

SAVE THE FUSION by OLIVER and PARSONS

1. There is a danger that the differences in the group over the Falklands/Malvinas issue might disrupt the fusion. This must not be allowed to happen. We must build on the strengths that both organisations brought to the fusion.

2. The historic importance of the fusion, both nationally and internationally, needs to be emphasised. Trotskyist groups in the UK are characterised by their small size and their sectarianism. Where groups have broken out of this impasse and turned to the class eg. SLL in the early '60's and the IS in the early 70's they have not managed to learn the lessons and consolidate the gains. Respect is due to the leaderships of both the old WSL and the ICL, the one for breaking from the politics of Healyism and learning from a genuine involvement in industrial struggles, the other for charting an independent course against other groups and gaining roots in the MP.

The fact that both groups decided to fuse comes not from a sense of weakness or irrelevance, as with Church unity, but a sense of mutual respect and a willingness to learn from each other in the process of discussion and in the course of intervention in the class struggle. Nobody should mind being in a minority; nobody should use a majority bureaucratically. We should be proud of the fusion and of the new WSL. WE SHOULD BE DETERMINED TO MAKE IT WORK.

3. The strengths of the old WSL are mainly twofold a) its stress on international work and b) its involvement in industrial and community struggles.

International work is of vital importance; we need to intervene in the world movement with our ideas; we need to learn from the experiences of our international comrades we need international solidarity. The formation of the TILC is a great step forward; we should try to expand it.

The old WSL has a tradition of full involvement in a whole number of industrial and community struggles, fighting for leadership against the Trade union bureaucracy. In this way a number of worker militants members were gained. At the same time they learnt in struggle to move from propaganda politics to basing themselves in the experiences of the working class.

4. The strength of the ICL has been mainly in the MP. A Belgian comrade at the Summer School complained that nobody in the debate had mentioned "smashing the MP" and "making the lefts fight". The fact is that the ICL started to do precisely that. The fight for democracy and the Benn for deputy campaign led directly to the SDP split and the present witch-hunt. The Broad groups are a means of drawing the "lefts" into a fight. The WF initiative has provided a lead to a whole layer of women activists in the labour movement.

5. It has to be said that there has been a neglect over the last year to reap the benefits of the fusion; indeed there have been some quite scandalous failures of organisation at the centre where a bit of initiative or imagination could have improved our interventions. This seems to be a fusion of the weaknesses of both organisations and has left the membership somewhat confused, cynical or downright anarchistic. This needs to be sorted out before and at the next National Conference.

6. We have identified four main areas where the fusion needs to be strengthened...

a) international work b) the link between MP and TU work c) unresolved differences d) more planning and leadership from the centre.

a) For international work we need:

- (i) a pamphlet on the history and state of the FI and a crash programme of education throughout the WSL - so that all comrades know who is who and who stands where.
- (ii) the WSL magazine must appear regularly and have news about the FI and encourage contributions from TILC groups. A better title would be "Trotskyism Today" since it would make our traditions clear to new readers and help international sales
- (iii) our paper should have a section every week on the "Left Press" which could take up issues internationally and nationally - not in a sectarian manner but as a sober assessment.
- (iv) the WSL has a whole range of international contacts and these need to be prioritised. Some of our contacts have been around for a long time. It is

time to take stock of the situation-to draw up a balance sheet. We can then decide who to go for in a big way and with whom to maintain only tenuous links.

(v) we need consciously to seek out and bring into membership cdes from areas where we are carrying out solidarity work eg Ireland, Iran, Poland and S. Africa. This requires careful preparation of pamphlets spelling out our political line for the class struggle in those countries.

(vi) we also need to make every effort to intervene in international conferences and demonstrations -not just as WSL delegates necessarily but also through TU's, MP's, WF, CND and so on.

(vii) all this requires more resources. At least one full-time worker should be assigned to international work only.

b) The link between MP and TU work

(i) extend the fight for democracy and accountability into the Trade unions against the bureaucracy. Build Broad Lefts, Build MP factory branches.

(ii) fight for MP involvement in industrial and community struggles at whatever level

(iii) use the Broad groups to draw in the best militants and activists, stress the link between MP and TU work. This needs a proper drive and organisation from the centre with tours round the country sorting out the relations between the WSL and the Broad groups, making sure that things work properly. There should be a page of the paper devoted to Broad group news eg. accounts of campaigns, meetings, interventions, where new groups have been established -the point being to give an identity to the Broad groups and build up a spirit of loyalty.

(iv) the policy of 'Wiganisation' passed by the ICL but never implemented needs to be centrally organised as a major initiative.

c) Unresolved differences.

