

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 3X

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WHAT SHOULD SOCIALISTS SAY?

THE SOURCE, OR SOURCES, of the bombs that have been exploding in English cities for a month now still remains unknown.

Generally Irish Republicans, or their sympathisers, are held responsible. If they are — then what should the attitude of socialists in Britain be?

This newspaper believes that Britain's bosses have no right to interfere in the affairs of the people of Ireland. Throughout the centuries that they have bled Ireland, their only 'right' in that country has rested on naked terror, force, fraud, and murder.

Wrongs

The catholic revolt starting in 1968 was long maturing. The bitter wrongs of centuries, and of the last half-century in particular, have ensured its continuation. Having once started to move, the republican catholics became convinced that it was better to choke on CS gas and to risk losing their lives against a powerful, well-trained, and superbly equipped army, than ever again to subside into sullen resignation.

Justice in this war has been entirely on the side of the republicans. Talk of the democratic rights of the protestant Irish minority (the 6 County majority) is irrelevant and hypocritical nonsense. The Six County state was an artificial creation of British imperialism. Its 'rights' are the 'rights' of British imperialism — in active opposition to the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

Explain

If we support the right of the Irish people to self-determination, then we must support their right to fight for it; and if we support their fight, then we must support them using any means necessary — including extending the war into Britain.

Even if we believe that a tactical error is being made, it is the job of socialists to patiently and insistently explain to the working class that if youths from Belfast plant bombs in British railway bars, then they have been conditioned for this work by the British Army, through years of terror, of seeing their homes wrecked and their friends interned, jailed, and killed, while the mass of the

British people looked on placidly.

If there were no British troops in Ireland, then there would not be bombs in British cities — whether those bombs are planted by republicans or by agents of the British government as part of their war to isolate the IRA from sympathy in Britain.

It is not a question of terrorism as Marxists understand the word. Military action isolated from a mass base in Britain it certainly is, if republicans are planting the bombs. But the crucial criterion is the relation to the mass base in Ireland.

A military campaign in Britain would, however, increasingly take on the character of isolated, indiscriminate and thus futile acts of violence which would have only one effect — to help create mass support in England for Government action in Ireland. It would act against the still feeble 'Troops Out' movement. It would begin to 'make sense' to have the troops rooting out the 'terrorists' at their base.

"Ruins"

Not too many of the large body of British working class opinion which would gladly see Edward Heath strung up on the yard arm of his yacht see the IRA as fellow-fighters against one other aspect of Government and ruling class policy. But some have already done so; more can be made to do so; that is the job of revolutionaries in Britain. While we have no right to demand that the beleaguered republicans in Northern Ireland make that job easy — we do have the right to argue with them that a campaign of bombing in England will be counter-productive.

Unlike the economic-warfare bombing in Northern Ireland it will stand no chance of being on such a scale as to be a major factor in the situation. It will primarily hit at ordinary people, and thus primarily help the government.

When Sean MacStiofain said recently, in the course of denying responsibility for the bombs, that the IRA could easily reduce London "to ruins", then the degree of miscalculation is hardly less than that which led to the 1939 campaign in English cities — a campaign which was disastrous for the IRA.

Precisely because of the likely effect of a bombing campaign,

Workers' Fight No.33, p.7

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The explosions in Britain:

align, it is still likely that some if not all of the explosions are the work of the same people who set off bombs in Dublin last December — bombs which helped to push anti-IRA measures through the Dail, and were almost certainly planted by British agents.

If we assume, on the other

hand, that it is some faction of republicans, it would probably indicate not so much strength as weakness. Weakness partly caused by the lack of active solidarity in Britain with the IRA. We must change that!

The 'natural' instinct to direct hostility and resentment against the bombers and not at

the Government is going to be the best ally the government has. Socialists must insist, especially during a bombing campaign, that the anger should be turned at the government which is responsible directly for the terror in Northern Ireland — and therefore also for the bombs in Britain.

22nd Sept. - 5th Oct. 1973

Layout adjusted to fit A4

The advance of the left in the L.P.

The period since the defeat of Callaghan's government in '79 has seen the more or less continuous rise of the left inside the L.P. up until the last conference. This was reflected in policy decisions, the driving out of right wingers - notably the SDP splits - developments in terms of democracy and accountability, advances in constituency parties and the defeat of Healy in the leadership elections.

How are we to explain the advances and the present reversals taking place?

On what do they rest? The immediate cause in terms of the advances of the left is clearly the radicalisation of the CLP's. But that is not of itself an explanation, but rather a reflection of the changes which have occurred. A radicalisation does not occur out of nothing. And no workers party can undergo a process of radicalisation without the working class being centrally involved in one way or another.

Again, taken at the level of surface appearances, the changes in the LP do, however, appear to have occurred without the involvement of workers.

There has been no mass influx of workers into the party. Individual membership has in fact declined. There has also been an increase in working class electoral support. Workers have not come to the fore to create the radicalisation in the constituency parties.

This has led some cdes to turn away from the working class in terms of understanding what is happening in the L.P. The move to the left by Benn, for example, is explained completely in terms of Benn's perception that things as pursued by the last Labour Government and supported by himself have not represented workers interests. If such a scenario were valid, however, if it was simply the experience of their own failure in government that caused reformists to move to the left, then the L.P. would long ago have lost its right wing. Thus, whilst it may be entirely logical for the cdes who, following their articulation of a perical idealism, having looked to Benn's mind to explain changes in the L.P. then proceed to assert that their work in the L.P. is the fulcrum of our political work in attempting to develop this ideological process in the minds of the reformists, we must regrettably point out that they are indeed logical but also WRONG!

The measures imposed by the last L. Government amongst other things led to massive anger in the working class. I have already traced through this process which led to a wave of disillusionment and dissatisfaction being directed at the Labour leadership and the union bureaucrats in collusion with it by sections of the working class. It was this mood in the working class, sharply presented in the winter of discontent, which created the conditions for the advance of the left.

This was to go for a number of important reasons

1. Because it denied to the right wing the effective material basis on which they could safely proceed to ignore the policies of the party and the needs of the working class - a parliamentary majority.

2. Because it created tension and hostility in the unions, directed at the leadership on central issues of their collusion with the govt, wages control.

3. This in turn deprived the Labour leadership of the second crucial material basis of their power- the ability to impose discipline on the working class through the tu bureaucracy.

4. Finally as far as the L.P. itself was concerned, the anger and confusion of some workers was expressed in abstaining or voting against Labour both in local elections and in the general election 79.

In the unions, there was a massive challenge to the policy backed by the bureaucracy of wage controls through the social contract. In the face of this massive and mounting hostility from the working class, union after union was faced to declare itself opposed to income policy. And in turn union leaders were forced to carry this into the L.P.. It was in this way that the 'left' won its first major policy victory. But we should remember that this was not just any policy issue. It was the very heart of their political strategy, the essential basis upon which the ruling class had co-operated with the reformists. Without it the Labour leadership lost the third vital material basis of its powers- direct support from sections of the ruling class.

It was under these conditions, conditions in which the material power of the right wing had been crucially eroded if not wholly removed by the working class that the advance of the left could and did occur. It was not it should be stressed, the advances of the left which challenged and eroded the power of the right wing but rather the massive and growing hostility of the working class as expressed in the forcing through of a rejection of income policy. The left advance in conditions made favourable by the working class.

