

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO.38

FEBRUARY 1983

The Galtieri Gang Rides Again Casey, McVicar, Meehan
League wets throw in the towel Casey
For labour movement based youth work .. Coventry
Reply to comrade Hunt Jagger
(Note: the resolution referred to in this article will be
found in IB 39).

Conference is February 18-19-20.

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

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producing the IBs and mailing them.

AFTER "HIGH NOON AT GOOSE GREEN" - ANOTHER EPIC OF MAVERICK POLITICS:

The Galtieri Gang Rides Again

Part One (Introduction - not for voting on)

Even a casual reading (they hardly merit anything more than that) of many of the pre-conference documents now being produced with increasing frequency and decreasing political clarity reveals a striking paradox: the more they talk about the crisis of leadership in the working class, the more they talk about the need to build an international party of world revolution, the more they talk about the need for us to provide genuinely revolutionary leadership to the class, etc., etc. - the more that they do all this, the less do they have anything to say about the concrete work we need to be doing in the here and now.

Take the question of the likelihood of a forthcoming General Election, for example. A reprehensibly reformist event, we know, but nonetheless one that sharply raises the level of political debate and activity, and presents real opportunities for intervention by revolutionaries. What should our intervention consist of? Apart from passing references to a resurrected SCLV, one looks in vain through the documents for any concrete proposals.

Another example is the witch-hunt, now beginning to finally gather steam. It is a reality which we, and the reformist/centrist Left need to confront, and defeat. But insofar as the issue is taken up at all in many of the pre-conference documents, one often finds only idiosyncratic nonsense.

As a final example, there is the latest round of anti-union legislation, itself only the harbinger of still further attacks, and the question of our relation to/intervention in the new wave of left caucuses/Broad Lefts in the unions. Levy's document does at least start to get to grips with such issues and acknowledges that "we need proposals on this work (against anti-union legislation) to cope with the new situation". We do indeed need new proposals. The problem is that there is no sign of any such proposals being presented to the national conference.

In place of any concrete proposals on such issues, we are confronted with a hotch-potch of politically semi-literate documents, fantasising about rebuilding the Fourth International (with, of all things, the TILC), and rambling incoherently about liquidationism, programmatic abandonment, transitional demands etc. A variety of shibboleths ("our primary orientation is to the working class") is substituted for specific proposals. Was the background reading for these documents done in the archives of the IMG - or the archives of the Spartacists?

Or in the archives of the Militant? Cunliffe's 'British Perspectives' are characterised by the same bland emptiness and abstract impressionism that permeates anything produced by Militant, the only difference being that whereas the latter are always steeped in addle-headed optimism, Cunliffe's appears to be the product of a fit of manic depression. Kinnell's unending amendments represent an attempt at artificial (extremely artificial) respiration. Euthanasia would be a more appropriate fate for such a document.

Having glossed over the specific tasks facing revolutionaries in Britain, Cunliffe proceeds to perform the same feat world-wide, with the same degree of success. 'Aspects of the international situation and our tasks' ignores most of Europe (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Holland Belgium etc.), virtually the whole of Black Africa apart from the South, and most countries in Arabic Africa as well. The section on 'deformed workers states' mentions only the degenerated workers state of the USSR (doesn't Poland even deserve a mention 'impassim'?) whilst China is put into a separate category (does this mean it

isn't a deformed workers state?). And the one area of the world where the document's Mickey Mouse politics would have some relevance is also ignored completely: Disneyland. In terms of coming to an understanding of 'our tasks', the document is about as meaningful as a long-term weather forecast (dark clouds over Britain, violent storms in Central America, rising temperatures in the USA etc.).

But, as in the Falklands debate, it is left to Evington to lead the way in terms of sheer inanity. This person who is going to rebuild the Fourth International can't quite decide whether or not we've turned liquidationist. On the one hand, he warns of the future danger of "sacrificing our political programme and independence of press" whilst only a few paragraphs later he writes that "we have allowed ourselves to become an organisation which has abandoned the method of Marxism and the direct fight for our programme ..., drifting into political accommodation to reformism in practice". (I didn't know Galtieri was a reformist.)

It seems that we're just partial liquidationists, for Evington talks of how "the complete liquidation of the League has been avoided ..." - but the line of 'reasoning' which leads him to this conclusion only complicates matters further: liquidation has been avoided because "no-one bothered to explain through the IBs just what the idea of convergence and the relationship of S@ to the League actually was." But if no-one understood this notion of convergence - wouldn't that only make infinitely more likely our liquidation into reformism?

In relation to the Register, the document is simply incomprehensible. What is meant by the 'political capital to be made out of the Register'? The kind of 'political capital' which CND could make out of a nuclear holocaust perhaps? And how would registration 'compartmentalise us off from possible allies'? It would be more accurate to assume that 'possible allies' will be somewhat more speedy in registering than S@. But, since Evington is so aghast at the possibility of attempted registration by S@, why doesn't he put forward some ideas about how we can step up the fight against the Register? Could it be that this vanguard of proletarian revolution hasn't got any?

How fitting that in the midst of this mass of political irrelevancies now afloat one should find a piece of flotsam still adrift after the Falklands debate: Layton's "The political problems are as yet unresolved".

Layton has got it all sussed out. Scornfully rejecting Kinnell's argument that the Argentine faction adopted their position under pressure from the rest of the Left, Layton explains that "the former majority position was due ... to the pressure of the Left in the Labour Party, like Reg Race. Did they not fear being isolated from the social pacifists and construct their position accordingly?"

In the real world, reformism certainly is an infinitely greater force than the 'world Trotskyist movement'. But not so in the make-believe world of Galtieri-ite 'anti-imperialism' inhabited by Layton and his fellow travellers, where reality is re-defined in accordance with some Byzantine notions of mediaeval schoolmen in America. Layton is quite correct to write that "the political method of the majority must come under examination" - he might learn something. In all honesty though, we doubt it.

It goes without saying that the crowning glory of this political dunghheap is the declaration of the pretentiously titled "Internationalist Tendency" (ET), a less than loveable alien intruder from a different political world, several light years away from reality.

ET's document amounts to: fantasising about rebuilding the Fourth International on the basis of a rump talking shop of lifeless pedants; accommodation to Latin American nationalism, even in the form of semi-fascist dictatorships; retreat from the struggle against social democracy in Britain; a vicarious tail-ending of Irish nationalism; and support for "socialism through genocide" in Afghanistan (albeit, of course, 'critically').

ET's 'internationalism' manifests itself solely in the cosmopolitan nature of its political accommodationism. Behind the pseudo-Trotskyist rhetoric of the document lies nothing more than that which has long been a leading characteristic of fake Trotskyism: prostration before Stalinism. Hardly the healthiest of starting points from which to proceed to rebuild the Fourth International. The most ET could hope to rebuild is the post-Lenin Comintern - of the Third Period.

What these pre-conference documents have in common, though to differing degrees, is a fundamental failure to grapple with the problems of the class struggle which we face today. Instead we find little but timeless shibboleths, religious appeals to the prop-

erties of transitional demands, superstitious incantations of the evils of reformism, and a collapse into programme-fetishism.

