

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 25

PART TWO

JANUARY 1983

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A checklist of documents for conference will be
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PART ONE of this Internal Bulletin contains
Cunliffe's British perspectives document

AMENDMENTS TO BRITISH PERSPECTIVES

Kinnell

PAGE 4: Last but one para. Delete sentence, "The feminist campaign....to nuclear war", and replace by:

"The Greenham Common peace camp and the women's movement mobilisation around it has also been a resounding success, doing a great deal to build the campaign. Our orientation to this should be based on full support and building on its strengths. Criticism on the basis that the Camp will not stop Cruise etc. is fundamentally meaningless - nor will any other short of revolutionary action stop nuclear weapons; and, among the actions immediately possible, those around the Peace Camp are by no means the least valuable, nor are they counterposed to trade union and LP activity".

PAGE 5: para 4. Line 5. Delete "and the breakdown of the existing trading blocs".

PAGE 5: para 6. Line 15. Replace "Thus we find a sharp drop in individual membership of the LP etc" by

"The sharp drop in individual LP membership is due perhaps in large part to the increases in membership subscriptions, but must also reflect the widespread disillusion/demoralisation in the working class. Thus the emergence of 'new' political forces at least potentially block the election of a new labour government".

PAGE 6: para 2. Delete second sentence, "The summer riots..... ghettos".

PAGE 7: at the end of the page add: "For the election we should look to organising such left forces as we can reach to create an independent voice within the official Labour campaign - on the theme 'Vote Labour; organise for socialist policies; prepare to fight'. The fact that the official Labour manifesto almost certainly, after a period of major struggles for Labour democracy, will be sharply different from Labour conference policy, opens the possibility of doing this on a bigger scale than the SCLV in 1979.

"After the election, whatever its outcome, a resurgence of the Labour left is possible. If the Tories or the Tories/Alliance win, there will be recriminations and questioning about why Labour lost; if a Labour or Labour/Alliance coalition emerges, resistance to it by Labour's rank and file is to be expected. We will need to be as well-placed as possible to take part in, promote and fight for leadership within this left resurgence."

PAGE 10, para 5. Line 2. Delete "openly", insert "clear".

Para. 5. Line 8. Delete last sentence, "To fall short...", and replace by:

"This revolutionary transformation can be carried out only by the organised working class; to fight for the transformation

revolutionary

now means therefore to fight for the revolutionisation of the labour movement. We must fight to win militants to our perspective for the transformation of the labour movement, and thus to the WSL. We should, however, pose the question of political action not ultimatically, but in line with the method of the Transitional Programme: we should seek to draw workers into the fight in the TUs and LP on whatever level they are ready, confident that we can convince them to go further in the common fight. To draw workers into TU and LP activity on the simple basis of 'No more Labour governments like 1974-9; commit the Labour leadership to fight for conference policy; win democracy and accountability in the TUs and LP', is therefore a crucial aspect of our activity.

"To confine ourselves to posing the small Marxist nucleus (i.e. ourselves) as the political alternative is to fail to put forward any immediate way to fight for a workers' government (unless it is based on fantasies about the existing labour movement suddenly vanishing and a new movement arising behind the Marxist nucleus.) It is thus to abandon essential political tasks and to confine ourselves to an existence as a propagandist sect relating only to radicalised individuals, with essentially no political proposals for the mass organised working class.

"The call for a workers' government, linked to agitation for concrete transitional demands in line with the development of events must be central to us.

"What do we mean by the call for a workers' government?"

(see section on workers' government, page 6 of these amendments).

PAGE 10: last para and PAGE 11, first 2½ lines up to "pursue it".
Replace by: "Our rule should however be: clarity of politics, an intransigent ideological stand against the stream where necessary, but on that basis to emphasise rather what we have in common with existing working class activity (as a basis for further development), rather than badges of differentiation chased for the sake of differentiation. To imagine that in a deeply Labourite working class we can best make progress by presenting ourselves not as an organised left wing aiming to spearhead the fight for the transformation of the labour movement, but as a force alien to the LP, is to indulge in fantasy. Such a method can at best pick up some hundreds of alienated and radicalised militants, but it cannot give them a perspective of fighting for socialism other than one split on classic minimum/maximum lines.

The experience of the SWP, RCP and WRP shows that: as Trotsky said of other sectarians before them, 'Alas! They only forgot that they were far from a party, but were only a propaganda circle, that a party does not fall from heaven, that the propaganda circle must pass through a period of embryonic existence before it can become a party'".

PAGE 11. Para.2: Delete para. and replace by:

"Our policies do not revolve around the existing individual activists of the LP, but around drawing presently passive reformists into the LP and the fight to transform it and to build a revolutionary left wing. Only within, and out of, such a process, can a real revolutionary party be built in Britain. The details of how such a party will emerge can not be predicted, but we can be sure that no amount of proclamation and declamation will raise it suddenly from the raw masses of the working class to stand alongside the existing labour movement."
political

PAGE 11. para.7. Delete second sentence and replace by:

"We should think carefully about if, and how, particular transitional demands can be raised in particular struggles."

Delete all after "On the other hand...." and Para 8. and replace by:
"But on occasion our relation to industrial struggles has been wrongly limited to simple support. While avoiding sloganising and politics-by-formulas, we should look for a more political approach to such struggles."

PAGE 11: Para.9 Delete "advancing and propagandising of the", insert "careful explanation and well-judged use of".

PAGE 12: Para 3: Delete second sentence: "But we must grasp...".
Replace by "But industrial work is of the first importance. To take our policies from a paper existence to action, crucial is the transformation of the TUs and LP, or serious segments of them, into fighting organisations solidly based in the workplaces. Marxist nuclei in the

workplaces are vital for this and above all for our relation to the mass direct action of the working class, the lifeblood of socialist strategy."

