

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO.30

JANUARY 1983

Discussion article

A Reply to comrade Evington Kendall

Conference document

Women's document part 1 Collins

(this is to be read together with parts 2 and 3,
by Parkinson and Fraser, in IB 22+)

Conference document

Amendment: to 'Aspects of the International
Situation' Parsons

Amendments to British Perspectives draft: Parsons

For information

Resolutions on the IMG/SL, and letter from IMG/SL.

Comrades are asked to contribute
20p per bulletin if possible
towards the cost of duplicating
and mailing the Internal Bulletins.

Discussion articles, resolutions and amendments should be
sent, typed A4 on Roneo stencils if possible, to the centre.

It is quite clear that Evington's document is trying to convey, not a tactical disagreement on this or that aspect of our MO work, but the desire for a fundamental retreat from our present stand. We are told the 'SL has already capitulated to Labourism or is on the verge of doing so. Kinnell's resolution on tactics is cited as proof of this, while quotes from the ICL are used to show how the leadership of the former ICL and, it seems, some at least of the old 'SL leadership, have gone down the road of capitulation.

Unfortunately, much of what he states remains at the level of implied criticism. For this reason his very confused and incoherent document begs more questions than it answers. What is the nature of our capitulation? Is it impossible to carry out such an extensive tactic without falling into the grasp of Labourism? Is our analysis of the labour movement incorrect? He does not begin to answer these points. Nor is it put on record, for those who don't know, that Ed Evington is one of a number who have been wanting a different orientation, in reality a sectarian retreat from, MO work for some time. Instead we are treated to a rather coy statement that the debate over the Falklands war formulated other questions. For anyone who has been in the organisation for any length of time these questions pre-date that discussion and for Ed Evington at least since the 1980 ICL Conference.

One thing is very clear from his document and this is that not understood the nature of the labour movement in Britain, or the relationship we are attempting to build with it. This point needs to be tackled before we can look at our alleged deviation.

Evington enjoys quoting Kinnell and Macaulay, attempting to show a change in line; what he doesn't do is to try to put these quotes into our overall perspective of the labour movement (certainly this is no secret - read the ICL manifesto) which would show that there is no real change in line between 1980 and 83. In fact his claim that there was ever an ICL commitment to convergence in the way he states is sheer invention. It is seen as an open-ended process and no-one would have been so stupid as to have put a precise time limit on it. The starting point of our orientation to the labour movement as a whole - and it seems to be a precondition that we should get this right before we can do any serious work in other areas, as opposed to posturing and dabbling - is found most succinctly in the following quote/analysis by Trotsky:

'In England, more than anywhere else, the state rests upon the back of the working class which constitutes the vast majority of the population of the country. The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers and the state indirectly through the intermediary of the TU bureaucracy...'

The re is of-course no disagreement with the above. In fact this relationship has been massively extended in the 40 or so years since that was written; trade unions reach a far wider section of the class. The TU bureaucracy's relationship with the state, since 1940, has developed, though not without interruption, on a scale to where it now exists at every level of the state structure, yet the TUs remain the sole mediators between the class, industry and the state, at least for the present. While the attempt to find an accommodation to the state is a general phenomenon common to all reformist bureaucracies, the specific relationship in Britain is unique.

Superficially it would seem that this class/TU/state relationship is virtually independent of the MO, especially if you look at the struggles waged by the class in the 60s and early 70s, which also took place semi-independently of the TU bureaucracy. From this viewpoint the MO's importance and relevance as an integral part of the labour movement is only glimpsed at best: at election times, for example, when it's seen as the political alternative to the Tories, or at times of the bloc vote which can and does decide MO policy.

In one form or another revolutionaries have in fact based their work on the above analyses, not least because the relationship is there and our task is relatively straight-forward - betrayal by the leadership, need for shop floor organisation etc. While such things are an absolutely central element to our struggle it is impossible to explain the hegemony of labourism from such a one sided analysis of the labour movement, the routine it imposes on the class, the political and ideological parameters in which the movement functions and,

in a broader sense, in which the class exists, even if for many this is an outright rejection of them and of the labour movement. By not fully explaining the nature of the movement it also fails to provide a starting point for what we as revolutionaries should be doing. The quote continues:

'Up to now we have not mentioned the ^{which} MO in England, ^{which} the classic country of trade unions, is only a political transposition of the same trade union bureaucracy. The same leaders guide the trade unions, betray the general strike, lead the electoral campaign and later on sit in ministries. The MO and the trade unions - these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labour. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie. The latter cannot be overthrown without overthrowing the Labourite bureaucracy. And that cannot be attained by opposing the trade union as such to the state as such, but by the active opposition of the CL to the Labourite bureaucracy in all fields of social life' (Marxism and TU, The errors in principle of syndicalism p59 This quote is partially reproduced in the LCL manifesto of 77)

From this rounded position of the movement the independence of the class/state/union relationship disappears. The 'technical division of labour' has in reality created a total interdependence, which permeates downward to every aspect of the labour movement's existence, organisationally, politically and ideologically. This not only provides the 'fundamental support for the domination of the bourgeoisie' but through the leadership of the movement, and its NCOs, the major transmission belt for bourgeois conceptions and norms. This is This function is most directly performed by the TUs whose officials and stewards play a parallel role of being, in Gramsci's terminology, the 'organic intellectuals of our class!'

Of course if comrades believe that this relationship has somehow been superseded, is no longer of relevance, then they should say so, however to abandon such an analysis will leave comrades floundering - neither able to adequately explain how the class struggle has developed to date, nor to understand the underlying dynamic of different movements within it, and, most importantly, what to do with them. What is left is trying to place the MO and TU on to some utilitarian scale, a totally unacceptable formula, and a failure in grasping the importance in breaking up and therefore transforming the above relationship. For instance this lies at the root of some comrades inability to understand what it would have meant for Benn to win the deputy leadership battle. Not only would it have given hope to many thousands of workers which would have been reflected in people joining the party. It would also have meant that the relationship between the unions and the party would have been further destabilized as the viability of labour as an alternative capitalist government would have been brought into question. This does not mean that Benn is another Maxton let alone a revolutionary. Our job is not to look simply at the form but at the class content of such a development. Incidentally if he had won Benn would have been put on parade in front of the class, which is worth any number of polemics we care to write consigning him to the dustbin of history.