There has been much bemoaning the lack of growth of the League since the fusion. But if all that the League has on offer is genocide in Afghanistan, support for mini-colonial ventures in the South Atlantic, bombing Protestant workers in Northern Ireland, and ducking out of fighting social democracy in Britain, then one can only congratulate workers on their good sense in failing to join up.

In reality though, our situation and record of work is hardly as bleak as those so averse to any continuation of it make it out to be. The 'Health Workers for the Full Claim Campaign' and the MCDTUR were both initiatives of the League, which was also the only organisation on the Left ready to switch over to a semi-weekly production of the paper at the time of last year's abortive BL strike. However abortive or limited in their impact such initiatives may have proved, they certainly suggest a more serious approach to trade union work on the part of the League than that implied in much of the contents of the IBs currently in circulation.

The same holds true of other aspects of our work as well. The role of the League in WF would contradict the idea that somehow the League has turned away from fighting the double oppression of women for the sake of a more easy-going life in the LP. In terms of international solidarity work, one could point to the establishment of the Labour Committee on Palestine or the role of the League in the PSC as refutation of the notion we have abandoned internationalism to collapse into a social-democratic insular parochialism. And in terms of the so despised work in the LP itself, there are a number of positive aspects to the work of the League, e.g. in LAW, CLPD, LCI, a number of local Labour Briefings etc.

The progress made has been limited - partly by the failure of sections of the membership to carry out decisions of the League, particularly in relation to the struggle against social democracy. Those so dismissive of the work of the League might be on slightly firmer ground (though in fact they wouldn't) if they themselves had made a more serious effort to carry out such work.

Instead of turning our backs on the progress made, however modest, and following ET on its Oehlerite binge, we would suggest a more fruitful course of action would be to build upon the gains hitherto made in the period ahead. Although infinitely more modest than the various schemata currently being sucked out of different people's thumbs for rebuilding the FI, the following proposals are put forward in the context of attempting to come to grips with some of the major problems which the League is likely to be confronted with in the immediate future.

(We would also suggest that such proposals contribute infinitely more to the rebuilding of the FI than all the bluff and bluster in so many of the current IPs. The FI will be rebuilt by revolutionaries relating to the realities of the class struggle; the FI will not be reborn through political necrophilia with the TILC.)

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Part Two (To be voted on)

General Election

1) Immediately after production of the official LP manifesto S@ produces a broadsheet as our response to it. The broadsheet will take up the political inadequacy of the manifesto and counterpose to it an alternative based on three main elements: vote Labour; fight for a workers' government; for working class mobilisation whatever the outcome of the General Election. The broadsheet will propose an alternative political platform upon which we argue for CLPs to mount their election campaigns, with certain demands in the platform to be prioritised (e.g. unilateral nuclear disarmament, British withdrawal from Ireland, restoration of all cuts in public spending). At the same time as raising the demand for a workers' government in the course of such a campaign, we explain in the pages of S@ in intelligible language the relation of a workers' government to the dictatorship of the proletariat etc.

2) Immediately upon production of this broadsheet, we begin to campaign around it and get CLPs to adopt it and put it into practice. We use the alternative campaign as a means to turn LP branches outwards. (We do this anyway; the approach of a General Election and our proposals for the campaign to be mounted in relation to it provide a better opportunity for putting this into practice.) We fight to get CLPs to hold public meetings, carry out recruitment drives on the basis of the alternative campaign.

- 3) We argue for the alternative not just in CLPs but in all arenas where we can get a hearing for our proposals, e.g. in local Labour Briefings, the LCC in some areas, in LP Broad Lefts, in union Broad Lefts as a transmission belt into workplace branches etc.
- 4) In LP-based single-issue campaigns we fight to get a national commitment on their part to fight for CLPs to support and carry out relevant parts of the alternative platform, e.g. in the LCI we argue for all LCI members to organise and fight in their CLPs to ensure that priority in election campaigning is given to the question of British withdrawal from Ireland. The same approach could be taken up in e.g., Labour CND on unilateral disarmament or through WF on women's rights etc.
- 5) In the course of campaigning around the alternative proposals we advocate, we give priority to getting the campaign into workplaces, not simply as an end in itself but to exploit the opportunity which thereby exists of building workplace branches and strengthening the LP's base in the working class.
- 6) Given the shifts to the left in LP policy since 1979 and given the recent/current stress placed upon accountability of MPs to LP policy, the odds are that the mainstream Labour Left will counterpose (unless it falls in line around 'party unity to win the election') the notion of 'fight the election on Party policy' to the official, right-wing, manifesto. We must not allow ourselves to be dragged along behind this. Whilst we support specific elements of official LP policy, the policies and programme of the LP are obviously not our policies, our programme. At the same time, and as a last resort, if our proposals for the kind of alternative campaign outlined above are voted down at a CLP and the choice is between the official manifesto or Party policy as the basis for the CLP's election campaign, we obviously vote for the latter. How we then operate in such a context would need to be assessed in the light of local circumstances etc.
- 7) In principle we are not against a resurrection of the SCL@. At the same time we recognise the unlikelihood of building an SCL@ of any significance, given the lack of unity on the Labour Left (e.g. divisions in CLPD; divisions over the Register elsewhere as well) and the retreat underway in many sections of the Left (e.g. LCC), plus also the point made in para. six above. It must also be recognised that in many areas of the country the SCL@ never existed anyway, e.g. Scotland. The idea of launching an SCL@ as a joint effort between ourselves and the IMG, plus one or two individuals, should be explicitly rejected. At best it would be an irrelevance to implementing our proposals; at worst, a positive hinderance. If the opportunity arises of solidifying a specific, individual campaign along the above lines with significant sections of the non-aligned LP Left, then we take it. But we should not launch the above initiatives suffering from any delusions that this is likely to occur.
- 8) Not later than a month after the General Election, an aggregate/special conference of the League will be held to discuss the impact of our work in the election campaign and what we should be doing in the post-election situation.

LP Work (General)

- 1) Membership of the LP is obligatory for all members of the League. Anyone who regards him/herself as a special case should apply to the NC to be excused from this obligation. It is equally obligatory for all members of the League to fight for our politics in the LP, rather than be passive card-carrying members only à la Right-wingers.
- 2) Our intervention in the various LP-based bodies (e.g. LCC, CLPD) and single-issue campaigns (e.g. LCI, LCCR, Labour CND) should be rationalised and better organised by the NC. At the moment members appear to be expected to hold membership of virtually everything possible. This is impossible financially and meaningless politically. We join campaigns to build them, on our politics, not to turn up once a year to the AGM. Instead of a succession of appeals to join one campaign one day and another the next, we should divide our (limited) resources to ensure a constant, active, presence in all of them (or at least as many as possible).
- 3) Whilst bearing in mind the points made in para. two above, we give priority to taking out membership of LAW and the CLPD, and to getting CLPs etc. affiliated to them.
- 4) We stop regarding factory*branches as a 'nice idea' and start setting about building them. Goals should be set by the NC and progress monitored. (*should read: workplace branches ...)