PAGE 13, para.5. Delete sentences 2,3, and 4 and replace by:

"The paper has started a regular unemployed column, but coverage is still weak. The incoming EC should allocate a member to work with the comrades active in this work, with a view to extending it.

"Mobilising the official youth movement for recruitment and organisation of unemployed youth is central."

PAGE 13, para.7. Delete first sentence and the word "But" in the second sentence.

PAGES 14,15,16,17: DELETE ALL excluding paras 2-7 on page 17 in favour of a report to be drafted by Hill and Carolan's resolution, on the following grounds:

(a) The picture of mass working class indignation at the retreat of the labour left is (unfortunately) fantastic;

(b) The picture of Benn's evolution - identifying him squarely with the Clause 4 element - is inaccurate, and portrays the evolution as further advanced than it actually is;

(c) The account of our previous activity in the LP as concerned only with the already existing left is inaccurate: drawing in new people was equally important (and vital on the women's sections developments referred to);

(d) The idea of the "ins and outs" of LP affairs being of little relevance to most people - so that presumably a mass socialist movement will emerge from somewhere well away from such mundane matters - is actually an adaptation to a form of Labourism, the passive, semi-syndicalist, "vote-every-5-years and see how it goes" form of Labourism.

(e) The talk of "further dilution of our political line" etc is confusing political line with methods of expression and self-labelling (which is what the argument is really about).

PAGE 16: para.5 Add at end. "We could not remain as councillors committed to implementing cuts or redundancies: we would have to defy the mandate and provoke our removal and/or resign. Rate rises are a different matter because they do not necessarily counterpose the councillors to the organised working class in the same way (cf. Clay Cross, where the left councillors certainly raised rates). If a local labour movement, after a lead has been given and after a wide democratic discussion, votes to duck confrontation one year and go for rate rises instead, then that decision is wrong but it hardly makes that labour movement such that we cannot accept responsible positions in it. There is no question of compromising our principles by accepting a mandate to vote in Council for rate rises under these circumstances - for we will have argued against rate rises before the whole local working class.

"The fact is, however, that over the last three years no Labour council has proceeded by giving such a lead and seeking such a mandate. Few are likely to in the coming year. In that situation, we are obliged simply to campaign for votes against rate rises.

"To argue that sometimes we have to vote for a rate rise just because 'there is no alternative' is dangerous. Failure of leadership by Labour councils can very well lead to situations at budget-making where immediately there is indeed no alternative: no adequate mobilisation is by then immediately possible. We cannot accept responsibility for such failure and its results: in such circumstances we can only make propaganda for mobilisation, preparing for the future, and we should do that.

"However we should avoid formalism in our stand on rate rises. The principle is not 'not a penny', but that Tory cuts should not be passed on by the budget-balancing rate rises. We should not quibble about

'zero rate rises' or 'rate rise only in line with wage rises' or similar formulations - by focussing on the essentials we can better win support."

PAGE 17/18: 'Workers' Government' section. Insert earlier after reference to Workers' Government on page 10, with following amendments:

PAGE 17, last but one line: Delete, "the period... under".

PAGE 18, PARA 6: Delete "for the government to councils of action", replace by "for councils of action to acquire real weight and for a government based on them".

PAGE 19-20: Section on women. Delete section in favour of Parkinson/ Fraser document on grounds that it is almost totally negative. It would effectively negate the perspective pursued since fusion of developing WF while also continuing the work round women's cuts struggles, etc., in which several old WSL women had experience, within the framework of WF or outside it if necessary. It would negate it in favour of an ill-defined sectarian perspective. It would blight the WF work while not positively proposing anything that could not more fruitfully be done within and alongside the WF work.

PAGE 20: Section on youth. Refer back on grounds that the emphasis is again negative, warning against 'excessive' involvement in the official youth movement. (I anticipate that other comrades will draft alternatives on this).

PAGE 22-23: Delete from last para on p.22, "The paper in particular needs to..." to end of second para on p.23, "... since the weekly was launched". Replace by:

"Certain things are always necessary from the press of a revolutionary organisation.

It must, so far as it can, make itself accessible and interesting to militants who are newly coming into politics and/or find the internal details of the labour movement uninteresting. At the same time it must provide substantial material for existing activists, and adequately cover the internal battles of the labour movement.

It must explain, with adequate clarity, a revolutionary Marxist viewpoint on the major current events of the class struggle. It must also avoid ritualistic 'revolutionary' declamations which serve no purpose other than to allow the paper's supporters to congratulate themselves on their revolutionary virtue.

Tactical details of the press cannot, however, be decided solely on the basis of these generalities. The press is not an end in itself, but a tool for revolutionary politics. We have to analyse the development of the workers' movement, decide our tasks and orientation on that basis, and from them determine tactics on the press.

Over the recent period the LP has been the overwhelming focus of working-class political life. Positive proof of this is the movement over LP democracy (and now, in its beginning stages, over TU democracy); negative proof is the behaviour of sectarians like the SWP, who now find themselves obliged to give over a large part of their press to repeated, unavailing explanations that the LP is irrelevant and of no interest.

Despite the downturn in Labour left activity over recent months, and probably for a while to come, this centrality of the LP will continue for the immediate foreseeable period. The emergence of a sizeable working class political force outside the LP cannot be expected.

Without painting up the existing Labour/TU left as more than it is, without closing our eyes to its narrowness and weakness, without forgetting the centrality of the fight to bring new militants into the movement, we have to design our press and our tactics to enable us to develop and to fight for leadership within the essential political processes of the labour movement. 'One can write and read revolutionary

articles day in and day out and still remain in reality outside of the revolutionary movement. One can give the labour organisations good advice - from the sidelines. That is something. But that still does not make a revolutionary organisation' (Trotsky).