Renovating the movement... Understanding the above relationship between unions and party tells us in general what our strategic tasks consist of, it cannot tell us what should be the next step for such a tiny organisation as ours. During the latter part of the 60s it would have been sectarian for us to carry out such a general orientation to the MO. However the mass movement which had emerged then was not able to break up the inter-relationship. It was crushed between the growing crisis and the power of a united MO/TU bureaucracy which took the form of the social contract. For the revolutionary left the years, now almost a decade, of failure to reorientate to the movement as a whole have taken their toll on our ability to influence the classes attempt to develop organisations which which can move forward in the present crisis. The threads which bind the movement have been drawn much closer together but they have not yet formed a noose around the neck of the leadership, because revolutionaries who attempt to provide the conscious link between the class and socialism have only built up a minimal and peripheral relationship to the organisations of the working class.

However our conception of renovating the movement doesn't rest on it being a 'good idea' but on a necessarily objective process. The material basis on which the labour movement has been constructed is being destroyed by the present crisis. This does not affect just one section but the whole movement. It is this which provides our starting point in the present period. If the bureaucracy is left to its own devices it will undoubtedly try to find a new accommodation with the state (which is the basis of Tebbit); but these

people do not represent a class but are a caste who, in the final analysis, can be made accountable/replaced by the working class. Because under present conditions such an accommodation is not open to the working class. It is not whether to fight, but how, and against whom. It is this process of renovation in which we attempt to intervene. Undoubtedly such development, rather disparate and limited at the present time, is occurring in the unions. At the moment its sharpest form is found in the ILO. It was precisely the fact that the left of the party was trying to come to grips with the experience of the last labour govt. which allowed them to unite around the democracy issue. Yet some comrades attitudes to this struggle was to see it as a somewhat twee and rather parochial affair for Marxists to bother with. What else should the left have organised around - campaign for the dictatorship of the proletariat? The democracy issue was a very concrete and practical problem, a living struggle which we necessarily had to intervene in. More importantly such an attitude misses the point of how people develop; it is only through such experiences, such struggles that we will be able to reach them.

Are we capitulating to our milieu?... As I understand it the above provides us with an analysis of the movement and our tasks as that movement fragments under the pressure of the crisis. It is from this viewpoint that we have to look at the quotes of Kinnell and Macaulay. It should be self-evident that the spontaneity and the organisation at the point of production is an integral part of the struggle outlined above. The Cd cannot give one example of where we have in practice capitulated to our ILO milieu. If we had would it not have shown in our practice and attitude to industrial disputes? At the time of the threatened mass sackings of BL workers this time last year we were putting our organisation on a war footing ready to turn it upside down not only because of the centrality of our own Cds but because of the importance of the class of the possibilities it opened up for a generalised struggle against the Tories. Over the Health workers' dispute we attempted to mobilise solidarity action when and where possible, attacking the leadership for the way they ran the strike and, strangely, for an organisation which is accommodating to labourism, starting a health workers for the full claim. Again, rather strangely, over the strike at BL trucks we attempted to intervene and attack the ILO for their accommodation to the CP tribunate ABS programme put out by the strike leadership. Surely if we are going down the road Cd Evington suggests we would have supported the ILO line. If the Cd wants to say that we haven't taken up these issues as efficiently as we might then perhaps I would agree with him. If he considers we need to do much more work with our TU fractions, to a large extent preparatory work rather than any form of substituting for the class, then I for one would agree. However, that is far from his implication, for him we are abandoning the direct action class struggle. Maybe the WSL practice over the last year and a half has been an aberration, maybe some of us are putting forward and supporting the class struggle out of force of habit. If that is the case then much of our work in the ILO makes very little sense. For a number of years now we have been fighting over the questions of rent, no rate increases. Such a struggle has been waged in very unfavourable conditions precisely because of the lack of any mass action against the Tories. We broke with the Chartists and other lefts over this without qualms because it was a necessary step. Do we do such things for fun or merely to win a few people to a hard position on the issue? It is the only conclusion Cd Evington can draw from this given our rejection of the direct action of the class. The fundamental starting point for the whole argument has been that the only conceivable force to carry out such a policy is the working class, who else? - the labour council, the lefts, the WSL? Our struggle in the party can only take us up to the point which provides the most favourable point of departure for the opening up of the industrial struggle. Without wanting to sound too ultra left such a struggle waged in a determined manner would necessarily go beyond Cd Evington's rather TU routinist conception of the importance of the point of production (p 3 para 6). The very nature of the relationship between local authority workers and the point of production means any determined fight would almost immediately pose questions of workers control - who is to look after old people, do emergency repairs, who decides what council services should be maintained. Necessarily sections of the working class 'outside the movement' e.g. tenants associations would almost immediately be mobilised in the form of a rent strike. Whether the TU leaders were able to sabotage such a dispute before it attained such proportions, or the govt backed down is a matter of speculation, what is not is the logic of the dispute. On the basis on which we have gone in to the debate I would like to know how that is capitulating to labourism or rejecting the direct action struggle.

Operating in the MO... There are two component parts to this work and it is necessary to do both if revolutionary work is to be carried out. We base our work on the objective developments which are taking place and situate them in the context of the crisis of labourism. If that was all we did then indeed we would be capitulating to our milieu. It is a cast iron certainty that this is the road down which the IMG will go. They will see the objective process as something which will naturally and organically ripen, and which doesn't need the intervention of a revolutionary organisation except to rush it along and give it good advice.

The entire history of the Mandelbrot tendency has been one of such political accommodationism. Look how they have taken the theory of permanent revolution on a 'Cooks tour of the world' creating a mystical process like the will of the wisp, appearing in one country then the next; standing above the realities of the class struggle it has taken on a life of its own. However, we see ourselves as a permanently organised force who continually intervene in this development, to be part of the experience the reformists are going through, to show them, for instance, we are the best fighters for democracy in the MO (this is not a con we are in favour of the maximum amount of democracy in the mass organisations of the working class), to give them a Marxist over-view of the struggle which necessarily means an understanding of the industrial struggle and the need for the party. It is in this manner that we are not only part of a living struggle which distinguishes itself from paper exercises in party building, but able to develop a cadre in the organisations of the class and reach out and recruit from new layers, and, both in terms of ideas and organisational methods to reach an even wider grouping of people in the movement. This, as I understand it, is the lever of a small group.

