

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO.40

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In support of fusion with the Socialist League... Mellor, Paul,
Tyldesley

Critique of document submitted to CF conference
on women, and future perspectives for work
amongst young women Brown

Being a revolutionary means getting your hands
dirty Scott

Conference is February 18-19-20. Please make all arrangements
necessary to ensure that you can arrive for the Friday evening.

Comrades are asked to give a contribution of 20p per bulletin
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Further contributions for the IB should be sent to the centre,
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IN SUPPORT OF FUSION WITH THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Mellor, Paul, Tyldesley,

Comrades will have seen in IB 30 that the Socialist League (formerly the IMG) Have proposed discussions on the question of fusion between our two organisations. This proposal accompanies their turn towards increasing their work in the MP, including a suggested campaign around the election that comrades will have seen reported in issue 118 of our paper.

The signatories of this statement believe that we should respond favourably to their proposal; that the question of fusion should be seriously discussed at our coming conference; and that at our conference we ought to take a decision in principle in favour of fusion with them.

The Reasons for Fusion

1. Both the pre-1981 fusion organisations, the ICL and the old WSL, had been approached at least once by the IMG over the question of unity, and had rejected the idea. The ICL was last approached in 1978 when the IMG launched their ridiculous 'Socialist Unity' election campaign, and quite correctly refused to have anything to do with their campaign.

But this proposal of fusion is made in very different circumstances, and now, in these circumstances, a decision in favour of fusion would be the correct one.

The changes that have taken place that argue for fusion are -

i) their turn towards work in the TUs and in the MP.

ii) the developing crisis in the USFI.

iii) the change in the relative sizes of our organisations due to our 1981 fusion and their decline in membership.

2. About three years ago the IMG decided to turn towards doing more work in the MP, in which they already had a small number of members. Since then, we have increasingly found that they have been arguing a line very similar to, or identical to, our on the important issues that have arisen within the MP, and often - whether we like it or not - we have worked very closely with them. On a national level, this has happened with the 'deputy leadership' election campaign, the campaign against the witchhunt; on a local level, we have been in left caucuses with them on e.g. the issue of rates, rents, cuts, and local councils.

This has been because they have been moving towards the political approach that many in the WSL have been espousing and practising for years: they have been forced by events to realise that in 1978 their 'Soc. Unity' campaign was wrong and that we were working at least in the right direction.

We are also increasingly working with them in the TUs, particularly in Broad Lefts; we also worked with them to a limited extent in BL.

Both the IMG/SL and us are trying to draw non-aligned left reformists in the MP, and militants in the TUs, into 'united front' work. One result of this is that there is a large overlap between the peripheries of our two organisations. There are many potential recruits to the WSL who are very willing to work with both us and the IMG/SL, who would seriously consider joining a fused organisation - but wouldn't join either one beforehand.

With the decision of the SL, at their conference last December, to turn their whole organisation towards the MP, the convergence in political work between us and them will speed up; if we don't fuse with them, we will find more and more that they are turning up to the same meetings as us, to say the same things to the same people,

Of course, the reasons why the IMG/SL are in the MP are not our reasons; they regard the MP left in the same way as they regarded the ANL youth, and numerous other movements in the past - as an arena to recruit in by combining revolutionary politics in the abstract with opportunist politics on day-to-day issues. However, we believe that it would be more productive to argue over this inside a fused organisation than as one organisation to another.

3. At the NC (resolution printed in IB30), cd. Kinnell argued that unity with the IMG/SL would lead to "our political self-liquidation". This may have been the result five or ten years ago; now, by contrast, it is very possible that, on British perspectives, our politics could predominate in a fused organisation. Firstly, we would be about one third of the fused organisation at the start; and, probably the largest

coherent tendency within it. Even at this stage, we could be winning the discussions over British labour movement work. This is very different to the situation if, for instance, the IGL had agreed to fuse with the IMG in 1978, when we would have been only about one-eighth or one-tenth of the fused organisation.