Thus we must be prepared to make changes of form, labelling etc. in order that we can still have a press capable of being an instrument to organise the left within the LP and TUs.

The issue here is not our principled political line, but the means for expressing it. It may be that in the coming months 'legality' will restrict our ability to dot the ideological i's and cross the t's in our press more than at present. (Maybe not, too: that depends on struggle, and our ability to get involved in the struggle rather than standing on the sidelines and feeling relieved that the witch-hunt gives Marxists an excuse for aloofness from the LP). It is not realistically to be imagined that we will have less scope than the Trotskyists in the LP had in the '50s and '60s. In any case, if our main press is restricted we will supplement it with magazines, pamphlets, etc.

In this context we must also seek to remedy the main failures of the existing paper:

a) Inadequate development of broad debate with the rest of the left - of the paper as a forum with which a broad range of militant LP/TU activists can identify.

b) Too frequently, coverage limited to applauding workers' militancy and denouncing bureaucrats' perfidy. The paper needs more careful, well-developed political argument (which is not the same thing as sloganising).

c) An excessively crammed and heavy appearance - not enough simple, light, short articles attractive to new or casual readers.

d) Not enough cultural/labour-history/feature coverage".

.....

THE WORKERS' GOVERNMENT: INSERT FOR PAGE 10

We argue that it is not enough to get a new Labour government - though the achievement of such a government even under a Dennis Healey is of course a central objective of the labour movement. We need more. We need to fight for accountability in the labour movement and for socialist policies. And we need to organise and agitate to push that fight to the most radical conclusions.

With the present political positions of the Labour Party and even of the leaders of the left, we will get a Labour government which is fundamentally more of the same, possibly with radical trimmings. It will not serve the working class, and in present conditions it will not be able to adequately serve the ruling class. It will not even placate them.

The right wing know this: and so they want to make the Labour Party a stable bourgeois governing party again by means of a purge.

The only serious alternative to the right wing programme is for the Left to go forward - to fight for a Labour government which is controlled by the labour movement rather than the established state apparatus, and which starts a real attack on the wealth and entrenched power of the ruling class. We propose a fight to transform the labour movement so that it becomes able to create such a government.

As revolutionary Marxists, we believe that there must be a socialist revolution - a clean sweep of the capitalists and the establishment of the state power of the working class. The big majority of the labour movement don't yet share our views. But a common need and determination is shared to oppose and fight the Tory government and to oppose any moves, even by the Labour Party in government, to load the cost of

capitalist decay and crisis onto the shoulders of the working class.

We can organise a joint fight for a workers' government which begins the assault on capitalist power. That does not mean losing ourselves in consoling fantasies: if the Labour Party really were to strike at the power and wealth of the bosses, they would strike back, using their army and state forces.

Even under a workers' government, the working class itself would only serve and protect its own interests by organising itself outside the rhythms, norms and constraints of Parliamentary politics, expanding its factory shop stewards' committees, combine committees, trades councils, etc., and creating new action committees, to be an industrial power that could as necessary dispense with the Parliamentarians.

But to counterpose the full revolutionary programme of a state based on workers' councils to the actual political processes within the actual labour movement is to make the revolutionary programme empty words. To the labour movement activists engaged in the fight for Labour democracy and socialist policies, we propose the objective of a Labour government based on the labour movement and taking serious measures against capitalist power.

We propose this to serious reformist and semi-revolutionary militants, without demanding prior agreement on our view of the full revolutionary implications of such an objective - and trust to the logic of the class struggle to provide the basis for our intervention to secure the further development of those implications.

There is no need to seek doctrinal guarantees, elaborate calculations about future possibilities, slogans designed to sew up all questions in advance, or fearful formulas which place protection against hypothetical future opportunist dangers above the job of developing the logic of the class struggle now.

Whatever the guesswork, the slogan of a workers' government has in any case a tremendous educational value in organising and rallying the left.

RESOLUTION - CAROLAN

The decision of the LP conference on the register and the right wing majority elected to the NEC have laid the basis for a sweeping purge in the LP. The issue now before the right wing is whether they can carry it out.

There is good reason to think that we can stop them and minimise the purge. The actual ine-up in the unions whose block vote ensured the Right's victory is not solidly for a full-scale purge; the CLPs, which will have to carry out any purge, voted 80% against the register and voted hard left for the NEC; the right wing itself wants to win the next election and therefore has a keen self-interest in not purging the party to the extent that it goes into the next election gutted; and a thorough purge of Militant alone would probably gut the party.

For these reasons we can hope to stop the purge and limit expulsions to perhaps half a dozen, or a couple of dozen, members of Militant. A firm line by the CLPs of opposition to any and all expulsion of socialists, and resistance for as long as necessary and by every means necessary, will make the cost of a full-scale, or even a large-scale, purge prohibitively high for the NEC.

We must therefore focus our efforts on resisting the purge all the way, to the point of having CLPs disaffiliated and 'disbanded', and on attempting to unite the broadest forces of the Left to coordinate this resistance. What happens next is still an open question. Struggle will decide; and we can be central to that struggle.

The register is a mechanism of witch-hunt and purge aimed specifically, for now, against Militant. We must stand by Militant and argue against any grouping in the LP registering and thus helping the NEC to isolate and purge Militant. The principle for us is to resist the witch-hunt and expulsions, and right now that means resisting the register.

We need also to assess the prospects for the immediate period ahead and work out some rough lines of guidance for how Marxists should relate to the LP in the new situation created by the decisions of Blackpool.