Cd Evington, in wanting a sectarian retreat from this method and orientation, cannot come out into the open and say so; instead, we are given the hard line approach of fighting from the programme and not abandoning trotskyst principles. In doing this the Cd transposes - in his imagination - the WSL from a tiny organisation which doesn't even claim to be the nucleus of a revolutionary party to a fully formed organisation. This immediately puts us on a par with the reformist leadership in competing for the allegiance of the working class. Unfortunately this is fantasy. All the hard choices, the necessary tactical turns and organisational compromises (of which working in the MO is but one) are an absolute necessity for building that party in today's class struggle. The learning process, with its unavoidable mistakes, is brushed aside and replaced by ready made formula and equations. It is the hallmark of 57 varieties of Trotskyism's so called programmatic intransigence and exposure politics of the lefts, and waiting for the masses to come to you.

It is possible to build a cosy sect in this manner but not a revolutionary organisation. Such an attitude is the general stamp of the sectarian's approach to the world. This has found its most absurd form in the Sparts. It also leads to a consumerist approach to politics where you can say - if the bureaucracy had done this, if the reformist leadership had done that, then the struggle would be won. It may be necessary to point out such political lessons, but not to make it a method of political life. This may give some comrades a warm feeling but if TU leaders were prepared to fight there would be no need for organisations such as ours. This approach is literally idealist - we will change peoples perceptions of the world through our good ideas. Not only is this a recipe for passive propaganda, it doesn't develop the struggle or our organisation within the movement. It is in reality a retreat from communist methods.

'It is not enough for revolutionaries to have correct ideas, let us not forget that correct ideas have already been set down in Capital and the Communist Manifesto; it is task of the revolutionary party to weld together the correct ideas with the mass labour movement. Only in this manner can an idea become a driving force'

(The league faced with a turn)

It is this attitude which we have taken and are trying to develop. Cd Evington does not see our tasks in this light but accuses us of 'drifting into political accommodation to reformism in practice, for example substituting the UF tactic with the idea of staying with the left and gaining agreement to organise with them, by limiting our politics instead of marching separately and striking together' (p 3 para 1). Does this mean we have had the right approach till recently, or is it a general development of substituting for the UF tactic? By implication we have the full weight of the CI brought down on our head for abandoning the UF. But when have we, or any other organisation in Britain, had a UF with either the TUs or MO in the manner of the CI?

In the cases where the CP still remains an organization of a numerically insignificant minority, the question of its conduct on the mass struggle front does not assume a decisive practical and organizational significance. But wherever the CP already constitutes a huge political force.. whenever the party embraces, let us say, a quarter or a third of the organized prolet-

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(On the UF p 92 The first 5 years of the CI)

In Britain to carry out the CI UF tactic we would be talking about, and let us be generous to the cd, a communist party of 3 million. We are hovering around the 200 mark. It is clearly impossible to talk about a UF of that sort but it is precisely this framework the cd tries to impose on the WSL - mass organisation status, Lending weight to the idea that we can compete with the reformist bureaucracy on equal terms for the allegiance of the class. In attempting to build a relationship with the organisations of the class we have maintained the cardinal principle of all communist tactics - maximum organisational flexibility - with the maintenance of our political and ideological independence. Because the cds have underestimated this point they fail to understand that our organisational form can take any shape we choose as long as political independence is maintained. If cds consider this is not possible they then must consider that nothing can be done in the movement. The road to TUs is by a similar approach to that in the MO and we already practice it.

It is not only the UF with which we are beaten round the head, but also the first thesis for admission to the CI, once again with the implication that we have abandoned our commitment to the first four congresses. Cds should be aware that the use of the 21 points of entry was to strictly demarcate the international from all centrist & reformist parties so that the international was formed on ideological clarity, and presenting the tasks of communist parties formed around the Bolshevik revolution, not the tasks and tactics of a 100 or so communists. Trotsky, dealing with this question in the period of the international's degeneration, looks at it from this perspective:

'Q Is it possible to consider at this stage independent existence outside the mass organisations?'

'A The fact that Lenin was not afraid to break with Plekanov in 1905 and to remain a small isolated minority bears no weight because the same Lenin remained inside social democracy until 1912, and in 1920 urged the affiliation of the British CP to the Labour Party. While it is necessary for the revolutionary party to maintain its independence at all times a revolutionary group of a few hundred can work most efficiently at present by opposition to social patriots within the mass parties. In view of the increasing acuteness of the international situation it is absolutely essential to be within the mass organisations while the possibility of doing revolutionary work remains. Any such sterile or formalistic interpretation of Marxism in the present situation would disgrace a child of ten. (Interview on British problems - 1935 -6 p 328)

Evington's failure to grasp the difference between a small group and a party is central to his polemic which, when it comes to dealing with a concrete issue such as the witch-hunt, blind him to who we are. He attempts to impose sterile formula and equations on an analysis of what is happening in the MO. Quite correctly we are told that working in the MO allows us to argue our politics 'it is obvious and always has been that social democracy wasn't going to let that happen indefinitely.. What we are beginning to see now with the RW in control of the NEC is just that social democracy moving to defend itself(p 4 para 3)'. .

Firstly the equation is false that we are the central axis about which the witch-hunt was started. It betrays a total misunderstanding about the movement in the party and the nature of the battle taking place. It started just over a year ago after Benn lost the deputy leadership battle, 20 or so MPs threatened to defect to the SDP, Foot came off the

fence going over to the right willingly or not constituting the present bloc which has enabled the witch-hunt to develop, with of course the essential TU backing. Their basic target was the advances made in the party on the question of democracy, and the need to make the party a viable capitalist alternative to the Tories. Almost immediately Benn began to retreat or more precisely refused to move forward on to the offensive. The next stage was an attack on the MT as the right took over the reins of power, and the unity of the left which had been built up over the years began to fragment. The crypto-Stalinist section of the LCC, C-4, the ILP (not the Bennites) took up the right wing cudgels and began to define the party with them as the left wing. What did we do in this situation? We warned continually in the paper against the consequences of retreat and attempted to reform the left. The left didn't regroup until after the conference partly because we were not a big enough force to act as a pole of attraction, and partly because of M's exclusiveness and their unwillingness to unite. Many peoples also believed the threat was all hot air.

'Firstly a witch-hunt is above all else a heightening of the struggle between reformism and revolutionary socialism.. it will win (reformism) if it can silence us and thereby avoid having to fight on the theoretical plane...' (p 4 para 5)

Was the witch-hunt against the Bennites in the 50s one between reform and revolutionaries? No, neither is this one - the intention is the destabilisation of the party; the reaction of the witch-hunt was to the democracy campaign not from either our or Ms propaganda. The implication is that only revolutionaries can break up the present leadership of the party, which cuts you off from any understanding of the movement of the class and our role within it. As we have said of the democracy campaign it can quite easily over a period of time be institutionalized, but to simply see that would be to see its form rather than class content and dynamic. The idea of reformists engaging in a theoretical battle with us seems ridiculous (although Benn did win the debate of the decade on points).

