

Agenda and Standing Orders

The Single Transferrable Vote Hughes

Composite resolution on the LP Carolan, Hill, Kinnell
(composited from resolutions in IB21
and IB22+)

Comments on the IT platform Dupont

Comments on the WF article of Sep. '73
reproduced by the IT Carolan

Report on discussions with IMG/SL Cunliffe

It has been physically impossible to get some documents duplicated
in time for February 19-20. Those outstanding are:

'Against unprincipled revisionism, against national Trotskyism'
- Chris E, Sue E, Mike J (some copies have already been
circulated)

Parsons reply to Cunliffe on party-building (reprinting from IB20
requested)

Oliver document on Wiganisation (reprinting from I-CL IB requested)

Reilly: comments on LP work

LOR: some critical remarks on WSL work in relation to LP

Kinnell: 'Sect politics and class-movement politics'

Kinnell: The world economy today, imperialism & permanent revolution

Carolan: Permanent revolution and Ireland.

We apologise to the comrades concerned.

AGENDA AND STANDING ORDERS

A Standing Orders Committee was elected at the fusion conference. Unfortunately no-one kept a written record. The OC therefore proposes that we elect a SOC specially for this conference. We propose the following comrades:

Gains, Spilling, Armstrong, Andrea C.

The function of the Standing Orders Committee is to control the agenda and speaking times, to act as first court of appeal after the chair on procedural issues, and generally to supervise the running of the conference.

The OC is proposing to the SOC that comrade Parkinson chairs on the first day of the conference, and comrade Levy on the second day.

Speaking times: the OC is proposing to the SOC that comrades introducing documents should have 20 minutes, and all others 7 minutes. Comrades who have written discussion documents will be given preference in the discussion and a limit of 10 minutes.

The proposed agenda times below are very tight and leave no room for one discussion recommended by the NC - on youth. We can see no way round that.

Saturday

10-11 Registration
Standing Orders Report

There are 2 motions from the Oxford Area Committee, one to censure the NC on its recommendations for the agenda, the other to overthrow that recommendation. The OC proposes that if the motion to overthrow the NC recommendation is carried, the conference should move immediately to discussion on the LP.

There is also a procedural dispute about minuting the conference. Some comrades on the OC wish to move that the conference be minuted fully. Others wish to move that decisions only be minuted.

11-12 'Aspects of the International Situation' (IB 24)
intro. Cunliffe
Amendments (IB30) Parsons

'The Economic Situation' (IB 24) intro. Kinnell

12-1 'Crisis of the FI and our tasks' (IB 22)
intro. Cunliffe

Alternative (IB 32) Parsons

(Note: the NC asked for the 'Crisis of the FI' document to be edited from a literary point of view, and have background and explanatory material added. That has not been possible in the given time. The OC asks conference to vote on the basic political line of the document, on the understanding that such editing and supplementing will subsequently be done).

2-3.30 Democratic centralism & TILC (IB 26)

intro. Smith

(We expect there will also be a resolution from the Internationalist Tendency)

3.30-4.15: Report on discussions with IMG/SL

intro. Jones

Resolution in favour of fusion with SL (IB40, referring to Gunther resolution in IB30)

... Mellor/Paul/Tyldesley

4.15-6 Industrial Perspectives (IB 25 part 2, and amendments in IB 35)

... Levy

Supplementary document (IB 44) ... Kendall

(Note: the OC recommends to the SOC that amendments from the floor should be allowed on this item - and only on this item. They should be submitted by the close of the conference on Saturday, for voting on Sunday morning).

Sunday

10-10.30: Conclusion of discussion on industrial perspectives, and vote

10.30-12: Tasks in the period up to the election (short resolution to come from EC)

12-4.30 Labour Party: introductions from

Carolán on resolution in IB 45(which is a composite of the resolutions in IB22+ and IB25 part 2)

Cunliffe on British Perspectives LP section (amended version in IB39)

Smith on amendments to Cunliffe to t (IB 46)

Hill on LP report (IB 37)

Speaker from the Internationalist Tendency

Speaker on Casey/Meehan/McVicar document and resolution (IB 38)

If we have time for the youth discussion, the introductions should be:

Speaker on the Cooper etc. resolution (IB39), which refers to the Joplin/Fraser document in IB28, and the Jagger document in IB 38.

