

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO.39

FEBRUARY 1983

The Labour Party: re-draft for British Perspectives

..... Cunliffe with amendments from  
Hill and Kinnell

Resolution on youth work ..... Cooper, Fraser, Jagger, Joplin,  
Morganfield, Paul, Strummer

(This resolution relates to the Jagger article in IB 38).

Conference is February 18-19-20

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Replacement section for British Perspectives Draft

Today's situation in the Labour Party is the outcome of a series of interconnecting processes of development in the workers' movement and in British capitalism since the mid 1960s.

In the context of the end of the post-war boom and the substantial decline of British capitalism on the world markets, the established reformist leadership of the British working class - in the Labour Party and in the trade union movement from shop steward level to the full-time bureaucracies - has consistently lagged behind the requirements of the situation, clinging obstinately to the methods and often the policies of the past.

In its role in opposition to Tory governments, the Labour and trade union leadership persists in the politics of protest and parliamentarism, rejecting out of hand the concept of mass working class action to confront, defeat and remove the governments of the class enemy. And the same reluctance to permit or stimulate the independent mobilisation of the rank and file reinforces the bureaucratic opposition to left wing policies which could galvanise the working class and draw it into active political activity in the unions and the LP.

In government, Labour's various tactics and policies for managing and reconstructing capitalism to offer an improved economic climate in which concessions can be made to the working class have time and again run into the barrier of the decline and crisis of the British economy, with its associated pressures from the capitalist class in Britain and internationally (the IMF!) for anti-working class policies.

The reformist politics of the trade union bureaucracy, seeking the "lesser evil" under capitalism, sharing common politics and material links with the Labour leaders, and lacking any serious alternative even where (as occasionally on wage controls) they find themselves tactically opposed to Labour government policies, lead time and again to a bloc between PLP and TUC against the interests and even the ongoing struggles of the working class rank and file.

Thus we saw in the 1960s the Wilson government employ a succession of ineffectual reformist and outright anti-working class policies - including wage controls, strike-breaking and attempted anti-union laws - in their efforts to manage and sustain a decaying British capitalism.

Eventually, under pressure from a powerful and militant shop floor movement which had emerged and consolidated its strength in the boom period - and on which some sections of bureaucrats had built their power base - sections of "left" union bureaucracies of the time (TGWU, AUEW) were forced to a degree to challenge these attacks and mobilise some opposition to them in order to keep control of the movement. Yet even during their shows of protest, these same TUC lefts were seeking ways and means to compromise with their right wing colleagues and with the Labour leadership.

The strength of the shop floor movement and the radicalisation of the trade union rank and file became the main component of the industrial opposition to the Heath government of 1970-74. As Heath plunged into ill-prepared confrontations with the miners and with the trade union movement as a whole, through the Industrial Relations Act and state controls on wages, the pace of opposition was set by the left within the unions (though we should also recall the defiance of a few Labour councils - most notably Clay Cross - to Heath's "Fair Rents" Act).

An indication of the spill-over of this radicalisation came in the LP conference of 1973 which swung to the left, leaving Wilson to run for and win office on a manifesto far more militant in tone than he would ever have chosen.

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But 1972-4 summed up the basic political problem for the British working class. There were huge direct-action struggles, coming close to a general strike in 1972, blocking and crippling the Tories' attempted solution to the crisis of British capitalism, and finally forcing the Tories into an election which they lost. But insofar as the strike movement was political - i.e. had a conscious alternative at the level of the general running of society - its political expression was 'Kick the Tories Out', i.e., a Labour government.

And that Labour government, despite the left manifesto, was to introduce the social contract, execute cuts more drastic than the present government's, and implement the biggest drop in real wages for decades.

The only conscious political alternative possessed by the great militant strike movement - which implicitly posed fundamental questions of class power - was a bourgeois workers' party, operating in a period when bourgeois society allows little scope for reforms.

1974 and after posed brutally and sharply to the British workers' movement the task of changing its politics, i.e. changing itself. Since then the movement - or at least a section of activists within it - have been attempting that task: crudely, inadequately, in a very limited way so far. This acute crisis of reformism is the basic thread running through all developments since 1974.

In a bid to head off pressure while maintaining the same basic thrust of reconstructing British capitalism, Wilson made a few initial cosmetic changes. Heffer was brought into the government, and Tony Benn

was used as the figurehead for the Industry Bill through which proposals for the wholesale rationalisation of industry with government subsidies through the NEB and systematised class collaboration were to be pushed through Parliament and the trade union movement.