'Social democracy will lose if it is unable to expel us or silence us and we are able to fight for our programme..'

Social democracy will win only if it expels us because how are they going to keep us silent? This can only be explained if you start from a view of the party as an organisational and technical instrument, rather than a relatively homogeneous ideological force. Everything flows from this including technical instruments such as our paper. How can cds explain this when looking at the SLL experience where Socialist Outlook was banned in 54 to 57 (the start of the newsletter) and the SLL had no paper of their own. They did however manage to lead a powerful movement in the docks and much else besides. The crucial test for us would be over an issue like the health workers dispute. Would we change our programme, would we change our attitudes if we were a proscribed organization within the MO? Why should we?

'It will also have lost if in the course of expelling us it is forced to expel part of its left flank'

The bureaucracy would be only too pleased to evict a few 'trouble makers' if they were at the point of being able to expel us (which would in itself arise from our isolation). Our tactic here would be quite clear. Attempt to win them to the WSL, maintain a broad paper, and reorientate the whole bloc of expelled people to the MO for re-admission. The only arguments against this would be if the break was so large, or if it had such wide ramifications in the TU that the whole 'technical division of labour' between the MO and TU substantially cracked.

'It is only through a political struggle that such a break will occur'.

This is true, but what does Cd Evington think has taken place over the last few years? How did we arrive at the position where the witch-hunt is taking place except through the ebb and flow of that political struggle? In what realm does political struggle take place for the cd - in some cordoned-off area labelled 'political struggle for Trotskyists' or does our struggle to win such people to revolutionary socialism take place on a different plane to the class struggle itself?

'The importance of fighting the register is that it is over the issue that a clear split has occurred inside social democracy (p4 para 6)'

This is simply not the case. It is factually inaccurate because a) it is now conference policy and b) this has helped the elements who want to attack Trotskyists to maintain the disunity of the left and c) it has generally split the left on the level of tactics. However the main dividing line between right and left remains the question of expulsions.

It is here that the main split has arisen. How have we dealt with this question? Far from leading the retreat we have led the fight for a boycott of the register. Whether we should continue this has always been a tactical question depending on the number of forces we are able to rally. The CLPD AGM has been put down as our marker. If we stand alone shouting the principle of non registration the CLPs will turn round to us and say 'why, when everyone else has registered, have you not? We are prepared to defend anybody and everyone (willingly or otherwise) against expulsion because it is a matter of principle but you people, having lost the battle, want to make a principle out of defeat. Why?' Of course it might be possible to berate them for their lack of a Marxist perspective but our defence of non-registration would be vacuous because the question of non-registration is not an absolute principle.

'It would however be politically wrong for anyone considering themselves revolutionary socialist to accept registration just because they were able to do so' (p 4 para __)

Why? Such an issue cannot be explained as a matter of principle as the cd asserts. The CLPs have made their base line the issue of expulsions; we are deciding our tactics from the position of the CLP AGM. The greater the unity on this issue the harder it will be for the right to attack. 50 CLPs are far more substantial than one. This unity has been brought about in the face of the retreat and active sabotage of Mt, C-4 etc, around the formation of LAW in which we have played a role in proposing and building.

Staying with the left.... One of the ~~central~~ reasons for the retreat of the left if the forthcoming election. This has been a trump card in Foot's pack, though it may well rebound on him if the left can put up a unified fight. Whether we like it or not the movement as a whole is beginning to focus on that election, while the retreat of the lefts is more complex than Cd Evington believes (we are fighting with the Bennites at the CLPD AGM against c-4). Certainly there is no evidence to show that the left has been decisively defeated. Of primary importance is the fact that the CLPs remain solid. It seems inconceivable that, whoever wins the election, these forces will not re-organise themselves. In what concrete form this takes is open to debate, but for Cd Evington to deny the general point is in reality to deny our analysis of the movement. As I stated at the beginning of this document if the cds disagreed with that analysis then they should explain our shortcomings, or more precisely how the 'technical division of labour' outlined by Trotsky has been broken, become irrelevant or can be by-passed, not simply by a hundred or so revolutionaries but by the working class.

END

1. Women's Liberation and Revolution

- a) Women are and have been oppressed in all class societies, though the particular form that oppression takes varies with time and place. Women's oppression is based on material property relations and only the complete overthrow of those property relations, the ending of class society, can form the basis for women's liberation. Women's liberation presupposes a society in which production is organised for need, where society's resources are directed to the solution to humanity's problems. Such a society is a precondition for women's liberation, but in and of itself is no guarantee. Only a continuing struggle led by women will ensure that this potential is realised.
- b) Women's oppression arose with the dawn of private property and the beginnings of class differentiation. Previous to this, as far as can be known, society was organised on the basis of communal property, equality and subsistence. With the possibility of a surplus, developed the potential for unequal wealth and from that the exploitation of one human being by another. Allied to this, women became confined to the family in sexual monogamy, and excluded from social production and ownership. It is women's role in the family and its divorce from social production which is at the root of women's oppression.
- c) Capitalism continues the oppression of women which it inherits from previous class societies, but shapes it to its own purposes. The specific features of capitalism - wage labour, commodity production - put their own stamp on the form that women's oppression takes. Capitalism draws women into the waged labour force but in conditions of structured inequality (low pay, job segregation, unequal rights) and without relieving them of the burden of domestic work. Indeed, privatised domestic labour performed by women is the necessary corollary of the workers' freedom to sell his labour power. The servicing of the individual labourer in the family, the reproduction of the labour force, including the socialisation of new generations of workers, are vital for the maintenance of capitalism but take place, at least in appearance, outside the market relations of capitalism.
- d) Capitalism in creating the working class creates its own grave-digger. In striving to end their exploitation and for their liberation, workers can not aim to become a new exploiting class, but to put an end to the whole epoch of exploitation, i.e. the creation of a classless society. The precondition for doing this is that the working class becomes conscious of its historic role, becomes a 'class for itself' breaking all the chains which tie it to its oppressors. Central to this is the recognition that women's oppression is a vital pillar of class society and a barrier to the achievement of human liberation.
- e) Working class women are an integral part of the working class who as such share in the need to bury capitalism, but in addition have a specific interest in ending their own oppression as women. Because their interests as women and as workers converge in the necessity of a complete revolution in social relations to achieve their full liberation as women and as workers, they are strategically placed to break the working class from the hold of bourgeois ideology which gives it a seeming common interest with its oppressor.
- f) The Russian Revolution was a vindication of the view that socialist revolution is the precondition for women's true equality: even under extremely adverse conditions a greater stride forward for women was achieved than in any other single historic step. At the same time it underlined the lesson that legal and economic equality is not in itself sufficient to wipe out millennia of male supremacy: even before the Stalinist degeneration, women still had to struggle against the legacy of oppression. With the rise of Stalin and the bureaucratisation of the soviet state, the early gains for women were all but wiped out. The situation today in Russia and the deformed workers' states is a powerful argument against the idea that the right to work, childcare, abortion, etc., in and of themselves constitute liberation, without democratic control of the state and its functions.

