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Two replies to Carolan's document in IB 22+/23

What Are the Differences on Perspectives? Cunliffe

The Labour Party - A reply to cde Carolan Jones

Further discussion articles and resolutions should be sent as soon as possible to the Centre, if possible typed A4 on Roneo stencils.

What are the differences or Perspectives?

By Cunliffe.

1) The publication of Kinnell's amendments on British Perspectives indicates that there is no basic disagreement on the overall situation facing the working class in Britain. The differences focus instead on the question of method: how should we as Marxists orientate to the working class and the workers' movement in order to build the basis of a mass revolutionary party capable of leading the struggle for power?

But the fact that the comparatively mild changes in programmatic profile proposed for our broad paper have been greeted with such extravagant and blood-curdling warnings that they would signal the end-of-political-work-as-we-know-it suggests that the differences on these issues may be deeper and more significant than appeared to be the case.

2) Though the discussion began at a juncture where the NC was forced to discuss tactical decisions on the MP (registration etc) and thus the question of our press, it would in any event have been necessary to discuss these same points for the forthcoming WSL conference even if there had been no witch-hunt. We face real problems in developing our organisation.

18 months of almost exclusively "broad" work - in which the projected WSL magazine has barely appeared and only one substantial WSL activity (the Rally) has been held - has seen the WSL not grow but decline in numbers from fusion. And we have been most lamentably weak in recruiting from precisely those forces to whom our movement most needs to turn if we are serious about fighting to build a new leadership and establish new methods and policies and programme in the workers' movement - shop floor militants, unemployed workers, youth, women and black people.

This comes in spite of the often excellent and consistent work in the mass organisations around the broad publications and campaigns we have promoted.

There is no reason to presume that the "more of the same" recipes being served up by cdes Carolan, Parkinson, Fraser, et al. will significantly change this bleak position. We need to reexamine our relationship with worker militants and the political content of our broad campaign work. We cannot afford another 12 months like the last 18!

3) To confront the problems we face both in our existing broad work and in extending the base of that work to draw in new forces amongst shop floor workers and other sections of the oppressed, we believe it is necessary to raise the political/programmatic content of our press, to offer more clearly and tangibly to workers the kind of fighting policies and perspectives which will motivate them to struggle with us in the labour movement.

It is obviously quite possible to do this in a patient, careful, systematic fashion, so as not needlessly to isolate ourselves or pose ultimatums - let alone level senseless volleys of insults and abuse against sections of the left with whom we seek common struggle and political debate. It would be possible to do it in the context of the existing - or even a similar - broad paper, provided that we retain editorial control of that paper. It need not be overtly labelled "WSL": the essential question is the political content and the clarity with which we pose the issues to workers and fight for their involvement.

4) As part of this renewed drive to reach beyond our obviously restricted existing circles of contacts and readers, it is necessary to underline what in theory is a common approach: that the

struggles in the Labour Party cannot be won or seriously pursued without struggles in the unions and struggles for the mobilisation of the most oppressed sections of the working class as our allies against the bureaucracy.

In reaching out to these layers we must recognise the need to offer a clear fighting perspective if we are to break down their understandable alienation and cynicism in relation to the organisations of the labour movement. We need more than a restatement of the left decisions at Labour conferences: we need to offer an all-round perspective for a struggle for socialism which can convince workers that we mean business in the fight for new leadership.

5) Yet in his extended polemical resolution on the LP (IB22+/23) cde Carolan gives good reason to doubt whether this theoretical orientation is seriously intended to be taken into practice. It is instructive to examine cde Carolan's arguments in the light of the real problems faced by our movement.

