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ARGENTINA - A SEMI-COLONIAL COUNTRY?

Since the build-up to World War One, revolutionary Marxists have identified imperialism as a specific form of international capitalist domination, which needs to be understood and fought by the working class movement. The question of imperialism, and its relationship to 'Third World' countries lies at the heart of the debate between us and many other Trotskyist groups and indeed among us over the Falklands/Malvinas War. To many revolutionaries it has seemed that in refusing to support Argentina in the war, by taking a defeatist position on both sides, we have broken with the Leninist conception of the anti-imperialist struggles of 'oppressed nations' which should be supported regardless of the character of the regime in power.

There is a big problem that is central to this debate. The term imperialism is never actually defined by those who support Argentina which reflects that fact that the Trotskyist movement, including ourselves, has failed to seriously analyse the character of contemporary imperialism. Instead, the arguments of people, some of whom are vehemently anti-Trotskyist, have been simply borrowed to back up accommodation to nationalism (petty bourgeois or not so petty) in countries like Argentina. Our position actually stands to the left, not to the right, as they seem to think, of groups that support (however critically) Galtieri's war.

A typical example of the 'Argentina as semi-colony' argument is to be found in an article by Will Reissner in 'Intercontinental Press', a newspaper of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, subsequently printed in 'Socialist Challenge'. Entitled 'Argentina - a semi-colonial economy', it is centred round the argument that:

"Argentine economic development has been deformed and distorted by the predominance ^{role of} foreign capital has played in the development of industry, and by the fundamental influence that imperialist companies exert on the Argentine state" (ICP, 3.5.82)

This theory, called the 'development of underdevelopment', has been the hallmark of radical sociology for the last twenty years. It should be pointed out, though it doesn't necessarily prove anything, that Lenin did not share the view that imperialism 'distorted and deformed' colonial economies. But the problem lies much deeper than a simple question of dogma.

First of all, distorted and deformed as compared to what? Theories of underdevelopment rest on the assumption that there is a 'normal' (undeformed and undistorted) pattern of development, which countries like Argentina have deviated from because of the dominance of foreign capital. The idea that capitalist development is normally wonderful and egalitarian, every sector of the population developing happily in tandem, is actually quite extraordinary for a Marxist. All that the description (not analysis) of foreign capital, uneven development etc. actually proves, is that capitalism in Argentina has developed under different historical conditions to capitalism in e.g. Britain.

Secondly, what does it mean to say that an 'economy' is deformed and distorted? Expressions to do with the 'national economy' would be avoided like the plague by Marxists if they were talking about advanced capitalist countries, but in countries like Argentina it

is regarded as unproblematic. It is one thing to say that there has been a particular (uneven) pattern in the accumulation of capital, a particular structure to the international division of labour, and that these affect the class struggle internationally; it is quite another thing to draw a line of divide between the 'Argentine economy' and 'imperialism' with everything bad in the former attributed to the latter. From there some easy steps are made. Reissner, quite rightly, argues that Argentina has been dominated by:

"an alliance between Argentine landowners and imperialism" (at least in the past) and that this alliance has had ramifications for "economic development". But the implications, once we start talking in terms of the 'Argentine economy', is that Argentine capital (landed or otherwise) is no more than an extension of foreign capital i.e. that what is oppressive about it is its foreign connections. In other words, the alliance between Argentine and foreign capital is somehow 'alien' to the 'Argentine economy' - or even that the political-economic strategies of states such as in Argentina, are simply imposed by imperialism, presumably against the spoken will of the Argentine bourgeoisie as well.

The next step in this argument is simple: there is a contradiction between Argentine and imperialist capital, the Argentine bourgeoisie can take anti-imperialist action. What is wrong with Argentine capital when it takes such supposed action is not that it does so as capital, in its own interests, but that it does not do so consistently. Consequently the point of difference between the working class and the bourgeoisie is that the bourgeoisie is not nationalist enough; it betrays the nationalist cause by selling out to imperialism.

The consequences of all this petty-bourgeois mystification about the 'national economy' is to bind the working class to the bourgeoisie via nationalism. Bourgeois 'anti-imperialist' demagoguery is taken at face value and given a 'proletarian' content. Many Trotskyists - especially in Latin America - have been put to their deaths as a result of such capitulation.

A third problem is that of why, precisely, foreign capital should 'deform and distort' economies at all. Reissner provides a number of avenues to answer this question. First, he gives a breakdown of the Argentine economy as compared with Canada, showing graphically that Argentina is less developed than Canada. In fact Reissner's figures are wrong: but it is of course true that Argentine capitalism is less advanced than Canadian.

Unfortunately to explain this with reference to foreign capital in Argentina is no explanation at all. Canada is also a field of investment for enormous amounts of foreign capital, particularly from the US. Of all the countries in the world, it is probably the one most dominated by foreign capital. And it is only necessary to extend the line or argument to see where it leads us. What about foreign capital in Japan? Or Britain? In fact, the majority of capital exports from imperialist countries are to other imperialist countries. Since the early 70's, the USA itself has become a prime market for capital exports from Europe and Japan. Clearly the USA has not been 'deformed and distorted' by foreign capital. Nor has Britain. The argument that it has is the argument of Tony Benn. Patterns of capital accumulation in countries like Argentina are clearly determined by something other than the national origins of capital investments.

Reissner's second line of argument is that foreign capital drains off resources that it does not reinvest in Argentina; there is a net outflow of capital. Translated into Marxist terms this should read that there is a transfer of value out of Argentina.

But simply the fact that imperialist capital has control over its own profits doesn't really explain very much. They obviously do reinvest in Argentina, or their own factories would fall apart. What determines where they invest is obviously profitability - but since all capitalist invest where the rate of profit is highest, it is again difficult to see what difference it makes that the capital in question is foreign. What actually underlies Reissner's complaint is, once more, an implicit belief in a 'nice' (national) capital which would invest in all the right things if it was left to itself.

Having said that, transfers of value do in fact play an important part in determining patterns of capital accumulation, arising from different organic compositions of capital in advanced and backward countries. Mandel, also a member of the USFI, has stressed this. But since the organic composition of capital (capital intensity) is actually very high in Argentine industry, a precise explanation of this mechanism remains a complex question.