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g) Liberation can not be given from outside. It is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that only the self-organisation and self-activity of the oppressed can ensure true liberation. This is especially true for women who for all of recorded history have been denied their own voice, have had their position and their interests defined for them by their oppressors. Even within the revolutionary movement, women have had to struggle against the unthinking sexism of their comrades to have their fight taken seriously.

But it is ultimately in the interest of that movement that women's voices are heard. It is no coincidence that some of the sharpest critics of the opportunism and bureaucratisation of the SPD were women (Luxemburg's 'Reform or Revolution' which mercilessly analysed that degeneration; Zetkin who led its women's movement in opposition to the SPD's capitulation on the War; exiled Kollontai who, even before Lenin, began to search for the causes of this capitulation, and linked it to the bureaucratic insensitivity to women in the Party).

'Opportunist organisations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the woman worker' - Trotsky in the one paragraph of the Transitional Programme he devotes to women !

The slaves of the slaves, by the nature of their existence, are especially vulnerable to bureaucratism, and exclusion.

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2. 'Sexual Politics'

a) The feminist critique of Marxism centres round its alleged failure to analyse male domination in the power relationships between men and women, which they see as the central question of women's oppression :

'In reality every such relationship is a class relationship, and the conflicts between individual men and women are ^{political} conflicts that can only be solved collectively..... We identify with all women. We define our best interest as that of the poorest, most brutally oppressed women. In fighting for our liberation we will always take the side of women against their oppressors. We will not ask what is "revolutionary" or "reformist" only what is good for women.' (Redstockings, reprinted in 'Feminist Revolution')

Because of this failure Marxists have little independently to say on issues of 'sexual politics' (e.g. rape, sexuality, pornography). This in turn leads to either a tail-ending or cynical manipulation of feminists and the women's movement. Either these issues are legitimate areas of concern, in which case Marxism is shown to be inadequate, or they are merely a cover for 'fishing expeditions' whose aim is to convince women to jettison their own concerns in favour of 'real' politics.

Insofar as those who make a claim to be Marxist have failed to make this analysis, this reflects not so much a flaw in the basic theory, as a failure by Marxists to develop that theory beyond mere repetition of formulae. Much of self-styled Marxism has consisted of a simplistic focus on 'economics' and 'production', narrowly defined to exclude women out of the working class; a 'materialist' analysis which ignores whole areas of material reality, e.g. domestic labour, and therefore can not hope to be adequate to explain how a central prop of capitalism is maintained. This defocusses the struggle away from human need, especially women's needs, the quality of social provision, etc., and therefore fails to answer the question of what sort of socialism we are fighting for. Ultimately, it leads to a denial that men have any interest in oppressing women, or that there is a material base to the conflicts between men and women.

b) Much of this criticism is apt, but it is aimed at a caricature of Marxism. None of it need necessarily be true. Engels' analysis of the origins of women's oppression does provide the basis for an analysis of 'sexual politics', indeed Engels' is the starting-point for much feminist, including radical feminist, theory. Engels himself clearly recognised that male supremacy and conflicts between men and women have a

material base :

'The first class antagonism in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between men and women in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male.'

While it is not possible simply to read off solutions to current problems from Engels' work, it does provide the basis on which to begin. Though to a certain extent the question of women's oppression and private property is a 'chicken and egg' one, it is clear that once set in motion the process is self-reproducing. Men need women's enforced monogamy to provide legitimate heirs to whom to pass on their property. This exclusive access to women's sexual services is both the mechanism for the continuance of private property and reduces women themselves to the status of property. Children function as both property and, in their turn, if they are male as property-holders. For women it involves both alienation from the fruits of their own bodies and powerlessness since they are denied the possibility of owning or passing on property.

With the development of class society, comes a shift from naked brute force as the guarantor of property rights to more mystified means of control : law, religion, ideology. are brought to bear to justify and consolidate class rule and the rule of men over women. Part of this control is the male definition of women's nature and sexuality. This has varied over time from the view that women are sexually rapacious creatures of the devil who must be firmly curbed and denied all human rights lest they drag men down to their level, to that which sees them as feeble asexual and in need of sheltering from the harsh realities of the world (and therefore still need to be excluded from any say in the running of their lives), and a whole gamut in between.

What these different views have in common is that they are alien, imposed from the outside, but given a special twist by being ascribed as women's natural characteristics. Women internalise these oppressive views of themselves, and thus, not only are denied 'external' property but in a sense do not even own their internal life. Feminist work on language reveals the difficulty of finding words, concepts, to describe reality which do not reaffirm this oppression. Of course, language does not create this oppressive reality, but the job of changing it is made doubly difficult by the inability to even express it clearly.

All oppressed groups are forced to operate in conditions where their oppressors define the terms, but for women this problem is peculiarly acute. Male supremacist ideology pervades every area of her life, especially the most intimate. The family and personal relationships, which for male workers provide some sort of refuge from alienation and exploitation, is for women the arena in which oppression is at its sharpest.

For all oppressed people, a part of their struggle is to see themselves with their own eyes, to define their situation as a step to overcoming the conditions of their oppression. For women this need is particularly urgent. Denied any sense of their own history, caught in a double-bind which decrees women are happy 'in their place' and if they're not happy, they're not real women, the first step to becoming conscious of their position is refusal to interpret their own experiences in their oppressor's terms.