This had the effect of creating a growing confidence in the latent left wing constituency parties, many of which were comprised of a mixture of long standing labour activists, militant supporters and the past '68 radical students come good. The TU leaders had to be extremely careful of an overt alliance with the RW party leadership in the face of the working class hostility to the record of that leadership in government. These were precisely the conditions under which the left could assert itself and score more advances. A part of the right wing were forced in the wake of the 79 elections forced out and this again fuelled the confidence of the left. But, we should be clear even as these advances were being made, the real basis making them possible was itself under attack. The dominating attitudes of the working class of hostility to the Callaghan labour government was giving way to a generalised but politically limited anti-toryism in the face of the more immediate attacks launched by the Thatcher and the bosses behind her. That it was a anti-tory rather than a 'mass anti-capitalist movement' was an important distinct I. attempted to argue at the time '1981' and which a failure to accept is behind our present confusion.

The mass hostility of the working class to the last Lab. Govt. and in particular its policies on wage and cuts had created the conditions for the advance of the left wing in the party. Benn articulated that hostility but he did not create it. His role and the role of the reformist left as a whole has been, in general, to present the illusion of a way forward against the right wing and the bourgeoisie which remains within the bourgeois parliamentary framework resting on a notion of the creation of Socialism from above.

Essentially, therefore the task for the left in the L.P. came posed as not (immediately) reforming, the system (however radically), but of reforming the reformists, as a means to create conditions for reforming the system via the AES. The political limitations of such an approach are apparant. But there was another important limitation within the left which, particularly in the case of those like ~~has~~ lead them to blame the 'hard left' for their recent reverses. That further limitation was the failure of the left of the party to identify the basis and conditions on which their own advances had been made possible.

Thus as the conditions of the life and struggle of the working class began to be changed under the impact of the economic crisis and the Thatcher attacks reflecting her classes needs in that situation, the gains made by the left of the party began to be separated from the mass working class base which alone could provide the material conditions under which they could be secured and taken forward.

The left advanced, but not conscious of the real basis of support on which this advance had been made possible. So, although the advances of the left affected the working class, these were advances which did not speak immediately directly to the consciousness of the mass of workers. They were made above the heads of the workers. More particularly they did nothing to affect the immediate problems facing these workers in their day to day experience in the class struggle.

For the period, while things appeared to be moving forward, there was very little attempt by the left to organise and strengthen a working class input into the party. Working class support for what were undoubtedly relevant, but from the class point of view not immediately relevant, constitutional changes tended to be presumed.

Moreover, since the advance of the left tended to be restricted to constitutional, democracy issues rather than clear policy issues, the relevance of these issues to other more immediate questions, wages, jobs public spending etc remained. It was only after some of the ~~the~~ ^{the} union bureaucrats felt forced enough from the immediate pressure of the class in the wake of the steel strike to start overtly blocking with the right wing that the attention of the left began to be directed to the question of the TU's. But then it was seen in terms of the need to democratise the unions so that the left wing decisions could be carried at conferences, Left wing candidates could be elected, and, thereby, the advance of the left in the L.P. secured. This was the orientation to organise workers that emerged. But it was in no way the orientation that was necessary nor the one which we should have been advancing as revolutionaries.

It is out of day to day experiences and the needs of workers that the questions of trade union democracy is inescapably posed. And the immediate issues around which it is posed are given by workers themselves- strikes which do not get official backing (such as at Laurence Scotts) because of autocratic decisions, secret agreements with management about redundancies and wage cuts as at BACO, failure to take up the daily discrimination against women and blacks,

absolute unwillingness to organise and take up the needs of the millions without jobs, failure to prepare a serious lead against the drive to closures, notably in engineering, but now in the mines..

Workers undoubtedly need their aspirations and immediate demands to be clearly articulated. What they do not need is the left of the L.P. arriving to announce that the question of T.U. democracy is on the agenda because of the undemocratic use of block votes at L.P. conferences. In fact, as I shall argue later, this process needs to be reversed so that the left learn from workers what the immediate issues facing them are, and it is necessary for the left to take those issues into the L.P. Certainly, whatever the left is doing or not doing, we should be campaigning and acting in that way.

In any event, the economic crisis and the political process by Thatcher had changed the immediate conditions of the class struggle at the point of this turn by the reformists left. The climate which had been created for the advance of the left was no longer there. Just as a section of the left—notably a section of the CLPD leadership around Derer, had seen its own advance as entirely self contained and self propelled, so that they saw the first set back as if the entire struggle against the right wing had been lost. Their own empiricist experience was substituted for a real understanding of the balance of forces and therefore of how that balance should be shaped. Confronted by problems and struggles for when the conditions for victory had not been previously received by the working class, the left began to become confused and divided, a state of affairs which has continued till today. They had neither created nor even understood the basis for their previous victories. Now therefore they were incapable of understanding the basis for their set backs, and therefore incapable of knowing where to turn in order to regenerate their own advance.

Thus, at the first sign of a right wing reaction, a section of the left went into retreat. Vladimir Derer's various contributions on the strategy for the left has been typical of this. But what they have explained as the broad consensus of the left has crumbled away at the first set back, in the political nature of that left. Constituency support was not enough, nor had it ever been. Good ideas were not enough, nor had they ever been. Skilful manoeuvres and tactics were not enough, nor had they ever been. And subjective experience was not enough, nor had it ever been.

Without the direct pressure of the W/C on the T.U. leaders in the first instance, there could not have been any victories of the left, and without that pressure continuing in the same way, the inability of the left to secure their own "independent victories" without the W/C against the R/W was exposed.

The present confusion of the left stems from this new situation. For us, in contrast what should follow is a reaffirming of the absolute centrality of the W/C and the class struggle and a struggle for that understanding with the reformist left as the necessary basis for any defence of past gains, and any advance to new gains.

There is a layer inside the working class who are angry, frustrated, tremendously hostile to their leaders and disillusioned with the very idea that any government can help in solving the problems that face them. And there are times when such feelings penetrate into deeper layers of the working class. We could see things like this expressed in the youth riots. We can see it represented in different way in the workers who despite everything were willing to support a strike to resist the Cowley victimisations. We can see it in the S&K strike the Rulecan dispute, the occupation at Marconi and the Health Workers dispute. We can see it expressed in the mood which forced Weighell to resign. This layer, and the mood which extends beyond them present us with opportunities which we must find a way to exploit. If, despite all the factors acting against militancy and struggle at the present time, such a mood can still persist and from time to time burst through, then there must be something which can develop out of it. Our task is to understand the political problem of this layer, varying in competition as it does, and through this find roads to them which can draw them around us because we can explain their setbacks and problems.

It is true that none of the factors we have mentioned produce a revolutionary. But they combine to create situations and groups of workers who will be receptive to bold, radical politics. They need to have their anger which today is largely experienced in isolation drawn together. They need to have an explanation of the setbacks and they need to be shown a way forward. It is more important than anything else today to give a direct, clear, bold politics to these workers. If we cannot exploit the receptivity which exists amongst them then we cannot draw the line and create the basis for the fight-back against Thatcher. And to make sense to these workers, to answer clearly their own feelings that there is nothing that can be done the way things are, we have to give revolutionary politics a high profile, both in our press and in our practical work. There is no way we can exploit the opportunities and make meaning to those workers unless we show the opportunity of the destruction of a system which they already feel- with whatever illusions, distortions- will always mean hardship, unemployment or the threat of it. We have to take the pessimism which says that things will not get better unless we fight to get rid of the whole system that makes them worse. As far as the paper is concerned, this means the following:-

- a. Direct revolutionary propaganda and agitation must be given much greater prominence;
- b. The content of the paper must be geared specifically to speak to the situation of the layer we have identified and the mass of the working class behind them.
- c. The form and style of articles must take specific account of the existing level of consciousness of the audience to which the paper should be directed- we must write in a way which we can understand and which takes up what they are thinking or feeling.
- d. The content of the paper must be determined by the factors immediately facing workers and the issues which we believe should be brought to their attention.
- e. What we write about the Labour party must be first and foremost directed towards workers.