The third line of argument is also taken from the radical sociology of development. Arising from the view that the weaker the ties of the satellite (e.g. Argentina) to the 'metropole' (imperialism), the better the chances for independent industrialisation, it is noted that during the 1930's/40's recession, when these ties were weak, many Third World countries achieved unprecedented rates of growth. Thus, according to Reissner:

"At the end of the war, Argentina seemed to be poised for large-scale industrial development. But... development did not take place because the imperialist corporations could again turn their attention to Argentina". (op.cit)

There are two huge problems with this line of reasoning. First, because the largest leaps in industrial development in some backward capitalist countries (Brazil, Argentina, Mexico etc) have taken place precisely at times of world recession - i.e. since 1974 - but precisely under the auspices of foreign capital. To explain away this problem, Mandel (following some Latin American academics) has employed the term 'dependent development'. In other words, if in doubt, square the circle.

The more fundamental problem is that 'independent' development is impossible to define. No capitalist country can be independent and every capitalist country is 'dependent'. In the world capitalist economy, what we are dealing with is not independent vs dependent capitals, but large powerful capitals vs weaker ones. All that Reissner's arguments show is that Argentine capital is weaker than US or British capital, and that, surely, is a banality.

What however, is more important than any of this, is that the whole framework within which Reissner operates is one in which the capitalist system is defined as a relationship of exploitation between nations, rather than classes. Imperialist, consequently, is understood as a system of national oppression (exploitation of the national economy), rather than class oppression. The Argentine working class, certainly, is exploited and oppressed by imperialism; but Argentine capital is not. From the point of view of the Argentine working class, the relative weakness of Argentine capital is irrelevant: it confronts both Argentine capital and imperialist capital; and it confronts them both as capital.

Consequently, whilst it is true - absolutely true - to say that the Argentine working class is oppressed by imperialism, and needs to carry out an anti-imperialist struggle, Argentina as a nation is not oppressed. National liberation is an irrelevant

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issue; and it is nationalism that holds the Argentine workers in check.

Indeed the shift in the nature of imperialist investments since 1974 - under the impact of capitalist crisis, seeking out a higher rate of profit - signifies intensification of imperialist oppression. But that is a class, not a national oppression, certainly in the case of Argentina.

Reissner recognises the enormous concentration and power of the Argentine working class. He describes it in terms that strikingly resemble Trotsky's analysis of the Russian working class before 1917 (was the Russian working class nationally oppressed?). But he cannot grasp its true significance. An analysis of imperialism as essentially a system of plunder (of nations, by nations), rather than a system of exploitation (of classes, by classes) mitigates against understanding the world. As such it mitigates against developing a strategy to change it.

All the theories of underdevelopment have a simple political conclusion: if the problem is foreign domination of the national economy, the solution is to break with the international capitalist system and go it alone; that is, autarky. Logically, Reissner's focus on the problems of the 'national economy' lead to socialism in one country on a miniscule scale. If the Trotskyist movement is to develop a theory of imperialism, it needs to start out by rejecting these kinds of theory and by analysing the precise nature of the international capitalist system, of imperialist domination, and of a strategy for international workers' power.

ELLIS

TILC RESOLUTION ON CENTRAL AMERICA: FIRST DRAFT: INTRODUCTION

Kinnell

This should be read together with the final text of the resolution (TILC Bulletin no.1) and my article on permanent revolution in IB8.

Much is common to the first and final drafts. The crucial differences are in the following passages:

First draft

Almost all of these mass movements are organised in the form of an anti-imperialist front in which a relatively small proletariat is allied with a very much larger peasantry and rural proletariat as well as bourgeois reformist elements. Such a front is 'natural' insofar as the small size of the industrial working class makes a united workers' front an impossibility. Moreover it corresponds to an important characteristic of neo-colonial states, where the small entrepreneurs, petty bourgeoisie and middle class, although they depend directly on the exploitation of the workers and peasants, are themselves oppressed by imperialism in a way that does not obtain in the imperialist metropolis. Thus, at determinate moments these forces can join the anti-imperialist movement precisely to improve their own bargaining position with imperialism. Such fronts may therefore be seen as the political expression of the oppressed nation in its struggle against imperialist exploitation...

... the building of proletarian hegemony in the anti-imperialist struggle must take place within the existing fronts in sharp opposition to the political line of the reformists... Trotskyists should spell out demands for the political subordination of the national bourgeoisie to the working class - while recognising that this would, in all probability, lead to a political break...

Final draft

Almost all of these mass movements are organised in the form of an anti-imperialist front in which a relatively small proletariat is allied with a very much larger peasantry and rural proletariat as well as bourgeois reformist elements. As pointed out above they follow the Nicaraguan model which in turn was influenced by the failure of Guevarism and by the turn of the Castroites to more traditional Stalinist politics of class collaboration. They are therefore not 'natural' alliances but the product of the crisis of political leadership in the region...

... a full victory of the struggle - through a socialist revolution subsuming the democratic programme - is possible only through the development of an independent proletarian revolutionary vanguard which can forge a strong alliance with the oppressed plebeian masses of the countryside and cities. Such a development presupposes the break-up of the existing fronts...

... The basic principles, in our view, would have to be the following:

a) Maintenance of independent proletarian politics...

... The illusory nature of such ideas as the political 'subordination' or subjugation of the bourgeois forces or of achieving proletarian 'hegemony' over them within the fronts must be patiently exposed...

The background is this. A preliminary draft was written by

James D. We received it at the EC shortly before the December TILC meeting. I skimmed through the draft at the EC meeting and said that I thought it was politically off-beam. It was agreed that Cunliffe should re-work it. The 'first draft' published here is the draft brought to the TILC meeting, as amended by Cunliffe.

In the TILC meeting I, together with Franco of the LOR and Carolan, argued that the draft was still faulty (though Cunliffe's amendments had introduced some passages more in line, to our thinking, with a Trotskyist attitude). We argued, in short, that the ideas expressed in the draft were more like the Stalin-Bukharin line for China in the '20s than the Trotskyist line. (Remember, Stalin and Bukharin also talked about the inevitability of a fight against the bourgeoisie and the eventual departure of the bourgeoisie from the 'bloc of 4 classes').

Cunliffe, Jones and Smith initially resisted our arguments, but it was agreed that amendments should be drafted. I did amendments and the amended draft was accepted without further controversy.

The intrinsic interest of the debate on Central America alone makes the reproduction of these texts worthwhile. Since they were stencilled, however, they have acquired another importance - in relation to the debate on the Falklands war.