The first factor that will strike many cdes is that nowhere in the text is there any attempt to draw in WSL terms any kind of a balance sheet of the successes and failures of 4 years of broad work. The whole discussion on present orientation and objectives thus becomes purely abstract, and divorced from life. The status quo is defended largely by absurd distortions and parodies of the positions of cdes who argue for a change,

6) It is from this elevated viewpoint that cde Carolan can reiterate time and again the formally correct notion that "the WSL sets itself the task of renovating, reorientating and transforming the existing labour movement" - without once getting down to the brass tacks of HOW we are to attract and win the forces which will do the "reorientating". (Certainly there is no clue as to how we win them to the WSL, whose apparently secondary role seems to be seen by Carolan as a mere appendage to the whole business, meriting only a few - odd - paragraphs on Page 8)

8) HOW do we win the confidence and commitment of workers made understandably sceptical by past Labour governments, by the present Labour leadership, by Tony Benn's wretched record over wage controls and 'participation' in the last government and his present "low profile" on the policies of the next election manifesto? HOW do we show a fighting perspective to shop floor militants facing closures, facing continual employers' pleas of bankruptcy, facing victimisations and facing a seemingly endless chain of betrayals and defeats orchestrated by a seemingly invincible bureaucracy? HOW do we win the black youth; HOW do we win and mobilise the working class women denied any prospect of economic independence under Tory or Labour rule? Do we offer them simply a perspective of "joining the left" and hope that we can later win them to our politics? Or do we offer them a programme for shaking up the whole labour movement - including much of the existing left; spelling out what we support and what we do not in the positions put by the leaders of the left, and arguing clearly what must be done?

We say that the second line is the correct one. Indeed we thought that was common ground in the fusion. Subsequent experience has shown an inadequate focus on our programme, and in particular an inadequate critique of the politics and policies of the left.

But cde Carolan is nowhere near clear on his attitude. Like those irritating presenters of "how to do it" features on Blue Peter and other TV shows, who talk about what must be done - never actually do the job (or make an appalling mess of it) - and keep producing the supposed finished product of each stage from under the counter, cde Carolan begins his prescriptions on the intervention of rev-

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olutionaries not with the mobilisation of fresh worker militants, but with how we should relate to those already active in the unions or LP!

Thus we read (p1) that:

"Nor can the shop floor be counterposed to the LP".

Waiting to hear how the shop floor can be brought into the LP, we are told instead that:

"The LP is the vehicle for developing our trade union work into mass working class politics in the next stage ahead, and for transforming passive reformism into the fight for reforms and for transitional demands."

Having thus glibly leapt over the real problems of making that connection, Carolan is then easily able to move on to the next stage: from "passive reformism" to active reformism, to....:

"Within that, by linking trade union and political aspects, and by our agitation and propaganda, we must fight for revolutionary working class politics, and build the next stage of the revolutionary party by recruiting individuals and more or less small groups to the WSL."

With one bound, Jack was free! By a series of unexplained developments, we are apparently recruiting people to the WSL! The only problem is that we aren't!

It seems inescapable that the "stages" seen by cde Carolan mean that we should first approach workers politically on a more or less reformist basis - only subsequently raising our political programme.

But with the LP itself, its programme and leadership so pathetically inadequate to meet the problems of the working class, and with its record of betrayal so clearly established, the approach to many militants on this restricted level strains our credibility and workers' credulity. While our daily work in the MP may involve making use of reformist propaganda, this does not mean that we should set out to produce more of our own!

8) Is cde Carolan suggesting that Communists have always been wrong to approach the working class directly with openly revolutionary propaganda and agitation? Or are his horizons so limited only in the particular situation of Britain in 1983? Does he believe that working class consciousness has necessarily to work its way through all of the tortuous stages of reformism and centrism before we can recruit Communists? Can we not hope directly to recruit and mobilise any new revolutionary forces from the revolutionary class in society to join us in the struggle in the organised labour movement?

Certainly if we follow cde Carolan's methods we cannot. The WSL itself has no publication (other than a notional magazine). Though we control a broad paper, which could easily serve to fulfil all the necessary tasks without taking on a party "label", cde Carolan's one-track, schematic and blinkered view of the development of working class consciousness narrows the focus of that press, & blunts its political edge. And when we attempt to shift this political profile to a sharper and more sustained level of critique of left reformism and clearer advocacy of our own programme, we are accused of "sectarianism" and "seeking to wreck" work done in previous years!