- 5) In S@ we need more coverage of what LPs are doing in different areas, i.e. report one week on LP in Birmingham, next week in Glasgow, week after (if possible) report from Leicester members on LP in Leicester etc., and then start cycle of reports again.
- 6) We put more resources into local Labour Briefings. Where they exist, we intervene to sharpen them politically. Where they don't yet exist, we initiate them, resources permitting. If the witch-hunt is stepped up and the proscription of S@ becomes a real possibility, we make this a major priority.
- 7) Immediately after conference, a special IB on LP work will be produced. This will contain reports from each branch on: their work/achievements/lack of achievements in the LP locally; general nature of LP in their own particular area; existence/level of activity/political leanings of other left(ish) groups/campaigns in their own particular area.
- 8) The IB will be discussed at a special aggregate/conference. If the General Election is in the not too distant future, this will be the same aggregate as that referred to in para. 8 in the section on the General Election. If the election is not till next year, an aggregate/conference will be held later this year to discuss the IB. The NC will present specific proposals to further develop our LP work, based on the contents of the reports in the IB.

Witch-hunt

- 1) We make it a priority for members of the League to be members of LAW and the CLPD. All League members should be members of at least one of them; if possible financially and meaningful politically: both. These are the main medium through which we fight the witch-hunt.
- 2) Whilst not withdrawing our member on the steering committee of Militant's Steering Committee against the Witch-hunt, we treat this body with the contempt it deserves, recognising that it is utterly incapable of giving any lead in fighting the witch-hunt. Whilst not being averse to joint work with it, we should recognise that the only joint work it is likely to be interested in is raising money to cover their legal costs of taking the NEC to court.
- 3) In terms of motions for the 1983 LP national conference we make it an absolute priority for our members to get their CLPs to submit motions to alter clause two of the Party constitution to re-open the Party to affiliations.
- 4) In the LP-based single-issue campaigns, we fight to commit them to continue to accept as full members anyone expelled from the Party during the witch-hunt.
- 5) Through LAW we fight to ensure that the question of the witch-hunt is raised when re-selection takes place due to boundary re-organisation, not simply in terms of: is the potential PPC for/against the witch-hunt, but in terms of demanding a specific commitment from him/her that he/she remains answerable to that CLP even if it were formally disbanded by the NEC for refusing to carry out expulsions.
- 6) In the unions, apart from fighting for democratisation of the block vote, we get LAW to campaign for: union branches to continue to send delegates to formally disbanded CLPs, pay affiliation to formally disbanded CLPs, and to be prepared to delegate formally expelled individual LP members to CLPs if the CLP is prepared to accept them, as well as general boycott of any sham CLPs the NEC attempts to set up to replace ones they declare disbanded.
- 7) In the course of the run-up to the General Election we (directly, and indirectly through LAW) we raise as a continuous theme the way in which the Right will be sabotaging Labour's chances of winning, e.g. watering down the manifesto, attacking the Left rather than fighting for a Labour victory etc., partly as an end in itself, partly to put the Left in a better position, should Labour lose the election, to beat back the Right's offensive around the theme of 'the Left cost us the victory'.
- 8) There are whole areas of the country in which LAW is still non-existent, or just one or two individual members. We therefore push the LAW steering committee to provide resources to enable a widening out of its influence geographically, rather than, as seems to be the case at present, LAW waiting for individuals in the localities to get something going off their own backs.

MFFHAN CASEY McVICAR

League wets throw in the towel Casey

Not since some time was worthlessly spent discussing whether any support could be given to a semi-fascist junta's occupation of a couple of islands predominantly inhabited by sheep can so much time have been squandered at an NC meeting, as there was by all accounts at the NC session on 14/11/82.

What ought to have been but wasn't discussed was started up by Carolan in the introductory comments to his document: "there is good reason to think that we can stop them (i.e. the right) and minimise the purge...we can hope to stop the purge and limit expulsions to perhaps half a dozen or a couple of dozen members of Militant. A firm line by CLPs of opposition...resistance for as long as necessary will make the cost of a full scale or even large scale purge prohibitively expensive for the NEC".

But instead of discussing how to lead the fight against the witch hunt, against the register, against expulsions, against the closing down of the left press within the Labour Party, the NC seems to have spent its time debating what to do when the clampdown is successful, when we are denied a place on the register when our paper is closed down etc etc.

Thus even before any real struggle of any degree at all, the NC already works on the assumption that the battle will be lost, that in fact we have already lost, and spends its time in discussing how to make the best of a (as yet non-existent) defeat.

Given the defeatist bankruptcy of the framework within which what passes for discussion at the NC took place, it was presumably only inevitable that so much of the contents of the motions/background documents should have been wrong, sloppily expressed to the point of insulting the reader or 'wouldn't it be nice if' speculations. "The brutal reality of mass unemployment, coupled with sexual and racial oppression, means that the organised labour movement is so structured as to exclude or marginalise the majority of youth, women and oppressed minorities", writes Cunliffe.

Either this is an intolerably sloppy style of writing - or it is nonsense. The present crisis highlights the structural and political inadequacies of the labour movement, it does not create them as the above quote suggests. (And precisely because the present crisis does highlight these structural and political inadequacies, the potential for revolutionaries successfully fighting to change them is that much increased.)

Similarly inadequate is the reduction of the Labour Party's programme to a backroom plot by union bureaucrats: constructed by trade union leaders as the means of furthering their politics of gradualism and class collaboration... If this is all there was to the establishment of the LP, then presumably it was a step backwards, rather than forward, for the British working class.

Even more perplexing is Cunliffe's statement that "while it is plain that the LP itself - certainly not in anything resembling the shape it has today - will not be transformed (least of all by a series of linear democratic reforms) into a revolutionary party..." What Cunliffe is here arguing is that the LP can be transformed into a revolutionary party! If it had a different shape from that which it has today, if more is done than simply fight for "a series of linear democratic reforms" (presumably this means "linear series of democratic reforms") then by the logic of Cunliffe's statement the LP would be transformed into a revolutionary party.

Not content with borrowing Gde Pablo's arguments on Third World nationalism (e.g. Argentina) and Stalinism (e.g. Afghanistan), it seems that some members of the League now borrow their attitude to social democracy from the same source as well.

The problem with Cunliffe's document is twofold. On the one hand, like Kinnell

he has nothing to say about how to fight the witchhunt. On the other hand, and more fundamentally, he does not seem to see any need to fight it. Implicit in the reduction of the LP's origins to a union bureaucrats' plot is the notion that the LP does not really count for much. If things are swinging to the left in it, as in 1980/81, then let's join in, but if the Right is on the offensive as it is today, there's other areas of work for us: women, youth, blacks etc.

Didn't some of us go through a similar argument about 7 years ago?

And then there is Kinnell's document. Devoid of any general theoretical/political introduction, the resolution has not a word to say about how to best fight the witch hunt, is implicitly based on the assumption that the paper will be shut down and the only concrete proposals for action contained in it flow out of that assumption that the paper will be shut down.

