.

- (b) Serve as a general information resource to the public. The magazine and the website should form a part of this.
- (c) Collaborate with like-minded groups which oppose imperialism and other forms of injustice.
- (d) Provide a forum for discussing the philosophical/intellectual problems underlying or arising out of the Israel/Palestine dispute - e.g. race, ethnicity, language, multiculturalism, nationalism, religion, imperialism and militarism.
- (e) Maintain a sense of community within the Palestine Solidarity movement and beyond by holding social events, thereby warding off a sense of despair and isolation. We might also use such functions to do some fundraising for Palestinian charities.
- (f) Maintain links with Palestinians wherever they may be with the purpose both of ensuring a human connection with the Palestinian problem and of reassuring Palestinians that their plight has not been totally forgotten.
- (g) Engage wherever possible Jews and Jewish organisations in dialogue, since the reality is that they are more likely to be interested and to have the power to influence Israeli politics than any other group. Their influence on those in the West with the power to exert pressure where it matters is also likely to be greater.
- (h) Monitor the media and respond appropriately on the Israel-Palestine dispute.

Tapping your resources; interaction with you, our members

If we had the personpower we might do all of these things, and others which you will hopefully suggest. I believe that we have an untapped reservoir of talent and energy among you, our membership. What we need is for you to come forward, and for that to happen we need to be in touch. One of the easiest and cheapest ways for this to happen is for us all to communicate and exchange ideas by email. (See the adjoining box for information about getting on-line etc.) We also aim to hold more social gatherings (see information on our forthcoming London get-together), and it would seem a good strategy to revive and expand our network of branches.

Let us know what you think of these ideas and we will feed back to the whole membership what you tell us. If you have any spare cash, send us a donation to help us over our present sticky patch. Likewise, if your membership has expired, or is about to do so, please renew promptly.

Best wishes and we look forward to hearing from you,
Francis Clark-Lowes