9) Cde Carolan speaks throughout his resolution in abstract and contradictory terms about the labour movement. On the one hand, we are told it is "indivisible" (p1, para4) But in the very next paragraph we are told - as cde Carolan engages in the wildest speculation - that if one wing of this "indivisible" movement had miraculously broken free of the other after 1979, events would have been very different! :

"A different, more militant, LP, even while formally remaining within the confines of reformism, would have secured a different working class response to the slump and Tory onslaught after 1979"

Who can argue with this kind of fantasy? The same type of logic - along the lines that "if there was an escalator up Everest, nobody would need to climb it" - appears as Carolan speculates on the current situation:

"Right now, if the LP were to fight the crusade we have advocated (...) even on the basis of its present limited or muddled politics, it might radically change the climate on the shop floor and call into being a storm of militant working class struggle."

If only If only! Obviously we can all have our daydreams. But the fact is that precisely because the labour movement IS indivisible, and because the trade union bureaucracy (which does not want a storm of working class struggle) retains, with the PLP, its vice-like grip on the Labour Party, such developments are excluded. To change the labour movement means more than wishing things were different: it means mobilising the forces to change it.

And that, in our view means challenging its current politics of both left and right, which are precisely the politics of reluctant acquiescence, passivity, class collaboration and in the longer or shorter term - betrayal.

There is no chance of the LP "fighting the crusade we have advocated". And surely if we could wield the forces to challenge its methods, we could hope to do something about changing its politics as well?

10) Despite Carolan's claims in Section 2 of his document therefore, the allegations that it is we who have a dual view of the labour movement is misplaced. There is only one labour movement, and one working class. To fight reformism in the unions raises the same issues as fighting it in the Labour Party. We advocate a consistent and revolutionary orientation to the class as a whole, on a programme of action to be fought for simultaneously in the unions, in the LP, amongst the unemployed and every section of the oppressed.

It is Carolan who creates a division by insisting that "The LP is the vehicle", and by suggesting that any broad work carried out other than through the MP is of itself "sectarian". In so doing he turns a blind eye to the political struggles to be carried out in the unions, the women's movement and a wide range of organisations of the oppressed - which may or may not succeed in linking up with the LP.

In reality it is the WSL which must be the vehicle to draw together unify and direct the struggle for our revolutionary programme in the various battlefronts of the class struggle.

Accordingly we propose a clear, unified, political/programmatic (not necessarily organisational) profile for the work in every sector of the working class, including the Labour Party. To break committed Labour activists from reformism is a task at least as demanding as winning a shop floor trade unionist.

And, talking of double standards, why is it that cde Carolan is untroubled when our press castigates left trade union bureaucrats like Buckton and Bickertsaffe, but rushes to prevent any move to raise a critique of Benm?

11) The impact of Carolan's dual approach is clear to see. What is supposedly the "broad" paper, supplemented by our own open journal has become in fact our only paper, our public face as a movement.

Our own propaganda as a Trotskyist organisation becomes at best submerged but in fact separated or even counterposed to

the production of a press tailored to cde Carolan's conception of MP work.

Such a division between theoretical and practical policies of our movement arise from cde Carolan's political approach - in which (unspoken) party propaganda is detached from our daily broad work.

Our proposal is to raise the programmatic/political fight in these broader publications to enable them to be used for party building as well as organising broader forces and as forums for debate and polemic with the existing left and with leftward moving forces.

If this were done, there would be no "clash" between the needs of our trade union and MP work.

12) At one point (page 4 para 4) it almost appears that Carolan has grasped the point we are making. He tells us:

"How to make the struggle in the political wing of the movement interesting and accessible to non-political TU militants or to militants who consider the LP a waste of time is fundamentally a problem of how to convey to them what the analysis, policy and perspective of the WSL for the labour movement are - that is to convey to them what the WSL is."