Given the Right's control of the organisational commanding heights of the party, it is certain that they will move to cut out a more or less large chunk of the Militant hard core from the party. Militant's declared willingness to go quietly, accepting expulsions under protest and not taking resistance to the point of forcing the NEC to disband CLPs, makes it virtually certain that there will be expulsions. Militant's attitude is likely to encourage the NEC to enlarge the purge.

It is most likely that the forces of the broader Left will comply with the register in the next few months, perhaps at a 'decent interval' after the purge of the Militant EB and others. The LCC has reversed itself and now opposes the register, perhaps in alarm at the strength of the right wing backlash. Nevertheless it is most likely that the register will become established as the norm governing the affairs of the Labour Party, and that the groups like LCC, CLPD etc will register or be registered by Mortimer.

We must fight against this happening with all our strength and ingenuity. The probability of success is very low, however. Most of the leftists see the struggle now as focusing on the resistance to expulsions, and the argument that we must accept the register as a democratic conference decision is being shown to have a great power on the softer Left, despite alarm at the right wing takeover of the NEC.

What attitude should co-thinkers in the LP adopt if or when the struggle against the establishment of the register subsides, and the register is firmly in place? The options are these: to regard the register as a question of principle, and therefore slide towards an acceptance of being automatically outlawed in the LP as and if the register is established. Or to resist the register, but if the resistance is defeated to attempt to comply with it and to gain registration as a means of coming to terms with the conditions of existence in the LP after Blackpool.

The first choice would be wrong for a number of reasons. The register is not a principle. The principle is to resist and fight the purge, and to stay in the fight within the mass political party of the British labour movement.

There is no reason to believe that the Left in the LP is smashed; on the contrary, it displayed tremendous strength at the conference - our weakness was in the unions. All the pressures of capitalist crisis and reformist bankruptcy which we have identified as generating the convulsions in the LP will continue and intensify. Even should the LP left subside between now and the election, it will be forced to resume the struggle either against a new right wing Labour government or in face of a new defeat. It will resume the struggle on the basis of the experience of defeat at Blackpool by the block vote, and therefore the conditions exist for turning many of them also to our work in the unions. We must avoid getting isolated from that Left, and make the tactical and organisational adjustments necessary to survive.

In addition there is - it can be said dogmatically - no prospect for an independent revolutionary tendency in the next period competing with the LP. The crisis of the SWP is no accident. Labour is the mass alternative to the Tories; Labour will appear with a left and radical face (in broad labour movement terms) in the period ahead.

The presently active core of the forces that will make the revolutionary party of the future is now in the LP Left and the trade union Left. Our commitment to united front work, and to work to organise the broadest forces of that Left, to link both the LP and the union Left (and both with the specially expressed), must remain central to the League. Our commitment to building the revolutionary party - the League - in the existing labour movement rules out passively accepting that Marxists in the LP should slide into automatically being outlawed.

The alternative is to fight the register until it is established (if eventually it is) and Militant's hard core is purged, and then go with groups like CLPD, LCC etc if they register. We should oppose the registration of the CLPD at its December conference, but in general it is unlikely that the Marxists can shape what happens. As a rough rule of thumb I suggest that we use the CLPD as a weathervane, and advise co-thinkers in the LP to register (or attempt to register) at the point that it does, or is automatically registered whether it applies or not.

The only matter of principle here is that we do not do this if by doing it we are ratting on Militant and making it easier to purge them. In general revolutionaries boycott a Parliament, or the register, so long as there is a chance of breaking, overthrowing, or sidetracking it; if that is not possible, then the revolutionaries have to find ways of working for their politics within the structures that we are not yet strong enough to overthrow.

It is impossible to anticipate precisely the future sequences and interactions of events. The above is intended as a crude outline of our approach. When and if we advise registration will have to be a matter of precise and concrete assessment.

It is improbable that the Marxists will be acceptable on the register (though it is not impossible - that too will depend to some extent on the combativity of the Left and its success or otherwise in limiting the purge). Irrespective of that, however, it is important that they apply to register if the conditions require it as above. If they are refused they can campaign among the broad Left on the matter. It will make the difference between fighting every inch of the way against their exclusion, thus protecting their major forces, and passively accepting exclusion. Politically for the Marxists it means a commitment to continue the orientation to the mass political party of the class, a commitment to attempting to find means of continuing to organise the broad Left (for example, in a campaign against outlawing the Marxists).

In the event that the Marxists are outlawed by whatever process, my proposal would be that the Marxists maintain the paper and its organisation as at present and also seek alliances to create a new publication that can play the role of

left wing organiser that the present paper has played at its best. In general they must create alternative means of continuing their work (as in Kinnell's resolution, etc.) This would obviously be a transitional phase of our work. At a certain point, after the election perhaps, we would have to assess where we are at and perhaps rationalise publications.

CONFERENCE

Our conference is February 18-19-20 - starting the Friday evening - in the West Midlands. Comrades are reminded to make any arrangements necessary about time off work in order to be able to attend the whole proceedings.

The documents tabled for discussion are:

Aspects of the international situation and our tasks	IB 24
The economic situation	IB 24
Crisis of the FI and our tasks	IB 22
Report on TILC	to come
British perspectives	IB 25
Amendments to British perspectives	IB 25
The Labour Party	IB 22+
and preamble in IB 21, reproduced in IB 25	
British perspectives: industrial perspectives	IB 25
The long road to Wiganisation	IB 25
Draft document on women	pts 2 & 3 in IB 22+, part 1 to come
Resolution on Ireland (Dec. 1981 NC: in IB 3 and also in	IB 25)
The EEC: document reproduced separately and resolution reprinted in	IB 25

Other documents not yet written are to come on: youth work, black work, report on O. work.