(i) we must begin a process of resolving differences by clarifying what they are, discussing them and then adopting clear positions which cdes can understand and therefore defend regardless of whether they agree with them.

(ii) the fusion left a number of political differences unresolved. Despite the deadlines laid down none of the three major issues-Afganistan; the General Strike and the EEC have been decided (although there has been a vote of sorts on the EEC). Perhaps more importantly each organisation had a distinct method which assumed a particular approach to almost all the issues we have to face.

Clearly the experience of working together has led many of us to reassess our assumptions and develop our political understanding. We have grown together but this has not been a simple linear process. As our line on some things has begun to change some cdes have reacted by retreating into the safe world of their previous political existences. Tensions have grown around a whole range of political issues-tensions which are sometimes based on as little as simply vague suspicions of other cdes motives, tensions which are starting to lead to explosive arguments and thus threaten the ability of the movement to function properly.

(iii) some examples.....A) The Women's Commission: As far as we are able to ascertain this has been a battle ground from the very inception of our fused movement. The result has been resignations by three NC members (one of whom was on the EC) and a marked reluctance of a number of women cdes to go near the meetings. The good work we have been able to do despite these problems should not blind us to the criminal responsibility of the EC for the state of affairs we describe above.

B) Youth work: Over a year into its existence the NLWYM is little more than a fiction and we went into the LPYS summer camp with marked reluctance on the part of some cdes.

C) The Falklands/Malvinas debate at the Summer School was preceded by some of the most disgraceful scenes we have ever witnessed. The hatred, hostility and indiscipline in the face of a unanimous EC decision is a warning sign we must not ignore.

d) More centralisation in the group

(i) our own events eg. Conferences, Broad Group AGM, Summer School need to be planned well in advance and the membership mobilised

(ii) our intervention in annual events eg MP and youth conferences, also need far better planning for the maximum results-resolutions, delegates, observers, collection of money to pay fares, travel, where to stay etc.

(iii) for demonstrations, a national mobilisation must mean mean a national mobilisation

and again needs to be fought for-not two days notice given- coaches, contacts, collections banners, posters, pamphlets, special issues of the paper etc are needed.

(iv) the paper should be used to stress the importance of events and to create enthusiasm There should be news of campaigns, meetings, plans, targets etc. Where we have done this properly we have been successful eg. MP Women's Rally and the SO/CDLM conference against the cuts last year. Where we have not done so eg. AGM and Summer School we have lost money and demoralised the membership. The lesson should be clear.

7) The purpose of this document, which incidently was written in the few days immediately after the Summer School, is to give notice in no uncertain terms that we will not allow the fusion to fail. The whole movement up to and including our top leadership must be called to order.

Party building: A neglected art? A contribution to the discussion initiated by cde Cunliffe. by Parsons.

In IB 11 cde Cunliffe sets out to answer the problem of poor responses to our national initiatives and the lack of new recruits. His answer to the problem is "be more outward going -get to fresh layers". This document is intended to develop the discussion and therefore I hope he will accept that to be the case. However wide the differences between us appear to be we have this in common-we are both trying to think round the problems that face us and offer some solutions.

When we fused last year we all felt a great sense of excitement. We believed that we would recruit fast and become a real force. In actual fact we have become a real force but this has, paradoxically, happened at the same time as we have lost members, some of whom were in leading positions.

Many of us feel frustrated in the present situation-there is much internal strife and a certain feeling of political paralysis. For some cdes this has led to the conclusion that the roots of our difficulties lie in the loss of a public profile for the WSL and a steady 'liquidation' of our movement into social democracy. Unfortunately, and I would be reluctant to believe that cde Cunliffe intended this, the Document in IB 11 will encourage what I regard as the real conservatives in the movement-~~the~~ conservatively the sectarians, the "public face of the WSL needs to be raised" merchants, the "get Carolan" faction. While we are faced with having to discuss the basic questions once again for the benefit of these cdes it is really not the discussion we should be having.

At the Summer school debate on social democracy one of the speakers used a vivid image to illustrate the real positions of the "granite hard Bolsheviks" in our midst. He explained how there would be a tendency at a certain point in the witch-hunt for some cdes to throw in the towel. Difficult, messy problems would be avoided in favour of the unfurling of the "banner of revolutionary marxism". They would step back behind a piece of red cloth bearing the slogan "Build the WSL". They would think it a flag but it would nevertheless be a towel and the reality would be that they were throwing it in, giving up, going out into the wilderness-the barrenness of which they would find comforting and safe. These cdes are in retreat from the real ~~tasks~~ tasks which face us.