Does he go on to explain how we are to do this, through explanation and agitation for our programme, analysis, policies and critiques of the left reformists? Does he explain in any way how this is currently being done?

No! - instead he trots out another absurd and crassly distorted list of the supposed sectarian aspirations of those who criticise his line: "Badges, names, profiles and banners will not suffice....."

The sum total of this is not simply to evade the key issue, but to denigrate the tens of thousands of "non-political TU militants" and compare them unfavourably to the presumably "political" left activist layers already within the LP, who may be a million miles from our politics, but do not need us to argue them into joining the LP.

We will not win either layer by flag-waving: but nor will we win them without clearly advancing our politics and fighting their illusions and conservatism.

13) It seems particularly ironic in this context that cde Carolan, a leading exponent of the "do-it-yourself-Marxism-and-never-mind-the-texts" school of politics should seek to invoke Trotsky's writings about entirely different situations and tactics in the 1930s to back up his case today.

There is no parallel in the Trotskyist movement to our broad paper(s) (- unless we refer to the "braod" paper, 'La Commune' which was launched in France by Molinier and Frank in the 1930s and which was mercilessly condemned by Trotsky as an instrument of confusion. I do not believe our broad paper could or should be equated with 'La Commune': I believe that its weaknesses can be corrected within the present framework.)

There is no parallel to the type of prolonged strategic and all-embracing entry in the MP proposed by Carolan. The Trotskyist entry work in France and the USA was of an entirely different character - short-term, tactical entry into relatively small leftward-moving or crisis-ridden parties, without stable links to the unions. The objective was either to take over such parties or to remove their active revolutionary component - particularly the youth.

The MP today is totally different: a solidly reformist party, firmly rooted in the mass trade unions, with no prospect of it vanishing from the scene in the short term. This does not of

course make our attitude to work in the MP wrong, or rule out the publication of a "braod" paper. Bt it does mean that we should be wary of mechanical parallels with the 1930s.

What we can usefully do, however, is look at Trotsky's attitude to the contemporary "lefts", the centrist forces in these parties. We find that his position was throughout to differentiate, (to fly indeed the "flag" of the 4th International beneath the noses of the reformist bureaucracy). He urged an offensive stance and uncompromising fight on the political issues, arguing that only an aggressive struggle by the left could pull the centrists leftwards and prevent their drifting to the right.

Our stance at least in our publications and overt politics is very different from this. In general we avoid polemic and debate on the politics of the left whether they be closer to us (Reg Raec, etc) or further distant (Benn).

This is expressly singled out as a major issue by Kinnell in his amendments and by Carolan (p5):

"Our work with the left in the LP and the unions is to organise it and draw it into struggle for goals we have in common with it, and on that basis of experience in struggle to seek to develop groups and individuals with our propaganda."

In other words the pace and content of the joint activity is set for us by the existing left in the LP and unions - since we set ourselves the objective only of fighting over "common goals". What of the issues on which the LP left will not fight, but which are important to the working class? Do we remain silent? Do we wait for the left to agree? Or do we not point out their weaknesses and attempt to mobilise sufficient pressure upon them to force them towards our programme?

What is on offer from cde Carolan is essentially "critical support" minus the criticism - or with the criticism carried out only on an individual private level with any worker lucky enough to be approached for recruitment to the WSL. Such an approach cannot develop the movement generally, or our movement in particular. It is a recipe for confusion.

14) It appears, furthermore that this is a stance for a prolonged period. Carolan's resolution looks forward to a "left offensive in the LP ...after the election, whatever its outcome" (p5).

It is with this in view, and the anticipated refurbishment under such conditions of the Bennite current, that cde Carolan is so opposed now to voicing criticisms of Benn in our press.

Thus the reformist "don't rock the boat" syndrome in the run-up to the election finds its own bizarre reflection in our ranks. Benn won't rock the Foot/Healey boat for the sake of 'unity; but we must not rock Benn's boat, because after the next election we wish to be on friendly terms with him and his supporters.