Concessions were made on pay to the still striking miners, to secure a return to work. Under threat of a national engineering strike, the Labour government two months later began the repeal of Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

But Heath's wage controls remained in force - trapping health workers and others who had looked to an increased settlement. The Shrewsbury builders' pickets remained in jail; and the Clay Cross councillors penalised for their stand on rents remained surcharged.

As the economic crisis increasingly tightened its grip, once again the Wilson/Healey leadership resorted first to threats to use "Tory policies" and then to wage controls. In this they were now able to draw on the collaboration of a rightward-moving Jack Jones and the majority of the trade union bureaucracy who were visibly embarrassed and feeling threatened by the militancy of their members. An unholy, wage cutting alliance was formed spanning from the right wing of the PLP through both "right" and "left" of the TUC hierarchy and including the tacit acceptance of the Communist Party, reluctant to jeopardise its position with the union bureaucracies: the line permeated down to many layers of convenors. The result was to put the lid on wages struggles with the exception of a few, isolated fights based at rank and file shop steward level - often opposed with ruthless vigour by the officials (eg BL toolroom, Port Talbot electricians, Heathrow engineers). This wage-control apparatus took on an extended lease of life as Labour lost its Parliamentary majority when a deal was struck with the Liberals. With the full weight of the labour bureaucracy brought to bear on any section seeking a fight, it was not until the firefighters press-ganged their leadership into an all-out strike against Phase 3 of wage controls in 1977-78 that this began to crack.

But with inflation still in double figures and Healey declaring in the Summer of 1978 for another wage cutting 5% limit, the anger and resentment at the record of the Labour government - which had driven up unemployment, cut back health and education, and slashed living standards - spilled over into a movement sufficiently strong to tip the scales at the TUC Congress and find a strong echo in the Labour Party.

Wilson's undisguised contempt for conference decisions in general and the left wing policies of the 1973 manifesto in particular had created conditions in which the question of accountability and of rank and file control over the labour leadership gained a concrete significance for wide sections of the workers' movement. Labour's squalid record in its second term of government had confirmed to many trade unionists that they did not wish to subscribe to yet another reactionary Labour government.

The Reg Prentice affair - in which the majority of the PLP and an important section of the trade union bureaucracy mobilised to defend the position and "rights" of a more or less open Tory against attempts by his local CLP rank and file to remove him - brought the whole issue of reselection as a component part of accountability to the eyes of the labour movement as a whole.

Then the rejection of Healey's Phase 4 by the TUC Congress and - by union block votes - at the Labour Party conference saw the union bureaucrats split on the main lines of economic policy, with sections under heavy pressure from their members to take a firm stand in defiance of the right wing PLP leadership.

As the hammer blows of the strike wave throughout the "Winter of Discontent" demonstrated the gulf between the practice of the Labour leadership and the demands of the trade union rank and file, and destroyed the government's pay policies, the conditions were created for a Tory

victory on the election and a prolonged political fight in the Labour Party.

### Since May 1979

The Labour defeat in the May 1979 election also set the scene for the reemergence of Tony Benn from his period obediently closeted in the Labour cabinet. He began to spell out an increasingly detailed critique of the previous Labour governments in which he had served, and championed the left wing's demands for democracy and accountability in the Party.

Some of those bureaucrats who had been driven to vote against Healey's Phase 4 in 1978 were aggrieved by the unresponsiveness to them of the Labour government. In parallel to the Labour rank and file, but from a different perspective, they came out for greater TU control over the Labour leadership.

This combination created conditions in which a campaigning left acquired a real weight reaching into the unions and hope of winning victories against a previously dominant right wing leadership. This change helped stimulate a revival in the rank and file activism and recruitment in the CLPs, and encouraged those taking up LP issues in the unions. The whole process was advanced by the campaign waged by Tony Benn and the fighting left wing forces grouped in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee. The Left in the CLPs were in many cases inspired to go further and pursue local struggles for the removal not only of right wing MPs but also councillors, and pursue left policies at local level.

But significantly the "left" rhetoric of the union leaders was confined to the largely propagandist arena of the Labour Party in opposition. This was shown particularly sharply as the TUC leaders united to isolate and restrict the steel strike of 1980 and to duck out of any mass action to challenge Prior's anti-union Act of 1980. They have established a completely consistent record of retreat and betrayal since the 1979 election - a record which embraces both those bureaucrats who block voted for Labour democracy and those who have consistently opposed it.