Secondly, they are trying to move into a political arena where we have been working for several years, and which we understand far better than they do. They are trying to develop a political approach that some of us have been practising since the S***. Probably, therefore, our cds. in a fused organisation would become the de facto leaders of that organisation's work in the LM.

Thirdly, the recruitment after a fusion would be mainly of people who want to do serious work in the MP and TUs, and who are closer to our politics than to the SL's on this; our weight within the fused organisation would correspondingly increase.

Fourthly, we would not have to sacrifice any of the work we are

doing in the IM in order to fuse. This is a very significant difference to previous occasions when unity has been proposed.

4. Whilst, therefore, we would lose little by fusing with the IMG/SL, the potential gains are considerable. The resulting organisation would have at least five hundred members; the possibilities for recruiting following a fusion mean that it could by the end of this year have

many more. Such an organisation, with something like our British perspectives, would become a significant force within the MP and have much more impact in the TUs than either of our organisations singly. The possible (not inevitable) gains are great; we shouldn't lightly turn down such an opportunity.

5. The situation in the USFI. The departure of the Marenoites, and the possible split of the SWP(US) and co-thinkers, means that the USFI is in its most serious crisis in its history. Both the pre-1981 fusion WSL and the ICL recognised the need for regeneration of the FI, and for open discussions amongst those forces in the world who consider themselves Trotskyist. The developing disintegration of the USFI is making our perspective all the more necessary. By entering into the USFI, we could put our politics over to a whole new, and possibly receptive, audience within the national sections of the USFI.

The Arguments used Against Fusion.

To assist us to have a serious, considered, discussion on the fusion proposal, at conference, this section will take up some of the arguments used against the proposal.

1. The IMG are centrists.

This may be true, but it is not in itself an argument against fusion. Trotskyists have, in the past, entered into quite justified fusions with centrist groupings: for instance, the predecessors of the ICL entered the IS(now SWE) in the late '60s and formed a Tendency there. The important question is: will a fusion help the process of building a revolutionary party?

2. We have had bad experiences of trying to work with them in the past.

Where we have tried to do joint work - e.g. in the IGL with the two broad womens' papers and the discussions over uniting them - they have been un-cooperative and factional, and their proposals for joint work have proved to be manoeuvres rather than serious approaches.

But, firstly, entering into a fused, democratic centralist organisation with them is different to doing joint work, and different rules would apply. Secondly, some of the most aggressive of their recent attacks on

us have been launched not because of political differences, but as an attempt to magnify small differences to cover over the major similarities in the work that our two organisations are doing.

3. We would sacrifice our politics by fusing.

Not so, The large measure of agreement on immediate British perspectives means that we would be able to continue with the important work we are doing in the LM. Over international issues, particularly our attitude to the petty-bourgeois nationalist movements in central America and the Carribean, we would be giving up our public criticisms of these movements : in order to take those criticisms into a new arena. Clearly we could not reach agreement with the IMG/SL over these questions, but that should not be used as a barrier to fusion.

4. We have not consolidated our own fusion sufficiently to take on another, and much less amicable, fusion.

This is perhaps the most serious of the objections raised. Comrades who argue this should take their own argument seriously. What proposals do they have for reinforcing our fusion? Have they been arguing in favour of more discussion of the areas of difference left by our 1961 fusion, and against the postponements of these discussions? If comrades would support going into the IMG/SL but for this problem, then surely they would support a decision to go for fusion in, say, six months, with an intensive discussion of the differences within the League in the meantime.

Furthermore, how long do those comrades who put this argument think it will take to consolidate the fusion, at the current rate of progress? These differences which prevent us from fusing with the IMG/SL must surely be holding back our work in the class generally; the class struggle won't wait for us to sort out our own problems.