Cde Cunliffe's location of our problems in terms of a lack of WSL recruits is in my opinion largely if not entirely misplaced. Our lack of recruits is not simply a symptom of our present problems, it is also a reflection of the complex and contradictory process of party building and the stage at which we find ourselves today.

We cannot judge our effectiveness in party building by the simple yardstick of individual recruitment. The test of a revolutionary organisation is primarily its ability to intervene effectively in the class struggle in such a way as to contribute meaningfully to the development of class consciousness. This does not necessarily depend on a great number of cdes, or on a public face for the WSL, it depends primarily on the movement knowing what it is doing (and why) and doing it effectively and in a disciplined way.

As I understand it (although it increasingly appears that a large number of cdes do not agree) we have analysed the central task of our movement to be the deepening of struggle within the MP and the Broad group tactic has been developed to meet the needs of that struggle. Cde Cunliffe's abilities could have been better spent pondering on the failures of the Broad groups to project a national and local profile and therefore to grow.

STATEMENT ON THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS DEBATE.

The signatories of this statement regard the holding of the Special Conference on the Falklands/malvinas as an irresponsible self-indulgence. The issues which have arisen are no nearer clarification than when the debate began. Extremely complex questions such as self-determination, the nature of imperialism, the strategy for revolutionaries in Latin America and the theory of imperialist and non-imperialist "camps" have only begun to be aired.

If the war was still continuing there might be an argument for holding such a conference as it would, after all, have immediate political significance. As it is the war is over. What might have been the occasion for deepening our understanding of the issues involved has become the opposite—a polarised and rushed discussion where our membership has been forced into a decision on the basis of little serious discussion.

Why have we been forced into such a polarised discussion on this issue when so many others lie ignored. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Tendency cdes wish to polarise the situation in the movement. The logical conclusion of their behaviour must be that anyone is now free to form a tendency around anything which is disputed in the movement eg Afganistan.

The National Committee has done a disservice to the movement by agreeing to hold this conference. If we had been able to attend the meeting which agreed to the Special Conference we would have voted against against holding it.

Oliver/Parsons 2/9/82

Correction to article in IB No 1

In IB No 1 there was an article on the TILC and the FI(IC). Due to an error by the typist (or more probably because of my writing) there were a couple of mistakes. The title "The Mole and the Bears" should have read "The Mote and the Beam". If cdes do not understand what this means I would suggest they re-read the article together with the Biblical reference (Mathew 7 v3) from which the title was taken.

The third paragraph on page 2 should read as follows.....

"I do not wish to detract from the good work done by the TIC TILC. However, it is not possible for me to read the sort of article written by cde Thomas and remain silent but in breaking my silence my motives are positive."

In the original the first sentence of the paragraph was missing.

Parsons 5/9/82

discussion on the priorities of the movement and careful allocation of resources and emphasis on what should be a central feature of our work.

Cde Cunliffe admits that some of our national failings are the result of weaknesses at the centre. However, I do not see these weaknesses as being simply organisational—a lack of an efficient division of labour. It is more than that. Not only were the conferences Cde Cunliffe refers to badly prepared—and I might say badly organised on the day but also we have missed out on some very important national events.

One of these was so important that no excuse is possible and the only serious explanation has to be a political one. It was, of course, the 250,000 plus CND march. Granted the fact that it was on the day following the Women's Right To Work march (and therefore our intervention was distorted somewhat) there was still no excuse for the lack of a national lead on this. There was no special material, no meeting of the CND fraction (it does not exist). Nothing in fact.

One of the problems here is that deep down we are not quite sure what we say about nuclear weapons. We have never discussed it and differences do exist both over unilateral nuclear disarmament and over the "workers' bomb". Only when we begin to clarify our thoughts on these and a whole range of other questions will we be in a position to make the contribution which is increasingly within our grasp. No amount of general lectures on why we need a party and the need to break from routinism and seek fresh layers can substitute for this.

I hope this short contribution will help to encourage the much needed discussion Cde Cunliffe calls for. To round it off I would like to suggest the following as the immediate tasks of party building.

- a) An immediate discussion on the present political situation and the orientation which flows from this.
- b) A determined drive to educate our cdes for these tasks.
- c) A discussion on the Broad groups tactic and how they can be projected as a more dynamic movement, more of a focus for leftward moving elements.
- d) A discussion on the nature of the paper and what supplementary propaganda material we require now.
- e) A determined effort to create for ourselves the ideology on which we can base our work. At present we have virtually no in depth positions. We get along with assumptions from the past—assumptions we do not all agree on.

Before we can talk of bringing in a large number of new recruits we have to begin seriously putting our house in order.