What is Kinnell's attitude to the arguments of Carolan in his statement quoted above? Does Kinnell agree with them? Obviously not, since his own resolution is in direct contradiction to what Carolan has to say. But Kinnell fails to offer anything even approximating to an explanation of why he assumes in advance of any struggle that the Right will be victorious, at least to the extent of closing down the paper and other left papers in the LP.

Despite the brevity of his resolution, Kinnell succeeds in being self-contradictory. In point 3 he states that "whatever happens we will need to maintain some method of publishing our full politics." But then what follows in the rest of the resolution is the assumption that that will not be possible, that alternatives need to be found, and that therefore in fact it will be neither possible nor necessary to maintain some method of publishing our full politics.

Kinnell's document is based on phantasy and conjecture. First of all, he assumes the paper will be shut down. So what should we do, he wonders, sucking his thumb, where springs the solution? work in a solution as conjectural as the problem it is meant to answer. After all why assume that the paper will be shut down, but not local Bs and maybe even T as well? Golding has already declared the LCC to be a suitable victim for the witch hunt. By such standards, local Bs and even T must merit the same treatment.

Thus instead of any concrete analysis of the present situation, balance of forces and proposals as to what needs to be done in the here and now, Kinnell presents us with an ill fitting jig saw puzzle of purely hypothetical assumptions.

Kinnell's resolutions, with or without its amendments from Parsons is a touching homily on the need to be in the XLP and suitably edited could be distributed as a leaflet to members of the S.P. In terms of the immediate problems thought it has limited value, save for those like Cunliffe who seem to lack any insight in the nature of and struggle against social democracy. It is however rather late in the day to launch that kind of discussion.

While it might be worthwhile even now to have some discussion on what might be necessary if the Right's offensive were to be successful to the extent of forcing the closure of the paper, there can certainly be no justification for entire motions/documents/NC sessions to be given over to this, especially when it is at the cost of any discussion about the immediate steps which need to be taken to organise against the witch hunt. The main issue which needs to be confronted and overcome which need to be taken up and clarified in the course of the present discussion would certainly include the following:

Labour Against the Witch Hunt (LAW): Is this the central/only campaign through which we fight the witch hunt or is it just one of a number of especially important bodies through which we work? What is the present relation between LAW and the Militant dominated Labour Steering Committee (LSC)?

and what do we want it to be if the present relationship is unsatisfactory? Have we got members on the leading body of LAW as well as the LSC and what are they /should they be arguing (presumably not that this is all a ~~an~~ waste of time)? In areas where LAW is non-existent (e.g. Scotland) do we try and set one up or channel our efforts into other directions (e.g. LCC, Labour Leader, Labour Steering Committee etc). Should we be pushing for LAW to produce a weekly paper if the paper were to be closed down?

LPYS: Given that Militant's chronic sectarianism and scenario politics make it incapable of leading a fight to save the LPYS, how do we take up such a fight, especially given the physical limitations of our forces in the YS in relation to Militant? Does our Youth Movement possess the weight to launch such a campaign (do its members even see a need for it)? Is there a need for an independent campaign in defence of the LPYS or should it be subsumed into the work of LAW, LSC or whatever?

Trade Unions: Though major problems remain in terms of work in the CLPs, the fight in the unions must be the central task, given their voting power at LP national conference. Again, do we argue for a specific campaign in the union or should work in the unions on the witch hunt be covered by LAW etc? Do we mount a campaign restricted to the question of getting these union votes cast against the register or do we take it up in the context of the general struggle ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ for union democracy? And could we achieve the former without the latter?

How do we organise when a union bureaucracy which hunts union branches which sends delegates to CLPs which the NEC declares disbanded?

Single Issue campaigns (e.g. LCI, LARC, LOND etc.)? Does the question of taking up the witch hunt within such campaigns take precedence over the immediate work of such campaigns? Supposing, for example, a sizeable number (enough to hamper, if not wreck, its work) of a local branch of a campaign threatened resignation unless a member from a CLP declared disbanded was banned from coming to branch meetings of the campaign: would we make opposition to the witch hunt the major issue (i.e. let them resign) or the work of the campaign (i.e. oppose, albeit unwillingly, that person attending meetings)? To what extent do we fight in single issue campaigns to get them to try to win affiliations from CLPs declared disbanded? To what extent do we fight for CLPs to affiliate to non-recognised (i.e. unregistered) single issue campaigns?

Labour Left (all varieties). How do we relate to them tactically on the question of the witch hunt? To what extent do we make friendly appeals to Militant to join LAW? To what extent do we say the truth about the LSC? (i.e. its a sectarian, do nothing substitute for a real campaign? How do we take up the failure of the 'hard left' to mount a meaningful fight against the witch hunt? How do we concretely assess the potential for joint work with e.g. LCC, (especially bearing in mind regional differences) Labour Leader etc? Are we even (still) meant to be members of any of these?

What's basically necessary is to change the whole direction of discussion in the witch hunt. The discussion at the NEC wasn't really ~~an~~ about fighting the witch hunt at all, it was about debating what port we should call in at in the supposedly inevitable storm. Instead of that kind of discussion in which defeat is the unspoken premise, we should be discussing the problems involved in building a successful counter-offensive against the right's attack.

CASHY

FOR LABOUR MOVEMENT BASED YOUTH WORK: A reply to comrade Hunt (IB 29)

The task before us

"This Conference must note with alarm the result of 18 months of 'youth work' in our fused organisation and we must take immediate steps from this conference to resolve that situation. My document attempts to pinpoint the real problems in terms of the general orientation. The worst possible outcome of the youth discussion at the conference would be a halfway-house position of CF groups here and there, a position that we have maintained up to now. To adopt that position would ensure a federalist youth movement. It is therefore my view that the two opposing views on the youth orientation must be fought out a conference, and that one of them must come out as the dominant position, which all members will be obliged to fight for in the class." (P. 1)

With these words cde Hunt both opens his examination of the L's youth work and outlines the task confronting the conference in admirably clear terms. I personally would describe the result of that work in far harsher terms than he has done: 'a federalist youth movement' demonstrates unusual restraint for cde Hunt. In my opinion the lack of clear perspectives for the L's youth work (compounded by lack of resources), has created a somewhat peripheral, two-headed organisation which sees the two heads squabbling with each other, rather than an organisation which is patiently building a working class youth leadership rooted in the labour movement.

Cde Hunt is therefore correct in this respect: a national perspective must be settled upon and all comrades must act in accordance with this perspective. Unfortunately, in his attempt to provide such a perspective, Hunt points the L in a direction which, if it were to follow, would prove to be a disaster for our youth and labour movement work.

The Centrality of the Working Class and the MP

It should be axiomatic that the working class is central to our work - we are, after all, supposedly Marxists. But it is not enough to simply state such a position, for as a FORMALITY it means nothing. Plenty of groups, including religious bankrupts such as the WRP and the Sparts, claim to be building the revolutionary workers' party. It is necessary, therefore, to be clear on what the centrality of the working class means IN PRACTICE. Cde Hunt proposes that

"We assert ... that our main, central orientation is towards working class youth." (P4)

Yet he precedes that proposition with a trend of thought which represents an ultra-left rejection of the labour movement, the only solid basis upon which a mass working class youth movement can be built.