For their part, many of the Labour lefts have been equally content to pursue their demands for democracy and accountability and for left wing policies more or less within the confines of the LP itself - minimising the conflict with the union bureaucrats by not reaching out to the trade union rank and file, and often making only tokenistic efforts to draw into the LP struggle new forces from the working class which are key to a successful struggle.

Thus - although support in the TU rank and file for LP democracy has not visibly slackened - union leaders like the TNU's have been able, as they desired, to limit the LP democracy fight. Successive betrayals and setbacks, massive redundancies and growing demoralisation and cynicism among shop floor workers denied leadership has produced a slackening of rank and file pressure upon the bureaucrats as part of a general decline in struggles. Each successive sell-out has strengthened the bureaucracy.

At the same time the fear engendered in the union hierarchy by the signs that the LP democracy question was - particularly during Benn's campaign for Deputy - spilling over into demands for trade union democracy began to be a powerful influence over bureaucracies - most notably the TGWU, whose inner divisions and lack of internal democracy were exposed for all to see.

In addition, a rise in Labour's electoral popularity, coupled with Benn's powerful showing in the LP seemed to raise the spectre for some of them of a returned Labour government led or strongly influenced by Benn, in which left policies might be taken beyond the conference floor into the class struggle, with a consequent stimulus to the trade union rank and file and sharpening of conflict with the employers.

Though sufficient union support was swung in support of the Wembley "status quo" to prevent the subsequent reversal of the electoral college formula achieved by the left, the right wing began openly marshalling its forces, while the TUC "left" was alarmed by the successes of the SDP and the spread of the democracy issue into the unions.

Indeed while the split of the SDP appeared politically and numerically to deplete Labour's right wing PLP leadership, it also piled new pressure on those who stayed behind in the PLP and on the union leaders. Committed above all to hopes of returning a new Labour government, they dreaded further losses of right wing forces - while some Labour right wingers plainly hanker after longer-term coalitions or alliances with the SDP along the lines of the Lib-Lab deal.

Hence the 1981 conference, amid a growing clamour from the right for a witch-hunt, brought the narrow defeat of the Benn campaign, and reverses for the left on the NEC, with the emergence of a centre/right wing majority in which both components were prepared to mount a witch-hunt.

By January 1982, under pressure from the right wing - in particular the trade union right - and after the defeat of the deputy leadership campaign, the left, headed by Benn, pulled back to declare support for the Bishop Stortford "truce" in which the only hostilities which ceased was the offensive of the left. While the right wing sharpened their knives daily in the Tory press, the left declared time and again their loyalty to the existing leadership and commitment to "unity".

The dismissive response to this from the best elements of the CLP rank and file was summed up in Peter Tatchell's joke in a Socialist Organiser interview, where he asks "who is this bloke Bishop Stortford anyway"? Despite the setbacks, the rank and file were still pressing home their fight - submitting an astounding 600 resolutions of protest at the NEC's non-endorsement of Tatchell, deselecting some right wing MPs, replacing some retiring right wingers with left wingers, standing firm in Bradford and Hornsey, and voting solidly for left wing policies at conference.

But the flirtation of the Tribune circles with the Bishop Stortford deal was followed by increasing evidence that the Stalinist influenced elements in the LCC and Clause 4 were prepared to join a witch-hunt of the left provided they could mask this behind a suitable facade.

By the 1982 conference, the consolidation of union votes in the right wing camp appeared to have gone a long way forward on internal policy questions: it was the union vote which - with few, notable exceptions - mobilised to force through the register and instal a hard right majority on the NEC. But even then the political bloc was not restored to that of the bad old days. Contradictory formulations on wage controls indicated that future attempts by Shore to enforce a new social contract will not be any simple repeat of those under Wilson. And the pressure of the rank and file could also be seen in the massive vote on unilateralism which is likely to prove a major embarrassment to the right wing PLP leaders. A gauge of the changed climate even in the unions was the episode which led to the resignation of Sid Weighell for misusing the block vote in a way that has gone on behind the scenes for decades. Though the right wing in the PLP and the unions are tightening the screws they have by no means crushed the activists, restored things to what they were, or created ideal conditions for a purge.

Indeed as the scale of support for the Militant and LAW anti-witch-hunt conferences indicates, it is not merely the legal technicalities but also the near-certainty of widespread resistance to a witch-hunt which

holds back the NEC from beginning the expulsions, particularly at a point where such struggles could destroy Labour's election hopes.