With or without agreement about the opportunities identified above our orientation must be firmly towards the mass of the working class. In other words - the profile given to the longer term revolutionary goals, the content of the articles and the programmatic perspective must all arise directly out of an assessment of the situation inside the working class.

8 No one can seriously argue that we have a paper based firmly on the criteria outlined above. On the contrary, the paper has in large part been based not on an assessment of what is happening in the working class or on an orientation to the mass of the working class, but on an assessment of what is happening in the left wing of the labour party and an orientation to sections of the left wing. Now those Cdes who have been most adamant about the need for a primary orientation to the LP left, shift their argument and invoke LP legality to suppress and confuse discussion about orientation and to maintain what is a misplaced set of priorities. In doing so they do us a double dis-service, evade the real questions facing us, and present a series of re-assessments of our past practise.

It is necessary to make clear that the question of what is immediately possible and necessary inside the LP and the question of what is immediately possible and necessary inside the working class are two different questions. It is on the basis of the answer that we give to the latter question that we should then proceed to consider the tactical problems posed by the former. In other words, it is first necessary to establish our primary orientation as being to the working class, and then proceed to consider how are tactics in relation to the reformist political party of the working class should arrive.

Our primary orientation to the working class poses the question of the LP in three different ways, all of which mean that we should be located and work inside the LP.

1. It is the party to which the mass of workers are attracted in pursuit of specifically class needs.
2. It is the party which the working class is organisationally attached through the trade union affiliations.
3. It is the organisation through which the reformist maintain political control over the working class.

We thus locate ourselves in the LP specifically to gain access to workers, develop the political consciousness which has taken them there and direct them against the reformists who act as a brake on the development of genuine working class politics i.e. politics which genuinely serve the interest of the working class.

There is a superficial empiricism in the view of some cdes that developments in the LP were secured by the "left" without any real role for the working class. It is an empiricism of a nature no less superficial than seen in low polls, anti-LP votes and the hostility and disillusionment of sections of the working class to the LP - anything even remotely resembling the final historic break of the working class from the LP and its destruction as a working class party of reformism. We would remind cdes that we broke from such Healyite ultimatism means years ago. We are not about to return to it.

There is only one way that the question of the reformist party will be dealt with to the advantage of the workers- that is when the workers take up and answer that question themselves. That task remains on the agenda. The traditional loyalty of the working class is still there, even if it is affected by cynicism and disillusionment. The capacity of the reformist to act as a brake is not destroyed. And right through history the struggle of the working class has been characterised by a movement back towards its traditional organisations, as struggle develops. So even in our location in the LP does not give us immediate access to workers, we must be there to prepare for the movement which takes place.

At the same time, we must operate with assessment and differentiations. We must seek out and focus on working class areas. It is nonsense to say that we should only be in the LP's if that gives that immediate access to workers today. But it is equally nonsense to see every LP as similar in so far as a primary orientation to the working class is concerned. Such a process of differentiation is necessary, and in using it, we guard against any tendency to try to base ourselves where the left is strong, without any consideration of whether there is or can be a strong working class base to that left. As a priority, we should in fact be seeking those working class areas where the right is strong- the areas in which the need for our intervention is greatest. A location there will be more important and more useful than a "paper victory" somewhere else where we dominate each other, even if the quantifiable result takes longer to come through.

The priority of our LP work is this; explaining to workers developments which occur inside the party and seek to organise and politically develop those workers to shape those developments in a way which meets their needs. That is the real task of socialist organiser. Maintaining a presence inside the party may be useful to that task. But it will have to be made useful by the nature of the work that we do and the connection with workers that we make. Maintaining a presence inside the LP in a narrow sense will not be enough to meet the task of our LP work. The mass of workers are not individual workers of the LP. They do not attend internal party meetings they are not branch officers. It is not through those channels that the question of the LP can be raised with them. To carry through effective LP work we have to orientate outwards from the immediate organisational framework of the LP.

Successful LP work is that work which raises the question of the LP with workers which develops them, and organises workers to take up the questions facing themselves, inside the organisation. Holding official positions inside the LP may advance that work. But again, it will not automatically do so itself. The measure of success in LP work is not in acquiring positions, but in using positions, to carry our politics to workers and to carry workers politics into the LP. We should bear this in mind particularly with reference to those of our comrades who have already, or are about to, acquire seats as councillors.

Arising out of all of this: The line that we should be drawing is not between staying in the party and getting out. It is one between carrying our politics to workers, or not carrying our politics to them. The gains of the right wing make direct clear bold revolutionary politics directed

Towards workers, not less so. We see it is the only way of changing the balance of forces inside the LP so that our position is assured, rather than as an infantile unfolding of the banner. We must base what we are saying and writing about the LP primarily on the need to explain developments to workers and show a way forward to control future developments, not on the need to be allowed to sell our papers by the right wing (to whom, why) our future course must be determined not by fear of being outside the LP, but by the determination to exploit opportunities inside the working class which would make it possible for the right wing to keep us out. Even in the medium term, the advance we make or do not make with workers is more important to the future of the LP than the gains of the left or the victory of the right. It is from such advances alone that any useful gains could really be defended and taken forward to the advantage of the working class.

While the condition which we listed still exists, then it is necessary that we still be in the LP. We can and must be as flexible tactically as possible. But we must not discipline ourselves on behalf of the right wing. Nor must we pretend that some expulsions would end our LP work. And least of all must we invoke LP legality to use as a cover for maintaining a primary orientation to the left when it is above all absolutely essential that we find a way of developing and taking forward our orientation to the working class.

In reality our useful LP work ends when we do not raise the issue of the LP with workers and organised workers to carry their demands to the LP; for some cases our useful work is ended (or rather not even began) because as they see it the question of the LP is first and foremost posed - not as the question of how to break workers from the block of reformism - but of how to consolidate stable agreements with a section of the left. For such cases an orientation to the left wing of the LP has become a dominant basis of their politics.

Does the orientation we have taken mean that we have dismissed or ignored the left? On the contrary. The paradox is that it is the orientation of those cases who are completely besotted with the left that proves incapable of breaking any of them working class, the question of the left reformists is inescapably posed - in terms of the authority that they have in the working class and on the other hand the harm that they can do as a break on the workers movement. But the current turmoil in the labour movement has meant that on the level of appearances, there are different political forces occupying what seems to be the same political ground. Some of them are confirmed reformists. Others are moving leftward from reformism. Now an orientation to the latter is necessary and legitimate - it must be based on a differentiation between them and confirmed reformists. But it must also be secondary to our orientation to the mass of the working class.