By mistake two IBs were both numbered 22: they are distinguished above as 22 and 22+. Every comrade should have IBs 22, 22+, 24, 25 and another bulletin, produced separately for reasons of security, containing material on CND and EEC: these should either have been collected at the NC, or included in this mailing. If you are short, please phone in.

British Perspectives - Industrial Perspectives

The Tory government's drive to weaken the trade unions has continued without respite. But, though pressing ahead with putting anti-union laws on the statute books, the main thrust of these attacks has not been through the courts but on the shop floor and in the hard-line, uncompromising stance it has maintained in the many industrial confrontations with its policies. The fact that Thatcher remains in office and the ever lengthening dole queues shows that this approach has paid off.

Yet the last year has seen several major opportunities to defeat the government wilfully squandered. Two of them, the ASLEF 'flexible rosters' strike and the NHS pay fight, represented by far the most serious threat to Tory rule since the steel strike. Their defeat and Thatcher's victory may well have cleared the way for the government to remain in office until they call an election and have certainly improved the prospects of another Tory government following. In the ASLEF and NHS disputes we saw from Thatcher boldness, commitment and resolution; from the TUC and the union leadership at national level only timidity, vacillation and ultimately sabotage. Despite the courage and tenacity shown throughout by the rank and file, these qualities proved unable to compensate for a failure to develop sufficient organisational and political independence to win control from the hands of the bureaucrats.

ASLEF betrayed

The national strike by ASLEF against flexible rosters and in defence of the 8 hour day had come after a series of limited stoppages earlier in the year had forced the British Rail Board to back down. But the Tories were seeking to generalise the methods used by Edwardes at BL and a decision was taken to impose the new working conditions unilaterally and tie this to a threat to sack those who strike. The ASLEF Executive, under the dual pressures of an employer prepared to smash the union and a membership that saw a major principle being breached, called an indefinite strike. The response was strong enough to resist the most high-powered media/management strikebreaking barrage seen for many years. What it could not do was survive the strikebreaking efforts of the TUC.

The NUR leadership, though itself going through a leadership struggle against the long-time domination of the right-wing, instructed its members to work normally. Though the ASLEF stoppage was solid, from the start the Executive was compromised by the weakness of its position in the period leading up to the strike. Amongst the membership militancy increased as the effectiveness of picketting became apparent, especially the use of the flying picket to counter the limited scabbing and link up with other groups of workers such as the miners and health workers. These measures to cement the strike came, significantly, from the rank and file; the leadership of the union was virtually paralysed throughout.

In London the unity which developed between several strike committees centred on the Kings Cross depot was of major importance. Not only did it quickly take on the responsibility of basic organising for significant sections of the union, it provided us with a qualitative input through our single ASLEF comrade with a respected record and leadership position in the Kings Cross branch. This connection allowed us to have some influence within the most advanced group of militants, notably in the political line of a statement from these strike committees calling for the preparation of a general strike if the sackings were implemented. Pledges of such action

were being made when the sell-out came. Just as in BL the TUC moved in to support the employer, in this case the BRB against the train drivers. The ASLEF EC, despite some individuals on becoming radicalised by the experience of betrayal, had no perspective for continuing the strike under these conditions. Had they done so in the face of the TUC condemning any support, their stand together with the impact of mass sackings would have rallied substantial forces from the rank and file and may well have sparked a movement of considerable size largely outside the control of the national union leadership.

It is instructive to examine the role of the national trade union lefts during this dispute. Apart from the vacillation and eventual prostration of ASLEF leader Buckton, the TUC sub-committee which actually took the scab decision did so unanimously under the chairpersonship of leading left Alan Sapper. At the subsequent full General Council meeting, which we vigorously ^{opposed} to the acute embarrassment of the TUC lefts and the CP who had come along to spectate, the decision on ASLEF was ratified without dissent. This collapse of their influential friends in high places brought a diplomatic silence from the CP leadership both at the time and since.

Since the defeat over flexible rosters there has been stiff and effective resistance in the most militant depots to the new work schedules being introduced. At best this can only be a short-term opposition but it does auger well for the next major battle over One Man Operated trains. Besides this is the question of the whole future of the railways in their present form with the Tory-commissioned Serpell report speculating on reducing the rail network to a mere fraction of its present size.

NHS workers sold-out

The marathon NHS pay battle saw the left bureaucrats play a seemingly different role. Compared with the brazen right-wing positions of CoHSE leader Spanswick, newly-elected NUPE General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe had the scope to appear credible even to many militants and there is no doubt he did develop some relationship with the rank and file. Yet from as early as June NUPE had a conference policy of all-out action and therefore had the key to victory. It was not until October that that policy was even considered by the NHS unions as a whole months after the mass action of health workers and solidarity from other sections had died down. NUPE tamely went along with the bogus improved offer negotiations, the acceptance of which ended the dispute.

The period July to September saw tremendous displays of militancy from the health workers, uneven as it was both regionally and within the NHS unions. But it was the breadth of supporting action - sympathy strikes and secondary picketting - which the NHS struggle inspired that reflected a very advanced level of class consciousness and put a new dimension on their action. Health workers had shown before their ability to fight against low pay but never previously had there been such a spirit of support for their cause as that which swept through virtually the whole of the trade union movement during those months. The industrial workers were in the forefront, the miners being among the first to respond to appeals from the NHS rank and file for support.

Contained in these actions was a readiness to defy the existing and proposed anti-union laws. The Fleet Street electricians stood firm against the combined efforts of the print bosses, Frank Chapple and a High Court injunction and despite the precedent being set of the Prior law being used the courts were effectively forced to climb down in front of what would have been wide-scale industrial action

had the sentence against Sean Geraghty been severe.