One strand of that debate has been the majority's insistence that the Falklands war was something quite different from a real anti-imperialist struggle like in El Salvador. Moreover, Argentina, a developed industrial country with a large working class and almost no peasantry, is very different from the countries of central America.

Perhaps more fundamental, however, is a debate on basic criteria. If I understand the minority's view correctly, it is that once we establish that Argentina is an oppressed country (defined some way or another), then support for the Argentine bourgeois state in a war with the British imperialist state is more or less automatic. (The majority would argue that such support always depends on the war being in a bourgeois-democratic, ie. national liberation, cause).

Implicit here is the idea that the bourgeoisie in an oppressed country is a different creature altogether from the bourgeoisie in an imperialist country. It is even in a different "class camp", according to IB 7. To it the notion that "the main enemy is at home" no longer applies. We can regard a war conducted by the bourgeoisie as fundamentally a war conducted by "the anti-imperialist masses", with the bourgeoisie only fulfilling the role of inadequate and treacherous leadership in the "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement".

The link with the ideas developed on central America is clear - and suggests that the debate at the December TILC meeting was not as conclusive as we thought.

There is also a more direct ideological link. The strategy of "proletarian hegemony in an anti-imperialist united front" is championed by Politica Obrera in Argentina, and also (though no doubt with a different interpretation) by the left-Peronist Montoneros.

FIRST DRAFT: TILC RESOLUTION ON CENTRAL AMERICA, December 1981

Since the overthrow of Somoza, Central America has become the centre of the Latin American revolution and a key region in the straggle between imperialism and the international working class. Over the last year this struggle has taken on an increasingly vital character as the Reagan administration seeks with ever-greater desperation to weaken and reverse the mobilisation of the masses in Guatemala and El Salvador, to mount a counter-revolution in Nicaragua and, if possible, to topple the Castro leadership in Cuba.

In escalating its military presence in the area and returning to the politics of the Cold War, the moves of imperialism in Central America are a sharper expression of its worldwide strategy. But the challenge to US military and economic supremacy is also most acute in this, its own "backyard".

IMPERIALIST STRATEGY.

By mid November 1981 Secretary Of State General Haig had begun openly preparing the diplomatic ground for a possible blockade of Cuba and Nicaragua as well as direct Military intervention in El Salvador. These threats - which have always existed - have become more acute and been met by a defensive mobilisation of military forces in both Cuba and Nicaragua as well as loud warnings by the regime in Grenada that they fear a US invasion.

These new moves and threats by imperialism are not simply the whims of the Reagan apparatus. The Pentagon knows full well that it would not today be a question of simply repeating the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. National liberation struggles have advanced and the US would be faced with the need to fight anti-guerrilla wars in the face of mass opposition. US imperialism has a precedent for this in Vietnam - and has no guarantee that it would be able even much closer to home to avoid a repetition of the same experience.

In addition, military action by the USA in Central America would inevitably damage the imperialist propaganda campaign against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and against the crackdown in Poland. Nor could the US imperialists necessarily count upon the support of the USA's client states in Latin America, for whose rulers the myth of 'national independence' is a critical feature of dictatorial control, which has already led to tactical differences with imperialism.

It is this which acts as an obstacle to exploiting the so-called 'peace-keeping' force of the Organisation of American States in place of US marines in El Salvador - a course which would otherwise be cheaper, diplomatically more acceptable and easier to US public opinion than a direct US intervention.

We should recognise that within the USA the campaign against intervention is based largely on the antipathy to new foreign adventures in the aftermath of Vietnam. Though the campaign is publicly headed by bourgeois liberal sectors, it has gained most of its impetus in Congress from an essentially conservative reaction. The task of mobilising a proletarian, internationalist opposition to the war drive has been evaded by the leaders of the US workers' movement.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

In this situation a division has developed within the imperialist bloc between the USA and sectors of the European bourgeoisie. These elements - expressing themselves principally through the Second International - have declared major reservations about the Reagan strategy for Central America, and produced an alternative strategy which appears to challenge it.

This difference is most obvious in the France-Mexican recognition of the Salvadorean opposition front the FDR-FMLN. This is particularly important since Mexico is the strongest local capitalist state, of great strategic importance to the USA.

Social democracy opposes the strengthening of the existing local oligarchies and their military dictatorships - a policy which has led inevitably to the waging of genocidal civil wars. Instead the reformists seek to concede political independence and to end the absolutist rule of the landed bourgeoisies in a bid to prevent the complete destruction of the capitalist state apparatus and preserve the basic property relations within a reconstituted state capitalist regime. It envisages extensive nationalisations in order to provide an infrastructure and guarantees of the long-term extraction of surplus value by imperialism.

This strategy is less immediately threatening to the masses than the US war drive and its arming of the dictatorships. But ultimately it is equally as pernicious - since it seems to fit in with the aims of the national liberation struggle and to coincide with many of the proposals of the petty bourgeois guerrilla leaderships. These leaders themselves seek only to achieve formal bourgeois democratic freedoms - freedoms which, however are unrealisable in backward capitalist states.

Social Democracy is also fighting for the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the national liberation movements. This means limiting the mass mobilisation and fighting ultimately for bourgeois control over the very workers' movement upon which the national capitalists and social democrats themselves currently depend to accomplish their schemes. The strategy of social democracy - resting upon the containment of the anti-imperialist struggle and the suppression in particular of its socialist element - is more risky to imperialism; but it is a more shrewd policy than that of the US administration.

THE MOBILISATION OF THE MASSES.

In NICARAGUA the initial class alliance forged by the the FSLN is now falling apart. But it shows no sign of being replaced by a workers and peasants government based on a strong working class leadership. Meanwhile the Sandinista regime continues to follow it necessarily erratic and crisis ridden course as a petty bourgeois leadership which is organically threatened both by the domestic bourgeoisie (as in the constant tirades of the La Prensa newspaper) and by the working class (necessitating the typically bonapartist response of prohibiting strikes and independent proletarian organisation).

The US offensive has succeeded in revealing to the FSLN that imperialism is not susceptible to diplomatic overtures, and must always intervene - the form of intervention being determined by the degree of crisis it experiences. Hence after failing to obtain indisputable bourgeois hegemony in the new regime, Carter's administration embarked upon the campaign of economic and diplomatic sabotage which Reagan and Haig are now escalating into a full offensive. A choice is being presented to the FSLN leaders in ever more stark form. Either they must defend the national liberation struggle - through the

nationalisation of property relations, the formation of a workers' state open support to the other Central American struggles and explicit demands on Cuba and the Soviet bloc to provide aid: or they must submit to client status, the terms of which they cannot hope to negotiate. While the Sandinistas continue to hold back the masses and fail - despite imperialist accusations - to provide necessary aid to the struggle in El Salvador and Guatemala, the FSLN will dig the grave of the Nicaraguan revolution.