Those moving left are not going to converge with revolutionaries. If they are going to become revolutionaries, then they are going to have to be drawn into our ranks, breaking from the ground they occupy, rather than gliding smoothly and automatically from it. Without a developing mass movement of struggle to propel them, there is only one way that these individual socialists can be drawn into the ranks of Trotskyism - by a combination of sharpened political criticism and the consistent example and explanation of Political practice based on an orientation to the working class. Without a firm lead from ourselves, the best of the lefts will move around in confusion, or go over to some other organisation which appears able to give that lead. And how can we give that lead? By giving these people a method which will allow them to locate their own individual socialist commitments within the struggle to develop the only force capable of actually making the revolution - the working class. The fact is that the left do not understand how the basis for their own advance inside the L.P. was created by the working class. They do not therefore see that it is only through an orientation to the working class that that basis can be recreated and strengthened. Many of them PRESUME the support of the workers; others regard themselves, or act as, SUBSTITUTES for the workers; to the extent that there was a conscious turn to the working class; it occurred by the left arriving to announce that the question of trade union democracy had been posed by the block vote. If instead of that type of turn, we can show a method which can take up the issues facing workers in a way which both connects with their immediate consciousness and challenges and develops it, then the best of the left will be attracted. And if we take forward the fairly feeble beginnings we made on united initiative on the Tabbitt Campaign and actually seek to draw the left into initiatives directed at the working class, then the best of them will draw to us through such experience. And we will be using the capacity of all of them, whether they are drawn towards us or not, in a way which serves the interests of the working class. (on the issues of organising unemployed workers for example).

It is not therefore a question of whether we seek to exploit the fact that there is this layer of left wingers or not. It is a question of how we think that individuals, whose background and social position is largely petty bourgeois, are actually drawn towards the revolutionary party and developed as revolutionaries. A newspaper structured around the false theory of convergence EXCLUDES us from exploiting the opportunities in the working class. However, a newspaper which is orientated to the working class does not exclude us from developing individual left-wingers. On the contrary, IT is by learning how to carry politics into the working class that such a development can occur.

MARXISM BY NUMBERS - THE POLITICS OF FRASER/JOPLIN AND THEIR SPONSORS

1. INTRODUCTION

At the last N.C. Carolan made the astounding allegation that the "British Perspectives" tabled by Cunliff was a "factional coup". The charge was apparently based on the fact that Carolan and others disagreed with the contents of that document. A subsequent examination of the charge would, however, another reading of the situation, especially in the light of the youth documents published.

At the N.C. Hill announced that the Fraser/Joplin document on youth work was the main youth document, with that of Hunt, National Secretary of the youth group, reduced to the status of "opposition" document. There had been no prior agreement on this. Yet, if we look at the Joplin/Fraser youth document what do we find? The document is not a perspectives document but a factional polemic with sub-headings like "sectarian regression" and comments like "we don't run off in a fit of pique". Here, given the large number of deliberate misrepresentations and rewritings of history contained in the document (all of which I shall outline later) we undoubtedly do have a factional coup! That is why the Hunt document was suddenly declared an "opposition" document. No doubt Carolan would retort, "Oh, but that is justified by the Cunliffe document!" Such is the politics of factional convenience; Carolan and his co-thinkers are always the injured party, the rest of the movement all factionalists. But it does require, therefore, a political response which draws out the politics underlying the manoeuvres.

2. ESTABLISHING THE PROBLEM

Joplin/Fraser begin by asserting that there is a political problem in the youth work. I could certainly agree with that. But their presentation of the problem is misleading and ultimately dishonest. They quote Trotsky and then present an entirely wrong-headed interpretation of the question to serve as their basis for erecting a totally spurious straw dummy which they then proceed to beat about the head. For, they claim that the problem that Trotsky was referring to, sectarian abstentionism, is the problem confronting our youth and the form of it is "a desire to pull away from the Y.S. on the bedrock of our youth work" (my emphasis). But what did Trotsky actually say? The essence of Trotsky's point is that, "Genuine Marxist policy means carrying the ideas of the proletarian revolution to ever wider masses, through ever changing and ever new and frequently unexpected combinations of historic conditions." Where is the parallel comrades? Trotsky talks about the working class, Joplin/Fraser about.....L.P.Y.S.. The point would only have any relevance if there were comrades who were opposed to taking our politics to the widest possible layers of youth. But, in fact, on the basis of their document, this latter charge could be more appropriately directed to Joplin/Fraser than those who have argued in favour of an orientation to working class youth as a whole through Class Fighter as a tendency both inside and outside the Y.S. In my view the logic of the Fraser/Joplin document is sectarian towards the working class youth, and particularly black youth and the mass of unemployed youth. How can we take

seriously a 'youth' document which has not one word to say on youth unemployment and how we can organise the hundreds of thousands of youth on the dole, on training schemes etc. who are not even unionised. A document which is unable to spell out a single practicle proposal for work with school leavers this spring and summer, and for organising the youth in schools against unemployment. A document which has nothing to say on organising young workers in the trade unions, particularly in a situation where apprentices, as in EETPU, face wage cuts of £16/wk. A document which sees black work as "setting up anti-racist committees", which has nothing to say about solidariyy work as with Ireland, Palestine etc. But which does deal with that burning question facing all youth, as they trudge their way to school work or the Job Centre, the witch-hunt in the L.P.

The answer is that the Joplin/Fraser document is not a serious document. It does not begin from the problem of working class youth. It does not begin from the "ever changing and ever new and frequently unexpected combinations of historical conditions". Instead it begins from a timeless idea of how youth work should be done and proceeds to impose that idea onto the present political situation. Thus, every section concludes, one way or another, with the ritual theme "the Y.S. is the bedrock of our youth work." And that is the ONLY policy the document offers.

Unfortunately, when the comrades attempt to PROVE this they run into difficulty. To begin with their "PROOF" is a-historical. It makes no references to any changes in the situation, any new phenomena amongst youth or anything in the material situation of the class struggle which would justify their view. Instead we have an extended version of the old 'Militant' slight of hand on the centrality of the L.P..

The working class is the revolutionary force in society
The organised working class has a political wing
The political wing has a youth movement
The Y.S. = the working class youth

In passing, of course they are obliged to cover their tracks. Thus, on page 2, they admit that in the struggle to organise youth as revolutionary fighters in the workers movement "one way of doing this is to show how we can fight in the Y.S." Presumably, from this they accept that there are others? Like showing how we can fight in the Trade Unions? Amongst the unemployed? Amongst black youth? But no, they do not get a mention.

For joplin/Fraser all this is sectarian abstentionism unless it is directed towards the Y.S.. Then they say:
"While obviously, we are an active force, or should be, in various campaigns like Bradford 12 or campaigns against unemployment, YOPs or the NII, working in these, in itself, is not enough."
What they have conveniently missed out of this statement(it is hidden in the phrase "should be") is that they were not, and took no steps to involve others in, either the Bradford 12 or the NUWM! But they then turn their own sectarian abstentionism, in particular on black work, into a virtue! Thus, they argue that work done with black youth who are HOSTILE to the L.P.Y.S. - in Leicester they were barred from the riots area by the black youth - to politically organise those youth without sectarian, organisational ultimatum "can be destructive, especially if it is done on a local basis without reference to what the organisaition as a whole

is doing".

What arrogance! What stupid, bureaucratic arrogance! The organisation as a whole has nothing to say to the thousands of black youth on the streets, many of whom have THEIR OWN organisations, except "you need a labour movement orientation - join the Y.S.". But those who seek to find roads to these youth, to work with them, overcome their hostility to the opportunism of the 'white left' by a common practice of struggle are destructive!! Trotsky would have laughed at you comrades Joplin and Fraser. Don't you realise that when Trotsky writes, in the question YOU have chosen as your introduction, "woe to him who turns this 'fealty' into doctrinaire stubbornness, into ready-made, once and for all learned formulars, without the capacity to give heed to life and respond to its needs....." he was talking about YOU. YOU ARE THE SECTARIANS INCAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO NEW SITUATIONS. And YOU do not accept the black community organisation as part of the organised working class. What ridiculous formalism! You should be working at Transport House.