The WSL has a right to expect that comrades who use this argument against what would be agreed by everyone to be in the abstract desirable unification of two Trotskyist organisations- do so after giving it serious thought.

In Conclusion

We put to the WSL -

- 1) That a proper discussion of the IMG's proposal be held at our conference.
- 2) That the WSL should adopt the proposal put by cd, Gunther at the 8-9 Jan NC. (IB30; Gunther's resolution, from "The EC should therefor" to "joint work in the TUs and LP").

CRITIQUE TO DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO CF CONFERENCE (ON WOMEN) AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR WORK AMONGST YOUNG WOMEN. - Brown

As the most oppressed section of the working class, young women are also the least organised in the formal labour movement, i.e. MP & TUs. To involve them in the class struggle we have to look beyond these organisations to the institutions and aspects of capitalism which specifically oppress young women - to where young women will be taking up the struggle.

Education

Education is necessarily sexist as one of the main socialising agents of capitalism. The role of schools is to ensure that school leavers are prepared for their role in the workplace, or as housewife, and to ensure that they believe in maintaining the status quo.

As the present crisis deepens the school's role of training workers is becoming less important for capitalism. With youth's oppression increased through unemployment, its role of socialising will be the main thing for the same reasons sexism in schools will grow, girls will learn that it is 'unfair' for them to take men's jobs, and so they must be housewives.

Bringing youth into CF will lead to them organising in their schools. The NUSS is now virtually defunct and fascists are in most schools. An alternative must be shown. Total opposition to all education cuts. Expansion of women's opportunities, not their erosion. No platform for fascists.

The choices for young women leaving school are rapidly diminishing - low paid jobs, government training schemes, unemployment, marriage, prostitution.

Women in Paid Labour

Unskilled women's choice of jobs have never been good, but are now decreasing further. Textile factories - traditional employers of women - are closing down, one after another, and public sector jobs are going with the cuts.

The TUC's concept of men earning a family wage is hardly an alternative with over 5 million wage earners on low pay, and the continuing acceptance of minimal pay rises.

Women need to work, not for pin money, but for a decent living, and this necessity drives them into accepting low paid, bad conditioned jobs. This usually means government training schemes for young women.

Women are always accused of not wanting to fight for better pay and conditions by the bureaucracy, when in reality this is only an excuse for a sell-out, and due to women being excluded from union activity through the nature of the TUs. The obvious examples of this are NUPE, USDAW, NUTGVI, where a vast majority of membership of women is virtually unrepresented amongst the officials.

We should be organising women through struggle to take on the bureaucrats, not just because they are men, but because, in their privileged position, they have no relationship to the rank and file. For this reason they must be challenged and exposed as such.

Replacing male officials by female officials will not make them any better. We must take up the question of democracy and accountability, demanding that officials represent the membership in all aspects, e.g. skill level, income, sex, race, etc.

Unemployment

Young women, as well as being more frequently unemployed than men, also experience it as a harder burden.

They are expected to take on responsibilities in the home, helping other female members, like cooking, looking after brothers and sisters, etc.

They also have to tackle the propaganda about women taking men's jobs. This propaganda should be vigorously opposed and the demand for a woman's right to work kept up. This should be put into practice by supporting women threatened

Critique ... Women/2

with losing their jobs, i.e. those occupying their workplaces such as Lee Jeans and those striking against cuts such as school meals and NHS staff.

Young women as single parents are being attacked vigorously by the Tory government at present with new laws to prevent them claiming social security (UB 671, availability testing).

The Tories attack the weaker sections of the working class in an attempt to "divide and rule". For example, they have recently implemented the training schemes for youth, and monitoring of ethnic minorities as well as the attacks on women. We should take consideration of this when organising unemployed women, involving them in issues taken up by Unemployed Groups. But to do this the unemployed groups should take up aspects of benefits etc. specifically affecting women and not leave this to the women's campaign.

Working in women's unemployed groups we should show the reasons for the way the Tories carry out their attacks and link up with other groups in the area.