This is a policy of diplomacy and evasion, not revolutionary struggle. It is quite the opposite of Trotsky's approach - and the worst possible way to prepare to campaign for an SCLV.

One can only speculate as to what mass base would remain for a resurgence of the left in the aftermath of a further Tory victory, given the further blow that would deal to the morale of the workers' movement, and the renewed wave of attacks it would herald upon the strength of the unions.

In any event we need to intervene and build now and in the political ferment before the election to prepare a solid political base for our work - and this means drawing out political debate with the left on their politics - including the errors and misleadership of Benn. No doubt it is possible to do this - or to do anything in a sectarian way: but it is not necessarily the case,

and we must attempt to seize the opportunity to raise the political level of debate in the labour movement.

15) Finally, a word must be said about cde Carolan's consistently scornful attitude to our Marxist programme and to the identification of our current as clearly Trotskyist.

Again and again his references to programme are purely perjorative, while instead Carolan himself suggests that it might be a big enough step forward to get the "existing reformist movement to fight for its own reforms" (p3)

On top of this, the objections he raises to the production of an "illegal" press in the event of a witch-hunt all refer with equal weight to the production of any open WSL publication to be sold in the labour movement. So if a combination of the witch-hunters and Cde Carolan's political approach ruled out a higher political profile for our weekly paper, they would certainly also rule out a WSL magazine.

So exactly what does cde Carolan see as the significance of the WSL in the class struggle? And exactly how does he propose or imagine that our potential contacts and recruits are to discover our existence, examine our policies and find a way to join?

"We carry the programme", writes Carolan in section 8. But who is to know? How does our wealth of theoretical insight manifest itself to the average reader of our paper or to the wider sections of the working class? How do we persuade people that Bolshevism is the answer?

Cde Carolan's view of our tasks is largely negative:

"We make no concessions on questions of principle, definition programme or political analysis...."

It is unlikely that worker militants will be galvanised to join a movement whose main *raison d'être* is seen as offering polemics against other tendencies (most of which, without a party press or publication must remain unpublished!)

The WSL must be built as a revolutionary combat party, the highest possible form of organisation of revolutionary Marxists, fighting for the theoretical and practical development of the programme for the revolutionary mobilisation of the working masses, fighting for this programme and leading struggles in the various wings of the workers' movement; if not it will ossify into a meaningless sect on the periphery of the Labour Party.

There are danger signs before us. The possibility of a change is at hand. Nothing would be "wrecked"; no lunatic "banners" unfurled; no rude words would be gratuitously used to insult well-meaning left wingers: but a sharpened political fight, in a dire and desperate leadership crisis of the British workers' movement offers us the best hope of striding forward to political gains in the next period. The most worrying sign is that leading cdes in our movement seem so dead set against such a fight.

Cunliffe. Jan 21.

The Labour Party - a reply to cde Carolan

By Jones.

The first noticeable thing about cde Carolan's resolution in IB 22+/23 is the fact that it does not deal with the present situation of the Labour Party. True enough his previous resolution (IB21) deals with "registration" and the witchhunt, but only in an organisational sense. That is, it does not give an overview of the situation of British reformism (a word Carolan hardly ever uses).

The Labour government of 1974-79 started off by holding back from the working class. It undid a few of the Tories' attacks. But then it set about its task as loyal Labour lieutenants of capital to restore profitability. Wage controls, redundancies, reorganisation (including the appointment of Edwardes) were the order of the day. Most workers suffered a cut in living standards, and unemployment went up to 2 million. A coalition deal was done with the Liberals. Labour lost the election to the Tories once the working class stood up and resisted.

The experiences of the Wilson and Callaghan governments, added to that of previous Labour governments, caused a reaction inside the LP. To some extent this also ran through the unions. But much of this reaction was after the event, and developed only once Labour was in opposition.

A stand by Benn or by the TGWU leadership during the period of the Labour government would have created substantially different political conditions. This should be remembered when dealing with the present moves back towards unity behind the right wing.