The centrality of the working class is a declaration that the proletariat is the only objectively revolutionary class in capitalist society, with the capacity to emancipate the WHOLE of society, abolishing for ever class domination. We therefore have a fundamental commitment to the building of a working class revolutionary party. But that will only be achieved by consistent and sustained work within those spheres of proletarian democracy built up within 'bourgeois society'. *(See quote from Lenin, printed at end of text)

That, quite plainly, means detailed daily work in the existing organised labour movement - not in order to adapt to its conservatism but in order to challenge that conservatism, to win the leadership of the working class.

There are, of course, other working class organisations, outside of what is commonly identified as the labour movement, in which we should be working. Tenants associations are an oft-forgotten example. But it is in the labour movement that the political and industrial muscle of the working class lies. We are compelled, no matter what the conditions, the obstacles, to work in the trade unions - mass organisations of the working class. That argument was settled long ago - by the experience of the Bolsheviks and the polemics between Lenin and the 'left-wing communists'. Unfortunately, today's 'left-wing communists' have learned ONLY that lesson, and that only in part. For their whole drift is AWAY

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from the MP and AWAY from the ORGANIC relationship which connects it to the trade unions. The MP was, in large part, formed by the trade unions; its annual conference is dominated by the trade unions' block votes; union branches affiliate to CMPs, as do some trades councils. Whilst there has been an increasing tendency for white-collar workers to join the MP (and we should be very careful on this subject) blue-collar workers remain a significant part of the active membership. The votes for the MP are, in the main, cast by the working class. In so far as workers look for a working class political alternative to the Tories they look to the MP.

All this, of course, is not to deny the role of the MP hitherto as a PROP of the capitalist system. Its leadership and policies have historically served the role of supports for the bourgeoisie, but they have only been able to fulfill this role because they are based upon the organised working class. Herein lies the fundamental contradiction of the MP: between its working class base, where objective interests can only be served by the overthrow of capitalism, and its pro-capitalist leadership. Our task as revolutionaries is to recognise that specific contradiction and to EXPLOIT it. We must bring the needs and demands of the working class to the fore, exposing by our agitation, propaganda and practice the bankrupt nature of the MP's leadership and policies. But this can not be done outside the MP a la SWP. Neither can it be done with one foot in and one foot out. We can only exploit that contradiction, breaking workers from the reactionary baggage of social democracy, by a CONSISTENT STRUGGLE FOR LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE MP AS PART AND PARCEL OF THE STRUGGLE FOR LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

In that struggle we must re-structure organisationally and politically re-orientate the WHOLE labour movement. To the MP we must recruit women and blacks who reject the chauvinism of the labour movement; industrial militants; and new layers of raw youth. We must recognise that winning such youth, whose energy, creativity and openness is vital to the revolutionary project, demands a practice which reaches out to the youth. Cde Hunt is quite correct - we must go where the youth are (though it should be pointed out, as it seems to have escaped his notice, that there ARE working class youth in the Youth O). But the objective is not simply to make ourselves more accessible to the youth - it is to make the LABOUR MOVEMENT more accessible. We must turn the labour movement out to the youth. Our task is not only to 'win' such youth, but in so doing to root them in the organisations of the working class - to bring them into the life and death struggle with social democracy.

In YOUTH terms this means that we must wage a serious consistent fight for the leadership of the Youth O and as the political youth organisation of the labour movement. This does not imply a weekly slanging match with the M. No youth movement will be built like that. What it does mean is that we attempt to turn Youth O branches outwards, to wherever youth may be. If that proves impossible because the branch is M controlled, then we turn out ourselves as MP members. But having done that, we take ALL contacts back into the Youth O. We build the Youth O and through that work build ourselves: the labour movement, INCLUDING ITS POLITICAL YOUTH WING, is central to our work. What we do not do is counterpose our own tiny forces to the existing labour movement. Unfortunately, that is precisely what Cde Hunt proposes in IB 29.

Hunt Counterposes CF to the Youth O

The whole dynamic of Cde Hunt's document leads to a sectarian counterposing of CF and the Youth O: We are NOT to be a serious PART of the Youth O: on the contrary, we are to have an 'independent organisation' with 'compulsory meetings' and 'local branches' 'Orientating to the Youth O.

That Cde Hunt does not mean us to seriously fight for the leadership of the Youth O is clear from his own statements, despite reassurances to the contrary. "I would be quite happy," he informs us, "to see a Youth O branch fight along the lines of our orientation and our initiatives in any given town, all the better." (P 3, my emphasis). 'Quite happy'?! 'All the better'?! Cde Hunt's attitude is

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obvious: it's handy if we win a Youth O branch but it is not really essential because we will still have 'our orientation and our initiatives'. Oh, jolly whizz, comrade, so nice if we win a section of the labour movement to our politics! Well I for one wish to win all branches of the Youth O because that's how the League will win the national leadership! I happen to have noticed that socialist ideas take on a lot more power when they are refracted through the institutions of the labour movement. Whole sections of youth may not think much of the MP but they haven't even heard of CF. We must build, win and build the Youth O branches in order to build ourselves, and to root a working class youth leadership in the labour movement.

"That fight to win our orientation and politics must be CLOSELY linked to winning youth from THAT Youth O to OUR Movement. NLWYM branches should discuss initiatives in the Youth O as well as aspects of OUR politics and recruitment."

(P 3, my emphasis)

The proposal is that instead of building Youth O branches on the basis of our politics we build our own 'independent' CF groups - independent of the labour movement that is. Instead of using CF to recruit to the Youth O we use it to recruit OUT of the Youth O. CF 'initiatives' in the Youth O are apparently something different to 'our politics and recruitment'. Yet our position should be this: to use CF to recruit to the Youth O on the basis of OUR politics, similarly to win youth in the Youth O to OUR politics and so to win the national Youth O leadership. Such a task is not 'closely linked' to recruiting youth to the League - it's identical! For it's a precondition of League membership that all comrades undertake serious labour movement work, and that includes the Youth O. The hopeless, sectarian counterposing of CF to the Youth O is summed up by comrade Hunt's rejection of the name 'NLWYM of the Youth O'. To build ourselves as a 'tendency', as a 'part' of the Youth O, is alledged by Hunt to be a 'negative orientation' (P3). In one sense comrade Hunt is right, for such a perspective negates his ultra-leftism!

The Youth O and a Primary Orientation towards Working Class Youth

If Hunt simply wishes to argue that CF's role in the Youth O has been confined to slagging off the M., then let him argue that. If he presents the evidence he may well convince me (though I would then be forced to ask questions about his role as a youth full-timer). But he goes much further than that. His position is that the Youth O is SUPPLEMENTARY TO, NOT A PART OF, 'real youth work' and 'a primary orientation towards working class youth'.