But the masses of Nicaragua must be offered a third, revolutionary alternative. It is for this reason, and not through any abstract or dogmatic motivations that Trotskyists criticise the FSLN, and call for the building of revolutionary proletarian leadership - a Trotskyist Party in Nicaragua.

In EL SALVADOR, the puppet Duarte regime and the USA are losing the guerrilla war simply by not winning it. Militarily, the guerrillas of the FMLN have recovered from the disastrous "final offensive" of January 1981 and now effectively control a third of the country. But without external support they will be incapable of making a breakthrough and gaining state power in the short or medium term.

The FDR-FMLN alliance has been built on the nicaraguan model. It is therefore intrinsically unstable even under war conditions. On the one hand the bourgeois reformists (Ungo, Mayorga and Zamora) seek a negotiated solution in tandem with social democracy. On the other hand within the FMLN itself certain groups (notably FARN) constantly tend to the "short-cut" of a coup in alliance with dissident sectors of the military - thus revealing their aim of an entente with imperialism. The bourgeois forces in the FDR have no social base. They can, however, count on the backing of the Communist Party, which is still attached to the unrealistic policy of a bourgeois democratic revolution even though no national bourgeoisie exists. But they are also faced with a left wing much stronger than in Nicaragua, principally because the left organisations have developed out of the CP in strong opposition to it.

Nonetheless the Salvadorean left has pledged itself to a programmatic platform which sets aside socialism "in the short term" and lends itself openly to bourgeois reformism. While some forces on the left (FPL and BPR) call for a worker-peasant alliance and have a history of opposing the CP and bourgeois reformists, they do not fight for the establishment of a workers' and peasants government. Nor have they sought to break the links with Social Democracy which offers a lifeline of support to the bourgeois reformists.

Thus although the political forces in the FDR-FMLN are more heterogeneous and potentially antagonistic in the short run than those contained in and organised around the FSLN, the tendency is increasingly towards bourgeois hegemony within a popular front rather than proletarian hegemony in an anti-imperialist united front. Here, too, the task of Trotskyists is to offer a consistent alternative to class collaboration.

In GUATEMALA, the process of building the anti-imperialist front has advanced more slowly. This fact has slowed down the revolutionary movement in the whole region, since Guatemala is the key state in Central America, possessing the largest population and most developed economy. Over the last year, the guerrilla struggle has made a major impact, with considerable successes against the forces of the dictatorships (evident in the fact that more officers have been killed than in El Salvador),

and has seen the operational unity of the various groups (EGP, ORPA, PGT, FAR).

But the concentration of the guerrillas in the countryside has failed to protect the working class and contributed to its slow recovery from the major defeats of the 1960s and 70s. The guerrillas still adhere to the broad strategy of the FSLN, despite the cool response from the reduced circles of bourgeois reformists, and despite the massive support they receive from the large rural proletariat. The Guatemalan struggle is however having a growing influence in Mexico, and forcing major military support to the dictatorship from the US.

In HONDURAS, less economically developed and more backward politically than the neighbouring states, the level of mass mobilisation has not yet reached the point of armed conflict on a national scale. Significantly a sector of the military considers that its best chance to avoid this is to offer reforms and establish a populist regime. The USA has pressured the high command into following the "Duarte formula" of conceding elections and acquiescing to a civilian failure, and will not protect the weakening Honduran oligarchy from the tornado that is sweeping the region.

THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT.

Almost all of these mass movements are organised in the form of an anti-imperialist front in which a relatively small proletariat is allied with a very much larger peasantry and rural proletariat as well as bourgeois reformist elements. Such a front is "natural" insofar as the small size of the industrial working class makes a united workers' front an impossibility. Moreover it corresponds to an important characteristic of neo-colonial states, where the small entrepreneurs, petty bourgeoisie and middle class, although they depend directly upon the exploitation of the workers and peasants, are themselves oppressed by imperialism in a way that does not obtain in the imperialist metropolis. Thus, at determinate moments these forces can join the anti-imperialist movement precisely to improve their own bargaining position with imperialism. Such fronts may therefore be seen as the political expression of the oppressed nation in its struggle against imperialist exploitation. As such, while they may incubate the germs of socialist revolution, these fronts do not express it openly. Consequently their leadership remains undefined. Beneath all the slogans of "unity", there is a constant and bitter struggle between the bourgeois opposition - backed by social democracy - and the working class and peasant organisations which, by virtue of their petty bourgeois leaderships are erratic in political direction and cannot represent a consistent revolutionary vanguard.

As a result there remains a struggle as to whether the national liberation struggle becomes dominated by the reformist bourgeoisie through a Stalinist-backed popular front, or moves towards the destruction of capitalism. The outcome depends not solely upon the political subjugation of the bourgeois elements by the mass organisations but also upon the establishment of the leading role of the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard - the building of Trotskyist parties - inside organisations which themselves at present incorporate many characteristics of the popular front. This political struggle is absolutely essential because despite its small size, only the industrial working class can provide the revolutionary vanguard which will ensure the continuity of the drive to socialist revolution.

As in almost all neo-colonial states, such a leading role can only be realised through a strong and active alliance between proletarian revolutionary forces and the mobilised strength of the peasantry - coupled with a programme to rouse the rural proletariat. As a consequence of decades of

reliance upon capitalist agriculture, the rural workers are the single largest sector of the masses. But they are increasingly divorced from the traditional peasant demands for land. Instead they look, like their class brothers and sisters in the towns towards increased wages and guaranteed employment.

The importance of this alliance between the toilers of the town and the countryside must not however be allowed to displace the fight for the leadership of the working class in the alliance or lead to a turn to the countryside as the principal site of struggle. This has in fact taken place in all these states, and contributed to the weakening of the proletariat - especially in El Salvador throughout 1980-81. In this sense, the strategy of "guerra popular prolongada" espoused by the Central American guerrillas is similar to guevarism, although it remains distinct from it in the sense that it has achieved mass support and a number of notable military victories.