The fight against unemployment must be co-ordinated and not left so that each little group is fighting for its own little bit against other unemployed people.

Prostitution

Some women, stuck in the poverty trap, try to escape through prostitution. There is no doubt that this increases in times of high unemployment.

Unemployment and the pressure of YOPS, with no opposition from the TU leadership, has created a situation where employers are able to drive down young people's wages to a level just above the YOP wage of £25, rather than a TU rate. For young women this position restricts their ability to earn an independent living wage and into seeing marriage or prostitution as a way out of boring low-paid jobs.

Prostitutes are treated as sub-humans. When they are beaten up, raped, etc., it is seen as less tragic than if such a thing happens to other women. Yet by capitalism's corrupt morality their clients, most of whom have well-paid 'respectable' jobs are considered to legitimately need an outlet for their sexual tensions.

The hypocrisy goes further when women are condemned for selling their bodies to a man for one night, but praised for doing so for a lifetime through marriage.

Family

The family is a necessary part of capitalism in the economical and ideological role it plays and it is the bourgeoisie who have the most to gain by its maintenance.

Women provide a cheap labour force in the family, they feed and clothe male workers for free, keeping them fit and healthy, preparing them for the next day at work. In addition to this they are rearing tomorrow's workers in the same way. This is a totally wasteful and uneconomical way of performing domestic work, with each household doing its own cooking, washing, etc., in small units. Yet for the capitalist it means that they have a larger market on which to sell their commodities. It also gives them the labour that performs these tasks for FREE.

The Tory government is slashing the domestic services that it does provide such as school meals, NHS, etc. - thus increasing women's burden. We must organise women against these attacks and be on the offensive, demanding more services. Initiating and being involved in Nursery Campaigns and occupations, school meals strikes, NHS occupations and strikes.

Women's second role in the family is that of emotional support for her husband and children. This puts a damper on moves towards militancy, when a man can come home and unload his work tensions onto his wife - it can mean physical violence. "Once he came at me with the kitchen knife saying I was the boss and

he wasn't going to take any more shit from me..." or moral support: "when he comes home from work, I really think it's up to me to help him relax and feel good. If he's grumpy and tired I cheer him up,"

Militancy is quelled also, simply by a wife and children's presence:

"...But he can't quit 'cos of me and the kids. We need his wages."

- and the pressure this puts on him not to take industrial action so as to take home a regular wage. This must be counteracted by politicising women in the home, involving them in community activities, i.e., tenants' associations, local action committees, etc.

Although, as Strummer tells us "regardless of class, women are oppressed as women through the family structure", working class women have additional burdens that double their oppression. This is mainly on an economical plane - the fact that financially they have to live week to week and that they own precious nothing, e.g. doing the shopping they have to price every item and cut corners; the upkeep of their homes is more difficult with less space and less equipment; clothes & furnishing have to be repaired rather than replaced. On top of this there is the pressure of children, who through the living conditions develop psychological problems and husbands who are continuously wrecked by their work. These are all quotes from working class women whose lives were described in "More than a Labour of Love".

SEXUALITY

For the bourgeoisie it is essential for the men to repress their women's sexuality so as to be sure who inherits their money. Yet these men are happy to use the prostitutes, women of the working class, for their pleasure.

The question of inheritance is not an issue for the virtually propertyless working class. But the suppression of working class women's sexuality is extremely important for the ruling class.

For these women to gain sexual freedom would threaten the structures of capitalism through its impact on the family. So it is denied them. In the 3rd World this is more open with cliterodectomy, etc. But in the 'civilised' world the suppression of sexuality is more oppressive for its subtlety.