However the emergence of witch-hunting currents in the soft left of CLPD and Clause 4 should also warn us that if the climate does shift with the start of expulsions, there will be plenty of our erstwhile "allies" from the democracy struggles ready to do their share of expelling.

### The Bennite left

It is important to recognise that the Bennite left in distinction to the crypto-Stalinist currents around LCC/Clause 4 has stood fairly consistently against every aspect of the witch-hunt. Benn for instance in the LAW newsletter has published a forthright defence of the rights of Militant

And in taking this stand, and backing the fight we have taken up against registration, the Bennites have been prepared to oppose the soft left of CLPD, etc. And if they (and we) were outvoted on this at the CXXX AGM, the responsibility is as much ours as theirs.

Indeed Benn's weakness in this respect is also echoed in our work. He certainly failed - but so have we failed - to maintain the momentum of the deputy leadership campaign in taking the issues of Labour democracy, trade union democracy and policy struggles into the unions, particularly the rank and file. We have time and again said this should be done: yet we have not done it.

Benn's stance bridges enormous political contradictions. On the one hand his massive popularity with the LP rank and file and with trade union activists can mobilise support on a scale dwarfing that of any other Labour politician. He combines this with a resolute opposition to the witch-hunt and a willingness publicly to champion even unpopular issues - such as the support for the GLC invitation to Sinn Fein speakers.

Yet on the central political issue of policy for the next Labour government, on which the right wing is currently dominant - on economic policy, which in reality is the relationship between the next Labour government and the working class - Benn has done no more than oppose incomes policy - and that sometimes equivocally. Shore's economic recipes contain within them all of the worst aspects of Wilson's and Callaghan's governments, which Benn has criticised: yet on this question of questions he keeps a low profile.

Indeed Benn's candidacy for the Shadow Cabinet, with its implied willingness to accept collective responsibility for the policies of the PLP leadership, can also be seen in this way.

Benn on economic policy is not even very left in traditional Labour terms, let alone having a worked out political alternative to the reformist politics put forward by Shore - though he would plainly argue that Labour conference policies should be implemented instead. Since Benn does not subscribe to our revolutionary programme or our transitional demands, he obviously does not approach matters in that way. Hence precisely the inability of the left to offer a clear perspective now - or at any time in the past - for the achievement of socialism.

But if Benn sees no immediate alternative or any need for more than calling for the implementation of conference policies, this is true also of the spectrum of Labour activists and trade union militants who look to Benn for political leadership. We cannot expose Benn's limited horizons on this without first expanding the horizons of our contacts, fighting to popularise and extend the discussion on transitional demands, the transitional method, and the inevitable failure and betrayal in Shore's policies.

We can and must begin that fight in joint campaigns which we conduct with LP activists who remain willing to unite with us against the Tories and the right wing, against the witch-hunt and for left wing policies. In the context of this joint work we must find ways of raising the level of debate and understanding, and popularising our programme and demands.

Of course, Benn's tactical position on the political fight in the Labour Party is also coloured by his view of the prospects following the next election. He obviously sees it as inevitable that a Labour defeat will regenerate a new



wave of left wing activism in which he would expect to play a leading role, while leaving open his options on how to relate to any new Labour government.

Such considerations make sense for Benn in his situation, and seeing events from his angle. But the consequence is that he holds back the kind of political discussion on Labour's policies which can advance the level of understanding amongst the best elements of the left and in the unions.

It seems to be an overly optimistic and one-sided view of events to take an "after Thatcher, our turn" attitude to a further Labour defeat. One of the factors which even now is hampering the left wing struggle in the LP is the hammer blows inflicted upon the shop floor movement and the morale of the union rank and file by four years of Tory government.

A new election defeat to Labour - with the prospect of the wholesale destruction of still more basic industries and public services, not to mention new anti-union laws including provisions designed to cut the financial links between the unions and the Labour Party, would of itself in this situation weaken the struggle of the left and demoralise sections of workers.

(INSERT PARA. \*\* FROM PAGE 10)

On the other hand, the reelection of a Labour government would pose as its most immediate issue to the workers' movement the real face of precisely the policies which Benn and his co-thinkers are failing to combat - Shore's economic plans, with the associated search for wage controls.

With one of the union leaderships which helped smash Healey's Phase 4 - the TGWU under Evans - already talking in terms of accepting wage controls and no-strike agreements under a Labour government, the dangers of this are all too real.