"It is my view,..." he informs us, "that at fusion we basically took the issue of youth work and buried it in the Youth O. We have substituted real youth work for what amounts to a battle of words between ourselves and the leaders and hacks of the M. who have a stranglehold on the Youth O. The alternative that I put is a PRIMARY ORIENTATION TOWARDS WORKING CLASS YOUTH. (Hunt's emphasis) It is no good telling people to do it, we need ourselves to be going out to youth ... wherever youth are ... winning them to Trotskyist politics, to our movement, WHILST AT THE SAME TIME having a serious 'disciplined' 'communist' orientation to the Youth O."

(P 2, my emphasis)

CF is to have a 'primary orientation towards working class youth' whilst at the same time having a serious, 'disciplined', 'communist' orientation to the Youth O!

For the benefit of cde Hunt, let me state the obvious: breaking the grip of the M on the Youth O is PART AND PARCEL of a primary orientation to working class youth. The Youth O is the political youth wing of the labour movement, i.e. of the collective organisations of the working class. To break the Youth O from the M.'s bureaucratic grip, to make it open and accessible to ALL working class youth, to give working class youth an organisational input into the labour movement is, or should be, nentral to our fight to restructure and reorientate the labour movement. To reject that fight, as part of the labour movement, in favour of 'independent' (of the labour movement) CF groups with a 'communist'

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orientation to the labour movement is to indulge in the political fantasy of rebuilding the labour movement from the ground up. Such ultra-left, sectarian nonsense has never been the perspective of the League. Our position has been to win the existing movement as part of the movement.

Comrade Hunt's views appear to be guided not by Marxism but by moralism and impatience. He shares, correctly, the revulsion of so many people at the bureaucracy, chauvinism and sexism of the labour movement. Unfortunately, he allows that revulsion to dominate his judgement. The plain harsh fact is that if we are to win the leadership of the Youth O then we must argue our politics out with the M. That, in and of itself, will not bring us success; but neither can it be avoided. The M. will not simply disappear and neither will they simply allow us to bring raw youth into political activity: they will address that youth in their long established, sexist, charismatic and heavy handed bureaucratic manner. Revulsion at their politics and methods is not enough - we must link a consistent practice in the Youth O with a firm espousal of the ideas of Marxism. We must turn the Youth O out, but we also HAVE to argue our politics with the M.

Winning the Youth O

Cde Hunt argues that his position "means fighting to build a tendency capable of challenging the M. stranglehold on that movement." (i.e. the Youth O, P 2). The problem is that if we train an organisation in the spirit of sectarianism then it will remain precisely that - sectarian. If we recruit OUT of the Youth O rather than to it and through it; if we build CF in OPPOSITION to the Youth O; and if we argue that building a tendency within the Youth O is a 'negative orientation'; and that Youth O activity is supplemental to, separate from, a primary orientation to working class youth, rather than central to it, then why should our youth take the Youth O seriously? We will be fundamentally miseducating youth; turning them away from the labour movement, rather than turning the labour movement out to working class youth and winning working class youth to activity in THEIR working class organisations on the basis of our politics.

Cde Hunt's whole position is this: to build CF outside of the Youth O, in opposition to the Youth O, with the long-term perspective of, somehow, taking this organisation into the Youth O in order to win it. The alternative I put is this: to build CF through the Youth O, rooting our youth in the labour movement on the basis of our independent politics; the struggle to achieve this being bound up with the fight to organisationally re-structure and politically re-orientate the labour movement on the basis of Marxist politics and leadership. That is the only perspective upon which we will win the leadership of the Youth O.

The Nottingham Experience and Our Perspectives

Cde Hunt claims that the proof of the pudding is in the eating:

"The Nottingham comrades have managed to take over Youth O branches, recruit to the League and do effective youth work, BECAUSE they have an effective CF group, while the critics survive with their Youth O quorates."

(P. 2, Hunt's emphasis)

A number of points need to be made:

1. Without outlining EXACTLY what the Nottingham comrades have done and who they have recruited it is difficult to assess what can be learned both positively and negatively from their experience.
2. Until he cites particular comrades and areas the claim that critics of his ultra-left position merely 'survive with their Youth O quorates' should be treated with due contempt. When a comrade makes this kind of remark s/he should properly substantiate it.
3. Even if the Nottingham comrades represented a (relatively) large force that would not, of itself, prove their methods to be right. To suppose otherwise is crass empiricism, not Marxist analysis. The SWP are a far larger force than ourselves, they always have been. Yet we have consistently argued that their politics would inevitably lead to a sectarian blind alley - and that is

precisely what has happened. The SWP is now collapsing in on itself. Yet I have yet to hear comrade Hunt argue that the SWP are a far larger force than ourselves and that we should therefore adopt their political methods. His empiricism is strangely selective.

4. What is clear when we examine other left tendencies is that the M. have far more working class youth than ourselves and anybody else. This has been true for a good many years. Why should this be so? I would suggest that the explanation lies in their heavy involvement in the Youth O. We have always argued, correctly, that they have politically stunted the Youth O, that they alienate youth, yet that they have still succeeded in recruiting more working class youth than we have. It is really time that we took the Youth O as seriously as they have done.

Does Youth O activity preclude reaching out to youth?

Running through Hunt's document is the strange notion that consistent membership of, activity within, the Youth O precludes reaching out to working class youth, 'wherever youth are': Youth O activity is supplementary to a 'primary orientation to working class youth': building a serious tendency within the Youth O is a 'negative orientation'. Or, again,:

"... we cannot regard the Youth O as the absolute central point of our work. That must be, as I have stated, winning working class youth to our politics. None of the turn that I propose is incompatible with a Youth O orientation, but our TACTICS in and as regards the Youth O must flow from that PRINCIPLE of working class orientation."

(P 3, Hunt's emphasis)

Yet again, Hunt counterposes a serious fight for the leadership of the Youth O to the fight to win working class youth to the L.'s politics. It is by counterposing the two in this manner that he seeks to persuade us of the need for 'independent' CF groups, meeting at the least on a fortnightly basis, and which would be the organisational focus of our work.

Such an analysis is political nonsense. The Youth O MUST BE CENTRAL TO OUR YOUTH WORK on the basis of building a MASS WORKING CLASS YOUTH MOVEMENT ROOTED IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. To state what should not need stating, the following are ways in which we may use the Youth O to build such a movement:

1. Visit factories, ask them to sponsor one of their apprentices/young workers on a Youth O or unemployment demo.
2. Write to trade union branches asking their permission to address them, enclose Youth O application leaflets in case they turn you down but are sympathetic nevertheless.
3. Write to all the schools asking for permission to address discussion classes - offer to debate with the Young Conservatives if necessary.
4. Do regular leaflets and paper sales of schools, colleges, estates, shopping precincts, dole queues, etc.
5. Do joint leaflets with ward MPs - it might even make them more amenable to hand over the names of young party members!
6. Establish or participate in YCND. Have joint YCND/Youth O activities - film shows, discos, etc. If the MP work is done properly you should be able to obtain a contribution towards the cost.
7. Use the Youth O to launch a labour movement campaign against racism/fascism. Set up anti-racist bookstalls; have mass leafletting drives, deportation campaigns; build opposition to fascist activity.
8. Link in with campaigns against the cuts, drawing the connection between cuts and job losses, lack of facilities, etc.
9. Launch a campaign to obtain free use of leisure facilities for the unemployed. Petition the dole queues, hold public meetings, build pressure on the council.