Women are so conditioned into sexual suppression that it is the acceptance norm to them. A part of this conditioning is the fear of pregnancy - young unmarried girls being pregnant is unacceptable to bourgeoisie ideology. And then, contrary to this, there is the romantic portrayal of sex. A contradiction thus develops, males are taught in the selfish traditions of capitalism, that sex is something where they take without giving, and a girl's wish becomes fantasy. They have had such different socialisation that misunderstanding, frustration and inhibitions set in. They are caught in a trap where something that is meant to be so good never turns out to be. And sex is eventually traded as a favour to a husband or boyfriend.

To start to relieve this young girls must be given access to contraception and advice. They need to be given information in surroundings where they aren't too inhibited to ask questions and discuss.

International Solidarity

We stand in solidarity with working class women in other countries. Women are struggling against Imperialism, both in national liberation struggles, and against the governments of their own countries.

The Six Counties, just on our doorstep, shows the oppression these women face. Although they are ignored by the national media they are part of the struggle at every step.

Young women, known to be republicans, are picked up by the army on their 16th, 17th, 18th birthday, etc., taken to Castlerea and interrogated, being tortured with beating, fondling, and rape. These women know they are being used AS

Critique ... Women/4

WOMEN. They feel their oppression many times more than we can ever imagine. Being part of the liberation struggle has raised their consciousness as women. The Armagh women state "When we achieve our 32 county Democratic Republic our full potential as women must be recognised and our equal status assured." (Armagh picket - Interantional Women's Day 1982)

These women have no doubt that ridding Ireland of the British Government is a necessary condition for their freedom as women. They also have no doubt that this will not automatically bring women's liberation, and that they must continue the struggle from now until its end.

When Leicester comrades went over to Ireland tentative links were made with Republican youth. These links must be strengthened, showing our solidarity by continuing their fight amongst the working class in this country.

Involve the Whole Movement

It is not enough to say to men in the organisation that they are sexist and that they must do as we say - that often meaning leave women to do it all alone and put the odd resolution now and then. We must involve these men in discussions and in women's struggles.

In CF it is the same men who voted for Strummer's document and would have voted for the day school to be women only, who made scandalous sexist remarks when Melanie got up to speak. I'm no longer prepared to let these men off the hook because they vote the right way. It is necessary to have an understanding of the nature and roots of women's oppression, with a proletarian orientation, within CF. And it is necessary to involve all the membership in such discussions. When saying "men are the people who carry out the oppression of women," we need to explain why and how they are doing so, and why it is in their own class interests to combat it.

For those who say we should organise young women around WX. This paper has not seriously orientated to working class, young, women as yet. As I hope I have explained in this document we need to go far beyond what WX has proved it can do so far, by organising women on a local level, and drawing them towards revolutionary politics.

CONCLUSION

Strummer opened her document by stating that "Women's oppression is not specific to capitalist societies" and "we reject the type of analysis that that women are oppressed only by the economy, and that a change in the economy will therefore liberate women". This is quite true, but its implications are quite clearly that there is no link between overthrowing capitalism and women's liberation.

The economic roots of women's oppression have developed to an ideological level. We therefore have to fight the both at the same time. It is however true that being involved in strikes, occupations, etc., will bring women into conflict with their task as wife and mother. Women's consciousness will be raised through struggle far more than by discussion.

I too agree that a change in the economic system cannot alone liberate women. But it is a necessary condition for women's liberation which can only be used for that is women are involved in the struggle to rid us of capitalism and the struggle for their emancipation right through to the end.

BEING A REVOLUTIONARY MEANS GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY

"As the experiences of the Russian Revolution teach us - remember this in England and America! - the most important thing of all is to stay in the midst of the masses of workers. You will often go wrong with them, but never leave the mass organisations of the working class, however reactionary they may be at any given moment." (Emphasis added) (Zinoviev's closing speech at the 15th. Session of the Second Congress of the Comintern)

Stoke I - CL was possibly one of the most sectarian branches in the group. Coming, as a worker, into the group, which was heavily student dominated, my impression was of a group of people who saw being a revolutionary as going to I - CL rallies, conferences and demos, and going along to the J to give the M an intellectual kick in the groin, but who did nothing to translate all the fine words from the rallies and conferences into practice through consistent work in the local labour movement. The branch organiser for example was not even a member of the O, and was afraid to talk to workers on picket lines for fear that they would realise he was a student.