Would Benn take part in such a government? Or would he stand with the labour movement rank and file in struggling against such policies? If so, why won't he mount a political fight now for the dropping of the Shore plan, and for implementation of conference policies on the economy as a starting point? These are the type of questions that we should be finding ways concretely to raise in discussion. They are neither abstract nor arbitrary.

Certainly we cannot "expose" Benn by simply pointing out to reformist workers that Benn (like them) is not a revolutionary (like us). We can, however, educate our readers and contacts on the kind of leadership that is necessary to prepare the workers' movement for the struggles ahead. We can tread where Benn fears or refuses to tread, and seek to persuade workers to ask and answer for themselves questions which Benn would sooner put off until tomorrow.

### The CLPs

We must recognise the pressures upon the CLP left wing in the next period. These are the forces who have most solidly backed a fight against the right wing and the witch-hunters. To a certain degree their rather limited horizons - frequently a preoccupation with the existing forces of the LP rather than turning outwards for fresh allies against the right wing - will be counteracted by the fact that this is already a pre-election period, and any hope of winning the election depends upon reaching outwards.

But the political pressure not to "rock the boat" between now and the election does carry some weight on the left and could hamper the willingness of some to carry the necessary series of demands and policies into their campaign work or to continue the internal battle against the right wing.

On top of this the compromises that have been universally made by

Labour councils in the face of the Tory cuts has driven many into policies which have hit council tenants, council workforces and whole sections of the working class. There could be further rounds of such damaging conflicts before the next election, and this could strain the credibility of even the most left wing arguments.

### Our work

It is clear that we must build on the strengths and confront what are real weaknesses in the Labour left and the rank and file of the labour movement as a whole. This requires in this pre-election period a combination of flexible, broad campaign work in which we reach out to mobilise the widest layers in political activity, together with a consistent political fight within the broader campaigns to raise and develop discussion on the key political issues before the working class, spelling out our answers and policies and promoting debate on the policies of the existing leadership.

In this respect the proposal for an SXXV in which we fight for the widest struggle alongside the MO rank and file, arguing for a Labour vote, for accountability and conference policies, and for our programme and perspective for class action to defend the working class whichever government is returned, offers an ideal framework.

Work along these lines must be taken into each and every union branch (whether LP affiliated or not) and used to promote the type of political debate in which we can spell out both a broader perspective and our own particular point of view on the questions of policy.

Within this framework, too, we can and must confront the serious weaknesses in linking our trade union and MO work. The election, and an independent SXXV campaign clearly defending the trade unions and the class as a whole, gives us the best basis on which to fight for the involvement of militants from the shop floor in MO struggles - fighting against the right wing positions of the Manifesto and for consistent policies in the interests of the working class. From this starting point the question of workplace branches of the MO can be given fresh impetus, and we can take steps to remedy the one-sidedness of both our MO and trade union work.

Examples of links in these arenas of struggle have been our fight for the rank and file organisation of health workers during the pay dispute, in which a London MO contact played a key role in our most successful meeting, and in our efforts to build the Mobilising Committee against Tebbit. Our initial information on the water workers' struggle for the paper came from a contact in the MO.

But there are many more such links to be made which can reinforce both our MO and out trade union work. In Sheffield, for example, the rank and file committee fighting the steel closures has developed in parallel with the hopelessly limited Save Our Steel campaign run by the left wing council. To fight in both arenas for serious policies of mass action and national links in the steel unions that could defeat further closures, and to bring together in this way the two divergent sides of the struggle, could give a boost to the stewards involved while making a political impact upon important sections of the Labour left.

Another obvious area of overlap is the issue of democracy in the labour movement. In particular the issue of both democratic control over and the relative size of the block vote must be raised in a much more systematic way in the trade unions. Local Labour lefts and "Briefing" groups could be called upon to coordinate campaigns into each of the various affiliated local unions, fighting for resolutions through to national conferences and NECs. If this were approached not as a routine post-Labour conference talking point but a serious campaign, we could have a substantial impact, making immediate links with other key issues of trade union democracy.

The dynamism which has brought a rapid growth in the size and political development of MO women's sections must also be seen as offering opportu-

ities to draw in far wider layers of women, particularly on working class estates. We should be at the forefront of active campaigning for the recruitment of such forces, the holding of estate-based women's meetings and discussions on such issues as unemployment, cuts, CND and childcare - within which we can and must put both the broader perspective for united action and our own particular policies and proposals.

