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Party Front or United Front: the
Broad Left Trade Union Strategy
for the 1980s

Proletarian Tasks Tendency
(former RWL minority)

Some comments on building the
League

Paul

Unemployment Perspectives 83

Maidstone

Many comrades are worried to discuss the reasons for the loss of the Party's Labour Party Committee, the relative loss in active members in the Trades Union Congress for a long time, and the effects of the loss of the Party's rank-and-file. Some comrades think that these problems can be overcome by a change in the Party's strategy. This is a head-in-the-sand attitude. Unemployment will continue at the above-mentioned level for many months if not for years to come. The Party will have the ability to win support to reverse every union strike as they are currently being called by the TUC. Good-Will Company, and Labour Party strike.

The attempt to build a Party-front-type radical trade union movement is questionable in good economic times: it is also to be avoided in times of retreat. Our strategy for now must be to build a broad left opposition to the right-wing "Union" and the "Right" - Organise the Unemployed. These demands are generally made of the bourgeoisie without immediately calling for their overthrow.

The possibility of a world turn-around on the political level lies beneath the surface. It is reflected in the rapid rise of the far left (September 1981), the Western European revolutionary (Europe and America), the Italian General Strike and British strikes of September 1982. We must today analyse intelligently for these mass movements of tomorrow. We must realise that this is 1930 or 1932 and not 1914 or 1917 when radical organisations and sit-down strikes were the order of the day.

Unfortunately, the kind of trade union movement we have attempted to build in Michigan, California and Missouri (but not in New York) have been more or less watered-down versions of the Spectator-Workers League party front formation. Attempts have been made to artificially introduce programmes into these committees that don't reflect the level of class struggle of the workers in those local unions or shops. Other demands such as liberal sympathy strikes to support other unions or radicals in favour of the British are introduced to increase party

PARTY FRONT OR UNITED FRONT

THE BROAD LEFT TRADE UNION STRATEGY FOR THE 1980s

At present the working class and more concretely the trade unions in the United States are in a broad, even disorderly retreat. The smashing of PATCO has been followed by unprecedented concessions and wage cuts among the big auto, trucking and municipal unions, not to mention many smaller contracts. The retreat in the unions has been complemented by the attacks on the working class from the Reagan budget cuts, the defeat of ERA, etc...The defeat of Argentina, Solidarnosc, and the PLO internationally also strengthens the offensive of the capitalist bloodsuckers.

Behind the retreat are the body blows of the economic collapse. Unemployment has knocked the wind out of the working class. The pessimism of the LOR report on Italy to the April TILC conference could also apply to the United States.

Many comrades are afraid to discuss the reasons for the collapse of the Bay Area Labour Party Committee, the massive loss in active members in the Teamster Workers for a Fighting Union, and the effects of the lay-offs of most cadres of the River Rouge plant. Some comrades think that these set-backs can be overcome by simple super-activism of cadres. This is a head-in-the-sand attitude. Unemployment will continue at the above-6% recession level for many months if not for years to come. Employers will have the ability to hire ten scabs to replace every union striker as they are currently doing during the St. Louis Coca-Cola company strike and Airport Limo Drivers strike.

The attempt to build party-front-type radical trade union caucuses is questionable in good economic times: it is close to suicidal in times of retreat. Our strategy for now must be to build broad Left opposition tendencies around the slogan: "Stop the Retreat - Organise the Unorganised". These demands should generally be made of the bureaucrats without immediately calling for their ousters.

The possibility of a rapid turn-around on the political level lies beneath the surface. It is reflected in the huge Solidarity Day March (September 1981), the Nuclear Freeze demonstrations (Europe and America), the Italian General Strike and British NHS strikes of September 1982. We must today prepare intelligently for these mass upsurges of tomorrow. We must realise that this is 1930 or 1932 and not 1934 or 1937 when radical organising and sit-down strikes were the order of the day.

Unfortunately, the kind of trade union caucuses we have attempted to build in Michigan, California and Missouri (but not in New York) have been more or less watered-down versions of the Spartacist-Workers League party front formation. Attempts have been made to artificially introduce programmes into these committees that don't reflect the level of class struggle of the workers in these local unions or shops. Often demands such as illegal sympathy strikes to support other unions or resolutions in favour of Gay Pride Week are introduced to impress party

leaders, the "radical public" or petty-bourgeois movements such as those orientated around the Gay News Telegraph or the National Black Independent Political Party.

These artificial demands do not flow from the perceived needs of the workers in the shops. They are not transitional or pedagogical to them. Their introduction only further isolates our dwindling trade union cadres and gives the serious workers the impression that we are only in the unions to follow an "outside agenda" and programme which doesn't meet their real immediate needs.

Our attempt to build Teamster Workers for a Fighting Union in St. Louis has failed. No teamsters outside our own RWL cadre have come to our past few caucus meetings. Bob M. and J.M. have dropped out. Two stewards elected on our slate don't even attend Shop Steward Council meetings, much less our caucus gatherings.

One of the reasons is that serious militants viewed our caucus as being manipulated and dominated by an outside organisation (RWL), some of whose leaders were not working in Teamster shops or in some cases not even members of the local union.

The transfer of comrade P.H. out of the Teamsters was very foolish. This comrade pulled the rip-cord and bailed out of the plane while he wants to continue to make kamikaze attacks at the Stewards Council. The most absurd development of this was that I was singlehandedly supposed to get the reactionary Reaganite Stewards Council to endorse Gay Pride Week. In reality, the only gay teamster we know never came to Stewards Council meetings when he was a steward and didn't even bother to show up at the Gay Pride March himself.

Our strategy inside TDU has also failed. Some RWL leaders wrongly viewed TDU as being composed largely of closet radicals who simply had to be pushed to declare in favour of a "revolutionary TDU".

Our super radical (for TDU) resolutions at the TDU convention fell flat on their face. They simply further isolated us from the existing we kly organised Broad Left forces around Camarata/Janadia, Reily/Willensky (Northern California chapter), and the New York Workers Power/RUL sympathisers (see Steve Zeluck's article in Workers Power). Our strategy should have been to give strength and organisation to the Broad Left tendencies, rather than push a vote on radical resolutions.

Just as our British co-thinkers have a "Draft Benn" strategy in the British Labour Party, we should have had a "Draft Camarata" strategy in TDU. This would have meant focusing efforts on mobilising support to Camarata's resolution against TDU sell-outs and the Workers Power initiated resolution on concessions.

The issues of racism and Labour Party could have been brought up indirectly in the workshops and directly in a propagandistic way in a Workers Struggle leaflet. The best way to fight racism in TDU is to be the best organisers of women, Black and Chicano teamsters, not moralistic lectures.