Speaker on Hunt document (IB 29)

Speaker on Internationalist Tendency doc. (IB44)

SINGLE TRANSFERRABLE VOTE

Hughes

The Single Transferrable Vote (STV) system has two main advantages:

- + It is more stable than the first-past-the-vote system - i.e. the results are less likely to swing wildly in response to small changes in the voting. Minorities are less likely to be crushed.
- + It is less vulnerable to 'tactical voting'.

It works like this.

1. Every elector has just one vote, hence single transferrable vote.

2. Each elector is given a ballot paper with a list of candidates' names. The electors put numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.) beside the names to indicate their 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. preference. They may vote say 1 to 24, if there are 24 candidates, or just 1, or 1, 2, 3 only. But there is never any advantage in not using all your preferences.

The ballot paper is valid provided that the number 1 appears next to a name and that any other numbers are sequential.

3. A quota is calculated by dividing the number of valid votes cast by the number of places to be filled.

4. The votes are divided between the candidates according to first preferences. E.g. take an election for three posts with 6 candidates, and 100 electors. The quota is $33\frac{1}{3}$.

Candidate 1st preferences

A	22
B	16
C	5
D	38
E	12
F	7
	<u>100</u>

5. The candidate with the highest number of votes above the quota is elected - in this case candidate D. Candidate D's votes are now sorted according to the second preferences.

Candidate 2nd preferences on D's

A	6
B	1
C	12
E	8
F	<u>11</u>
	38

6. The value of each of these votes is calculated. Deduct the quota from the number of votes the successful candidate received, i.e. $38 - 33\frac{1}{3} = 4\frac{2}{3}$. This is the total excess vote to be transferred. Each vote to be transferred is worth this value divided by the total to be transferred, i.e. $4\frac{2}{3}/38 = 0.123$. This value should be written on each ballot paper before being transferred.

Thus the election now stands like this:

Candidate	1st Preference	1st Transfer
A	22	$22 + 6 \times 0.123 = 22.738$
B	16	$16 + 0.123 = 16.123$
C	5	$5 + 12 \times 0.123 = 6.476$
D	38	ELECTED
E	12	$12 + 8 \times 0.123 = 12.984$
F	7	$7 + 11 \times 0.123 = 8.353$

7. Continue to elect candidates from the top until no-one exceeds the quota. This is the case above. Now the candidate with the lowest vote is eliminated. This candidate's vote are transferred, e.g. :

	C's 1st prefs. (worth 1.0)	C's transfers (worth 0.123)
A	0	6
B	2	4
E	1	2
F	2	0

Transferring this gives:

	1st Pref	1st Transfer	2nd Transfer
A	22	22.738	23.476
B	16	16.123	18.615
C	5	6.476	ELIMINATED
D	38	ELECTED	
E	12	12.984	14.230
F	7	8.353	10.353

No-one over quota, so F is eliminated.

8. Continue in the same way.

A Further Reply to the Platform of the Internationalist Tendency

Dupont

The numbers which follow refer to the sections of the Platform. In general it seems to me very unfortunate that we should have to focus on this kind of red herring when really urgent international tasks lie in abeyance.

1. We all orient to the working class. We orient to the MP because it is the major political expression of the class as it is.

2. We do not only try to break workers from reformism. We also try to make reformism fight for its own reforms; we fight alongside reformists against reaction; we distinguish more or less positive varieties of reformism; and we learn from reformism. By doing these other things as well, we may hope to be successful in breaking workers from reformism.

3. Our press cannot both orient to the most militant section (i.e. us!) and the mass of workers (most of whom are labourite) unless it orients to the major problem faced by militants: how to make contact politically with the mass. Further, we cannot assume that we possess the whole truth and that the mass possesses none.

4. The idea of 'taking our politics to the workers' is totally vague unless the mechanisms are spelt out. Registration would not negate our fight against the witch hunt (though it would be a defeat). Registration would be our means of pursuing this fight. Nor would it negate the League's international links. If we refused to register and were cut off from the MP for this reason, then indeed we would 'voluntarily limit our politics'.

5. Not all women and blacks are working class of course, let alone being the most militant layers of the working class - not even all the most militant women and blacks. There is nothing revolutionary about being black per se.

6. We all oppose an uncritical approach to petty bourgeois feminism; but we join it in a struggle against reaction. This is particularly important in the context of the present and anticipated Tory onslaught on women's rights.