The converse of the all-pervasiveness of ruling class ideology is that the experiences of class society are in direct contradiction to the ideological picture. But while workers are constantly forced by the nature of capitalist production itself to develop a collective consciousness in opposition to the ruling class, it is in the nature of women's oppression that any disparity between ideology and real experience is likely to be felt as individual personal failing. For this reason it is especially necessary for women to come together as women to combat their oppression, and it is part of the political struggle against oppression to encourage that self-organisation. Working class women, in their daily struggle for existence, do have a tradition of organising together, but have very often faced opposition from working class men who see such organisation as divisive or a threat to their male privilege.

Throughout history and up until the very recent past, women have been seen as literally the property of men, and denied not only the right to own property, a right that only applies to men of the privileged classes, but also control over their earnings and even rights to their children in the event of marital dispute. They have been forced into economic dependency and thus in a position from which to challenge male dominance is to put their whole existence at risk. Nonetheless, women have fought back, and literally having nothing to lose, have proved the most tenacious fighters both for their own rights and for class liberation.

Even today, while women do possess formal equality, the same property relations obtain. Denied the possibility of a living wage, segregated into the most menial, low-paying jobs, treated automatically as dependents if they are out of work, women are still forced into economic dependence on men.

The ever-present threat of sexual violence reinforces this. Women who escape being seen as the property of a particular man are seen as 'fair game' for all men to abuse, sexually harass and even rape. Those who are tied to a particular man are seen as 'his' body and soul. The fact that a man can rape and batter 'his' wife with virtual impunity reveals how little has changed fundamentally.

c) Marxism has defined itself in opposition to feminism, because was seen to cut across class politics, proclaiming the sisterhood of all women. But historical materialism itself locates the oppression of all women in the same processes which gave birth to class society, and sees men's power over women rooted in monogamy and women's exclusion from social production. What it has not done is develop this analysis beyond first principles, or solved the contradiction between the common oppression and therefore the common interest of women of all classes and the need for class unity: it has merely side-stepped the problem, declaring feminism, and with it sexual politics, anathemas.

Feminism does indeed see all women as having a common interest: radical feminism sees women as an oppressed class, telescoping Engels' analysis into the view that women are the first oppressed class, from this flow the slogans 'personal is political' and 'sisterhood is powerful'. Personal relationships (heterosexual ones) are seen as relationships between different classes, and the solution to these conflicts is seen as the unity of women as a class. They focus on sexual violence, for example, as instances of class conflict, to elucidate the violence inherent in 'normal' relationships between men and women.

Because these issues have become identified with radical feminist politics, Marxists have tended to ignore these issues for fear of being tainted with alien, cross-class politics. 'Sex war' is rejected as a perspective, and with it any recognition that men benefit from women's oppression.

But 'sex war', in the sense of a conflict of interest between men and women, does exist: the point is to recognise it and offer a way out of the dead-end. The fault of feminism lies not in its claims for the identity of interest of all women, but that it denies any differentiation. Traditionally, feminist movements have subordinated the interests of the mass of women to the most privileged. In seeking to focus on issues which unite all women, they ignored or down-played the specific interest of the most oppressed. In doing so, they could not deliver what they promised, liberation for all women, and instead settled for equality for some.

The failure of feminism has been in not recognising that women are divided by class, race, nationality, etc. The failure of latterday Marxists in practice has been in not recognising divisions in the working class on lines of sex. Marxists have a creditable record in dealing with racial and national divisions in the class, taking the interests of the most oppressed as the interests of the class as a whole, recognising that true class unity can only be built on the basis of acknowledging the rights of the oppressed.

When it comes to feminists challenging 'male power' i.e. oppression, too often this is seen as an attack on men as men rather than on male privilege. If women's struggles are divisive, it is because the lines have been drawn in the wrong place. Insofar as male workers fight to maintain their privilege, they are fighting to defend capitalism; it is their failure of consciousness in accepting a shared interest with their oppressors. In fact, Marxists have fought against the short-sighted self-interest of male workers. In the much-quoted debate on women's right to work in the last century, it was the Marxists who fought against women's exclusion from the labour movement and waged work, ranging themselves against other currents in the labour movement who saw women's paid employment as a threat to men's jobs and family life.

A further reason for the rejection of any struggle round sexual politics has been an over-simple identification of 'personal is political' with life-style politics, and thus with reformism. It is clearly true that changing one's personal life is no solution to problems that are built into the system, nor is this solution even accessible to the majority of the most oppressed women. But that is not to say that 'personal' relations are somehow outside of politics - that is a reactionary mystification which obscures real inequalities of power between men and women. The feminist concern with 'personal' issues is precisely to demystify these relationships, to reveal the social roots of what are felt as individual inadequacies.

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3. Our Orientation

a) Women's liberation is part of our programme, so we relate to women struggling for their liberation not in order to convince them to give up that struggle in favour of some other, but to convince them that our political approach is the only one that will ensure the achievement of our common objective.

b) While, self-evidently, we believe our politics to be the only ones that will ensure this victory, we do not place ultimatums on women struggling as they see it for their liberation by demanding that they accept our politics from the outset. We struggle alongside all women who are committed to the fight for liberation, without denying ourselves the right to our own politics. Furthermore we are committed to building a movement of women to free themselves. Because of our understanding of the strategic importance of working class, as an integral part of the working class and the most oppressed section of women, we are for the building of a movement of working class women. Within this, we argue for our particular politics, while not excluding women who do not share our politics or women of other classes who understand the need to relate to the particular oppression of working class women.

A disproportionate amount of energy in any discussion on the 'women question' is devoted to spelling out the dangers of reformism, adaptation to feminism, life-stylism, etc. While it should be self-evident that we do not see piecemeal reforms as able to fundamentally alter the position of women, we do not take such a sectarian attitude to other struggles. We are for the abolition of the wages system, but we do not hedge our support for groups of workers fighting for wage increases round with caveats that wage increases won't solve the fundamental problems of the working class. We propose a system of transitional demands to link up the day-to-day struggle round particular issues of wages and jobs with the generalised class solutions. Our slogan of a mass working class women's movement is an application of this transitional method to the struggles of women.

c) We recognise that the labour movement as it is at present constituted, organisationally, politically, and ideologically, is unfitted for the task of freeing itself and all humanity: it requires radical transformation before it can take on its historic role. We reject the idea that the labour movement will evolve spontaneously towards revolutionary consciousness; it requires struggle by ideologically-armed revolutionaries within the movement. One of the fundamental deficiencies in this respect is in relation to women in the labour movement. It will be the struggle of women in the labour movement, working class women, who have a burning immediate interest in challenging the sexism, which will primarily effect this transformation.