If we have not already hurt our chances too badly by isolating ourselves in Teamsters, we must now become strong builders of TDU. In some cases we might become simply partners in ad hoc coalitions

around burning "single issues" which don't openly or immediately call for ousting the bureaucrats.

Only when a Broad Left has been built and a "make the Lefts fight" line followed for some time can we think of building caucuses on more radical transitional demands. Until then these demands can rarely be agitational, but must remain propaganda articles in Workers Struggle.

The trade union strategy of some RWL leaders is not the traditional policy of Marxists in the United States except for the Socialist Labour Party (1880s - 1914) and the Communist Party under Third Period Stalinism (1928 - 1934). Nor was it the "Make the Lefts Fight" line of healthier Healyism (SLL, 1957 - 1964) or the Broad Left Unity Strategy of our old or new British co-thinkers.

From the beginning Marxists in the United States not only had to fight American pragmatism and right opportunism but also left sectarianism. Engels wrote the following to German immigrant socialists in the United States about one hundred years ago but it applies to some RWL policies today: "But above all give the movement time to consolidate; do not make the inevitable confusion of the first start worse confounded by forcing down people's throats things which, at present, they cannot properly understand but which they soon will learn."--Dobbs, Revolutionary Continuity p. 192.

There is no space in this document to review the policy of communists in the trade unions from 1900 to 1950. Such a study is essential, however, for the working out of a correct trade union strategy for the RWL today. RWL comrades must at least read the following in addition to Cannon's works and Art Preis's book on the CIO:

Vera Weisbord:	<u>A Radical Life</u>
Farrell Dobbs:	<u>Four books on Teamsters and especially his new book, Revolutionary Continuity.</u>
Tom Kerry:	<u>Workers, Bosses and Bureaucrats: A Socialist View of Labor Struggles Since the 1930s</u>
John Lister:	<u>Spartacist Truth Kit</u>
Education for Socialists pamphlet:	<u>The Background for "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party."</u>

Tom Kerry was the outstanding leader of the Trotskyist work in the unions for the SWP in the 1930s and 1940s, especially in the Maritime and Painters unions. What he says about Trotskyist union strategy, despite some right opportunist deviations, has much truth in it for us today.

Comrades who have bothered to read Farrell Dobbs books on the Minneapolis Strikes know that agreement on demands for a workers government, gay liberation, or anti-Zionism were not made pre-conditions for unity in the union struggles to build the Teamsters or requirements to join such rank and file formations as the "Committee of 100". Comrades who have bothered to read John Lister's Spartacist Truth Kit know his views on American union tactics are very different from some sectarian RWL leaders.

For example, the RWG, like the Sparts, opposed critical support to Miller in the UMWA elections (1972, 1976), or Sadlow-

ski in the steelworkers election (1978), and Morrissey in the NMU. Lister says: "Blandly ignoring the growth of rank and file movements in support of the 'insurgents' and the debate on union democracy and on policy which the very existence of such 'left' challengers promoted, they (the Spartacists) therefore simply denounce all three."

The RWL's sectarian trade union policy is in sharp contrast with the United Front-Broad Left policy of our British co-thinkers in the labour movement. An article in S@ no 95 (August 12, 1982), page 11, attacks Tony Cliff's SWP's recent trade union turn but in many ways it also applies to the RWL. Stan Crooke and Ian McCalman begin by reporting on their comrades' support for the "New Broad Lefts (that) have been established in NUR and COHSE, CPSA, NUPE, IRSF and TGWU unions. Outstanding in these Broad United Fronts which have had a real, significant impact on the class struggle in Britain are "Health Care Workers for the Full Claim" and the "Leyland Action Committee". These groups are more or less ad hoc formations around contract demands or trade union democracy. Our co-thinkers give them leadership but do not insist on trying to shove down their throats a fixed and artificial set of "transitional demands". The article comments on "...attempts by small groups of left-wingers to hurl calls for action over the heads of the official movement are no substitute for a fight to transform, invigorate and renew the leadership of the movement." They criticise the British SWP for abandoning "...the whole enterprise of grouping militants for the immediate struggle against the bureaucracy, without sectarian preconditions of political affiliation or across-the-board political agreement."

Crooke and McCalman also criticise the "simplistic anti-bureaucracy approach of the Rank and File groups" of the Cliffites. "Unofficial strike action was always fetishised by the Rank and File groups and involvement in the official union machinery was downplayed. The result was often that, apart from barracking from the back of a meeting, the union bureaucracy was given a free hand to carry on its betrayals whilst the Rank and File groups attempted to mobilise phantom armies to tilt at windmills."

The S@ writers assert "a revolutionary organisation maintains its vitality by relating to class struggle. But the SWP's self-denying sectarianism has already led to a serious case of emaciation."

The RWL leadership has the same idealist method. It doesn't begin with the level of class struggle in the Teamsters today or the needs of building TDU and relate that to the Transitional Programme. Instead, "Right now, our essential task is to recruit to the RWL", and "the RWL therefore seeks to present itself as the leading pole of militancy in TDU". This is the central error in Statement of RWL Policy for the 1982 TDU convention document. It says, "the purpose of submitting our programme proposals in resolution form is not so much to win adoption of any of these resolutions -- although that is our goal --- for we do not now have significant influence in TDU, but rather to demonstrate to our contacts that we take our own programme seriously..."

But just the opposite is the case. Serious TDU militants

will know that these resolutions are too far out for TDU at this time. They will conclude that our purpose in TDU is one of three things:

- 1) moralistic, idealistic public exhibitionism;
 - 2) an attempt of an "outsider", "communist" organisation to rip off TDU.
 - 3) consciously or unconsciously to play the objective role of disrupting and confusing TDU in order to wreck it.
- After last year's essentially negative publicity in the Detroit Free Press it is likely that many TDUs will conclude the latter.

Already those who gave us half-hearted support at the 1981 convention, such as Jessie M. and Don C. are stating that they won't support our resolution at this convention.

Some comrades seem to think the TDU convention is like a student politics or SDS gathering where a lot of wild ideas can be discussed and voted on, because students are essentially middle-class and impotent in the real world. But the workers who come to the TDU convention face real and immediate problems; they are not interested in playing around. Foreexample, the six young TDU militants who will attend the convention from St. Louis UPS, reject us.

Even if we are only interested in ripping off recruits for RWL at the TDU convention we would proceed differently. We would have a special edition of Workers Struggle or build a RWL fringe meeting at a hotel nearby where our socialist ideas could be discussed for those interested.