September 22nd was the most extensive workers action since 1926 with 2 million or so on strike. The decision shortly afterwards by the TUC NHS committee to go for Regional Days of Action and the fiasco of the November 8th transport strike signalled surrender by the whole union leadership. The NHS leaders tactics of limiting the action to Days of Action, and then often not clearly strike action, with long delays in between sapped the workers fighting capacity and ensured the dispute dragged on. Attempts to organise local all-out action failed. The 'unity' now made so much off by the bureaucrats was positive only to the extent it unified the rank and file, where important gains were made in workplaces and by area strike committees. The negative side was the use of unity to hold the action at a level acceptable to the weakest and most conservative unions and the reactionary RCN whose members constantly rejected settlement offers. If, instead, there had been bold leadership from the unions at decisive points the most class conscious RCN members could no doubt have been won away from this dead-end organisation to genuine trade unionism.

Our intervention in the pay fight centred on the policy of all-out strike action, with emergency cover, to win the full claim. Our core of NHS comrades, though quite small and spread over a wide area, included a number of mainly women comrades with an important base in their unions and a history of struggle. Through the Health Workers for the Full Claim caucus we attempted to draw around us the best militants and provide a consistent counter to the bureaucrats. Our attempts to involve other left groups in this initiative met with little success. The IMG maintained a token presence, largely under our pressure, and Workers Power saw it, typically, as a polemical platform against us. HWFC did provide an important vehicle for our work which we were able to use to good effect, particularly at the NUPE and CoHSE conferences, and we drew into activity many important activists. The 8 HWFC bulletins we produced and the series of national meetings held was the only attempt made anywhere to provide rank and file national coordination. One opening in this context was the NHS shop stewards meeting in Sheffield in October which drew 200 people and at which we had a strong presence. It is far from clear whether this has a future but some longer term organisation may emerge from it which we should be in a position to relate to. In spite of the very good work that our comrades did, we did not win new recruits from the struggle. This may yet still happen as we retain contact with several potential members. A priority now for our NHS comrades will be to combat the inevitable demoralisation among the militants by drawing out for them the political lessons and preparing for the battle in front. The next period will bring an escalation in closures, cuts in services and jobs and the drive towards privatisation. The Oxford RHA proposals give a glimpse of the Tory NHS of the future.

Privatisation

The Tory's commitment to 'free enterprise' makes the whole of the public sector vulnerable. The cutting edge of their anti-nationalisation policy has been privatisation, essentially selling-off and contracting out nationalised industries and municipal services to private capitalists. Thatcher's hit-list includes British Airways, British National Oil Corporation, British Telecoms, parts of British Rail and, in time, probably BL. The attack on local authority jobs and services is seen most acutely in Tory-run councils bringing in private operators for dust collections and breaking up DLOs. Resistance has been sporadic and largely unsuccessful. Wandsworth dustmen were defeated after a 7-week strike, forced back by a combination of sacking threats and manoeuvres by full-time union officials.

Ironically, their defeat came straight after NUPE and GMWU conference decisions of support. Elsewhere local government workers have taken action, notably the 900 NALGO members in Birmingham who struck in November and resisted several sell-out attempts from their leaders before being forced back after failing to gain majority support from the branch membership for an all-out strike.

The biggest display of opposition organised nationally has been a one-day national stoppage called by the POEU and other BT unions against the privatisation of British Telecoms. The setting-up of Project Mercury under BL-supremo Michael Edwardes gives the capitalists a free-market alternative profits bonanza at the direct cost of jobs, services and trade union rights. The POEU is faced with virtual devastation and with its sections of the CPSA and UCW yet no union in the public sector has anything remotely resembling an adequate programme to defeat privatisation. An urgent priority for us must be to win support for policies in these unions based on complete non-cooperation with attempts by employers to contract out services, in particular by refusing to tender for contracts in competition with private companies and organising resistance based on blacking, strike action and sympathy strike action. Given the diversity of the attack and risk of fragmentation and isolation, an across-union public sector alliance must be developed at all levels of the unions to coordinate resistance. We need to formulate concrete proposals and initiatives to draw together militants disorientated and demoralised by defeats and the lack of national direction but prepared to fight.

Union rights under attack

Against a background of legal and shop floor attacks on the trade unions struggles which begin as attempts to improve or defend pay and conditions increasingly tend to become fights to defend union organisation itself. Employers tactics are more and more to simply sack workers who strike. Rulecan, Air India and Arlington House follow this trend. Newer groups joining unions for the first time, usually the low-paid and often blacks, demand recognition and are given the sack. As in the late 70's with similar disputes, many of these recognition struggles involve the TGWU and as in past years its attitude has been almost entirely one of doing the absolute minimum to support (in one case nothing at all) and above all avoiding any attempt to mobilise its vast membership. In a union which boasts one of the leftist leaderships in the TUC and which has taken a number of important policy decisions, this attitude of tokenism and betrayal is the day to day practical reality of the army of unelected TGWU full time officials. The most damning illustration of this can be seen in the long-running Air India strike at Heathrow. The TGWU has a huge membership at the airport controlling many essential services including aircraft refuelling which could rapidly win the strikers demands yet it has not been used. The serious defeat of the well-organised and militant Heathrow Ramp workers earlier last year arose from a similar failure.