7. None of us relegates youth work simply to building a tendency in the LPYS. This is yet another of a series of implied insinuations.

8. We do not defend all who oppose our own imperialism. We reserve the right to criticise some of those who are fighting imperialism: e.g. other imperialists and reactionaries who wish to claw back the progressive content of imperialism (as Lenin clearly spelt out). Further, we reserve the right to comrades who are fighting against imperialism even when we support their struggle in general. For instance, criticise those who make a fetish out of the armed struggle (i.e. substitute armed struggle for class struggle) not out of a weak kneed concession to pacifism, but on the basis of a marxist critique of the class nature of this substitution. We defend the rights of those in struggle to determine their own methods, but we do not defend the right of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie to impose its own methods of struggle on the mass of the population. We do not forget that guerilllarism means the desertion of the working class by the nationalist petty bourgeoisie (as has happened in Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa etc etc etc).

9. Not all nationalist struggles against imperialism take place within the framework of Permanent Revolution. Some nationalist struggles take place at the expense of the working class and of the furtherance of the struggle for socialism. This has been the case in many African countries.

10. We support a 'classless' call for self determination in Poland, Afghanistan and Kampuchea - as Trotsky did for the Ukraine - in order to tie democratic demands for self determination to class demands for socialism. Far from being a 'reflexive resort' (i.e. knee jerk) it is our considered response to the problem of winning a popular, national, democratic movement to socialism. If we equivocate our support, the workers and peasants of these countries will equivocate in their support for socialism.

11. The transformation of TISC into a 'democratic centralist tendency' at this time can only mean substituting organisational directives for real political unity. Such a move would actually block the most useful international contacts which we could make. There is absolutely no identity between internationalism and setting up such a tendency.

12. What a muddle! If the workers' government is the dictatorship of the proletariat, then it is our 'crowning point'. No one believes that a workers' government is a 'necessary' stage - but it may be. If a workers' government is not a 'strategic goal', then we should not raise it as a slogan. If we do raise it as a slogan, then it is a strategic goal.

13. Calls for police accountability - ie. for reforms on the state - are not substitutes for workers self defence squads; but neither are self defence squads substitutes for calls for accountability. We learn in general to combine strategies aimed at dual power and strategies aimed at reform of the existing state. Where we put the emphasis - on accountability or on self defence - depends on the context. In Germany just before the rise of the Nazis Trotsky was absolutely correct to put the entire emphasis on self defence. Calls for accountability would have been absurd in that context. In the present situation in Britain, the refusal to join fights for accountability would be abstentionist and sectarian.

"We do not need a bridge to the bridge". A classic example of pure dogma. How many bridges depends on how many rivers. Otherwise we drown.

Carolán

My impulse to congratulate the tendency on their good sense in reproducing the editorial from Workers Fight is wiped out by the knowledge that they chose it because it is likely - 10 years later - to be misinterpreted. Morrow's visible confusion when I told him that the dismissive reference to the 'democratic rights of the Protestants' in the 1973 article referred to something quite different from the subject matter of the current discussion in our paper, suggests that other comrades may be misled by it as well as the tendency.

A.

The article's dismissal of "talk of the democratic rights of the Protestants" has nothing to do with the democratic rights of the Protestants within Ireland. It refers to the supposed democratic validity of the Six County entity, alleged to represent the legitimate democratic rights of the Protestants. There is an article in the current paper by J.O'M. which explains the difference clearly.

It needs to be added here that in 1973 Britain held the first of a projected annual series of referendums in Northern Ireland on the constitutional status of the 6 Counties. (the first general bombing offensive in Britain accompanied it, in March 1973). The argument about the right of Northern Ireland to exist as an expression of the rights of the Protestants was therefore very prominent in this period.

But the fact that the argument about the right of the 6 County state to exist is imperialist nonsense, does not mean that there is not a problem of securing a democratic settlement within Ireland. Comrades who confuse the issues dealt with in many 1973 WF articles and J.O'M's recent articles on the Protestants merely parallel those who think it sufficient to define the Protestants as pro-imperialist to 'solve' the problem within Ireland. The Protestants can have no claim to democratic rights imposed by imperialist violence against the majority of the Irish people; they have every claim to democratic rights as a distinct minority within Ireland.

B.

The 1973 article does not admit that the Republicans are responsible for the bombings (or at least for all of them). Certain comrades ten years later think it permissible to respond to events like the Chelsea bombing by denying Republican responsibility. This is not serious.