The balance of forces between Trotskyism and the mass movement means that the building of proletarian hegemony in the anti-imperialist struggle must take place within the existing fronts, in sharp opposition to the political line of the reformists. Indeed for certain specific and defined, limited tasks in the struggle against imperialism it is possible for the proletariat and poor peasants - without making any concessions on their own demands - to wage a struggle jointly with sections of the national bourgeoisie against the imperialist enemy. But it would be wrong to extend such temporary alliances on specific tasks into any kind of long-term political bloc, in which the independent programme and struggles of the working class and poor peasants inevitably become subordinated to the political demands of the "democratic" bourgeoisie in the name of an "anti-imperialist front". Trotskyists cannot place the exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the present broad fronts as a precondition for involvement in the struggle of the masses; but they must recognise that the task is to fight from the outset for perspectives and policies which will win the support of the militant rank and file in these fronts and create conditions for the exclusion of the bourgeois forces whose continued domination can only strangle the socialist revolution. At present, while their exclusion remains an impossibility and is not sought by the most active militants, Trotskyists should spell out demands for the political subordination of the national bourgeoisie to the working class - while recognising that this would, in all probability lead to a political break. In any case the political struggle must not be delayed until after the taking of power in the mistaken belief that the continued mobilisation of the masses can spontaneously and automatically displace the existing leadership and lead to the overturn of capitalist property and the emergence of a deformed workers' state on the Cuban pattern.

it is indeed such a belief which lies at the heart of the USFI's strategy for Central America. They voice only amicable criticism of the FSLN - and refuse to build revolutionary parties. This policy corresponds to a false understanding of the Cuban revolution and of the attitude of the Stalinist bureaucracies to developments in Central America, as well as a capitulation to petty bourgeois reformism. The responsibility of the Trotskyist movement is to build parties that will provide revolutionary leadership - not to wait for the spontaneous evolution of petty bourgeois leaderships into "natural Marxists". Indeed even the Cuban revolution and the assimilation of Castro's petty bourgeois movement into the orbit of Stalinism shows the necessity for a Trotskyist leadership to fight for the establishment of genuine workers' power based on the organised power of the masses.

Revolutionaries must therefore fight on two fronts. On the one hand they must support the anti-imperialist struggle against a growing imperialist offensive, and take an active part in this fight, on the other hand they must fight for proletarian hegemony. The latter struggle does not diminish by one iota the importance of the former. Yet it cannot be achieved simply by establishing a separate Trotskyist party outside the existing mass

organisations. This would be a sectarian stance towards organisations which are notable for their lack of a defined political character and in some cases highly accessible to revolutionary ideas. The experience of the Simon Bolivar Brigade in Nicaragua demonstrated very clearly the sectarian and maximalist nature of such a course - which must inevitably lead to isolation and failure.

SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

Furthermore the task of forming a revolutionary vanguard in these struggles must take as its focus the impossibility of the consolidation of national liberation while it remains constrained within the limits of the nation-state. Central America is a balkanised region, comprising small, disastrously-organised economies. The only basis for socialism is a planned economy created through the fight for a United Socialist States of Central America. Thus, in failing to give concrete military support to the other struggles in the region, both Nicaragua and Cuba are endangering the survival of their own conquests. And while Cuba - itself under direct pressure from the USA - has made perceptibly more emphatic verbal declarations of solidarity than those emanating from the rest of the Soviet bloc, the fact is that - despite the fabrications of the State Department and illusions of the USFI - Castro is at one with the Kremlin leaders in promoting the counter-revolutionary politics of Stalinism and failing the elementary responsibilities of proletarian internationalism. The fight for principled revolutionary leadership in Central America involves a fight against illusions in Stalinism and its Castroite variant.

- * NO U.S. INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA ! * DOWN WITH THE DICTATORSHIPS
- * FOR SOVIET, NICARAGUAN AND CUBAN AID TO THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE
- * FOR INTERNATIONAL BLACKING OF TRADE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE
- * MILITARY VICTORY TO THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS
- * NO TO U.S. MOVES AGAINST NICARAGUA AND CUBA: NO U.S. AID TO THE DICTATORSHIPS
- * FOR WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' GOVERNMENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA
- * ESTABLISH WORKERS' COUNCILS AND DEFENCE COMMITTEES
- * FOR A SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF CENTRAL AMERICA
- * BUILD TROTSKYIST PARTIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA AS PART OF A RECONSTRUCTED FI

YOU'RE ONLY YOUNG ONCE

The National Left Wing Youth Movement has been set up primarily to transform the LPYS from its present state, to a fighting Revolutionary youth movement, failing that, (blocks from the right-wing etc.), we intend to build a youth movement that is committed to Trotskyist politics and is a constant source of enthusiasm and recruitment to the adult party, LPYS or not, that is what we are about building.

The intervention into the YS is a tactic, but a very important one. Both previous organisations decided that it was necessary to work in the LPYS and liquidate an independent organisation into the YS in order to have a consistent orientation. Anyone who is committed to the YS but thinks that it is still possible to have an 'alternative' organisation to the YS could do no better than to look at the state of Revolution at the moment, who have one foot in and one foot out of the YS and are suffering tremendously from it. (No doubt if they do decide to go fully into the YS fully they will find 'progressive' elements of 'militants' politics that we never spotted before, in typical pabloite tradition).

We recognise that we won't transform the YS by poaching off the 'militant', we have to show comrades in 'militant' YS branches that the YS will be won for the revolutionaries in the main outside of it, not through the dog-fights every Tuesday night in it. Arguing against a centrist current is not youth work, youth work is winning working class youth to your politics and to your organisation, and therefore to the interventions of your organisation, in this case the LPYS.

It is not a concession to the militant that we fight to project ourselves as much a part of the YS as they are, the argument is not about or will not be won by programme alone, the decisive factor in the end will have to be who builds the YS the best, us or them.

The objective situation could hardly be better for building a communist youth movement. An empiricist would say that the Tories are playing into the hands of the left by launching such blatant attacks on youth. The truth of course is that the Tories know that there is no organisation organising youth in such a way as to threaten their ability to carry through these attacks. The YS has proved incapable of this, their method blocks it and also their ability to significantly increase their numbers in this situation, it may not be of any propaganda value at the moment, but if the truth be known the YOPS lobby of parliament would have been a flop had it not been for the presence of the 'Right to Work' march, both in numerical and morale terms.

We are at a stage now with the youth movement where we are capable of making a turn to mass work amongst youth. One of the advantages of the present Tory strategy to put us down is that they put youth in the same situation on mass, YOPS, etc.