But right now TDU members are not interested in making TDU a socialist front organisation. Our super-radical (for this historical conjunction) resolutions simply make them feel up-tight and scare off serious discussions of the ideas we want to advance.

It would be far better to confine ourselves to fighting for a few resolutions on which a Broad Left tendency in TDU could be consolidated.

Comrade Trotsky has written, "Each sectarian wants to have his own labour movement. By the repetition of magic formulas he thinks to force an entire class to group itself around him." -- quoted in S@, no 95 p 11.

Comrade Lister has written of the Spartacists: "Their periodic forays into the unions are not designed to strengthen or advance the struggle and organisations of the working class, but solely to further the interests of their own cult..." -- p 67, Spartacist Truth Kit.

Ditto RWL.

Behind the sectarian tactics of some RWL leaders is this idealist method. They refuse to recognise the state of the labour movement as it is today. They think they can build their own doll-house labour movement without dealing with the complexity and contradictions in living reality. They are therefore incapable of constructing the necessary bridges between today's backward labour movement and the class struggle formations of tomorrow.

The fruits of our sectarian policies in Local 688 were harvested at the October City Wide Shop Conference. This conference was attended by several stewards who were elected as stewards with the support of Teamsters for a Fighting Union, our now virtually defunct caucus in Local 688. As soon as they were elected, Bobby B., Gregory J., and Robert C., began to distance themselves from our caucus and its leftist programme. None of them would introduce or speak up for our radical resolutions at the City Wide Shop Conference. Sarah N. and Jessie M., two other stewards elected by our caucus, didn't even show up for the meeting. Bobby B., who was supported for steward by us and is a black woman factory worker, in fact made a snide comment about our resolutions. Others said that they "did not think the resolutions will get much support". Comrade J.H. was left in a very isolated spot. Only at the end of the meeting was he able to get support from 4 or 5 of the 171 delegates for a watered down version of the resolutions on the Airport Limo strike.

The dangerous effect of radical-phrasemongering leaflets can be seen at the September union meeting of the factory where comrade A.B. works. The leaflet distributed before this meeting was written and distributed by a RWL comrade not working at the factory. It contained personal attacks on union officials and a lot of wild rhetoric in addition to a proposed resolution against the company's new speed-up system. The workers there faced real attacks from speed-ups and disciplinary firings and might have supported at least parts of the resolution itself. Instead, comrade A.B. feels the wild-eyed personal attacks and unsubstantiated charges of the leaflet turned off many workers who might have at least listened to the content of the resolution. As a result, none of the workers backed comrade A.B. at the meeting and he wasn't even able to raise the resolution.

At the October 24th RWL St. Louis Organising Committee meeting revealed the disastrous results of having "outside" comrades write artificial petitions for other comrades to distribute. Comrade A.B. said that his steward, Bob C., refused to support a petition drawn up by comrade S.C., who doesn't work in that factory. The reason he gave is that he wasn't consulted on the content of the petition before it was drawn up and distributed. Of course, the opposition of the elected steward, especially one elected on the Teamsters for a Fighting Union slate, would greatly damage support for the petition and comrade A.B. in the shop. For this reason, Comrade A.B. supported Comrade Hayes' contention that he should first consult the stewards at his airport workshop before rushing around with an ultra-left petition suggested by comrade S.C. Meanwhile, the same comrade who writes hysterical leaflets for other comrades to commit Bonzaicharges with, refuses to do any organising in his own shop or challenge his own B.A. on the ground that he is a new hire. This is a flimsy excuse as he has been off probation for some time.

The RWL policy of appointing as the organisers of Teamster fractions persons who are not working at Teamster jobs or in some cases not even having Teamster cards, experience, or are not even currently working in trade union situations is madness. Can we imagine the WSL assigning an Oxford Don to dictate TGWU tactics to Alan Thornett or Tony Richardson? Yet in California the head of

our Teamster work is an unemployed comrade who has no connection with the industry. The head of our Teamster fraction at the TDU convention will be an individual who only worked two weeks in a Teamster shop before being stupidly told to quit by our national secretary.

This policy of having distant or outside party intellectuals set the details of tactics for comrades working in the industry, is mindful of the "auto crisis" in the US SWP of 1939. "Burnham and Abern made the fatal mistake of thinking that party members can be led by resorting primarily to formal authority. They looked at the party constitution and saw right there in black and white that the Political Committee is empowered to make decisions between meetings of the National Committee. So they started to bark out commands without regard to reality, their own experience in the given area of work, or the opinions of others who were more experienced." --p.7 Ibid.

The SWP PS ordered the SWP's supporters in the auto industry to join Horner Martin's rump split from the CIO. The party's trade union fraction opposed this and refused to distribute the Socialist Appeal paper calling for this adventurous action. Later the PC majority orders were overturned during the Schachtman split. In June 30, 1939, James P. Cannon wrote the document "On the Relation between Mass Agitation and Trade Union Work", found on page 43 of Background to "The Struggle For a Proletarian Party".

In this document, Cannon outlines the patience, dialectical method of genuine Trotskyist trade union tactics:

"Trade union work is not easy. Moreover it is restricted in scope not complete of itself -- herein the syndicalists commit one of their greatest errors -- and must be supplemented all the time by the general political and agitational work of the party." -- p 44.

Larar Cannon more clearly states that revolutionists in the unions must not insist on the full programme, but present it bit by bit in relation to the developments in their shops, and the class struggle:

"Trade union work requires patience, endurance and skill. In very few unions, at present, is it possible to unfold the whole programme of the Fourth International. In many unions dominated by red-baiting bureaucrats, it is necessary for revolutionary militants to refrain from exposing themselves to expulsion by advertising their political affiliations. Revolutionary trade union work, as a rule, in America, is quiet, molelike, unspectacular. To carry on such work unfalteringly; to work in the unions in piecemeal fashion for parts of the programme while holding fast to the party, which in its general agitation expounds and defends the programme as a whole; to be attentive to the smallest issues of the day without succumbing to opportunism; to entrench oneself and be in a position to influence the whole union when the time for action comes--these are among the sternest and most important revolutionary tests today...It is easy to fight one's way out of a union by ill-considered tactics, and still easier to talk one's way out. But what the party needs is militants who know how to dig deep in the unions

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and stay there, gather a circle of sympathisers and supporters about them, and transmute their personal influence into party support in the trade union movement." --p. 44

The trade union approach of the S/P in the 1930s and 1940s and the WJL today are essentially correct. The RWL should try to model out policies after their method without overlooking their mistakes and omissions. The RWL methods are more akin to the sectarianism of the Spartacists and the adventurism of the Progressive Labor Party and Revolutionary Communist Party USA. Despite the dedication and energy of the comrades, these tactics are leading to the isolation and victimisation of cadre and forcing others to burn out and drop out.