This unwillingness to rouse the trade union membership, to alert workers to issues at stake and prepare for action in defence of their interests is what the Tories have been banking on in proceeding with their anti-union legislation. The TUC leaders have not let them down. their usual pedestrian routine has hardly been disturbed by even the thought of Tebbit's knife at their throats. The April 1982 Special Conference adopted, without the possibility of amendment, the bald minimum of what could be passed off as a defence policy. Union Day in June was for handing out leaflets, specifically not strike action (though many thousands struck anyway). Over Sean Geraghty, solidarity from Congress House was a deafening silence. Behind demagogic declarations from some about being ready to go to jail, the bureaucrats

strategy all along has been 'responsible' avoidance of anything smacking of direct action. The basis of this is the presumed eventual repeal of the laws by a Labour government. As an election gets nearer this will increasingly dominate the TUC's thinking. Quite apart from the bankruptcy of this perspective even if a Labour government committed to complete repeal were guaranteed, there is at the least a serious possibility that the next election will produce nothing of the kind.

Nor have the Tories by any means completed their plans. The new Tebbit Green Paper proposes measures to destroy the unions' links via the political levy with the Labour Party; implementing this would almost certainly require the mandate of an election victory. However much the Tories rely on the corruption and undemocratic methods of the union leadership they are not above using this in their propaganda against the unions. The bureaucrats' gross, managerial lifestyle and distance from the membership together with their general lack of accountability, used to such good effect by the bosses, is turned against trade unions as a whole. Sleight of hand is then used to put bureaucrats in the same bracket as the revolutionaries, brand them as an 'unrepresentative minority' and further Tebbit's reactionary and fraudulent crusade to 'put the unions into the hands of the members'.

Despite their do-nothing approach the TUC have nevertheless got allies in the Communist Party. The CP-controlled LCDTU, trading on an ill-deserved reputation from past anti-union law struggles, has added a little rhetorical spice to the TUC's 8-point plan and not a great deal more. The two conferences last year were lightweight, depressing affairs tailored to the left of the TUC General Council (3 of them CP members) who over Tebbit are virtually indistinguishable from the right wing. We have attempted to organise a fight back by initiating the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights, launched from the April 3rd Trade Union conference. Based initially on the need for strike action to defeat the Tebbit Bill and for the TUC to break off links with the Tories (a demand over which the CP vacillated and only supported when it was passed by the TGWU), the Mobilising Committee anti-Tebbit propaganda, leaflets and bulletins including around Union Day and the TUC conference in September which heavily voted down a 'break links' resolution. In some places such as Hull and Manchester it has made useful links with trade unions. In addition through Reg Race we attempted to bring together various rank and file TU bodies and others to establish a broad anti-Tebbit organisation. A successful meeting was held which included a delegation from S. Wales NUM and representatives of numerous Broad Lefts as well as the LCDTU. Despite a further meeting being planned and a conference proposed so far no more has come of this. We need proposals on this work to cope with the new situation.

The trade union rank and file

Closures, redundancies and defeats have inevitably taken their toll of rank and file organisation. So too have victimisations where every successful sacking makes union organisation harder. Nothing can compensate for a defeat but at a time when sell-outs expose the bureaucrats and shake workers' confidence in their traditional leaders Marxists with an understanding of reformism and stalinism can make qualitative gains by emerging as the best fighters under these harsh conditions.

While real problems do exist, so do opportunities, particularly when other tendencies have largely given up consistent union work. It is well known that the SWP's superficial 'downturn' diagnosis has led

them to completely abandon their Rank and File group work and retreat into a sterile 'build the Party' propagandism. We must guard against any similar tendency in our own ranks. Extending our influence at the base of the unions must include looking for openings which allow us a dialogue with activists. There has been a rapid growth of union left caucuses over the last few years and we have correctly sought to work within these bodies. Such Broad Lefts, by whatever name, now tend to differ quite radically from the old, AUEW-style, CP-dominated versions of a decade or more ago. They are now usually much more politically open and by no means confined to passive electioneering. Our perspective has been to orientate them towards day to day problems and struggles and in particular union democracy. In CoHSE's Group 81, we have with few comrades won significant authority with a woman comrade standing for the general secretaryship with the caucus supporting her nomination. The NUT's STA has also brought us real influence among many left teachers. In other, longer established Broad Lefts like the TGWU our progress has been slower but gains have been made there too. Not that these groupings should be seen as either a panacea by themselves or still less as counterposed to our internal fractions. It is the case that in many Broad Lefts the influence of the CP or Militant severely limits their usefulness. Examples of these would be the NUR and to a lesser extent the POEU, but the shake-up in the NUR following Weighell's demise and the privatisation threat looming before the POEU means work there is vital. In the CPSA, where new BL President Roddy has played a scab role in the DHSS strikes over staffing levels, we have set about organising a Socialist Caucus against such capitulations. The continuing fear the right wing have of such groupings may be seen from the heavy bureaucratic attacks made on them by the UCW and IRSF leaderships. Our ability to work effectively as revolutionaries in this milieu is dependent on our internal trade union structures working properly. Some union fractions have begun to operate really well but much more must be done to get others functioning on a consistent basis.