Similarly the MO youth movement can and must be turned outwards to organise, educate and mobilise youth - with particular attention to black youth.

Provided we combine such general broad work with the fight to extend the sales of our press, the discussions with our readers, and draw out the issues at stake in our pages on a weekly basis, we can hope in the next period considerably to strengthen our forces as the only current on the left trying to make this kind of connection.

The twin dangers are on the one hand that we fail sufficiently to turn outwards in such campaign work, and see the fight in the MO as some kind of routine existence in which we relate primarily to the existing, fairly narrow circles of activists; and on the other that in turning to new forms of "broad" work we fail sufficiently to bring forward our own politics and programme, fail sufficiently to fight the illusions and preconceptions of the forces with whom we are jointly struggling, and thus fail to build our organisation and make the gains which can and should be made.

We must not lose sight of the fact that for the millions of unemployed, for pressurised shop floor workers, for tenants facing rate and rent increases and cuts imposed by Labour councils, for those in fear of nuclear holocaust sceptically watching the contradictory pronouncements of Labour Conference and Labour's PLP spokesmen, the Labour Party appears to be offering them no more than another dose of the same old double talk - or, at best, a slight reprieve from the relentless barrage of the Tory attacks. Many will vote Labour: but to persuade many to enter the Labour Party as active members we need to offer a clear fighting perspective as to what they - and we - can hope to achieve. In answering the question as to whether a new Labour government offers a real alternative to the Tories, we have to argue clearly that the answer to that lies not in the hands of Foot or Benn but in the mobilisation of the working class itself in new forms of organisation and on a new scale of mass action. We should not shrink from explaining clearly our criticisms of the existing left including the Bennites - both verbally and in our press. It is by our ability to offer a serious perspective to forces now outside the Labour Party that we can persuade them to join it and fight with us.

If seriously carried out, the type of work outlined above would expand our links with sections of trade unionists, Labour activists and sections of the specially oppressed. We must ensure that we respond to these forces with material in our press clearly elaborating and popularising our programme, our perspective on the class struggle, and - whether in explicit or implicit form - our critique of the politics of the Labour left.

In many cases this could take the form of us simply calling for policies or pointing to problems which the left leaders choose to ignore. On other occasions it may be necessary to examine and argue against specific policies retreats, concessions by which the left leaders give important ground to the right wing. In particular this will be true on the question of import controls and planning agreements, which are central to the left's "Alternative Economic Strategy". It is plain that we could not make opposition to import controls a precondition for any sizable SXV: but we should clearly and repeatedly make our stance on the issue clear to our contacts.

This by no means implies a sectarian, denunciatory style, or seeking "arbitrarily" to distance ourselves from the others. But as a distinct,

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Marxist political current, fighting on certain issues alongside sections of the Labour left, we have both the right and the political obligation - if we are not to vanish out of sight for ever - to explain our differences, hopefully in terms which can be understood if not always accepted by our readers and contacts in the labour movement.

In this way we can hope to give both an organisational and a political lead to sections of the labour movement, not simply confine our remarks to the fields chosen for debate by the leaders of the Labour left.

And in this way too we can link up best with those sections of worker militants, youth, black people, women and unemployed who are irritated by the seeming irrelevance of much Labour Party activity. Spelling out our revolutionary programme in terms comprehensible to Labour activists should also make clear the perspective we offer to those outside the MO.

### The Register

The setback at the CXXX conference - partly brought about by our own failure to mobilise the forces we could have brought - could now mean that we find ourselves left isolated on the question of registration, and compelled to take a tactical decision to apply to register.

Such a tactical decision however must not be linked to any retreat from the political tasks we have set ourselves or any political compromise on the programmatic content of the weekly paper. The next period will see crucial political debates and discussions in the workers' movement in which our policies, demands and perspectives must be spelled out if we are to fulfil our political responsibility. (ADD INSERT @@@ FROM PAGE 10)

If the expulsion of M does go ahead, plainly the implication is that we, too, could be bureaucratically disposed of through the same hatch. But again this demands not a retreat to the nearest trench, but a political fight, and preparation for a new combination of MO "legal" and "illegal" work, through which we can convey our politics on a weekly basis to the labour movement. (\*\*\*)

In the period ahead, therefore, our general approach should be to strengthen the educational, theoretical and debate content of the paper in order more fully to promote the debate on programme policy and perspective with the left wing in the unions and the Labour Party. We should do this in the context of our broad, campaigning approach to a new SXXV spanning the workers' movement and reaching out to the most oppressed sections of our class. That is the best answer to the witch-hunters.