Instead of assuming that our leaders know it all, comrades should make a serious study of history of the development of Communist and Trotskyist trade union tactics.

were presented with an 'Organizational report', or 'Organizational resolution', drawn up by a member of the E.C., which formed the basis for a discussion on such areas, and I expect that this will happen for this conference.

Any ordinary member of the League is bound to have a somewhat partial and parochial view of our current state. Even so, I think that it's possible to anticipate the findings of that report. It will probably show that we have made little progress in building the League since the fusion. The one real gain in that time has been that members of the two pre-fusion groups have been able to work together well on the routine business of the branches and groups.

Three examples of this lack of progress are - Recruitment - to the Bd. groups as well as to the League - has been hardly enough to compensate for the members who have dropped out since fusion; the broad groups that have a much larger regular attendance at meetings than the local WSL members are probably still the exception rather than the rule. Resolving the differences left over from the fusion discussions still has not taken place apart from the conference on the question of the EEC. In our women's work particularly, the differences that exist and have not been worked out continue to hold back. Finance - where the considerable running debts of the pre-fusion organizations have been not just added together, but compounded since the fusion.

This article is an attempt to discover the deeper problems that are hindering our work, and to suggest some solutions. I hope that, at least, it will stimulate other members into giving some thought to this. It's necessary to state two 'disclaimers' at the start. Firstly, that I don't think that the problems we have started with, or were caused by, fusion.

Paul.

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(Cannon in 'History of American Trotskyism', p.118)

In the forthcoming conference, we need to answer for ourselves the question: 'What to do next?'. This must include seriously discussing the building of the WSL as part of the fight for a revolutionary party, and producing guidelines and targets for our growth and development over the next year.

To do this, we need firstly an examination of the state of the League after eighteen months of the fusion; an examination that will cover both the 'external' aspect of the League - winning respect and support for our ideas, recruiting new members, - and the 'internal' - ^{such as} developing our members' understanding of the workings of capitalism and of how we intervene in the class struggle with the aim of its overthrow. At conferences of the ICL, we were presented with an 'Organisational report', or 'Organisation resolution', drawn up by a member of the P.C., which formed the basis for a discussion on such areas, and I expect that this will happen for this conference.

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It's necessary to state two 'disclaimers' at the start. Firstly, that I don't think that the problems we have started with, or were caused by, fusion.

Secondly, that I don't think that there is any necessary conflict between building the WSL and building the broad groups, the youth organisation, or the broad womens' organisation.

What kind of a Party have we now?

Comrade Cunliffe's article on Party-building in IB11 was a welcome indication that atleast some of the leadership are thinking about the problems hindering the building of the WSL. However, it rarely descended from the very general and theoretical level to the problems facing branches on their ground, to the present situation in the class struggle and our immediate political perspectives within that. Also, the extent to which branches can transform the work of the League for the better without a change in the League as a whole is very limited,

So I'll start by describing 'where we are now'.

Firstly, it's only five years since those of us who were in the ICL tried to make the turn away from being essentially a propaganda group, towards directing our work mainly towards the wider labour movement. The process of clarifying our politics and of relating mainly towards other left groups culminated in the production of our manifesto ('The Fight for Workers' Power') in the summer of 1977. Although prior to that we had been producing a number of industrial bulletins, some of them regularly and with an established audience in the factory concerned, our turn to doing mass work started in reality with the launching of the S*** campaign in the MP in mid-'78.

When we launched the S***, we saw it not just as a party-building exercise in the way that, for instance, the IMG (now SL) have turned to MP work. We saw it as part of a longer-term perspective that we summarised in the slogans 'Organise the left' and 'Renovate the labour movement'. The tasks involved were, we realised, huge for a group of our size (there were then about 160 of us); we were a very small engine trying to set in motion a huge machine. Consequently, we had to organise a large body of left reformists, in the MP and the TUs, around the limited programme of S*.

In the light of discussions being conducted in the WSL, it is necessary to state here that I think that the turn to the broad paper was, and remains, the right one. However, we have found that to organise the left we have had to do so around even more limited demands, such as in the RF** for the democracy campaign, around 'left caucuses' in boroughs, etc.

The tasks we have taken on in our work in the LM, even with the fusion, are still huge compared to our small size. The necessity to go into broader groups, e.g. 'Br*****', has made this even more true. Although we have won considerable respect, and a large audience, for our politics, we haven't turned that into recruitment. Now, to carry forward the organising of the left for democratising the LM, we need to take that perspective into the TUs. All this has produced an enormous strain on our resources; It is

vital, therefore, that we ensure that the most effective, the most productive, use is made of the resources we have (human, material, and financial). This must include a considered division of resources between those spent on carrying out our work in the class, and those spent on those activities (contact work, educationals, further study, etc.) necessary for the building of the League.

It's this that I'll deal with in the rest of this article.

1 The question of priorities.

Consider the factors that determine how comrades spend their time in political activity.

Firstly, they are expected by the League to be active in their local MP; through their MP branch, YM, WM, TUbranch, or more than one of these. Serious involvement in an MP branch or CMP means taking on officerships, collecting dues, helping with canvassing, leafletting, etc.; the more left-wing the MP the more active it will be. Then there are caucus meetings. And on top of this, some cds. have become local councillors which is one helluva job in itself.

Then cds. are involved in their TUs, which can itself lead to broad left, union officerships, or other commitments. Or unemployed cds. can be involved in unemployed gps, students in their SUS, women in their WMPs, those under 26 in youth work,

For an employed young woman, there are already potentially four areas of work to get involved in.

Secondly, some cds. choose to get involved in other areas of work; to state a far from comprehensive list: Irish work, anti-racist/anti-fascist work, gay movement, Polish solidarity, CND,.....

Cds who work in these areas do so at their own discretion, rather than on being assigned to by the League; they often spend considerable time on routine business for the organisations/campaigns they take part in; and the overall control of their work by the League- by their branches or higher bodies- is often minimal. And how has all this effort contributed to the building of the League? Where are the recruits from this work? One consequence of this 'laissez-faire' attitude to cds. activity ^{is} that the time spent is time that they are not available to work in areas that the branch might decide is more productive. Another consequence is that -

Thirdly, cds involved in these areas of work then act as pressure-groups within the League, arguing that the League ought to devote more resources to their issue by financing pamphlets, by members joining local branches of the XYZ campaign, attending demonstrations, etc. The NC and EC do not appear to have a consistent policy, for deciding priorities for the work of the ^{League} beyond stressing the importance of LM work, for deciding either the total amount of resources to put into such campaigns or the allocation of resources

between campaigns. The consequence is that the better organised the pressure group, the more influence it has on the NC, the more resources it gets.