Many sections of workers tried to resist the last Labour government. Benn sat quiet in the cabinet, and the "left" union leaders left the struggles isolated. These people helped create today's unemployment. When they are in opposition the left reformists can shout their mouths off - as some union leaders can make left speeches on Labour Party platforms. But they are spineless when it comes to fighting capitalism. But Carolan seems to leave this out of account:

"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." (Carolan IB21, p2.)

My points about the inherent political weakness of the left reformists are in line with Trotsky's assessments. It would seem to me that it is Trotsky and not Carolan who has been proved right.

Why did Trotsky insist so strongly on this point? Because the left reformists have no real programme to fight the right wing. And despite the real victories of the left on policy issues at Labour conferences, this remains the case today. Healey moves the resolution on the AES, and Benn winds up - or vice versa. And of course let's not forget that economic policy is the way the next Labour government will run the country and relate to the working class.

The AES - or at least the 'official' versions of it - are barely even a reformist alternative - let alone a revolutionary socialist answer to the crisis.

This must be drawn out centrally in our propaganda if we are to win Labour and trade union members to the party. It is also essential if we are to win sections for a limited fight, because our perspectives are opposed by the left reformists.

Of course there are left reformists of different varieties, and within the LP, particularly in the constituencies, there is no doubt a move to the left that holds genuine revolutionary potential. But we will not be able to take advantage of this if our guiding principle

is simply "staying with the left".

Real moves

But Benn and others did make a stand, albeit limited. So how do we react to this? We would be strongly in favour of not just reacting to it, but also helping to create it in such broad initiatives as the Mobilising Committee. But we do so in the overall context above. We do it because we want to sharpen the struggle inside the MP and break sections of it from reformism both "right" and left. The best elements in the constituencies must be sickened by Benn's unity moves. Why has he not criticised Shore's ludicrous economic policies?

There are two wrong ways of approaching initiatives that we promote or support in the MP. One is to seek solely "exposure". So we demand something that right and left reformists will not do, they fail to do it, or fall by the wayside, and are thus "exposed". This demands no sensitivity as to the real movements within reformism, since you can expose them on almost anything. They are reformists, and they do not support our programme for revolution.

The other wrong method is simply to give a perspective restricted to fighting the right wing, hoping in this way to win the respect of the genuine left. But this leaves the political issues in mid-air. We reach our perspectives from an overall Marxist approach. And to develop the fight, we must give both a perspective for the current battles within reformism, but also relate this to the programme on which we struggle as revolutionaries - ie transitional demands, the policies we advocate for the workers' movement.

Our battles in the MP only reach a limited sphere. This sphere is crucial with regards political development.

Trotsky points out that the working class relates to the mass reformist party despite conference decisions.

"It is a great danger for revolutionists to attach too much importance to conference decisions. We use such evidence in our propaganda - but it cannot be presented beyond the power of our own press."

It is true that with media involvement the witchhunt issue has gone further, but the decisive way the working class learns is in action. This is how they learn about reformism. What is needed are the conscious forces to draw out the lessons. The experiences now within the MP are creating conditions for developing those conscious forces. Our fear is that we are unnecessarily limiting our possibilities.

The democracy movement got a response because of the hostility to the previous Labour government. But now the union leaders are pulled back into line because of the possibility of another Labour government, or the development within the LP of a 'left' alternative to the Tories (i.e. if the Tories win the election, and the Left win in the LP).

It is necessary to bring programme centrally into the democracy movement. This is why the time is ripe for another SCLV-type initiative.

Leadership

In cde Carolan's resolutions the word 'leadership' is hardly used from beginning to end. I think this relates to what is written above. The development of communist cadres is precisely the sharpest and hardest part of the struggle.

Instead the comrades offer the following perspectives for the

struggle in the unions and MP:

"... focus the normally passive (i.e. voting only) mass reformism of the trade union rank and file on the task of energising, transforming, reclaiming and renovating its own industrial and political labour movement, and turning it into a fighting organisation, even if initially on the level of the fight for reforms and counter-reforms." (IB22+/23 p3).