Levy
January '83

THE LONG ROAD TO WIGANISATION - Oliver

1. The policy of 'Wiganisation' was first discussed in the old ICL about 3 years ago and was passed by the ICL National Conference. It has never been implemented.
2. Basically the idea stems from the policy change of the SLL in 1961, to move out of small discussion circles in the party rooms into the Council Estates to organise and recruit working class youth on a mass scale. This was particularly successful in Wigan where Liz Thompson recruited 300 YS by running regular discos. This policy was also consciously adopted by the International Socialists in the early 1970s - this time out of the party rooms or Universities to the factories with Tony Cliff's book "The Employers' Offensive", with factory bulletins and rank and file papers.
3. There is plenty to be learnt from both of these experiences. The fact that both the SLL and IS were built into probably the largest Left Groups ever seen in this country and then became ossified sects is interesting in itself. My view is that it was through Wiganisation that they built, it was through sectarian politics and bureaucratic centralism that they failed. Both groups patronised and pandered to their target population - the SLL to working class youth, the IS to shop stewards. They failed to develop the new recruits politically, they also failed to learn from the practice and experience of these new recruits.
4. Both the SLL and IS caught hold of new moods in the working class and built alongside them - the SLL, the Teddy Boys, the Mods and Rockers amongst the youth - the IS the self-confident shop stewards' movement. Both the SLL and IS also drew cadre from mass protest movements - the SLL from the CND in the early 60s, the IS from the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in the late 60s. In the early 80s, there are a number of developments taking place in the Labour movement which we are failing entirely to build alongside. We have the policies which should make us relate to these, but we seem to be paralysed organisationally. The particular developments I have in mind are a) the CND, b) the Women's Movement, c) Anti-Racism amongst Black Youth and d) the Left Wing in the O.
5. When we are talking of Wiganisation, we are talking of taking initiatives on a national scale and on a mass scale. It means a whole transformation of our methods of work. This is what it meant in the SLL and in IS and in both cases it was done quite consciously and quite deliberately. We talk a lot about campaigns and building a mass LPYS and mass O particularly in relation to 'Militant' but we've never in practice made any serious attempt to carry these ideas through, as far as I can see. An obvious example is the LPYS where the SLL in 3 years took complete control of the NC by building mass LPYS branches. In 10 years in the LPYS, we have more or less the same number of delegates each year. We have mounted no serious challenge to any of the NC places held by 'militant'. We have built no mass LPYS branches indeed some of our delegates represent "paper branches" in the same way as "Militant" do. This at a time of mass youth unemployment, riots in the inner cities and 7,000 members of YCND! In my view there should be no problem to building mass LPYS branches if a national decision was so made.
6. There are many different forms Wiganisation can take, it need not relate first to youth. Women's Sections, T.U. branches, LP branches, YCND and so on - they can all be turned outwards. The point is "of attending many meetings there is no end, and much discussion is a weariness of the flesh". We need to turn outwards into the Council Estates into the inner cities, to talk to, to listen to and to organise new layers of workers.
7. Some examples of how Wiganisation might be applied. In Coventry, the Upper Stoke LP Branch ran a campaign on Housing. They went from door to door in a Council Estate with a questionnaire on repairs and maintenance. They compiled a report on their findings which they published in the local press. The most obvious cases were taken up by local Labour Councillors, the Branch demanded that the rest be done and quickly, they involved local UCATT members and the Trades

WIGANISATION/2

Council. The result was that the whole Branch were threatened by the right wing Council leaders with expulsion from the LP for "bringing the Labour Party into disrepute". The Ward then appealed to tenants to join the Party to fight the right wing. The repairs are now being done and have brought the local Party some new members. Other campaigns run by this Ward have been around Education and School Meals using problems in local schools - in other words Community issues.

The Radford Branch in Coventry turn up every Saturday morning in their local shopping precinct with their banner and megaphone and hold political meetings. They have made 40 new members in the last 2 months.

Leamington LP have bought an old mini bus for transporting comrades to demos and to do door-to-door canvassing in Council Estates and also to drive round covered in posters with loudspeaker equipment to give impromptu meetings outside factory gates or at shopping centres.

Single issue campaigns like CND or Anti-Apartheid can very often gain mass support. Local bands will sometimes play and give inexpensive gigs to raise funds. There is no need to always organise meetings - films, theatre groups or social events are just as useful.

8. The main thing to remember about Wiganisation is that activity has to be regular to gain support of new layers - no here today and gone tomorrow, no quick raids. The mass YS branches run by the SLL had discos and meetings every week month in month out. The R & F groups run by IS had factory bulletins every fortnight with paper sales in between.

Another point to remember is that his regular activity in the SLL and in IS was helped by nationally and centrally organised events and campaigns - so that the new supporters did not feel isolated and met people like themselves from all over the country. Also cadres were developed in organising for these events.

9. Some proposals on Wiganisation

- a) Each branch in consultation with the OC discusses one area of the work of the local broad group where a pilot scheme of Wiganisation can take place.
- b) This work should involve all members to one degree or another and should utilise an existing base, e.g. LPYS, Women's Section, LP branch, TU branch, YCND.
- c) The OC to maintain co-ordination and control over this work with regular reports via a page every week in the paper.

IRELAND: RESOLUTION OF THE DECEMBER 1981 NATIONAL COMMITTEE

1. We give unconditional support to the fight of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland against British imperialism (and its Irish representatives) and for a united Ireland.
2. We fight for British troops to be got out - unconditionally and immediately.
3. We support the right of the IRA to strike against British military and state targets - even if we may question the tactical wisdom - but we condemn attacks on civilians. These criteria apply to events in Britain and Ireland equally.
4. We criticise the nationalist and militarist limitations of the IRA leadership, and counterpose a fight to link the struggle against partition with an all-Ireland class movement, under revolutionary socialist leadership, coupled with a campaign of solidarity within the British labour movement. We do not use the socialist programme on nationalism to avoid taking concrete positions on struggles led by petty bourgeois nationalists.
5. Debate should continue on the immediate prospects and possibilities of the struggle in the North, etc.

E.E.C.: RESOLUTION OF THE APRIL 1982 NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Faced with an anti-EEC motion in a trade union or Labour Party branch, we try to amend it by adding:

- a) no to an independent British capitalist state (no to bosses' Britain);
- b) no to import controls,
- c) for the Socialist United States of Europe.

If our amendment is defeated, we then vote AGAINST the motion.

(The alternative debated by the NC was that under such circumstances, if our amendment is defeated, we vote FOR the motion).