I'm not being narrowly economistic, arguing that we should ignore the issues involved and concentrate solely on strict TU and workplace questions. We need to take up every aspect of the oppression, or double- or multiple-oppression, of the class', of course - but that does not imply becoming active in campaigns around all these issues. It means raising the issues in our paper and in our TUs, etc.

The worst examples of our method (or lack of it) are in our Irish work, our CND work, and in the events of one month early last year. In describing these, I'm not implying that the cds. concerned are any more guilty of the failings I've mentioned than the rest of the League.

To take the latter example first ; in Feb. last year, when we were supposed to be encouraging contacts and others to come to either or both of two important (for us) conferences, -held on successive Saturdays!- the TU democracy conference and the Womens' TU conference- we were issued with an "urgent notice" to all broad groups telling us that we should be building for a March 13 demo. in London in solidarity with Polish workers, which was "vitally important for us...politically and organisationally". Not surprisingly, the attendance at 2 of the 3 events fell well short of expectations. The exception was the Womens' conference, and that was a success only because many women cds, concentrated on it to the exclusion of the other 2.

Second: we have secured a large influence on national and London committees of the MP Irish campaign, only to find that our cds have not had the time to properly carry out the officerships they have undertaken, and we've not built the campaign in the regions.

Thirdly, an amazing oversight : it was only when it turned out that we had a solitary, lonely delegate at the 1500-strong CND conference last November, that anyone in the League realised that we were doing very little CND work because... very few cds. have chosen to take up CND work.

So, in the absence of central planning of our cds. work, apart from an orientation to the struggles going on in the MPs, the overall direction that the League's work takes tends to be determined by the effect of pressure-groups within the League, the whims of individual cds, and the extent to which cds. find themselves taking on routine work for organisations such as CMPs, campaigns, that they are part of. The best branches will try to impose some direction and co-ordination on local work, but will still be hindered by the amount of time cds. spend on areas of work that the branch can't control.

Individual cds. , possibly with some guidance from the branch, then have to decide for themselves how much time to give to political activity, how much to

their personal lives; they then have to decide how to allocate their political activity between the different areas of work available. This is obviously an inefficient way of using the resources of the League; what's more, it leads to great pressure on many cds, and to unnecessary friction between c's, because of the differences in the amount of work that cds. choose to take on.

2. Our Trade Union work

Nowhere are the results of the League's 'laissez-faire' attitude more obvious than in our work in the TUs.

The approach of a serious organisation of revolutionary Marxists would be, surely, to direct or at least encourage its members into

(i) the most class conscious, the most militant, sections of the class, and those sections where conflict with the employers and/or the bureaucracy is most likely to occur

(ii) workplaces and unions where they can help the work of cds, who have already won respect as militants and as revolutionaries, in order to turn that respect into an organised periphery (e.g. through industrial bulletins) and into recruitment.

The only case where we try to apply anything like this approach is in our work in BL. As for the rest of the League, it is remarkable how many cds. are in workplaces that are unorganised or poorly organised by the appropriate unions, that are irrelevant as far as the development of the class struggle is concerned, or where they are never going to win recruits through TU work. Furthermore, it is remarkable how few of these cds who are trying to do TU work are under the guidance of an effective, functioning, fraction of the League. A survey of our membership would undoubtedly back up these assertions. This situation is the consequencd of letting cds. take jobs where they can or where they will.

Even our work in BL suffers from this amateurishness at times; Recently, hundreds of new jobs were announced at BL Cowley; this announcement was headline news at the time. About six weeks later, London cds were asked - through the Area Cttee. - wether anyone wanted to apply for one of these jobs. Given the importance to us of our implantation in BL, and the setback that w we had just suffered there, surely we should have made certain that at least one cd. moved in there when the new jobs were announced.

A serious policy of colonisation of our members should start with those leaving school/college, and should involve discussions with them when they

start considering what to do when they leave. We should then see if we can colonise unemployed eds. into workplaces where they can do TU work under the guidance of the League. I realise that , given how few jobs there are anywhere, we will be able to operate this policy to a very limited extent, but even so we should try it.

3. Education.

One subject that an 'Organisation' document should deal with is how little Marxist education has taken place in the League or broad groups since the fusion,

The 'structured' education that the League should be conducting consists of -

- i) educationals in basic Marxism for contacts and new members.
- ii) more advanced educationals for older members,
- iii) the commissions' role in increasing our understanding and analysis of . developments in the rest of the world and of the position of the specially- or multiply- oppressed.
- iv) debates on the disagreements left over from the fusion.

It would take a comprehensive survey of the League to establish just how much or how little such education and study has taken place. I would estimate that so little of the above list has actually happened that a majority of members - including a majority of new members - have taken part in no structured educationals or commission meetings ^{at all} since the fusion. Of the four categories, I would estimate that (i) occurs in a few, but not a majority, of League branches; that (ii) hardly ever occurs; of the commissions, I understand that only two of those looking at parts of the world, plus the gay commission, are functioning.

Now, I shouldn't need to argue here the importance of Marxist education for the League - or for any Marxist organisation whether it has two members or twenty thousand. If contacts are to be turned into members who play an active part of their branch, if new members are to become the 'middle ranks' of the League capable of taking a part in the work of commissions, in League debates and discussions, and in local leadership of the League, a thorough grounding in Marxism is absolutely necessary.

Yet for most of the League, Marxist education comes so far down the list of priorities that, in practise, it gets put to one side because there are always routine meetings to attend, demonstrations to sell papers on, another new issue that must be taken up or new campaign to take part in...

4. Who are we trying to recruit?

When we (then the ICL) launched the broad paper, we did so with the aim of organising the left. Organising the ^{left} around the paper, around the programme of S*** and S*, or around particular demands; organising the ^{left} into a force that would challenge the right-wing and fake-left leaderships of the LM. It would challenge them by democratic reforms that would make them subject to accountability, and to the possibility of being deposed in elections; and challenge them with policies and demands that would spring from the needs and aspirations of the working class.

And who are this left? To quote from John O'Mahoney interviewed at the time of the launching of S***;

"Over the last four years, with the slump and the Labour government, many industrial militants who are reformists in the sense that they have no perspective for the overthrow of the system have found themselves without a perspective of struggle. Some of them can be drawn to our campaign, and, in the course of the campaign, educated politically. We aim to give them a perspective for struggle and for organising, linking industrial action with socialist policies...