(\*\*\*: see note from Hill and Kinnell, p.10)

This can and must be done without sacrificing the 'broad' character of the paper. The paper has carried our line on all major class-struggle issues over the last 18 months. In some situations the organisation may have taken positions which comrades think inadequate or wrong, or failed to think issues through clearly enough and draw conclusions sharply enough; in none were political points which we had formulated blocked from expression by the 'broad' paper format.

That criticism of Benn on Zionism was done by an open letter patiently going through the arguments rather than by screaming headlines; that criticism of the Bennite Left on sanctions against Argentina was done in the same format; that we have articles like one from Reg Race, for example, arguing for the sort of campaign we favour on Tebbit while favourably mentioning the AES in passing - all this does not make us less capable of criticising left reformism or posing alternatives. It can and should make our criticisms more effective, our alternatives more listened-to, because we can hope to draw reformist activists into a debate. It can and should also make the paper more useful as an organiser of the left.

We should continue the 'broad' format and also:

- a) continue the 'P&P' column;
- b) have a series of debates - e.g. on Labour economic policy and on other manifesto policies in the run-up to the election - in which we can develop our critique of reformism clearly and accessibly,
- c) look for more theoretical and historical articles;
- d) try to give our industrial and TU coverage a greater content of detailed political argument in which we pay greater attention to advancing, explaining, and showing the relevance of appropriate transitional demands. Where necessary, this may mean supplementary contributions from non-members;
- e) strengthen and regularise the operation of the editorial board, in particular ensuring the participation of comrades active in trade union work;
- f) improve the paper in other ways, e.g. on coverage of struggles involving black and women workers.

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The crisis of reformism would however remain. Despite the demoralisation of election defeat, some continuation of the struggle of the labour movement to find new answers - and therefore also of the Labour left's fight - would be certain. And as and when industrial resistance explodes against the Tories - as assuredly it would, though we cannot say when - this would find reflections inside the LP.

.....  
NOTE from Hill and Kinnell:

This text seems to us acceptable. On contingencies if the paper is banned, it leaves the matter somewhat open - 'a new combination of MO "legal" and "illegal" work...'

We support Carolan's October 9 resolution (IB 21 and 25pt.2) which was passed by the November 1982 NC: "In the event that the Marxists are outlawed by whatever process, my proposal would be that the Marxists maintain the paper and its organisation as at present and also seek alliances to create a new publication that can play the role of left owing organiser that the present paper has played at its best. In general they must create alternative means of continuing their work... This would obviously be a transitional phase of work. At a certain point, after the election perhaps, they would have to assess where they are at and perhaps rationalise publications".

This is not, as sectarian agitation has had it, "dropping the paper". It is simply not tying our hands for evermore to a particular, set form of paper. And certainly it does not mean dropping our politics! A new 'legal' publication would have to be discussed concretely, in concrete circumstances, when the paper was banned. It cannot be excluded in principle that it would be a joint publication with other forces and looser politically than the present paper. It would have to enable us to put across our politics, otherwise there would be little point in the exercise. To the extent that the paper was 'looser' and perhaps did not allow us to dot i's and cross t's, the need would obviously be greater to supplement it with other material. In our view the entire agitation about hypothetical future 'liquidationist' dangers, whipped up solely on the basis of our refusal to tie our hands for future tactical responses by commitments to a particular technical form of our paper, is a red herring. The issue is whether we continue and develop our present general orientation, or regress.

## Resolution on youth work.

1. Conference endorses the political orientation of our youth work outlined in the Joplin/Fraser document.
2. Conference resolves that the implementation of the Wiganisation ~~document~~ perspective in respect of YS work is to be the number one priority in the coming year.
3. The YCND march and festival on May 7 shall be the first national campaign around which we begin to implement Wiganisation. The incoming leadership is instructed to ensure that a national leaflet, poster and Class Fighter pamphlet are produced. All WSL branches will be expected to draw up plans by the end of February for mobilising youth behind the Class Fighter banner on May 7.