3. BROAD WORK

Fraser/Joplin argue that to accept separate forms of organisation for black youth is "going round" the labour movement and that we do not approach any other aspect of our work in this way. They further argue that to set up Class Fighter groups means counterposing our "tiny forces to the official labour movement". Both of these arguments are wrong, but they do reveal an interesting side light on the Joplin/Fraser method, for what we have is a clear example of organisational ultimatum! Why are we opposed to separate forms of organisations for black youth, comrades Joplin/Fraser? You never say! All we get is "it's true the labour movement is not a welcoming place for them.....but in no other cases do we argue that that is a reason for going round the labour movement." But that is not an answer. Firstly the Y.S. is not the labour movement but one small part of it. Secondly, we should assess our tactics not on the basis of "what we normally" do, but WHAT IS NECESSARY, taking account of the real situation. Thirdly, anti-racist committees are not "special campaigning methods" in terms of organising black youth. They are a means of orientating the white working class. And finally, we actually DO, or should, support separate forms of organisation in other areas of our work! Or do you regard Women's Fightback as not being a separate form of organisation. If the answer is solely to tell women to join the L.P. women's sections then why build Fightback groups? Comrade Fraser, as co-author of the women's document should make up her mind!

In practice, I welcome the development of black youth organisations like the Asian Youth Movement and the Bradford United Black Youth Movement. I see these as a part of the organised working class. Similarly, I welcome the emergence of the gay youth movement. Perhaps it's because of our "sectarian abstentionism" in Leicester that we were able to involve the local gay youth group in the Class Fighter Conference, get one of the Bradford 12 to speak at the Summer School, and involve a significant group of black youth in the class fighter conference. Perhaps it's this same sectarianism which means our Class Fighter group has 7 black members, while the Nottingham group have recruited a young black member to W.S.L. Maybe comrades Joplin/Fraser could give the conference a list of their achievements in their "anti-racist committees with a labour movement orientation"...if they exist!

Of course, Comrades Joplin/Fraser will reply that such "Class Fighter" groups should be resisted because they are posed as an alternative to the Y.S.. Amazing! The ignorance of these comrades is truly staggering. In Nottingham the Class Fighter group has counterposed our youth comrades to the Y.S. so sharply that there is now a ward secretary, one Y.S. secretary, and 4 are on G.M.C. Very clever these sectarians, eh? In Leicester, where the other Class Fighter group exists, one youth comrade is now Youth Officer in South, and 3 are on G.M.C.. And, just to be certain, there was a Class Fighter fringe meeting at Regional L.P.Y.S. Conf.. So, no comrades, we are not drifting away from the Y.S..

But what about the general question? Should we have Class Fighter groups as a general rule, or only in the most exceptional circumstances, or as a caucus before the Y.S.? Well, perhaps we should ask Joplin/Fraser a question. Are S.O. groups counterposed to the existing labour movement? Of course not. So we only have S.O. groups as a L.P. caucus? Of course not. We use them to group supporters around us, discuss political issues and involve them in our campaigns. And in the S.O. groups we draw in NOT ONLY L.P. members but also militant trade unionists who are not in the L.P.. We argue our orientation on the question of the L.P. in these S.O. groups. That is what Class Fighter groups are about too! But they will only be necessary if we really do have an orientation to ALL layers of youth, both those in, and those not in, the Y.S. For those who never get beyond the Y.S. they will never be necessary.

Class Fighter groups are a vital part of our work because we build the N.L.W.Y.M. as a tendency among working class youth as a whole, not just in the L.P.Y.S.. We should be building our tendency in the unions among young workers, on YOPs, in YCND, amongst young women, amongst the unemployed, amongst gay youth, amongst black youth, amongst school students; in short amongst all layers of youth. THAT IS AN ORIENTATION TO THE WORKING CLASS. And in the Class Fighter groups we argue and explain why it is necessary to take up the political struggle in the mass organisation, the T.U. and L.P. (and its youth section). It is this flexible, non-doctrinaire approach to youth work which the opponents of the Joplin Fraser orientation have argued. It is THIS approach which was argued at Fusion! And it this revolutionary approach which Joplin Fraser have tried to stifle and jettison in favour of their marxism by numbers thesis: the Y.S. is the bedrock of our youth work.

4. SOME POINTS OF FACT

According to Fraser "The problem we face is one of a sectarian regression by some comrades; desire to pull AWAY from Y.S. as the BEDROCK of our youth work, and to declare Class Fighter as a separate youth organisation." They also say later "this is a complete change of orientation."

Now, firstly NO ONE has argued for Class Fighter as a SEPARATE youth organisation counterposed as an ALTERNATIVE to the Y.S. as say the old S.Y.L. was. What we have done is to reiterate our agreed position that C.F. should be JUST a tendency on the Y.S. but should be able to operate independantly as a tendency outside the Y.S. as well. THIS WAS THE OLD WSL ORIENTATION. In the 1981 Conf. document I wrote:

"If we are to make an effective intervention into the L.P.Y.S. rather than simply sporadic poaching raids then we must recognise

that it will not be possible to do so by posing S.Y.L. as an alternative to the Y.S."

What was proposed, therefore, was a new youth paper "which will operate as a public focus for an organised tendency in the L.P.Y.S. YCND etc." This tendency would "organise its own events, including an A.G.M., local readers groups, (which should hold public meetings wherever we are not in the leadership of the Y.S. itself) and carry out its own campaigns in L.P.Y.S., Y.C.N.D. etc."

"Membership of the readers groups will not be confined to L.P.Y.S. members. Other youth, whether from YCND, ANL or our other work among the young unemployed will be encouraged to participate in the readers groups. At the same time, however, we will encourage these youth to join our tendency in the L.P.Y.S..."

That was the position of the old W.S.L., comrades Joplin and Fraser. We have NOT changed anything. In fact, it is you who have abandoned your old positions for a myopic emphasis on the Y.S.. To demonstrate this, perhaps we can recall what comrade. Carolan (O'Keefe) had to say in the joint WSL/ICL discussions on 10-12-80.

Q: How is B organised? Via youth branches?

O'Keefe: Yes, but our policy does allow FOR INDEPENDANT B. GROUPS. We would have to discuss our relationship to the Youth, We would not be prepared to leave. But it should be possible to build up substantial collaboration without confronting that. M's extreme backwardness has a deadening effect on youth, SO WE DO NOT CONFINE OURSELVES TO THE FORMAL STRUCTURES." (mu emphasis)

And again,

O'Keefe: "It is important to avoid sectarianism and maintain a relation to the general labour movement of which the youth is a part. But we can combine building healthy areas in the youth and DOING INDEPENDANT WORK WHERE APPROPRIATE."

That was the line of the ICL. It was also the thinking behind the N.L.W.Y.M. as originally motivated by O'Keefe: There is likely to be a long hot summer. We need to be in a position to relate to this in a flexible manner. (O'Keefe was right). Joplin and Fraser have abandoned this for their Marxism by numbers equations: an orientation to L.P.Y.S. and nothing else. That was NEVER agreed prior to fusion and nor should it be now. But comrades should be clear that apart from the clear drift from the ICL position by Joplin/Fraser there is the equally important question of their mis-representation of the pre-fusion discussions. Thus, for example, they say, "We come to our common conclusions on work in the Y.S. because in both organisations THERE WAS A MOVE AWAY FROM THE SECTARIAN APPROACH OF THE PAST, an attempt to root ourselves, and our politics in the working class....."