...Also, there are a lot of people in the labour movement and the Labour Party who are trotskyists with a small 't' - people who accept many of the basic ideas of Trotskyism, and who have had some education in the Trotskyist movement, but who, because of the failure of the movement to organise a coherent and serious party, have lost the perspective of reorganising the labour movement and creating the force that can really overthrow capitalism. They have not lost their commitment to the working class interest, but they have lost hope. They tend to sink into routine activity in the labour movement.

I think we can give a perspective of struggle to many of these people..."

Over the last five years, we've had a lot of contact with these "trotskyists with a small 't'", and been able to organise them successfully around particular demands, and issues, e.g. in the RFMC. But apart from a few exceptions, we've not recruited them to the League or even into the local broad groups.

Why is this?

Not for want of trying. In S, London we've come across many of these people in the MPs; we've worked with them in wards and on GCs, caucused with them over council and GC matters, canvassed for them when they've stood for council and had them canvas for us when we've stood; supported them for positions in the MPs. We've sold them the paper every week, occasionally

they've sold the paper; we've talked about our politics to them in pubs after meetings, at countless MP socials; we've got to know many of them on a personal level as well as politically. But we haven't recruited any of them.

They won't join us because they are (i) the '68 generation 15 years older, settled, with a mortgage, a car, a well-paid job, and already spending more time in political activity than they ^{would} want to; (ii) mainly or exclusively MP activists, without the commitment to or understanding of the primacy of working-class activity; and (iii) they are often well-worked out reformists - who know their reasons for rejecting revolutionary politics. They read S*, but also read 'New Socialist', the writings of Stuart Holland, Ken Coates, other reformists, all of which influence their thinking just as much as S* does. (And, although this is strictly part of another argument, to the extent that these people we've come across in the MP look towards ^{the} revolutionary left, they don't want to choose between us and the IMG and would be much more prepared to consider joining us if we fused with the IMG).

Although these generalisations are based on my experience in South London, I see no reason to doubt that they apply also to the people we work with in the MP in the rest of the country. The CMPs where left TU militants have a large impact are very rare.

We can build the broad groups, and out of that the League, through our work in the MP, but it requires looking in a different direction. New members of the party - many of whom join because they find that they support the left of the party, - tend to have more time available, have much less well worked out ideas, and can easily become supporters of S*. Many militant trade unionists who look towards the Labour Party do not join it, or join it but never attend meetings; often they'll say that they don't have the time to become active in the Party as well as their TU work. We can reach those people through the CLPs, but only by looking for opportunities to go to them instead of waiting for them to come to us in the Party.

Above all, the broad groups and the League can be built through youth and the YM; who may be sympathetic to us because of the work we do in the MP - amongst other reasons, but who won't necessarily want to - or feel able to - take part in that work.

To build the broad groups in these ways does, however, require that we take our TU work, and above all our youth work, much more seriously. (On youth work, I support the arguments put forward by ed. Jagger in his article in a forthcoming IB, so I won't write any more on that subject here).

5. Isolation

To help cds. understand how these four failings in our work are hindering the building of the League, it's useful to look at their effect on individual cds - particularly newer and younger cds.

The dispersion of our members within the TU movement, and our reluctance to guide members towards jobs where their activity in the TU would connect in with work that other members are doing, means that many members have to carry out their work in their TU alone. They may well not have the support of a TU fraction of the League. Their geographical League branch may not be much help, because many of the issues that crop up in a workplace or union are particular to that workplace or union. This isolation, and lack of support, that many members experience in their TU activity is reinforced by the fact that we so rarely share within the League our experience of those problems that are common to many workplaces, such as 'how to argue for your union branch or group to oppose early retirement schemes, ^{or} voluntary redundancies!:

There are other ways in which members are left isolated by the League such as when young cds are expected to become involved in, or even take positions in, their local CMP, where they may be the only League member amongst a left consisting of older, worked-out left reformists.

An isolated League member in such situations will undoubtedly come under strong pressure to drop or accommodate their politics. This pressure can come from members of other would-be revolutionary groups, from the reformist left, from local left- or right-wing TU officials perhaps. The same pressures, in fact, as those exerted on the League as a whole, but on a local level.

In these situations a cd. has to rely on their own capabilities, their experience, and their knowledge and understanding of our politics. Which is where the next problem - lack of educationals - comes in.

On top of that, the League's inability to determine priorities amongst the areas we are involved in, means that a member is expected to attend all League and broad group meetings and activities, all their local MP and their TU meetings, plus such other conferences, meetings, demonstrations, that the League decides, and will also be asked to become involved in the pet issues of other League members. The problem is not the amount of commitment involved, but the fact that it is the individual member, and if they are lucky their branch, who has to try to impose some order on all this - because the League nationally does not.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that many new members become demoralised, confused, and drop out, or that we recruit so few new members.

Some members are able to carry out their political work with some success, and to educate themselves in our politics, despite all this. But of a revolutionary party is supposed to bring its strength - the strength derived from being the continuation of the Marxist tradition, and from the knowledge that our class is potentially stronger than all others - to the political activity of its members. It should not operate a sort of 'natural selection' process whereby only the most strong-willed and persistent feel that they are able to remain an active member of the League, whilst the rest lapse into part-time political activity or drop out of the League altogether. Yet the latter is the way the WSL - and formerly the ICL - have been treating their members.

In conclusion (if anyone has read this far)

No one can deny that we have seriously failed to build the WSL since the fusion, and that this reflects the fact that something is badly wrong with our work so far.

This is not a product of the fusion; neither the pre-fusion WSL nor the ICL were growing at a significant rate before the fusion.

Cunliffe, in IB36, ('What are the differences on perspectives?') rightly realises that we must use our politics, and our orientation to the fight for leadership of the LM, to reach beyond MP activists to TUists, youth, women workers, etc. But our failure to recruit from these layers is not because of the lack of profile allegedly given to the WSL and our own politics. Rather, it is because of the lack of resources devoted to work in these areas. We need to remedy this by withdrawing from some of the work we are currently involved in, and by turning the League at every level - nationally, branches, individual cds., towards youth work as the first priority and towards TU work.

The areas we need to withdraw from are those single-issue campaigns on which our cds - often our more experienced cds - spend so much of their time. The incoming NC should see that this is done for all these campaigns except where the cds concerned can make out a convincing case that the work is necessary for the building of the League. In addition, deepening of involvement in the work of local MP bodies and TUs must be discussed with, and approved by, the League at an appropriate level before being undertaken.