This idea of "renovating" is in distinct contradiction to the way Trotsky approached the crisis of the working class in the TP - i.e. as a crisis of leadership:

"Under these conditions trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organisations or become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of the workers." (Writings on Britain, Vol 3, p75).

Trotsky talks not of "renovating" but revolutionising; he looks not backwards but forwards.

Contained here is the difference between the struggle for leadership and being a pressure group. Of course our propaganda can determine our exact terminology. But here we are discussing Carolan's conference resolution.

From his lack of comment on leadership, cde Carolan goes on to ridicule "banner", "flag" and "build the revolutionary party" techniques of self-proclamation. Certainly we do not build an organisation simply by proclaiming it - that's obvious. But nobody has suggested that.

On the other hand if you simply pour continuous ridicule without spelling out how you see the party being built, you weaken the struggle to recruit to the organisation and to explain to people why they should be revolutionaries.

Trotsky

The photostats of Trotsky's writings issued at the NC are beside the point. Entry into the ILP in the 1930s was not the same as in the LP. The ILP then had a policy of dictatorship of the proletariat, for example! The question is what work are we doing?

When Trotsky says we support the LP in elections, he points out that "such support is only for the purpose of exposing the treachery of the Labour Party leadership" (Vol 3 p 121). When arguing for the ILP to join the LP, he puts it in the following terms:

"The policy of the opposition in the Labour Party is unspeakably bad. But this only means that it is necessary to counterpose to it inside the Labour Party another, a correct Marxist policy. That isn't so easy? Of course not! But one must know how to hide one's activities from the police vigilance of Sir Walter Citrine and his agents, until the proper time. But isn't it a fact that a Marxist faction would not succeed in changing the situation and policy of the Labour Party? With this we are entirely in accord: the bureaucracy will not succumb." (Vol 3 p 107)

Note Trotsky avoids any illusions of "renovation". He goes on to say it is necessary to win over tens and hundreds of thousands of workers.

There are many references to the question of a newspaper, but I think the clearest is one written by Trotsky in 1939. When asked about an independent paper, he said the following:

"It is simply a question of the juridical possibility. I believe that even if we work inside the Labour Party we must have an independent paper (proclamation? -TR) not as opposed to our comrades within (some were in, some out in 1939 - TR) but rather

to be outside the control of the ILP" (Vol 3 p 143).

I believe it is necessary to have a paper over which we have control in the present situation in order to counteract the sectarianism and opportunism within the MP. This could be the present broad paper, precisely because it is under our control.

Opportunism

Cde Carolan continuously attacks sectarianism in his resolution, but does not deal with opportunism. Yet there have been a whole series of groups and prominent individuals which have opportunistically dissolved themselves in the LP. The answer to the problems of developing a revolutionary party in Britain cannot simply be in the MP and "with the left".

Orientation

I think the most important "development" in the resolution in IB22+/23 is the way in which it deals with orientation and the relationship between the LP and trade union work.

For Carolan, trade union struggles are "sub-political", while the LP is "for now and the foreseeable future the pivot of mass working class politics in Britain". (p1) "The Labour Party is the vehicle for developing our trade union work into mass working class politics in the next stage ahead."

Indeed cde Carolan insists on the "indivisible" nature of the unions and LP only in order to portray the LP as the "political" sphere.

But they are different. They interconnect both at the level of the actions of governments and oppositions and within the LP at rank and file level. But they are not the same. The LP is a political party, representing the politics of the 2nd International. It was formed by, but is not identical with the unions.

By identifying the two together, we wind up with the unions as the mass economic expression and the LP the mass "political" expression of the class.

But while we aim to revolutionise the unions, this cannot be our strategy for the MP. Only a revolutionary party is adequate for the struggle for power.

I am not arguing that they are completely separate; but the unions and the LP are different kinds of organisation.