Not so. Where, in the minutes of our discussion did ANYONE from the old WSL say this. Read the documents! We came to OUR conclusions on the Y.S. on the basis of a concrete assessment of present developments inside the L.P. and LPYS. The old WSL, through its work around YOPs, NUSS, anti-racist work, was already attempting to root itself and its politics in the working class. It was because of the specific conditions prevailing in the LPYS AT THAT TIME that we concluded it was tactically correct to work in LPYS and develop a tendency inside it. All this is absolutely

clear in the WSL 1981 Youth Perspectives. Why don't you re-read them, or D.A.'s document "Our relationship to LPYS". Again, the comrades glibly announce "we launched the N.L.W.Y.M. as Red Youth and Barricade supporters with a leaflet and a basis where we stand in ten points at the YS Conference.."

What short memories you have! YOU launched the N.L.W.Y.M. in that way having successfully failed to consult with the WSL over the project itself or the 10 point programme. I was delegated by the WSL EC to object on behalf of the WSL at this 'fait accompli' with which we were presented. I also explained why the June Conference could not, and would not, be the start of this NEW organisation from the point of view of the WSL. That is why there were TWO conferences in 1981. You were present for this discussion. Why do you not tell the truth comrades? Why do you try to mislead comrades and mis-represent the situation?

The answer is very simple. If you are to present the old WSL youth cadre as sectarians now, then it is necessary to rewrite the history accordingly. In contrast to you, the core leadership of the SYL has not changed its politics with the sublime indifference with which you change a pair of socks. Given the positions Joplin/Fraser hold and have held in the Y.M. it is just as well.

A FACTIONAL MANOEUVRE UNMASKED

- Colin Morrow -

At the December TILC Conference Carolan treated everyone present to a lecture on what democratic centralism was. Amongst the points he made in this lengthy catalogue are two that are thrown into a new light by the documents 'On the RWL Tendency' and 'The Sectarian Offensive' in IB 35. At the TILC meeting Carolan told us that two important aspects of democratic centralism were the development of a tolerant leadership and the development of a critically minded membership. What he did not say then was that if this critically minded membership came into political disagreement with him and formed a tendency to fight him then they would be slandered, framed up and to ld they faced the threat of disciplinary action. Still, you learn something new every day.

It is regrettable that anyone should have to spend their time replying to Carolan's nebulous collection of innuendos, misrepresentations and downright fairytales. But in a situation where the tendency now clearly faces disciplinary action we have no choice but to respond. In doing so, however, I wish to make one point brutally clear. Cde Carolan's motives in moving to organisational measures against the tendency have absolutely nothing to do with a desire to 'save' the new WSL. It has a good deal more to do with ensuring by factional manoeuvres an artificial majority in the forthcoming conference under conditions where Carolan and his supporters are aware that they now face a real prospect of defeat for their orientation away from the class; a defeat which Kinnell has stated 'would destroy what we have fought for for the last 17 years'.

As the Conference has drawn nearer so their hysteria and fear that the membership would reject their bankrupt line and vote instead for a proletarian

orientation has grown, and now expresses itself in what can only be called a witch hunt. The documents in IB 35 have a good deal more in common, in terms of method, with the Gerry Healy school of political slander by association than with democratic centralism. But what makes it so appalling is that the entire argument is built on no more than innuendos, suppositions, possible scenarios and totally one sided interpretations of the facts, laced with one or two deliberate lies. Having accused the tendency of having as its perspective a split in WSL, Carolan now urges the WSL to drive us out. So who is after a split?

1 CAROLAN DISCOVERS CATCH 22.

On page 2 of the 'RWL TENDENCY' document Carolan says, "The RWL/LOR tendency in the WSL - and that is undeniably , it seems to me, what the IT is..."

In fact Cde Carolan has, and offers, no evidence for this whatsoever beyond his own fantasies and lurid speculations. The bourgeois courts, which Carolan has praised in the press for generally dispensing a high level of justice within existing laws, would throw out his ludicrous case against us. The flimsy web of circumstantial evidence which he attempts to paste together cannot hold up to the light of day. But Carolan knows that. So in advance of proving anything and on the basis ONLY OF HIS OWN ALLEGATIONS he announces, " Any denials that the tendency is an LOR/RWL tendency will simply be lies on the part of the original nucleus - and the lies will be an indication of the real relationship of the RWL tendency to the WSL."

Very prudent Cde Carolan. Why justify your slanders when the obvious short cut is to denounce any replies as lies and claim them as your own proof! If the tendency deny they are an LOR/RWL tendency then they must be ! Brilliant. Such formidable logic. Healy and Lambert would be proud to have such a protegee. But what has it got to do with revolutionary marxist methods of organisation ?

2 CAROLAN FETISHISES YOUTH.

According to Carolan, 'at the TILC december conference, "Their (ie the PWL/LOR I presume - Morrow) programme for achieving this was spelled out by Leland S before the 'invited ' audience of young WSLers from Leicester and others..." Flattered as we are, neither myself (age 36) nor Grassas (age 37) nor Maidstone (age 36) consider ourselves young. There were two youth comrades, and only two youth comrades, present at the TILC Conference. Tagore, who in late 1981 did a speaking tour of Denmark on unemployment for TAF, and Arthur, an active member of the old WSL French Commission who was part of the TILC team at the 1981 LO fete. Presumably Carolan feels that we should not encourage this dangerous enthusiasm for international work. After all, TILC is only fantasy land, isn't it Cde Carolan. So much for the strengths of the old WSL in that arena.

But, somewhat more ridiculous however, is the parallel assertion in the Carolan/Kinnell/Hill document, 'At a session where Leland S violently denounced WSL and where a number of young cdes now in the Internationalist Tendency are present...'

The actual number of young cdes present was ONE.....Cde Arthur. Cde Tagore and myself, being already familiar with the work of the WSL and its problems, had opted to miss that session, have a lie in and do some shopping. Cde Carolan should either learn to count, or better still do something about his phobia for youth.

Finally, we have to ask, by whom is Carolan alleging the non EC members present were invited ?

If he is claiming that it was at the behest of the RWL then he is a liar, a factionaliser and a slanderer of all those present. But then, of course, Carolan does not care so long as the mud keeps flying to bury the politics.

3 THE LABOUR PARTY AND TILC.

Cde Carolan is aware that few members are familiar in a detailed way with the TILC discussions. He has, therefore, in IB 35 chosen quite deliberately to play on this, utilising the membership's lack of knowledge to further bolster his farcical, factional case. Thus, he states, in relation to the LOR and RWL... "What they were up to was revealed plainly by the way they tactically chose issues to fight on, for example, they diplomatically avoided premature clashes on the LP."

And again, in the 'Sectarian Offensive' document we find, " DEC 27-31 - For the first time RWL denounces WSL openly on the LP question (they had largely kept quiet on this at the Summer School) "

In fact, Carolan has conveniently omitted a number of salient points which if included would actually DESTROY his case.

- A At the Easter 1982 TILC Conference the LOR expressed concern over WSL's LP work. That is recorded in the TILC minutes. So is Carolan's request that they present something in writing on it.
- B In response to Carolan's request the LOR brought to the summer school a document on our LP work. They presented it for circulation within TILC. At the December TILC Conference they again asked that it be distributed, not least in WSL. To date it remains uncirculated despite a clear agreement at that TILC Conference.

At the summer school the RWL also bought a detailed document by "E.O'Brian replying to the series of articles by John O'Mahony on 'Socialism and Democracy'". Throughout this document the main point pressed was that in practice O'Mahony was adapting to the politics of the labour left. The RWL requested a debate on the articles during the summer school. But when this debate took place it was treated as a semi-clandestine affair. The details of it, and its title were removed twice from the black board in the main foyer. Cde. Carolan knows that this debate took place, because he spoke at it. But very few of the WSL membership were aware of its existence.