This is what is wrong with the position of those who would have us withdraw from the O, or like Cunliffe would have us adopt a different method of operating in the O to in the TU's. They fail to recognise that a partial or full withdrawal from the O reflects a sectarian political deviation which sooner or later would manifest itself in the TU's and other areas of our work. (A sign of this is the attitude of some comrades to CND) What indeed would happen when, having handed the O back to the right wing, the witchhunt is extended to the TU's (as Wighell has attempted). Would we, faced with expulsion for selling the paper/being a member of an 'illegal' organisation, throw our hands up in despair, like the SWP, declare that it would be unprincipled to continue working in the TU's, and set off to build our own pure revolutionary unions. It is the path that sectarianism towards the O has already led the SWP, and the logic applies equally to sectarians in the WSL.

I am not saying that because the sectarianism in the Stoke I - CL stemmed from students that this type of sectarianism is peculiar to student comrades. Obviously not. One only has to read the speeches of Willie Gallacher during the debate on the Labour Party at the Second Congress of the Comintern to realise that TU militants can easily fall into the same sectarian approach. It reflects an attempt to find easy routes to the revolution. In this respect sectarianism is similar to centrism resulting in abrupt changes of course when the going gets tough down a particular route.".....for the working class, for communism there can be no opposition from the left" (Ibid.) One has only to look at the IMG's hot and cold attitude to the O to see how the politics of sectarianism and centrism merge. But being a revolutionary involves more than working where it's easiest, more than rallies, conferences and WSL Summer Schools; it means getting your hands dirty doing the boring routine work of canvassing etc. that is necessary to win the respect of workers whose political outlook at best centres round reformism and parliamentarism, and it means the hard work of winning these workers in the process of struggle against the reformists in the O and TU's to our Programme.

Missing from these comrades position is any political perspective for the course of the class struggle and its reflection in the O, and symptomatic of their sectarian approach is any consideration of the effect our actions might have on the course of that development. As JM wrote in S. 118 p8 "whether a return of the Tories, a right wing Labour administration or a coalition - will mean an intensification of the struggle on the industrial front.....Any administration taking power will be forced to attack the TU's."

Such an attack like the Tories attacks up to yet may be successful/meet no response. If so it is likely that workers as they did after the Tories took office will turn to the O for a political answer to their problems (certainly it is more likely than them turning to the WSL). Alternatively, workers may resist further attacks the upturn in militancy radicalising further the rank and file of the O. Additionally, the struggle inside the O would be renewed from a higher level were the Tories to win the election as the right wing would be blamed for defeat, resulting from their refusal to fight for conference policies, from the witchhunt etc. Were Labour to win the election they would be faced with attacking a working class with expectations of an improvement in their condition, and with a Party rank and file angry over conference policies being dropped, and which could be threatening reselections, and demanding Leadership elections. Whatever, the variant the centre of working class political struggle will be in the O. It would be sectarian madness were we to voluntarily isolate ourselves from that struggle. We must begin to make whatever organisational steps are needed to give us the flexibility to intervene in that struggle.

As I wrote in S.93 on Labour's Programme the ideas may be limited but even the limited gains for the working class will not be achieved "Without a fighting organised ~~left wing~~ left wing in the party and adequate mechanisms to ensure democracy and accountability, this Programme like all the others in the past will be no more than waste paper." We should build that organised left wing to fight for the limited reforms of the Programme and their extension, the necessity of which we will prove in struggle. That way we will build the WSL and break out of the isolation which British Marxism has faced since the beginning of the century, an isolation resulting time and again from its sectarian stance to the O.

Scott 8th. Feb. 1983