Sub political

This term, invented by cde Carolan in the pages of the paper, does not appear in his resolutions. But it describes his whole attitude to the unions. Trade union work, it appears, is all very well, but it is not "political" until it relates to the LP.

Flowing from this notion, we are told that trade unionists recruited directly to "our own name and banner" would either be "sectarian" on the LP "or have to be radically reeducated to be able to work in the LP".

Cde Carolan refers to "non-political TU militants" as if any working class person who is not in the LP falls into this category. It is noticeable that every LP member is not equally dismissed as "reformist", "opportunist", etc. What this shows is that cde Carolan has not grasped the first basics of TU work - the way the fight for leadership takes place. It takes the form of day-to-day struggles at a time of capitalist crisis. Within these struggles, revolutionaries fight for transitional demands. (If these do not include reference to the LP are they therefore "sub-political"?) In fighting for these demands - which include reforms - workers come into conflict with the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracy.

This is a political question. Reformism is the policeman in

the trade unions. Through such experiences we can recruit worker-communists who relate not simply to ideas but come through their experiences to grasp the necessity for a Trotskyist party.

In recruiting them to the revolutionary organisation we have to educate them in Marxism and the overall work of the movement - part of which is the fight in the MP.

But the Labour Party is not a necessary stage in their eventual recruitment.

To demand that the paper relate to these workers is not a "propaganda", "blackboard" approach: these workers often risk their jobs in carrying out the fight for our policies.

Real Crisis

The real crisis of the WSL lies in its drift away from the proletariat. The theoretical argument for this drift is in cde Carolan's IB22+/23.

We as an organisation have only a handful of industrial members. Are we going to rectify this by general work in the MP? Will this proletarianise our party? Look at the class composition of our NC. We plainly have a crisis.

The working class is in crisis in its unions. It is under daily attack from government and employers. That crisis is not "sub-political" but political. The reformists and Stalinists have no perspective to defend jobs or living standards. We must reach these workers. We must increase our focus on resolving the crisis of leadership in the unions.

To drop the present paper would go in the opposite direction.

When Trotsky said of the ILP that they should first of all spend 99% of their time in trade union work, he meant then that they had to earn their right to struggle in the LP.

We have to win proletarians to our party. They will not join a party dominated by the petty bourgeois. Cde Carolan often quotes Cannon. Cannon argued strongly on the theme of the proletarian content of the party. In an article on "Problems of the Comintern" (1926-7 Writings) Trotsky argues on France:

"It is more important for us to win over a hundred workers in the Departement du Nord (one of France's chief industrial areas) than a thousand civil servants or small shopkeepers in Paris or Marseilles".

He stresses that he is not against recruiting these people, but wants to strengthen and consolidate "the proletarian backbone of the party" (p202).

This is basic: but apparently not to cde Carolan. Why are we not recruiting industrial workers, railway workers, hospital workers? If cde Carolan thinks their struggles are all "sub-political", maybe that helps explain it.

Women and oppressed minorities.

Cde Carolan insists that the struggle in relation to the oppressed minorities and women is politically related to the LP. He says we do not want to subordinate their struggles to the "mere form of the existing labour movement, or to its backwardness". "Nevertheless", he goes on to say that this is the way for them to relate to the working class.

I agree that we must relate special oppression to the labour movement. I think everyone agrees. We all agree on fighting backwardness. But how do we do it? We can only do this if we recruit the oppressed, to carry through the fight. Black people, gays, working class women and youth. But where are the black comrades being recruited to our movement? We have a mere handful of black

members. We need to relate directly to these forces. There has to be a drive towards recruiting them, and this must include the paper. To drop the paper would be a catastrophe for black work, in that it would mean we would not have the possibility to make the necessary changes.

Conclusion.

What I am saying is that out of a discussion around tactics in the LP has come the theoretical justification of the drift of the movement away from the working class and oppressed minorities and towards the radicalised (and important) milieu in the LP, at the expense of these other forms of work.

This drift can and must be stopped, if we are to win the forces that should be won in the present crisis.