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d) The movement we fight to build should be autonomous. This is not the same as separatist. Separatists define men as men as the enemy and refuse to associate in any way with men. They define the labour movement and all its constituents as male-dominated, and reject class politics and class solidarity as collaboration with the enemy. A working class women's movement can not and should not be 'autonomous' in this sense from class politics. But it can and must decide its own direction, for several reasons :

- i) Part of the struggle of all oppressed groups is that the oppressed themselves must take control and define their struggle for themselves.
- ii) Men, including working class and revolutionary men, have a vested interest in maintaining the oppression of women even though this contradicts their own long-term interests. They have the 'power of language' to define women's struggles as for example, 'divisive', 'counter-revolutionary', even 'sexist'. Very often they may not even be conscious that they are motivated by vested interest and not 'objective' criteria. Working class women must therefore develop their capacity to locate their own best interests and act on them.
- iii) While men in the labour movement may come to recognise that issues of women's specific oppression are class issues, experience shows that this only happens after women have taken the initiative and fought for the labour movement to take up the issue, e.g. abortion right
- iv) The now-lauded work of women in the socialist movement in organising women, which is held up as a model, was only accomplished in the teeth of opposition from their male comrades. Thus do we go forward - yesterday's controversies becoming today's panaceas.
- v) It is clear that issues which are only now beginning to be debated in the labour movement (sexual violence, lesbian rights) would never have come to any sort of prominence without radical feminists raising such a hue and cry that they become of public concern.

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4. Labour Movement

A) The bureaucracy of the labour movement rests on the most privileged sections of the working class - white, male, skilled workers (if there's any left !), and plays upon their backwardness. It is concerned to exclude everyone from democratic participation, but this bears particularly heavily on women workers who are anyway conditioned to quiescence, altruism and self-effacement. Its interests are tied to capitalism and therefore directly counterposed to those of working class women who have nothing to gain from the system.

B) But the male domination of the labour movement is not confined to the bureaucracy. Women are discouraged from participation at every level, both overtly and indirectly through the timing of meetings, lack of childcare provision, etc. When they do break through into this male domain, they are treated to sexist abuse, patronised, or alienated by its obscure routines. At work they face sexual harassment from fellow workers and scape-goating when jobs are threatened. They are not seen as 'real' workers, especially if they are part-timers or work in low-status servicing jobs.

C) Women entered the labour force on unequal terms and despite some minor amelioration are still in the same position. Women's wages which rose slightly in relation to men's just after the Equal Pay Act have fallen back to around two thirds of men's. Job segregation has only improved marginally in the last hundred years. Women still form the overwhelming majority of the part-time and low-paid workforce. Unemployment has ravaged women's prospects of independence. Cuts have destroyed women's jobs, horrendously worsened their conditions as workers and as consumers, and sucked women back into the home as a buffer against disappearing services.

The 'personal' effects of this economic catastrophe is not only increased domestic workload and grinding poverty, but also deepening dependence and vulnerability to male violence, and the reinforcement of repressive ideology. Mothers, harassed by poverty and overwork, denied childcare facilities, face the additional bleakness of bringing up children in a world menaced by unemployment and the war threat, in which there is no future for them.

AMENDMENT to "Aspects of the International Situation and our tasks"

P2 Lines 33/34 Delete "Cuba the USSR and..." Proposed: Parsons.

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Amendments to British Perspectives - Parsons

In general I support almost all of Kinnell's amendments. I have, therefore, restricted mine to other areas. However, as I have only recently received Kinnell's amendments it might well be that further thought and discussion will lead to more proposals.

In relation to local government issues and the workers government section this will certainly be the case as I have had insufficient time to consider these - although I have submitted initial amendments to both Cunliffe's and Kinnell's views on the workers government.

Amendment 1

P7 (nine lines from the foot of the page)

Delete "new recruitment from the working class"

Insert the following new paragraph (before Kinnell's amendment):

"However, in the run up to the election many of the 'hard' left forces while retreating from internal conflicts will turn outwards. Where CLPs and wards take such initiatives we should be in the forefront - helping to mould the character of their intervention. Where necessary we should be proposing such initiatives now."

Amendment 2

P8 Delete first paragraph - it is unnecessary.

Amendment 3

P9 In Section title delete "vacuum" and insert "crisis".

Amendment 4

P9 Para 3, line 9. Replace "confused" with "disorientating".

Amendment 5

P10 Insert after 2nd paragraph new paragraphs:

"The crisis of shop floor leadership often reflected at union branch (not to mention CLP and Ward) level creates a particular problem for a small movement such as ours. Precisely because we are not retreating while others are it is increasingly the case that stewards, branch officers and Ward/CLP positions are there for the taking.

"In this sense, obviously more so than politically speaking the isolation of revolutionaries is over. As we turn more and more towards serious work in the labour movement our cdes are under pressure to take day to day responsibilities often of a routine nature. While no blueprint exists we should consider each case carefully. We do not want to cripple our political intervention through dissipation of energy and time in routine tasks."

Amendment 6

P12 (top) Delete "around the theme of Reconstruct the shop floor movement and relevant political issues".

And Insert:

"These should focus on the key campaigns we wish to raise. Rather than generalised propaganda about the need to 'Reconstruct the shop floor movement' we should seek to do precisely that through providing a perspective around which the working class can struggle.

"While it is not possible to lay down a blueprint certain key questions suggest themselves as possible pivots in the development of working class confidence and self-organisation over the coming period.

/amendment cont. over...

/amendment cont. from previous page

- (1) The tremendous solidarity of the NHS pay dispute showed the commitment of the working class to its past gains. While the obvious justice of the claim and in particular the role of the NHS militants played a central part in generating solidarity action and sympathy the key factor was the way in which the workers movement identifies with the NHS. The Tories' decision to destroy the Health Service will arouse widespread anger which will have the potential to fuel the basis for a mass response if a lead is given. While many cuts have been carried out in the past the pay dispute and the extent of the present proposals have focussed the attention of much wider layers of workers.
- (2) Privatisation. We have carried a certain amount of material on this in our paper but have not yet got to grips with what is a major feature of Tory policy. In particular insufficient attention has been paid to the T&CWU's method of dealing with it in Birmingham. A scandal of such an order should have been at least considered for a leading article. The incoming NC should consider the best ways of focussing the attention of the class on central issues - thus avoiding dissipation of effort in a number of directions.

Amendment 7

P18, Para 4. Delete first sentence and replace with: "This fight needs to commence now."