1.9.82

N.B. ...Parsons/Oliver statement on the Falklands/Malvinas debate on page 3A

The following is a resolution we will seek to place before the special Conference.

"This Special Conference of the WSL on the Falklands/Malvinas issue is a massive self-indulgence given the problems facing the working class and our own organisation.

Recognising that today's discussion and vote will solve nothing we call upon the EC to prepare a programme for the next NC of.....

- (a) agreed areas and methods of work as a centralised national plan of work for branch activities.
- (b) proper discussion, written and oral, of items of political dispute in the group.

Proposed by Oliver and Parsons.

After all, a functioning Broad group gives ample scope for party resruitment.

Cde Cunliffe refers to the WSL branch as the high point of our activity. I would have thought this was obvious. However, posed in the way it is in his document it doesn't really tell us anything. A more useful starting point for discussion would be the experience of WSL and Broad group work and the relationship between them. How much work can be discussed in the former and how much in the latter? How can the latter develop an independent life? What approach should we take to WSL democratic centralism and the Broad groups? I say very deliberately that the starting point should be our experience of these matters because we do not want a set of formulae—we want to discuss the real world. We have a common assumption about the primacy of the WSL—otherwise we wouldn't be in it. What we need now is to improve the working relationship between the WSL and the Broad groups.

The real discussion we need on party building is a million miles away from cde Cunliffe's exhortations to seek fresh layers and new recruits. His suggestion that we seek out the most active and militant layers when taken with his attack on routinism smacks somewhat of the overconcentration on "struggles" and the "point of conflict with the bureaucracy" which characterised the old WSL. In its extreme form it has been correctly characterised as the "blue-arsed fly syndrome". Jumping from one intervention to the next, abandoning the potential fruits of such interventions for "fresh layers", greener pastures etc.

It is not the fault of the forces with whom we have been working in left caucuses, on Councils and in the MP that we have not brought them into the Broad groups. We have failed to win them for a number of reasons but one of them, and an important one at that, is our failure to engage them in lengthy, regular, sometimes "cosy" chats in which we can draw out for them what we are trying to do, what our achievements have been and why they should join us. Perhaps one of the reasons why we have not done this is because it is more difficult than the type of contact work cde Cunliffe wants us to indulge in. It generally requires a higher level of political knowledge and understanding with more depth to it than might be required for the fresh layers cde Cunliffe wants us to orientate towards.

Even when he does advocate contact work and discussion he seems to draw back, feeling it necessary to almost counterpose development of consciousness through struggles to individual discussion and study. He even comes close to ridiculing our work in the mass party or at least to articulating the reservations of those who get tired of what is often tedious and mundane but vitally necessary routine work.

The fresh layers he talks of are essentially the unorganised, the most oppressed sections. He does not, however, link this orientation to any focus for political action. Let's get one thing straight. No one, as far as I am aware, is opposed to turning to the most oppressed layers. The key question must be how this is to be done.

I myself feel that a central orientation of our movement should be the building of a mass unemployed movement. But this flows from an analysis (obvious enough) that with unemployment at record levels the working class needs such a movement and in a similar way to the impact of the R+FMC an unemployed movement could lead to a fundamental change in the consciousness of broad layers of the workers movement. We should be discussing how we could best allocate national resources to such work but also how we could relate that work to the MP—how we could use other forces than just ourselves to develop a mass movement.

Unlike work amongst the unemployed but like Broad groups work there are two initiatives which we have launched but have never allocated sufficient resources and emphasis to—work amongst women and youth.

At the time of writing this document NUPE's vote to affiliate to WF has not even been discussed—yet it holds the potential for the most dramatic surge forward on the question of women's oppression we have seen for a very long time. No doubt the conservative layers in our midst will want to repeat ad nauseam the "lessons of the nursery occupations" while the Nupe decision recedes into history and the opportunity is lost. If we want fresh layers to turn to NUPE's membership will do for a start—we will make a huge contribution to the building of a party by turning the NUPE membership into the basis of a mass labour movement oriented women's movement. Unfortunately, there will no doubt be a tendency for the sectarians to be more concerned with avoiding what they will see as "opportunistic adaptations to the NUPE bureaucracy" than working out how we can really take advantage of the current situation—I sincerely hope that they will prove me wrong.

Our youth work is nothing short of a disgrace. As far as I can see we have achieved virtually nothing at a time when we have the potential for bringing hundreds if not thousands into political activity. It is not a question of placing blame on our overworked and underpaid youth organisers but neither is it a case of chiding local branch and area organisers for their routinism. The key failure it seems to me is one of serious national