There can be no doubt that in the localities in most areas, even the most 'hackish' branch of the militant YS's have grown. The reason for this is not because they are so correct, but they are going out and doing the work and youth are becoming more receptive to radical ideas.

At a recent debate a militant hack declared that militant branches were more active than branches run by us. In some areas this may be true, not

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because we are not active, but because I believe we are spreading ourselves too thin, we can't build a youth movement and go to 3 or 4 other meetings in the week. We have got to start prioritising youth work much more and concentrate on building youth groups in towns, this must, as the Wiganisation document points out, involve organising discos and going to youth clubs etc., which may seem tedious but will get results, to do this work consistently we have to sacrifice some of the areas of work that we are involved in. You're only young once, if we let youth work slip now we will find ourselves apologising for the fact that there is no youth work in the area because 'we're all too old to do youth work'.

The wiginisation document is I believe inadequate and needs to be rewritten and updated to accomodate today's conditions and not those in the '60s. However the basic principles and method of the document do require careful consideration by the whole movement.

If there are comrades who think that youth work does not deserve priority over other issues I would appreciate it very much if they would speak out and state their reasons for this position as a contribution to the urgent discussion that is required to make the qualatative and quantatative developments that are not only entirely possible, but necessary if we are going to build a movement that really can have the chance of transforming the LPYS.

SIMON HUNT

PARTY-BUILDING: A NEGLECTED ART?

A discussion document on recruitment
and the work of our branches.

"Were the proletariat as a whole capable of grasping its historical task immediately, it would need neither party nor trade union."

"The Communist Party is the fundamental weapon of revolutionary action of the proletariat, the combat organisation of its vanguard that must raise itself to the role of leader of the working class in all the spheres of its struggle without exception, and consequently in the trade union field."

"The question of the relationships between the party, which represents the proletariat as it should be, and the trade unions, which represent the proletariat as it is, is the most fundamental question of Marxism"

"If the theoretical structure of the political economy of Marxism rests squarely upon the conception of value as materialised labour, the revolutionary policy of Marxism rests upon the conception of the party as the vanguard of the proletariat.

Whatever may be the sources and political causes of opportunistic mistakes and deviations, they are always reduced ideologically to an erroneous understanding of the revolutionary party, of its relation to other proletarian organisations and to the class as a whole."

- Leon Trotsky, Marxism and the TUs.

How many of our branch members and branch organisers place a comparable emphasis on the development of our cadres, our "party" in the context of the overall daily work of the WSL? This document is an attempt to focus attention on these issues, and hopefully sharpen some comrades' awareness of the role of WSL branches in the building of revolutionary leadership.

Since the fusion last year many aspects of the work of the organisation have gone ahead by leaps and bounds. Our trade union work has advanced on all fronts, with substantially increased resources devoted to work in BL, TGWU, the Rail, the NHS unions and our interventions at trade union conferences. This work is far beyond the scope of either pre-fusion organisation. Our youth work has developed promising potential; there has been a successful women's trade union conference and the building of a periphery in the MP.

But the outcome of this work in terms of recruitment to the WSL has fallen consistently far below our modest expectations of a year ago. And the drive for our campaigns - beginning with the test case of the WSL Rally last autumn, has in most instances failed to reflect the possibilities now open to us as a major tendency on the left and a tendency with real policies to offer the workers' movement. With the SWP now apparently embarked upon a Healy-style sectarian turn away from their rank and file politics and the IMG plainly wracked with problems, there are real avenues open to us now that were not visible even a year ago.

Why is it that we have consistently under-achieved in our campaign work - resulting in poor WSL mobilisations for the two trade union conferences this spring?

I think the reasons are two-fold. First and foremost there is an acute weakness in our central direction of the work - work which

is more extended, more diverse than either group had previously attempted. It has taken us far longer than we expected to carry through the process of unification at national leadership level. Although we now have more full-time workers, we have not yet succeeded in establishing a sufficiently efficient division of labour to cover the various arenas of Party work and check through the implementation of decisions - in the unions, MP, youth, women, unemployed, anti-racist work, international work, publications, finance, admin and internal education.

This document is in no way an attempt to duck out of a self-criticism by the leadership of our own obvious failings in terms of internal communications within the movement and various other fields of work. But given these failings, it would be a big mistake to lump every one of the problems we face as the sole responsibility of the Executive and NC: branch and area leaderships must also examine their role in the movement.

There is an additional complication in assessing the problem of recruitment: the heavy emphasis our work places upon Broad Groups and the resultant lack of overt political profile for the WSL. It is true that there has probably been insufficient attention paid to establishing a regular framework of WSL activity as such, and ensuring that the WSL is discussed with Broad Group members and supporters. But the problem of recruitment to the WSL is if anything most acute where the Broad Groups too barely function: it is not so much a problem of WSL branches in general liquidating into circles of Broad Group contacts - it is a failure to use the Broad Group tactic to build a periphery; a conservatism that walls comrades off from seeking out new contacts through fresh work. Only in some cases can it be said that large Broad Group peripheries operate as a diversion from recruitment.

It is this side of the work - the turn towards new forces - which is the key to the problems of recruitment. If the paper - the main new resource gained by the fusion - is not being imaginatively and flexibly used, there is every reason to question whether there is a serious and vigorous approach to the winning of new contacts; and without new contacts we cannot have new recruits to the WSL; and without new recruits the movement in time will - on a local or a national level - simply ossify into an irrelevant sect, or politically submerge into its immediate political milieu - the MP, trade unions or women's movement.

Perhaps the issues involved can be better focussed if we dwell a little on why, and in what material conditions, we need to build not a left caucus in the labour movement, but a revolutionary party, a Leninist party with a democratic centralist structure and a programme based on Marxism.

The struggle for proletarian revolution in Britain brings workers up against a range of interrelated material structures through which the ruling class perpetuates its system of exploitation, but which are not immediately understood by workers.

1) There is of course the armoured backbone of the state machine - the police, the army, reinforced by the courts. Yet while these agencies are fundamental to capitalist stability their overt operations in Britain are generally restricted in scope. The reason for this is that more subtle mechanisms of control have to a large extent proved successful in containing the working class.