Amendment 8

P18 para 4. Delete reference to Councils of Action.

Amendment 9

P18, bottom but one para., line 4:

Delete Councils of Action and replace with "genuine organs of mass democracy".
Then insert new paragraph:

"In each and every struggle we seek to maximise the organised collaboration of wide sections of the labour movement. In every struggle we argue for organisational forms which correspond to the need for joint action and decision making. Our aim will be to facilitate the maximum possible concentration of potential strength and the development of class-wide democratic structures. In the past we have summed up this orientation in the slogan "For Councils of Action". This has too often appeared a wooden and abstract slogan and we should be very careful how we use it now. This is particularly important because the emergence of such forms (in a limited way at least) is quite possible in the next period."

(This could usefully be inserted before the final 4 paras of Kinnell's amendments P6).

Amendment 10 P23. Replace "turn to the rebuilding of the shop stewards' movement" with "work".

Amendment 11 P23. Last but one para: Delete "Area committees must meet and direct the work" Insert new para;

"The incoming NC must commission a report of the deployment of full-timers and as a matter of urgency resolve the problems of the centre. In the case of the latter conference insists that the possibility of a transfer to Coventry, Birmingham, Manchester or Sheffield be at least discussed seriously.

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RESOLUTIONS ON THE IMG/SL - NC Jan 8-9 1983

1. Gunther
2. Armstrong (amendment)
3. Jones
4. Kinnell
5. IMG Letter

1. Gunther resolution - rejected

This NC recognises that the following developments in the IMG demand a quick response from the WSL:

- a) The decision of the IMG to change its name to the Socialist League and to publish "Socialist Action", an apparently SO-type paper;
- b) The decline of the IMG to approximately 450 members;
- c) The possible split of the pro-SWP tendency comprising 100-150 members;
- d) The decision of the IMG to approach the WSL for fusion talks. A rapid response to this situation could speed the split of the Barnesites in Britain and win supporters of T1 to us given that T3 contains definite liquidationist tendencies.

✓ The EC should therefore:

- 1) Respond favourably to the IMG's approach, while insisting on a proper agenda for such discussions and the production of a joint discussion bulletin;
- 2) Put forward concrete proposals, [including the perspective of launching a joint class-struggle paper];
- 3) As a matter of urgency commission a special IB on the present situation in the IMG and the political differences of the WSL with the IMG for the education of WSL members; *contacts*
- 4) Instruct Branches to approach the IMG locally for discussions, including discussion of joint work in the TUs and LP *for local debates*

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2. Armstrong amendment to Gunther

In point 2, delete: "including the perspective of launching a joint class-struggle paper"

Add at end of pt. 3: "together with extensive background material on the history and present state of the FI".

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3. Jones resolution - accepted

The EC should do what the IMG letter says (i.e. arrange discussion) and report to the NC.

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4. Kinnell resolution - rejected

1. Unity is always desirable, all other things being equal; and unity with the IMG is not ruled out in principle. But the WSL, and its two forerunners, have had sharp differences with the IMG over nearly 20 years now. We do not believe that our separate existence from the IMG over that period was a mistake. It would be good if something had changed to make unity with the IMG feasible: but has it?
2. The "net result" of the IMG's and USFI's political battles over the last 3 years has been a drift to greater adaptation to Stalinism and Third World petty bourgeois forces (Cuba, Poland, Nicaragua, the Non-Aligned Conference); and a more adaptationist line in the TUs and the LP (Leyland Vehicles, attitude to Ken Livingstone, "Labour government with socialist policies," etc); coupled with episodic seccarian sallies. Unity between the WSL and an IMG with such policies could lead only to our political self-liquidation, to an unviable organisation where every major political event provoked a faction fight, and/or to a new split in short order.
3. Our recent experience with the IMG has been one of attacks on us beyond the call of their general political differences with us: on the LCP, on the PSC and the London Poland labour movement demo, on Leyland Vehicles, etc.

NC Resolutions on IMG/SL/2 - - Ballykelly reply.

In the light of this, our estimate - at this point at least - must be that the fusion proposal is more a manoeuvre than a genuine wish for unity. (Despite such being the view of the central leadership there may well be IMG rank-and-filers, even some leadership members, who genuinely want unity).

4. We should therefore reply to the IMG by:
 - a) repeating their proposals in writing before a meeting,
 - b) in discussions with them posing the political issues mentioned in point 2 above, and asking them for a written explanation on their attacks on us on the LCP (as in point 3 above),
 - c) conducting internal education in the WSL on those issues, and on that basis seeking to get discussions etc with individual IMG members.

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5. IMG/SL Letter

Dear comrades,

Following a decision of our recent national conference, I am writing to you to arrange an initial meeting to discuss the question of fusion between our two organisations.

The purpose of this meeting will be for us to explain what our conference decided; to seek information on the present policy of the Workers Socialist League regarding revolutionary regroupment and to exchange information on current plans and perspectives of our organisations.

After this meeting we will send you a document explaining our proposals.

Revolutionary greetings,

Steve Roberts (for Socialist League Political Committee).

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THE BALLYKELLY BOMBING: A short reply to the Glasgow Comrades - Kinnell

1. The Glasgow comrades do not say what their own view is on the Ballykelly bombing. The NC discussed the issue of civilian bombing in November and decided that within our overall support for the Republican struggle against the British state we condemn such bombings. The view put then by Cd. Casey was that such civilian bombings were never carried out by the INLA and IRA. So what is their attitude to this bombing, against a civilian building heavily used by civilians?
Do they believe that the civilian casualties are a secondary detail compared to the fact that soldiers were killed? This view is surely sustainable only on the basis that the mass of the people in Northern Ireland are a passive back-drop, and their fate is a secondary matter compared with military considerations.
2. "Defeat of British imperialism" sounds very rah-rah-revolutionary. But actually it has less content than the editorial's call for a democratic solution (and the editorial spelled out what the democratic solution should be). The "democratic solution" is the victory for which British imperialism must be defeated. The bare formula is vague and ambiguous. "Defeat of British imperialism" is not a very illuminating slogan for the UWC strike of 1974, or possible confrontation in coming months between the N.I. Assembly and the British government.
3. What all this has to do with Militant is not clear. Militant characteristically rejects any democratic programme for Ireland, instead proposing a general socialist programme as the universal answer to all concrete questions. Moreover, our editorial was about defending the Sinn Fein visit; Militant's editorial attacked it.