One can go on and on: the opportunities for youth work through the Youth O are endless. The energy and spare time of youth comrades is far in excess of other comrades, who often hold 'bureaucratic' posts as well as family responsibilities. That energy and time should be spent building the L. in the Labour movement - not in engaging in political fantasies.

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M. Dominated Youth O branches

But what if a Youth O branch is M. controlled and the M. refuse to participate in such activities? Then simply announce the activities at Youth O and do them anyway! YCND, anti-racist work, etc., are NOT dependent on the Youth O, though they are greatly strengthened by its official and committed involvement. Seek labour movement sponsorship and support elsewhere - TU branches, trades Councils, wards, CMPs, Women's Sections. The objective, however, is to win youth into activity on the basis of our politics, involving them in the Youth O and other labour movement bodies and so to win that Youth O branch.

Now it may be the case that some Youth O branches have so many M. supporters in them that:

1. it will take years for our supporters to win that branch
 2. Comrades are unable to put across their ideas and activities.
- Such a difficult situation may be further compounded by lack of experience in the labour movement on the part of some young comrades. In such circumstances it may be necessary to establish CF groups as a forum for our youth comrades to put across their ideas, to gain some organisational experience, and to plan activity involving non-L members. In those RARE circumstances comrades should be able to establish CF groups, but not as an excuse for copping out of the local Youth O. The perspective of winning the Youth O branch by bringing youth into it must remain.

POLICIES TO GIVE EFFECT TO A LABOUR MOVEMENT BASED YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

1. That the L declare the Youth O as central to its youth work on the basis of a thorough-going commitment to working class politics and a working class youth leadership rooted in the labour movement.
2. That L youth are committed to fighting for a labour movement orientation when taking up the problems and demands of youth.
3. That L youth take up all the problems of youth and fight on ALL the issues that concern youth, irrespective of whether they are specific to working class youth or not.
4. That all L branches be required to submit a half yearly and yearly youth report to the NC meetings specifically devoted to youth work.
5. That youth work be a permanent item on EC & NC agendas - and that it be treated with proper seriousness.
6. That the NC be instructed to examine ways of establishing our youth work on a sounder financial footing.
7. That a functioning youth commission be established under the chairpersonship of an EC full-timer.

Quote from Lenin:

We have ... "to link up, maintain the closest contact, and - if you wish - merge, in certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people - primarily with the proletariat BUT ALSO WITH THE NON-PROLETARIAN masses of working people."

(From: Left Wing Communism & Infantile Disorder - Lenin's emphasis)

Coventry, February 1983

Reply to Comrade Hunt.

Comrade Hunt's document (IP29) points to some of the serious problems that have beset our youth work since fusion. He argues that there are three basic reasons for this situation:

- 1) A bodged up job on the fusion of the two youth groups.
- 2) A "negative orientation" in our youth work towards resolution passing and away from the concerns of working class youth.
- 3) A failure to get youth work taken seriously as a priority in the WSL.

I think that comrade Hunt is right on the last two points, and probably wrong on the first point. However, the conclusions that comrade Hunt draws from this are in my view completely erroneous.

The fusion of the youth work.

Within the old WSL the question of youth work was raised very late in the fusion discussions. Our first step was the perspectives on youth work, written by Morrow and myself in April 1981 for the WSL Annual Conference.

This document recognised the serious problems we faced in building an independent youth organisation, the SYL (only 3 functioning branches) and the opportunities opening up in the MP and the MP youth organisation over the democracy issue, the growth in membership of the MP, etc. We argued that if we were to make an effective intervention into the MP youth organisation "we must recognise that it will not be possible to do so by posing the SYL as an alternative to the MP youth group and ourselves as both members of the MP youth group and a separate organisation."

Our specific proposals were: a conference to wind up the SYL and launch a new communist youth paper with an elected EP. The tendency within the MP youth group would have an AGM, would establish readers' groups, and where we didn't control the MP youth group, hold public meetings. Readers' groups would be open to non-MP youth to whom we also intended to have an orientation -- unemployed youth, YCND, anti-racist youth, but they would be encouraged to join our tendency in the MP youth group. The EP would not only produce the paper, but lead the tendency and we would seek sponsorship from branches of the MP youth group, as well as YCND, ANL, etc.

The section on general perspectives for youth work concluded:

"Subject to the agreement of perspectives by the conference, the ICL should be approached at leadership level to discuss these perspectives as the basis for joint national perspectives on youth work in any fused organisation . . ."

At the WSL conference, most of our leading youth comrades spoke against this document and in favour of maintaining a distinct youth organisation with a partial orientation into the MP youth group. Before the vote was taken, a straw poll was conducted of all the youth comrades and we found that a majority supported the line of our document which was then carried by the conference, with all our leading youth bar one voting against.

This change in orientation towards the MP youth group and using our tendency in the MP youth group as the basis for our drive out to working class youth brought us more or less into line with the ICL position.

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The ICL proposal was for a NLWYM -- a new initiative to set up a broad grouping within the MP youth group to organise the anti-M forces and win new youth to an alternative based on a ten-point programme. The NLWYM wouldn't operate solely in the MP youth group, it would also orientate to young workers, young women, YCND, etc., but would do so from its base with the MP youth group and with a view to winning youth to our tendency in the MP youth group.

The difference between the position adopted by the last WSL conference and the ICL clearly wasn't very great. Fusion discussions centred on what was to go into the ten point programme; how the NLWYM was to operate; and how the SYL was to be wound up. Presumably, it was in the course of these discussions that comrade Hunt thinks the fusion was bodged up in great haste. In fact, the ICL drew up the ten point programme which was discussed in the WSL who proposed some amendments. The programme was then agreed. Nothing was put in writing on how the NLWYM was to operate and there was clearly a problem in that many of the old WSL youth didn't agree with this orientation at all and were keen to make the NLWYM as independent of the MP youth group as possible. As I understood it, we did agree that the main orientation was to be towards the MP youth group -- that it was not possible to succeed in challenging M on the basis of a partial orientation to the MP youth group, and that we would use the NLWYM to go out from the MP youth group branches and bring in the new forces that would enable us to challenge M for the leadership of the organisation.

Finally, we in the WSL stuck out for a formal winding up of SYL and its paper because we thought it was necessary if we were not to alienate those WSL youth who opposed the new orientation. This formal winding up didn't in fact happen. I do not think that this was because by that time we were rushing into the fusion, but because as we began to develop joint work for the launch of the NLWYM the formal winding up of the SYL seemed to be less important than we at first thought it was. In the end, it was not the bodge-up of the fusion that contributed to our problems so much as the failure of the old WSL and subsequently the fused WSL to convince those youth who opposed the turn to the MP youth group that this new orientation was correct.