2) The most powerful of these is the capitalist ownership and management of the means of production - and thus total capitalist control over the daily lives of the vast majority of the population. The material condition of being dragooned and discip-

lined by capitalism and its agencies each day, subjected to the outpourings of the bourgeois mass media, processed by the education system of the bourgeois state (and for some also herded into line by Church leaders) does most of all to shape the daily thinking of workers. Within such an apparently immutable system, the instinctive response is to seek improvements here and there inside the existing framework - whether on an individual basis or collectively by groups of workers.

3) This view is actively promoted by the trade union bureaucracies, rising above the mass working class organisations and politically incorporated more or less openly into the capitalist establishment. The bureaucrats accept without question the immutability of the system which provides them with personal power and privilege and lend their weight to bourgeois propaganda against revolutionary struggle. Not by accident are they the leading witch-hunters.

4) Taking this blinkered reformist view into the political arena, the Labour leadership right and left swallows whole and promotes the charade of bourgeois Parliamentary democracy, in which MPs debate while the bankers generals and civil service bureaucrats make the decisions which shape the lives of the masses. By posing as a "voice of the workers" in this bourgeois discussion chamber, the Labour Party consistently diverts politically conscious workers away from independent class action, and misleads them on the character of the state they must combat.

5) In addition to this the trade union and Labour bureaucrats trade upon and by their actions reinforce sectoralism and divisions within the working class, exploiting political backwardness as a buttress for their own class collaboration. Thus we see the current Labour witch-hunt against those who question the panacea of Parliamentary democracy - but also in the same category of exploiting backwardness we should recognise the use made of craft divisions, professional privileges, and (even more cynically) racial, national and sexual divisions in the working class. A growing problem is the gulf between employed and unemployed. And the bureaucracy has a material interest in preserving these divisions.

6) And as if this toll of confusion and division were not sufficient, the capitalist class and its Labour lieutenants are also able to trade upon an internal division which still further atomises the working class - the perpetuation of the individual family unit. Even the increasing break-up of the conventional "nuclear family" leaves single parents, unmarried couples, gay people and single adults divided into isolated, economically weak and exploited individual units. Such units continue to be the focus of discipline - the arena where youth learn their "place" in the capitalist heap. They also provide an ideal target for media propaganda and consumer marketing. Within such units, the double oppression of women as both workers and unpaid domestic servants of their children or their men reaches its peak. It is from such extreme levels of oppression and super-exploitation that proletarian women have to emerge politically if they are to be drawn into revolutionary struggle.

From this general framework we can understand more correctly in today's context Lenin's insistence in What is to Be Done that the working class by its spontaneous evolution can reach no more than trade union (reformist) consciousness: and that because such consciousness is confined to seeking improvements within the bourgeois order, it must be regarded as bourgeois consciousness. Lenin insisted that something other than this was needed if the working class were to make a revolution:

"In a word, every trade union secretary conducts and helps to conduct the "economic struggle against the employers and the government". It cannot be too strongly insisted that this is not yet Social Democracy (Marxism). The Social-Democrats' ideal should not be a trade union secretary, but a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; he (sic!) must be able to generalise all of these manifestations to produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; he must be able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to explain his socialistic convictions and his democratic demands to all, in order to explain to all and everyone the world-historic significance of the proletariat's struggle for socialism."

(Chapetr 3, E)

Thus we must build not simply a left caucus of union militants or left Labourites with a more advanced series of reformist demands; we must recruit and train workers with an overall grasp of the need for revolution. They must be trained to recognise that revolution will only come in Britain on the basis of a vast social movement which will require a leadership that is capable of analysing the social political and economic forces driving forward the class struggle, and correctly intervening to raise and deepen the political awareness of those in struggle and the content of their fight.

We don't simply want a group of individuals with correct formal calls about smashing the state; we need to build a party capable of fighting in a disciplined and coordinated way on a programme that can mobilise the forces necessary to do the smashing! We need to be able to find the point of connection with sections of workers moving forward in struggle, and to fight both alongside and against them to raise them to the level of seeing the need for revolution. Though we tactically work in a wide range of struggles we are not a strike support group or a publicity machine for the Labour left; we are a combat party, with the task of fighting for our programme of socialist revolution against the present levels of reformist consciousness. We may help win partial struggles; but we will fail in our overall task if we do not build the WSL.

"Very well", I can hear readers muttering: but what has all this ABC stuff got to do with branch work in our area? The answer is that the struggle for recruitment is not a mere ideological debate. We cannot hope to build a mass party simply by selling workers books or by cornering them one by one and lecturing for hours on the nature of capitalist exploitation, the role of the state, the treachery of Stalinism and the method of the transitional demands.

Obviously we should take such opportunity for discussion where it is offered! But we must see that the working class as a whole has learned its politics and its trade unionism not in the main through books or lectures, but through its material struggles and experience in practice. It is through this practical experience that we must find a means of reaching out to workers and offer them a concrete revolutionary answer to the bureaucracy they are up against.

This is not so much a question of providing/directives to comrades on the detail of their day-to-day work, but requires comrades to organise at local level to carry through flexible and thoughtful work in line with national policies and campaigns. We must offer workers the example of an organised, collective

from the centre

response to the attacks of the capitalists; we must offer them not simply programmatic demands and discussions but a party organisation with an all-round answer to reformist capitulation.

To develop the struggle for our programme in conflict with trade union consciousness, we need first to establish a groundwork of unity, common experience, common practice, to enable our distinctive voice to be both heard and heeded. The history of the Communist movement has seen various efforts to spell out a basis for such unity. These can be seen in the demands of the Communist Manifesto; the "legal 8-hour day" agitation and mass work of the early Second International; the Theses of the Third and Fourth Congresses of the Comintern in which the relationship of the Communist Parties to the non-Communist and social democratic masses is discussed; and of course in the mass struggles in the mid 1930s of the American Trotskyists, the lessons of which laid the basis for the system of demands spelled out in the 1938 Transitional Programme.

At each point there have been two dangers to be resisted - which are by no means necessarily mutually exclusive. On the one hand there is SECTARIANISM, through which any real unity with the mass movement is in effect rejected in the name of preserving the "purity" of the revolutionary organisation - or placing the perceived requirements of the organisation as an obstacle to involvement in the mass movement. This results in the abandonment of any serious struggle to raise the level of the workers' movement. And by reverting to forms of individual propaganda and debate, in reality sectarianism - for all its "leftist" facades - strengthens the reformists.