In the League's internal life, we should start acting more like a Leninist organisation, with much more serious attention being given to, for example, educational work and contact work.

The basis for this was set out at our fusion in the 'Organisation' document (issued but then collected back in and, apparently, forgotten) and in the section on 'Democratic Centralism' in the Platform Document -

"...The major orientation of the WSL's work is thus always towards the working class and the labour movement, aiming to build an organisation rooted in the workplaces and the working class communities. The WSL strives to develop as many worker comrades as possible into leading positions in the organisation...

...(non-worker members)... will be assigned to work in labour organisations, in workers' districts and as assistants to the factory militants of the WSL.

Only a self-acting, politically educated and critical-minded membership is capable of forging and consolidating an adequate revolutionary organisation....

The struggle for power organised and led by a revolutionary party is the most ruthless and irreconcilable struggle in all history. A loosely-knit, heterogeneous, undisciplined, untrained organisation is utterly incapable of succeeding in this task..."

Additional note : I am not completely satisfied with the way this article has turned out. However, I am submitting it in its present form because the problems we face in building the League are serious ones, but little enough has been written about them. This article raises what I believe are important, and often new, points. At, least, I hope that the writing of this article prompts a discussion on (A) whether there is a problem (b) what it is and (c) what we should do about it.

Paul

UNEMPLOYMENT PERSPECTIVES 1983

Once again the ruling class are resorting to the use of mass unemployment in a desperate attempt to offset the falling rate of profit, to counter the effects of a world economic recession.

To carry this out they must increase the rate of exploitation by reducing the workforce, wages, conditions and increase the output of those that remain, threatening to replace workers who resist.

In the past the unemployed, driven on by their desperate conditions, have been used to undercut trade union rates of pay. With the current attacks taking place on the benefit system, with the implementation of the proposals from the RAYNER REPORT, the unemployed will be rapidly forced, once again, back into this position.

The trade union leadership is caught in the 'viability' trap, accepting that employers have the right to throw workers on the dole in an attempt to restore profitability.

Little wonder that with an attitude like that to their employed members they have no real policies to defend the interests of the unemployed. Although they do recognise that high unemployment could present a threat to social democracy, and their positions within it, and therefore the unemployed need controlling. Their contribution to an ongoing stability is to encourage a network of rigidly controlled unemployed workers centres.

The worst off victims of the governments economic policies, the unemployed, are not turning to the major opposition party - the Labour Party - but if they do bother to vote at all are still prepared to vote for the Tories, or for the smaller parties including the far right.

If the labour movement does not seriously attempt to win the unemployed to their ranks - especially the youth - they could find that, in the not too distant future, they will be amongst our fiercest opponents.

It is crucial that we attempt to unite the unemployed and employed to prevent the current attempts by the ruling class, to divide and control the working class, making them pay for the economic crisis.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE EMPLOYED

Organising the unemployed to identify with the struggles of workers will help prevent the unemployed being used to break strikes and to undercut existing wages and conditions.

The unemployed can assist workers fighting against the employer - during last year the unemployed supported the NHS workers and have already supported occupations against cuts.

But there still needs to be a greater understanding of the needs of the unemployed by those in work, they are not there to be used when it is convenient to do so.

One way that this can be taken up is by raising the need to fight against overtime working, for a shorter working week and to resist cuts in manning levels.

Union branches should be urged to recognise and support their local unemployed groups.

WILL THE UNEMPLOYED RESPOND TO THE EFFECTS OF LONG-TERM MASS UNEMPLOYMENT?

In Britain during the early 1970's, when the unemployment figures were approaching the 1 million level, this level was widely regarded as the danger mark. Would the organised labour movement be prepared to accept mass unemployment again?

Remember the slogan 'forward the 80's not back to the 30's?'. Since then the political tolerance of high unemployment has been observed at first with disbelief and then with complacency. Currently there are signs of unease amongst the ruling class that there has not yet been a reaction to the high levels of unemployment. They know that the greater the oppression the more chance there is of reaction, but until this actually happens the measures required to counter any reaction can only be speculative. Not knowing what exactly is required to contain any opposition, to mass unemployment, can only in the mean-time create greater anxiety in their part, with the possibility of over-reaction, which in itself will increase the anger of the unemployed. Recently surveys and opinion poles have been carried out to ascertain why there is the apparent apathy.

Unemployment levels in themselves are not a guide to potential unrest. It is the local 'critical threshold' of deprivation that encompasses unemployment, poor housing and police methods etc., that count.

With the current attacks on benefits, council house costs, trade union rights, and the increasing of police powers, this tolerance will surely be shattered in the near future.

UNEMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

There are many initiatives relating to the unemployed and likewise many forms of unemployed organisations/groups:

- 1) Autonomous Unemployed Groups, Unions, Action groups, Associations.
- 2) Claimants Unions.
- 3) Self Help, skills exchange.
- 4) Small business.
- 5) Co-operatives.
- 6) Further Education - Adult Learning.
- 7) Self sufficiency.
- 8) Voluntary organisations.
- 9) Pressure groups.
- 10) Charities.

Groups 1) and 2) often overlap, or else work closely together. They are also the most difficult to obtain funds for, as they are the political campaigning part of unemployed initiatives. Likewise both receive open hostility from the Trade Union leadership through the T.U.C.. Claimants Unions were rejected by the T.U.C. in the early 1970's, when they informed all Trades Councils not to have anything to do with Claimants Unions. They now have a similar attitude to unemployed groups.

During the last two years there have been many unemployed groups formed, plus many individuals wanting to organise the unemployed. These groups have met with varying successes, some have continued throughout most of that period, others have gone into decline to be later revived, others have disappeared. In the early days groups had much to learn from their own mistakes without much guidance or information from others.

Since the formation of the national organisation last year, and later the obtaining of resources to back up the work nationally, it is now easier for new groups to obtain information from existing groups, by-passing some of the pitfalls that would have been unavoidable earlier.

A common faeture of many groups was the lack of political direction, but due to the involvement of some SO comrades in the formulation of the Constitution, Aims and Objectives of the N.U.W.M. the political diction is now much clearer. This work must now be built upon and further developed by all comrades in SO, especially unemployed comrades, by getting involved in existing unemployed groups in their area, and if one doesn't exist start one, and affiliate to the N.U.W.M..

The N.U.W.M. is becoming recognised by others involved in the unemployment field and the political/campaigning part of the organised unemployed.

IN THE TRADE UNIONS

The TUC policy is for member unions to retain and recruit the unemployed. But in practice the involvement of the unemployed in trade unions is minimal. In many unions unemployed members do not retain full membership and cannot therefore fully participate within their union.