This problem, which remains largely with us to this day, is compounded by the fact that those who supported the MP youth group orientation did not properly implement that perspective. If that had happened we might have been able to convince the old WSL youth leadership that we were, after all, right. Instead our failure to build even those MP youth branches under our control, by turning them out to working class youth, gave ammunition to those who wanted to abandon the MP youth group orientation completely.

The fruits of this failure can be seen in comrade Hunt's document. He voted against winding up SYL and launching a tendency paper in the MP youth group, but as national secretary of the NLWYM he has loyally tried to implement the new policy. Now he wants to retreat from it back to what he calls "real youth work" because we have made so little headway in the MP youth group. He blames the orientation itself. I think the problem lies in the failure of the WSL to even attempt the consistent implementation of that orientation.

Negative Orientation and "Real Youth Work".

For comrade Hunt the WSL has taken the issue of youth work and buried it in the MP youth group, substituting for

"real youth work" a "battle of words between ourselves and the leaders and hacks of M ..." And again: "Youth work is far too often seen as gaining a majority in the MP youth branch and passing lots of marvellous resolutions that, if implemented, would be the salvation of the working class."

Despite the caricature, there is most certainly an element of truth in what comrade Hunt says. I know from my own experience, that my own WSL branch has failed in the past year to turn our local MP youth branch out to campaign amongst working class youth. The youth branch has grown on a word-of-mouth basis. A large M presence ensures that the meetings, which we run, turn into debates with M and all proposals to turn the branch out to campaigning amongst working class youth have so far failed to be implemented. (We are currently embarked on another attempt to make this development). These are not untypical of the problems we have faced nationally in building youth branches around Class Fighter policies in the face of M opposition.

But these are very real problems which have to be confronted and overcome. Comrade Hunt chooses instead to counterpose "real youth work" to the fight to build our tendency in the MP youth group -- a fight which can only be successful if we stop debating with M and start getting out onto the estates, dole queues, YCND branches, schools and colleges and drawing in the forces that will help us eventually to topple the M leadership.

That is why Hunt is so wrong to argue for a return to the position he and other in the old WSL youth leadership lost -- i.e. an independent youth organisation (NLWYM) with a partial orientation to the MP youth group.

If anything, the whole idea of the NLWYM should be dropped. It has proved to be a complete fiction since it was formed. Our tendency has come to be known by the name of the paper, both by our supporters and by M, and the name NLWYM, apart from being very cumbersome and meaningless as a name, only adds to the confusion of having two names by which we are known. The impact of the NLWYM has been so small that the Labour Party didn't even send it a form to register. If the NLWYM was essential for what we are trying to achieve, then there might be an argument for trying to turn it into a meaningful organisation. But it seems to me that we can achieve all that we want, both in the MP youth group and in other areas, YCND, unemployed youth, etc., on the basis of a tendency organised around Class Fighter, as Morrow and I argued in our old WSL document. Consequently, I would propose that we drop the NLWYM and concentrate on building our tendency around the paper.

As far as comrade Hunt's partial orientation to the MP youth group is concerned, I think it would be a complete waste of time. If we are to win anything out of our work in the MP youth group, then we need to devote our resources to mounting a serious challenge to M.

We can win working class youth to CF and the WSL by demonstrating in practice our ability to build mass, campaigning working class-oriented MP youth branches. But we have to go into this wholeheartedly and not just leave it up to a few people who think that it is a good idea. Our problem is not that we have tried to do this and failed. Our problem is that we have not yet made a consistent, national effort to do this at all. Instead of retreating from the orientation agreed by the majority on both sides of the fusion, we should be demanding that the WSL carries out its agreed perspective. Only then can we assess the success or failure of the orientation.

Attitude of the WSL to Youth Work.

Comrade Hunt points out in his document that the youth work has suffered because the WSL has never seriously prioritised this area of our work. It is my view that it is this, rather than disagreements about Class Fighter groups versus MP youth branches, that is the main reason why we have made so few gains in our youth work.

I have lost count of the number of resolutions and perspective documents in which we in the old WSL pledged ourselves to a greater effort on the youth work. Every single one of these was then put in the files and never heard of again. In the ICL the Wiganisation document seems to have met a similar fate. And yet everyone in the movement will agree that the youth are a central aspect of the fight to build a revolutionary party. I won't recite the arguments. We all know them, they are as old as ~~the~~ the Trotskyist movement itself. And yet, what do we find? Youth work gets a couple of minutes at meetings of the NC; it is not adequately discussed at the EC or OC; the youth steering committee does not function and yet no leading body of the WSL has called the members of that committee to account or made a serious attempt to sort out the problems; the youth paper appears irregularly, greatly hampering our work; no pamphlets or leaflets are produced; money, articles for CF and progress reports on the work are not properly chased up and the Wiganisation of the youth work is not fought for. Some of the responsibility for this lies with the leading youth comrades, and they accept this. But the failure of the national leadership to take youth work seriously lies at the root of the problem.

Previous attempts to rectify this in the old WSL -- particularly by comrade Morrow -- were unsuccessful and the youth work just staggered on as best it could. That is the situation today in the WSL 18 months after fusion and a big opportunity to make great strides forward in our youth work. I am convinced on the basis of the experience of the old WSL and the fused WSL that we will not develop any serious youth work at all until that area of work is made the major priority within the organisation. Unless we can at conference commit the incoming leadership to a very specific perspective for developing the youth work which it will then be their task to see implemented, our youth work is destined to continue in its present moribund state.

We have a major responsibility to our youth comrades. At a time of life when social activity assumes great importance and when their peer group spends much of its time socialising, we are asking these young comrades to sacrifice much of that; we are asking them to resist the pressures of their peer group, of sometimes hostile parents, of the attractions of youth culture, all pressures on our young comrades to turn away from serious political commitment. Young comrades who resist those pressures deserve not only our admiration but more importantly our support. The very least we must do is demonstrate to them in practice that we take seriously the youth movement that they are enthusiastic about building and which we say will prove to be so crucial to the building of a revolutionary party in Britain.

I am therefore tabling a set of amendments to the Joplin-Fraser document, supported by a number of comrades involved in the youth work. These amendments are designed to commit the WSL to giving youth work the highest priority in the next period, based on the implementation of the Wiganisation perspective. It is not possible to outline in these amendments every last detail of how Wiganisation should be implemented or to cover every aspect of policy that we should be

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taking up in youth work. Rather the amendments set out the immediate tasks facing the WSL and its leadership bodies if we are to transform the youth work. If agreed by conference, these amendments will make clear the responsibilities of branch organisers, the leading bodies and those they delegate to implement the perspectives. But as I have already said, just passing resolutions, no matter how tightly worded they may be, is not of itself enough to ensure that we transform our youth work. For that it will still be necessary for all comrades in the WSL -- and in particular the incoming leadership -- to make a genuine commitment to give to youth work the priority it both deserves and needs for its success.

Jagger

5.2.83