On the other hand there is the danger that in rejecting sectarianism the struggle for revolutionary politics can increasingly take a back seat to an OPPORTUNIST striving simply for a form of unity with workers in the mass organisations. This can result in an adaptation to reformism and syndicalism in which the mass movement is seen as the starting point, and the revolutionary party subordinated to it. This means in practice that instead of offering leadership in the broader groups in which the revolutionary organisation is involved, we wind up trailing behind - or cutting back our politics to fit in with - non-revolutionary, reformist forces. The result from this must inevitably be a failure to build the revolutionary organisation and train its members - since its very purpose is by such methods set aside for the indefinite future or forgotten altogether. Indeed from this kind of position a vast amount of daily "political work" can be done by comrades in the trade unions or MP - but it will produce little or no political fruit for the WSL in terms of recruitment. This in turn can produce a profound personal crisis for comrades concerned when after a period of work in this way they come under new pressures and either question the need for a revolutionary party at all, or are forced to choose between the discipline of the revolutionary organisation and the "discipline" of a broader group or reformist body.

Our fight is to organise the working class into a party capable of leading the struggle for power. The high point of our work must therefore be seen as the struggle to BUILD BRANCHES OF THE WSL through recruitment; to ensure that these branches OFFER LEADERSHIP to our comrades, equipping them politically to assess and analyse developments on a local, national and international level; to train comrades to plan and lead revolutionary interventions and work within the mass movement; and to promote Marxist education for all members, as the political backbone of our daily work.

The local branch, as the organised daily link between the members and the WSL as a whole, must help to combat the continual ideological and material pressures on comrades to adapt in their work to reformism/syndicalism. This means providing support, criticism and guidance - sometimes instructions on comrades' work. Individual strengths can only be tapped and weaknesses combatted by a fight for a disciplined functioning of the branch.

National leaders of the WSL may issue circulars and exhortations to comrades; but in its work - good, bad or indifferent - the local branch is the crucial unit in determining the real shape of the work of the WSL. It is for instance largely in the hands of local leadership whether or not a branch orientates its efforts primarily towards petty bourgeois left groupings or towards the working class. It is in the hands of branch leaders to ensure that serious trade union work is not focussed exclusively on the "heavy battallions" of well-organised industrial workers to the detriment of serious work for instance in the NHS and public sector; and that trade union work and MP work does not blind us to the need for systematic work among the most oppressed and radicalised layers emerging in struggle - youth, women, blacks and gay people. Such forces are vital for our movement, and our political work is not complete without the involvement of such oppressed groups in the leadership of the WSL. But unless branches set out to recruit them, we cannot make that development.

It is to monitor these facets of the work and to provide an organised focus to which the best militants can be recruited, that the branch must function on a regular basis, with well-organised, politically prepared meetings including political reports and discussion that sets out to integrate and develop new members as Marxists.

Nor is there any good reason why the leadership of local branches should be seen as the monopoly of longer-standing members with "more experience" to the permanent detriment of new comrades and less well-developed but energetic organisers. Every effort must be made to draw such new forces into leading roles in the movement - and sometimes they can be seen to have a much more dynamic and bold approach than existing leaders.

Branches should therefore be ready to hold specialist classes or discussions for new recruits, or sometimes for existing members who find particular problems of political confidence or theoretical development - for instance youth comrades, or some women comrades. Indeed branches must actively combat the residual sexist pressures which flow into the WSL from the society we grew up in; we must fight sexism not simply in words or "out there" in the labour movement, but in practice in the WSL, in combatting the worrying failure of the movement to develop women comrades to branch, area and national leadership.

A healthy branch will not be a tranquil branch; rather it should reflect in many ways the life, the struggles, the problems and possibilities of the local and national labour movement. A lively branch leadership should be seeking at each point to find the point of connection to the most active and militant workers, the opportunities for intervention - and seeking to overcome the political problems holding back the most oppressed sections from active involvement in political and trade union struggle.

So while a routine structure to the weekly work of a branch is an important backbone - (distribution of papers, collection of money, regular sales at regular times, branch meetings, etc) - it

must be seen as the starting point for further initiatives, not as a goal in itself. Branches can only live through the fight for recruitment, through drawing new, active, militant forces in to the organisation, bringing with them what is new in the class struggle.

Branches cannot grow or develop ~~at~~ politically simply through maintaining a routine circuit of well-established "contacts" and paper readers. Still less if even this amount of routine is not established. Long-term contacts who have refused to join can often only be shifted by seeing our movement as a campaigning, outward going organisation, fighting for its policies and fighting for recruitment on that basis.

We can understand why - with the present organisational state of the Centre some branches have felt isolated and frustrated. But the frustrations in branches can only be compounded and even turn into demoralisation if even for one moment a branch leadership turns inward instead of out, and begins to "accept" its limitations, its lack of recruitment and lack of contacts. Still worse if it "settles down" to a humdrum - if superficially busy - weekly fixed routine. Simply trekking week after week around already established paper readers, holding lengthy chats with a circle of long-term contacts (in which the issue of WSL membership is not central) offers no hope of breaking the political isolation of any branch. The danger under such conditions is that the branch might easily become a circle which might contract in size (if an existing member moves or drops out), but which has no means available for expansion and growth, and thus no means of politically connecting with the new developments taking place within the broader labour movement - which members may observe or respond to but cannot influence.

FRESH work, FRESH sales of the paper in new working class areas new union branches/MPs, sales which set out to gather names and addresses on High Streets and factory gates, on every demo and picket line, every council estate; these are vital sources of life and possibilities for every branch. Without them the internal life of the branch becomes stale and introspective; the preoccupation becomes increasingly the internal problems, personalities and differences within the movement rather than the relationship of the WSL to the working class. And in this situation the development of new members is held back, while the older members too can lose their sense of direction.

No doubt there is not a branch organiser or NC member who will feel that the points above apply 100% to their branch. Some will indignantly and rightly feel that the implicit criticisms apply elsewhere. But at the present time, when the class struggle in Britain seems poised to take a new upward turn, where the Labour Party crisis is boiling over and our work amongst women offers real opportunities for political advance, it seems appropriate to open a searching look at the work of our branches and its theoretical and political basis.

No one can deny the WSL should be far larger than it is. Politically, we should be making many recruits. So perhaps we should start between now and the Summer School the much-needed debate on the reinvigoration of branch work and a turn to party-building.

Let us have suggestions on how the paper, the magazine and the Centre's apparatus should be better geared to the needs of branches. Let's have a real discussion on HOW TO BUILD THE WSL. The fruits of discussion should be a major advance.

CUNLIFFE, June 18, 1982.