(YCND is the fastest growing youth movement in Britain today. Thousands of young people will be involved in the march and festival and the events leading up to it. While the MP youth group is affiliated to YCND, M have a position of lecturing YCND youth on their shortcomings and the advantages of socialism. We seek to win YCND youth to socialism and a labour movement orientation in the course of fighting to build YCND with them. So CF supporters who take this campaign seriously will be seen by YCND supporters as the only people in the MP youth group who are serious about building YCND. In Peckham we have called a meeting for all London MP youth branches who want to build the YCND march and festival. CF is proposing a national campaign in the MP youth group to build YCND. The campaign for May 7 must be directed particularly at working class youth. We are not opposed to mobilising middle class youth, but we are supposed to be building a working class youth movement and there is no reason to suppose that working class youth are any more willing to try for Thatcher or Reagan than middle class youth).

- 4) MP youth branches run by CF supporters will be expected to lead the fight to implement Wiganisation of our youth work. Each MP youth branch leadership must plan out a campaign for the May 7 YCND festival. At the same time, each ~~XX~~ MP youth branch must also plan a series of lively, regular, meetings with guest speakers/films/videos, etc., on a variety of topics of importance to youth. e.g. the Bomb, unemployment, anti-racism, women's oppression, etc. Alongside these meetings, we must organise regular social events to build a social life around the MP youth branch. These events must be advertised, along with the political meetings on local leaflets. MP wards, CMPs and trade union branches should be approached for money to finance the films/videos and leaflets. (Copies of all leaflets must be sent to the centre). Regular sales of CF must be organised, MP youth branches should be asked to place a regular, pre-paid order for CF and all money from sales must be sent to the centre regularly. MP youth branches should discuss and write articles for CF. Where possible, street meetings with posters and a loudspeaker should be organised.

- 5) In the course of 1983 we should drop the NLWYM and concentrate instead on organising our supporters as a tendency around CF. The NLWYM Steering Committee should be replaced by an EP (which will also act as a steering committee). An AGM for readers of CF should be held annually. We should implement the agreed policy of seeking sponsorship of CF and list on the masthead the names of MP youth branches.

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agree to sponsor. The paper itself should be "relaunched" as a monthly paper, perhaps with a facelift. In order to end the isolation of different CF MP youth branches, a CF EB newsletter should be produced and CF itself must carry reports of the work of CF supporters around the country. EB members should from time to time visit CF supporters around the country to hear their views and regional meetings of CF supporters should be organised where the possibility of joint work between different CF MP youth branches exists. Where CF supporters don't control their local MP youth branch, they should try and set up a branch based on their ward. If this proves impossible, CF readers' groups should be set up with the aim of winning and organising the forces that will enable them to take control of the local MP youth branch.

6. The WSL NC, in line with the decision to prioritise youth work is instructed by conference to:

- a) Appoint a full time youth organiser for the period up to the next conference.
- b) Appoint a youth steering committee comprising one EC member, together with NC members and comrades with past experience of or active in youth work. This steering committee must meet at least fortnightly (so it will primarily be London-based) to supervise the implementation of Wiganisation, assist the full-time organiser and ensure that written reports on the work are prepared for leading bodies and IFs.
- c) The NC is instructed to ensure that the necessary material resources are made available to enable the implementation of this perspective. This must mean at the very least, enough financial support to ensure production of a monthly 8-page CF and all the national publicity and propaganda material necessary for the YCND campaign.

7. The function of the full time youth organiser will be:

- a) Regular discussion with WSL branch organisers/leading youth of all aspects of the youth work.
  - b) Regular chasing up of money from paper sales and fund raising activities by CF supporters.
  - c) Commissioning (through EB meetings) of articles for CF and ensuring that articles are written and posted to the deadline agreed. Convening of monthly EB.
  - d) Together with the youth steering committee to map out a plan of action for achieving very concrete and realisable gains within the MP youth group.
- (The organiser must know at any one time how many branches we control, or influence; where we could set up new branches under our control; where we could with a little effort win branches from M. On the basis of this information the youth steering committee should plan targets for the youth (to be taken to EB meetings for their discussion and agreement). These should be targets for the youth to aim at in the short term -- e.g. so many new CF MP youth branches in the next six months -- and in the longer term -- e.g. the first MP youth region to fall to CF and hence our first NC member. We are very small and M are very big in comparison. Our supporters will be strengthened if we set ourselves limited but

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achievable tasks and then go out and actually achieve them.

- e) Writing of reports for leading bodies and IPs.
- f) Speaking at meetings of MP youth branches.
- g) Organising the writing and production of national publicity and propaganda material, starting with the YCND campaign.