At the Dec. TILC meeting the RWL, surprised their document had not been distributed, also requested that their document be circulated to the WSL membership. Again, despite agreement at the TILC meeting, it has not been.

Since I am not a great fiction writer like Carolan I shall not bother to develop an elaborate hypothesis as to why all this comes to be forgotten, why the document remains uncirculated etc. One thing is, however, factually certain. In alleging that the LOR/RWL "diplomatically avoided" premature clashes on the LP and that this is a symptom of their duplicity Carolan is quite consciously seeking to mislead and deceive the membership of WSL. It is difficult to say what charitable assessment can be made of the political morals of someone who will stoop to such fabrication!

4 CAROLAN THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS.

According to Carolan the tendency is comprised of the young, the ill-educated, the sectarian and the disgruntled. Carolan obviously runs a fine line in character assassination of his opponents. What he doesn't point out is that the tendency actually involves the central nucleus of our intervention into STA, the cdes. leading our work amongst the unemployed, almost the whole of the central youth cadre of the old WSL and the vast majority of the cdes. actively involved in developing consistent black work. Perhaps rather than attempting to explain the development of the tendency ~~in terms of our psychological failings~~ in terms of our psychological failings, or worse ~~as an unexplained and preposterous Leland Sanderson 'cult'~~ as an unexplained and preposterous Leland Sanderson 'cult'. Carolan should consider whether our common political experiences might not be a much more decisive factor. But, of course, Carolan cannot admit such possibilities since to do so would interfere with and cast doubts on his carefully orchestrated slander campaign.

We will, therefore, spell out the factors which made it imperative to form a tendency to carry out a political struggle in WSL.

1 The question of the Register and hence of the future of our press.

2 The conflicts which developed over 'Women's Fightback' both prior to and immediately after the AGM which ended with two leading women comrades being withdrawn from the PB steering committee.

3 The moves by Joplin at a youth fraction to change the NLWYM into exclusively a tendency in YS called the NLWYM of the YS.

- 4 The revised position on the 'Workers Government' adopted for the SOA.
- 5 The NC decision not to discuss the question of our position on Afghanistan at the WSL Conference.
- 6 The Ballykelly bombing which unleashed a new wave of articles in our press steering a course away from a consistent revolutionary defence of the Republican movement against British Imperialism.
- 7 The disastrous TILC Conference and the positions taken by the WSL on a number of questions in it.

If Cdes look at the tendency platform and compare the positions outlined there with this list of significant political developments in WSL since the Special Conference on the Malvinas they will see quite clearly why a tendency was finally set up. Because we were opposed to the political drift of the organisation under conditions where the discussion on Imperialism was never begun and the TB again fell into quiescence. Because we were opposed to what were, in our view, a series of revisionist political positions which were gaining currency in the organisation. Finally, because we were concerned at the increasing political paralysis of the WSL, expressed both in a serious degree of demoralisation amongst certain layers of the membership, and in our inability to mobilise effectively for major events.

In fact, the only valid criticism which we would accept is that we hesitated about taking such a step as forming a tendency. We did so under conditions where there was a continuing lobby from the Centre about avoiding factional heat, but objectively, we should have recognised much earlier that our differences implied the need to organise for a political fight on the disputed issues.

But, having said this, we must now give notice that in the present situation we will not be browbeaten by Carolan's slander campaign. We will not be intimidated by threats of witch-hunting disciplinary action. We will not be cowed into submission by the wave of hysteria whipped up against us. Our rights are safeguarded in the constitution. We reject Carolan's attempt to junk the constitution by labelling us Spies and aliens. For those involved in the WRP expulsions there must now be a nasty sense of *deja vu*. We demand that Carolan withdraws his witch-hunting threats against the tendency. We demand that Carolan withdraws his slanderous allegations that Cdes who attended TILC were 'invited' by the RWL. We demand that Carolan withdraws his lying slanders against the Italian and American Cdes on the question of the Labour Party. We call on the NC and the Conference to stop the organisational measures being prepared and used against us, not least the forcible splitting of the Nottingham Branch. We urge the membership of WSL to hold Carolan and his factional clique to account for their irresponsible, dishonest and disruptive conduct.

It is not the 'secularians' of the LOR/RWL or of the tendency who are going to split TILC and the WSL but the Carolan faction.

IB 35 is simply Carolan through the looking glass.

CAROLAN'S RESOLUTION ON THE LP EXAMINED AND EXPOSED.

Comrade Carolan's document "Resolution on the LP" (IB 22/3) demonstrates in vivid clarity, how confused some leading comrades have become. Hopefully, the majority of comrades will have realised that this document has nothing to do with dialectical materialism. To outline the whole series of errors, while being justified, would take too long, and it is more important to produce a resumé prior to the WSL's conference.

Cde Carolan states in the first paragraph that the LP "is the mass political movement of the working class, organically tied to the bedrock organisation of the working class, the trade unions". While there is an element of truth in that the LP was set up by the trade union bureaucrats, to represent their interests in Parliament, and without doubt, there have been periods, in its life when the LP has been the mass political PARTY of the working class, the question is to what extent is it the case now? After 60 odd years of parliamentary reformism to what extent can the LP still be seen as "the pivot of mass working class politics in Britain". Cde Carolan obviously thinks that the "7 million trade unionist (who) have full LP membership rights, if they choose to exercise them" signifies this. But any shop steward will tell you that it requires a union to opt out of paying the political levy in affiliated unions, and that can often be difficult, and normally represents a very hostile political attitude to the LP. In contrast, the LP has a 1million individual membership in the CLPs, without doubt a mass membership, even if it is overwhelmingly passive. What is of much greater significance is the result of the recent bye election in Peckham, a working class district of London; only 38% of the possible electorate could be bothered to vote, despite 3 years of Thatcherism, only 50% of the vote was for Labour, in other words 19% of the electorate voted Labour. Surely this result which isn't atypical, must raise some question as to the extent to which cde Carolan's claim that the "LP is for now and the foreseeable future the pivot of mass working class politics in Britain". This is not to suggest an "Oshlerite binge", an unhelpful expression some comrades start throwing around when anyone starts questioning the significance of the LP. It is not a case of counterpoising the trade unions to the LP or visa versa. It is a case of attempting to analyse the crisis in the working class, recognising that the LP does not represent in most cases, the illusion of a peaceful road to socialism, but only an alternative to the Tory Party.

It is cde Carolan's confusion about the relationship of the LP to the working class as a whole and the relationship of the struggles inside the LP to the working class, that has caused the WSL to have such an over emphasis on the LP. This clearly comes across when cde Carolan writes "On the issues at stake WE had won the CLPs". As far as I am aware, we have not won a single CLP to our programme, which obviously is the issue at stake - the question of leadership. But cde Carolan doesn't mean we the WSL, but we, the reformist left, the CLPD, the IOC etc. and ourselves, have won the issues at stake around which the CLPD and IOC have campaigned around, and which obviously do have some importance. But it is hardly surprising that the Left Reformist/Activists of the CLPD etc, should win the CLPs to a demand for greater control of the LP by the CLPS. Neither is it surprising that the TBureaucrats, the heirs of those who set up the LP in the first place, and who still need it, should use their bloc votes to oppose such demands. What is surprising is that a Revolutionary should see this struggle as being in some way, our primary fight. Our struggle is to break left reformist workers from reformism. To counterpose to their demands for greater control of the LP, with demands for what is necessary for the working class, what programme is necessary. The CLPD is not a centrist group it is reformist, it sees its goal as the control of the PLP by the CLPs, not the abolition of Parliament and its replacement by workers councils.