As the majority of the trade unions are in financial difficulties due to rising costs and falling membership, to retain and recruit the unemployed would menn a further drain on their resources. For example, the AUEW unemployed members do not pay any contributions at all, but retain full membership. The cost to the AUEW to service these members is therefore an extra expense. So if the number of unemployed members significantly increased, employed members contributions would also have to increase to offset the increased running cost of the union.

So once again we have the trade union leadership facing both ways at once, having a policy to retain and recruit the unemployed, but because of the increased cost involved, doing very little to enable them to do so.

In the case of the TGWU they re-interpreted their rules specifically to make it more difficult for the unemployed to join, after the TUC had adopted the above policy.

The unemployed must campaign, within the unions if they are members, or from the outside if they are not, for the trade unions to recrit all unemployed, with full membership status.

T.U.C. UNEMPLOYED WORKERS CENTRES

As the TUC has no real policies for involving the unemployed within the trade union movement, but wish to be seen to be doing something for the unemployed, they have pursued a policy of setting up a network of centres for the unemployed. These centres, if run according to the TUC guidelines, will strictly control the unemployed, keeping them away from any real campaigning against the effects of mass unemployment, and restrict them to recreational and social activities. Also the TUC, when challenged about their lack of fight against mass unemployment, can claim to be doing something for the unemployed.

This attempt to set up a network of centres under their control is not a new idea, in the early 30's the TUC adopted the same policy to counter the success of the N.U.W.M. of that period. It was not successful then, and the rigidity of the current guidelines is now making many active unemployed hostile to using - or being used by - the TUC unemployed workers centres now.

Unemployed groups must take the fight within existing centres, and where centres are currently being set up. For a majority say for the unemployed in how the centres should be used. The centres must be turned into campaigning centres. This will immediately bring the unemployed into a fight with the local trade union bureaucracy, and possibly the local council, on the question of democracy within the centre.

LABOUR PARTY

In London there already exist some Labour Party unemployed groups. This method of organising the unemployed could possibly be also adopted in other areas where the Labour Party has a traditionally strong base. These groups - and other Labour Party members - could use this platform to challenge the inadequate LP policies for fighting mass unemployment. They could also pressure local councils to oppose cheap labour schemes and to give up the majority of their seats on the management committees of TUC Unemployed Workers Centres to the unemployed users groups.

WOMEN

Due to the recent attacks on benefits, with the implementation of the proposals from the RAYNER REPORT, women are amongst those in the forefront of the attacks on the unemployed. The housing Benefit Scheme will also bring an extra burden to women attempting to balance an even smaller budget.

To reach these women we need to campaign on estates, at nurseries, and at local Post Offices. Taking up these opportunities will enable us to reach many women who we would not normally have much contact with. The attacks on benefits can be shown to be part of the overall attack on the working class, housing, local authority cuts, nursery closures, etc..

We need to encourage active local unemployed women's groups where necessary.

The Women's Campaign for Jobs operating from a national leadership downwards will have difficulty reaching local working class women, there needs to be campaigning on local issues as well. The campaign should

look towards operating joint campaigns with the N.U.W.M., Federation of CI Claimants Unions and any other relevant organisations.

MARCHES

When our members participated on the Peoples March for Jobs we did so to argue against marches as a satisfactory way to campaign against unemployment, which in the event proved correct. The Peoples March for Jobs was a rigidly controlled, futile protest march, which the trade union leadership claimed much undeserved credit for, following the huge turn out at the end of the march.

Marches in the 1920's and 1930's were organised around specific issues, and were not just blanket protests against the immorality of mass unemployment. The Scotland - London march will be a more rigidly controlled version of the PMFJ, and still a moral appeal against the evils of unemployment appealing to all political persuasions.

Even the Right to Work Campaign's march in 1981 was run contrary to previous marches, seeking respectability they would not allow publicity stunts as in previous years.

Over recent years the die has been cast for how subsequent marches will be conducted - they are all totally controlled by the police - and a Women's March for Jobs conforming to that pattern will advance the campaign against unemployment very little.

We should intervene in marches organised for the unemployed to point out that a one off march will not change the situation very much, . they are soon forgotten, and that the important task is to organise the unemployed locally, to enable them to have an ongoing campaign that can campaign on all issues that affect the unemployed. We should agitate for the unemployed to have democratic control of the march and at all times attempt to link up with other unemployed and workers in struggle.

Although marches do gain some publicity whilst in progress, they do act for the most part as a diversion away from the issues that we should involve ourselves in - political campaigning.

Resources are given by the labour movement to finance these marches, these could be better used financing specific campaigns taking up issues that seriously affect the unemployed. These resources act as a get-out clause for the bureaucracy who, whilst doing almost nothing for the unemployed within the trade unions, can claim to be doing something generally.

Controlled marches, as with controlled demos, act as a safety valve for the anger of those involved. Marches needing the support of the community at large, allow the real reason for unemployment to be obscured and allow it to be seen as a common problem for all the nation, thus concealing the class nature of mass unemployment.

THE ROLE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Within the Labour movement and other left groups there is a recognition that mass unemployment is very undesirable. The problem for the reformists is how do they campaign against it and what alternatives do they put forward. There are currently divisions within the LP

as to what promises they should commit themselves to on reducing unemployment.

The SWP have retreated from their Right to Work Campaign as a campaign for taking up the question of unemployment. They now ask the TUC to set up an unemployed section, meanwhile they are not effectively doing any unemployed work. There are individual members who do work in local unemployed groups.

The Communist Party will continue their cross class collaboration of marches appealing to everybody to operate on a minimal non-political level with an expression of moral indignation at the level of unemployment. Their members who still hold positions within the trade unions will ensure that they gain support from the labour movement for their campaigns.

The CP are amongst the fiercest critics of the unemployed organising themselves and need to be challenged throughout the labour movement on their reactionary politics, at every opportunity.

Militant look towards working in existing inadequate labour movement organisational structures and their own rigidly controlled campaigns, bypassing the majority of the unemployed.

Some other groups are sympathetic to autonomous unemployed groups: but make no real attempt to help organise the unemployed - other political activities are still considered more important. (Some SO comrades are guilty of this position.)

The involvement of some SO comrades in developing the work of organising the unemployed and our involvement in the NUWM has given us an advantage to lead this work and direct the NUWM in line with our politics. But if we do not continue this work at a higher level of commitment this position could soon be jeopardised.

The general involvement in the task of organising the unemployed creates the opportunity for comrades to take our politics to a broader section of the labour movement and working class, than normally could have been achieved

M.J. FEBRUARY 1983