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INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 32

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Discussion article

**Democratic Centralism and TILC; An initial reply
to Comrade Morrow.....Parsons**

Conference document

**The Crisis of the FI and our Tasks; The case for
its rejection and an alternative approach to the
reconstruction of the FI.....Parsons**

The NCCC-A neglected area of our work.....Parsons

**(This is a discussion article which includes a short
resolution).**

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DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND TILC: AN INITIAL REPLY TO COMRADE MORROW : PARSONS.

Morrow's document is one of the most dangerous type in that its simplicity allows it the appearance of a coherent perspective and thus makes itself attractive at a time when things seem to be going wrong.

Time does not allow a detailed critique of "Towards an International Tendency ; Problems and tasks" and so these are really just outline notes. There are no simple answers to the problems of forming a tendency ,just a few questions which Comrade Morrow is obliged to answer.

As I understand it Comrade Morrow's theses are that firstly there has not been sufficient serious attention paid to the establishment of an international tendency and secondly that it is possible to move more or less immediately to a democratic centralist structure in the TILC.

I have a certain amount of sympathy for his first arguement. As far back as the January '78 conference of the WSL I put a resolution calling for the establishment of an international tendency within 12 months. I continue to believe that it is a crucial and urgent priority for the movement. However ,it is of course easier to advocate and even believe in something than it is to do it.

It seems to me to be the grossest arrogance of Comrade Morrow and his co-thinkers that they alone are the "Internationalist" section of our movement. The problems which have arisen over the last year or so have nothing to do with any retreat,any "national Trotskyism" or anything other than the political problem posed by the organisational difficulties of moving towards a democratic centralist tendency within which major political differences have emerged.

Comrade Morrow brushes aside these differences as being of a comparatively minor character. Thus his only significant references to them read as follows . . .

"In general I agree with Cunliffe when he states 'I would regard the material problems as far more serious than the political differences'"
(No date or reference for the Cunliffe quote) p.2.

"On the political problems I am inclined, like Cunliffe to think that these can be resolved by a process of patient discussion" (No date or reference again).p.4.

"The present differences are not, in my view, any wider than those existing within individual national sections, or for that matter existing between WSL and ICL pre-fusion. We still do not, for example have agreement in WSL in the TILC founding documents.

What differences have emerged in TILC, I think, are of the type we might anticipate in an international Trotskyist tendency and even welcome given the present condition of the world Trotskyist movement as a source of deepening the process of discussion and clarification towards greater homogenisation of our selves as a tendency. We should not, I think, take the somewhat sectarian stance of those like Worker's Power who would demand agreement on every factual dot and comma before accepting there is a basic principled agreement."(p.4)

So, as you can see, Comrade Morrow does not attempt to look at the concrete political differences which have proved a barrier to the establishment of

(2)

democratic centralism. Moreover, if comrades compare the formulations quoted above with those in the statement of the so-called 'internationalist' tendency platform then the situation becomes far more serious and indeed Comrade Morrow's evasive document on democratic centralism and the TILC becomes far more sinister than it at first appeared.

"The contention that there is not the necessary political agreement within TILC does not hold water as the so-called political differences pale into insignificance beside the yawning differences within the WSL since fusion and between the WSL/ICL prior to fusion."

("internationalist" tendency platform - my emphasis)

Now which is it comrades? Are the differences within TILC no wider than those within the WSL and between the WSL/ICL pre-fusion or do they pale into insignificance beside the yawning differences within the WSL and the WSL/ICL pre-fusion?

This is no academic point. Whatever there might be of use in Comrade Morrow's document is rendered useless by his refusal to examine the actual differences which exist in TILC.

Fundamentally the political problems which exist within the TILC come down to the RWL. Comrade Morrow makes no attempt to examine the differences we have with that organisation and justify his charge that the differences with them are no wider than those which exist within the WSL now. He could of course mean by this that some comrades in our movement are in fundamental agreement with the RWL's programmatic positions, method of party building and internal regime. If this is the case then he should say so and indeed the comrades concerned should be called upon to justify their positions. If he thinks that the differences we have with the RWL "pale into insignificance" beside the differences within WSL and between the WSL/ICL pre-fusion he should justify this statement.

Comrade Morrow should tell us how he approaches the question of political agreement or difference. It is not a straight forward matter. Plenty of movements which might have paper agreement with us on general political truths eg. "the centrality of the transitional programme" have fundamental disagreement with us on its application.

To read Comrade Morrow's document you would not know that the US fusion which TILC forced through 18 months ago has blown apart. He makes no reference to the existence of a second group of TILC supporters in the USA. What does Comrade Morrow think of the proletarian Tasks Tendency? Does he seriously believe that the experience of the US fusion and its complete failure places no question mark over the future of a democratic centralist internationalist tendency which includes the RWL?

Indeed Comrade Morrow's silence on the RWL and his formation of a tendency precisely at the time one is called for by the LOR/RWL gives rise to grave suspicions on the part of many comrades. What is the relationship between the RWL/LOR tendency in the TILC and the so-called 'internationalist' tendency? These questions need answering before we can even begin to discuss Comrade Morrow's view that international democratic centralism can be launched now.

if the political problems did not form the task of the party

resources. However, at a time when the political tensions in the movement are temporarily sharpening during the pre-conference period it would have been useful if he had posed his suggestions as a development of, or an alternative to, the proposal already made by Comrade Oliver and myself. Last September we called for a leading full-timer to be assigned to international work only (see LB20 Oliver/Parsons "Save the fusion." Sept. 1982). Rather than his concerns over international work being attached to a tendency struggle they could then have played a part in developing the will to solve the very real problems which lie in the way of relocating our resources.

Until the questions I have posed are answered by Comrade Morrow it is not possible to go any further with the debate. I hope he clarifies his position soon.

Parsons 30/1/83.

ERRATA Insert at the top of this page the following which was omitted during typing.

'Even if the political problems did not exist in the form they take at present Comrade Morrows document is not much use in casting light on precisely what democratic centralism would mean in practice. For example, he might have used the Falklands/Malvinas debate to illustrate the mechanics of democratic centralism as he understands it. He might have used other examples such as Poland.'

One thing he does which I consider useful is to put forward some interesting suggestions for developing our international work through reallocation of.....'

Also page 1 para 5 Line 2 should read '.....to suggest that they etc'.