But then cde Carolan is out of touch with what the LP is - anyone who can write "If the LP were to fight the crusade we have advocated ... even on the basis of its present limited or muddled politics, it might radically change the climate

on the shop floor and call into being a storm of militant working class struggle", just fails to appreciate the nature of social democracy.

Michael Foot is by no means a hardened right winger in LP terms. But like the rest of the LP establishment, he sees that change comes through the ballot box. Even Tatchell who advocated a "seige of Westminster" by the Unemployed, was considered to be over the limit. Social democracy is reformist and Parliamentary. The idea that is anything else is cockeyed. Where Social democracy has led struggles it has always been to stay in control of the masses. But even in Chile in '73 or Spain in '36 or Germany in '20, the Reformists looked first to the Capitalist establishment for protection, and not the working class. It was the working class who scared them! Why should the LP rock the system? Cde Carolan might also like to consider the question of "Where was the LP during the Health Dispute?".

The working class does not look to the LP for leadership in its struggles, when it does look to the LP, to the extent that it does, it is as an alternative to mass struggle

Cde Carolan stresses that the LP is central to the work of marxists. This is not the case. The working class is the central area of our work, and our central task is to win workers to our programme. LP work should be seen in relation to that. But then cde Carolan has a very flippant attitude to the question of political programme. It is the political programme which characterises the party, it is therefore somewhat stunning to read that "... the notion that we can only relate politically to reformist workers ... with direct and fully labelled Trotskyist propaganda implies a dual-labour movement conception of the Trade Unions and political wings of the British Labour Movement. We reject it as out of touch with reality."

The programme is what characterises a political party, it is the guide to our work. It is essential that in both the LP and the T.U.s and other areas of our orientation in the working class, is done on our programme. Not because of some dogmatic reason or programmatic fetish, but because the purpose of a political programme, is not something to hide, but a guide to all comrades in their daily work. A Transitional programme is what characterises a trotskyist party.

Cde Carolan's lack of understanding of marxism is apparent yet again when he writes that "We must politicise the trade unions in our sense ... right now it is indisputable that IF the existing reformist movement could be made to fight for its own reforms that would be a tremendous advance from where we are at. In terms of ideas we can put and demands we can make with a wide immediate mobilising power than our full programme this is very important. "Such is the approach of the Transitional Programme...." Is this really the best that cde Carolan can do? That IF the reformists were to fight, things would be much easier for us. No doubt if they were to flock to our programme, things would be even easier. The question is why dream with "ifs" and "extremely probables"? It most certainly isn't the method of dialectical MATERIALISM. Why is it that the reformist leaders won't fight? What did Trotsky mean by the "crisis of leadership of the proletariat"? The approach of the Transitional Programme was to start from where the working class is at, now, not where they would be if the reformist leaders started fighting. It also understands why reformism, which accepts the fundamentals of the Capitalist system, is impotent in the face of the capitalist crisis. In other words, when cde Carolan writes, "if" reality flies out the window!

The aim of the Transitional Programme is to take workers from their day to day struggles to the threshold of the Socialist Revolution. Cde Carolan however writes "It is only on the level of mass movements, of general strikes which overflow the normal channels and boundaries of trade unionism ... that 'trade union' direct action can reach a higher level than mass political action, even on reformist politics...." Just what the implications of this are, is hard to stomach. Cde Carolan is basically saying that strike action/occupations with all the questions about organising, strategy, the role of the police and the law

etc is secondary to mass political action (an example of what is meant would have been useful, but I assume mass demonstrations involving a few thousand people for one day , or general elections are what is meant). It seems obvious that those who advocate the latter approach are those who use the "blackboard and a pupil-teacher relationship ... to the working class", and not the other way around.

Cde Carolan seems to equate rejection of his desire for "broad groups" approach to T and LP as in some way a harking back to the SIL/WRP approach (though he may now be equating it to proof of membership of the Spartacists) is laughable if it wasn't so slanderous. It would be easier to equate the broad groups approach as a harking back to the Socialist Outlook period of the Healeyites, but that is not a particularly useful point to make. What we do however wish to point out is that broad groups , by their very nature (which is , in passing, a thoroughly Pabloite nature and first spelt out in "The building of the Revolutionary Party" by Pablo. in 1952), have to limit the programme. Not to do so would be to be a Party organ. The fact that cde Carolan doesn't seem to realise this is even more worrying and helps to explain why cde Carolan thinks selling T or B as a possibility.

Our desire for a Party Paper stems from necessity. It is important to firstly to have a clear understanding of the crisis facing Capitalism and the effect that this has on the working class and labour movement , and from that to develop a programme that meets the needs of the working class and our comrades on the shop floor who are arguing . Basic militancy is not enough, political leadership is needed. (Cde Ellis's document "The Labour Party" IB31 seems to be a good expansion on this idea.)

Cde Carolan writes that "we consider central to our work the task of organising the LP and T left and the militants for the struggle and for class struggle issues and politics in the LP and IM generally." Cde Carolan fails to raise the question of what programme or platform this organising is to be around. Is it to be the minimum agreement between our selves and the reformists, in other words their programme, or on the basis that we will provide the hard core, and that by fighting on our programme, the people around us will look to the WSL for leadership? Cde Carolan in effect answers this question? "(concretely now when it is EXTREMELY PROBABLE that the left offensive in the the LP will be resumed after the election, whatever its outcome, to abandon that work would be political suicide for marxists).

"Such organising is our technique both for forwarding the interests of the broad movement and simultaneously for building a revolutionary party inside that movement". In other words on the basis of a hunch from cde Carolan that the left will continue to fight for democracy in the LP, the role of the WSL will be to organise those forces, not around our programme, but on the basis of their democratic demands! Why should anyone want to join the WSL? In effect its programme will be a minimum/maximum programme, with the practical work competing with Briefing and CIPD . Following this road one is left only with the "blackboard" approach to recruitment to the WSL, something cde Carolan criticises later on on the same page.

Finally, though there is more of the same in cde Carolan's document, and he has since written a document attacking the Internationalist Tendency on totally apolitical ground, and insisting on referring to us as the RWL Tendency, which other comrades are replying to, I'd like to remind comrades of cde Smith's speech at the founding conference in 1981. In it he quote at some length from Leopold Trepper, ending with these two paragraphs:

"The Trotskyites can lay claim to this honor. Following the example of their leader, who was rewarded for his obstinacy with the end of an ice-axe, they fought Stalinism to the death, and they were the only ones who did. By the time of the great purges, they could only shout their rebellion in the freezing wastelands where they had been dragged in order to be exterminated. In the camps, their conduct was admirable. But their voices were lost in the tundra.
"Today, the Trotskyites have a right to accuse those who once howled along with the wolves. Let them not forget, however, that they had the enormous advantage

over us of having a coherent political system capable of replacing Stalinism. They had something to cling to in the midst of their profound distress at seeing the revolution betrayed. They did not "confess", for they knew their confession would serve neither the party or socialism."

The reason for quoting Leopold Trepper (leader of the Red Orchestra) is to point out in conclusion, that if there has ever been a time to carry out the sort of tactic that cde Carolan is now advocating then it was in the '20s and '30 in the Soviet Union. Many leading Left Oppositionists did; Radek, Prechrazhensky to name but two,, However the result of their capitulation was to confuse the struggle and allow Stalinism to continue. Obviously it is impossible to say that by following cde Carolan's proposals we will ensure the continuation of Capitalism, except in so far as to say that we will not be aiding its down fall.

Evington,

Jan/Feb 1983.