In September 1973 Britain was experiencing the third wave of Republican bombs in the recent period. The first was February 1972, - when the Official Republicans bombed the Aldershot barracks officers' mess, accidentally killing five civilians; the second was March 1973; the third was September 1973. British provocateurs had recently set off a bomb in Dublin which killed about 20 people. There was objective reason, as explained in the article, to doubt that the Republicans were responsible, or solely responsible.

10 years later there is a record of Republican bombings including the Birmingham pub bombing (for which no informed person doubts Republican responsibility at one level or another). It would be evasive and not credible in 1983 to pretend not to know about responsibility. It would earn the well-deserved contempt of the average thinking British worker.

C.

We support the right of the Irish people to fight for self determination now as then. What must be said also in 1983 is an assessment of the war and of the realities of N.I.

It is no longer possible responsibly to bow to the fact of the Republicans leading a war, and not to comment on the consequences, 12 years into that war, of the Republican strategy, which has led into a blind alley.

The argument that we should criticise the strategy as a whole, and therefore (?) we cannot criticise specific military actions, is illogical. If we can and should criticise the strategy, then we can and must criticise its harmful concrete expressions. That is the only way that we can have the possibility of talking to the women and men of our own class who are not 'gut' Irish nationalists, who have normal human responses to bloody carnage, and who, nevertheless, must be talked to about the basic justice of the Catholic revolt and the Republican cause.

D

We have explained to British workers why and how Catholic youth from Belfast can set off bombs in London. We have consistently denounced the British Army and its activities in Northern Ireland. But it is no longer possible to just trot out our general explanation: we must say where we stand on the specific incidents as they arise.

Workers' Fight was the only working class newspaper which publicly justified the IRA after the Aldershot bombing. (The IMG also supported the IRA, but they then produced a stratospherically way-out petty-bourgeois paper, Red Mole, which did not even try to talk to workers). Our comment then distinguished between 'legitimate' military targets and others. The line I am taking now is that basic position, in the light of the subsequent 11 years' experience.

Socialists should insist that the British government is responsible? Yes. We did and we do. That is not enough, however. To be able to talk to our own class after or in response to Birmingham, Chelsea, Ballykelly, etc. we have to honestly assess the specific responsibility for a given military action within the framework of British government responsibility and say where we stand. That's what we have done consistently.

Quoting WF out of the context of the time and the then stage of the Catholic revolt is as scholastic and useless as trying to rely on any other old text to tell us about the living world around us.

We must continue to support the Catholics. At the same time we must, by criticism of the Republicans and their strategy, and of the actions that this strategy produces, try to talk to the socialists and Republicans in Ireland. And if we want to talk to those of our own class in Britain who are not Irish nationalists, then we have the duty to say plainly that we reject civilian bombings or bombings which are indifferent to civilian casualties.

My own criticism of WF and the I-CL would be that we did this only in the small print of articles, and subordinated gaining a hearing from our own class in Britain to a sort of political self-boycott in deference to the traditional tactics of a petty bourgeois nationalist faction in Ireland which we have consistently disagreed with.

Introduction: This resolution is a composite of Carolan's (IB 21 and IB 22+) plus a couple of items from the Cunliffe/Hill/Kinnell document (IB 39) and the Hill document (IB 37), plus linking, explanatory, and updating passages, to produce a text suitable for voting.

1. THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

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

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

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

1974 and after posed brutally and sharply to the British workers' movement the task of changing its politics, ie changing itself. Since then the movement - or at least a section of activists within it - have been attempting the task; crudely, inadequately, in a very limited way with the high water mark so far being the struggle to democratise the LP and make it accountable etc. This acute crisis of reformism is the basic thread running through all developments since 1974.

2. 1979-82

The industrial struggles against the Labour government in 1977-9, and the clash they opened up between the union bureaucrats and the Labour leaders, set the scene for important struggles inside the LP.

Labour had been exposed in government, as Trotskyists had long argued it would be. Thousands of activists set about tackling this problem - by way of fighting to transform the LP. Whereas in the mid '60's the reaction to Wilson's government had been a mass exodus from the LP, in the mid '70's the activists stayed to fight. The experience in '72-4 of the limits of direct action had brought home to many of them the irreplacability of politics and the central place the LP occupies in mass working class politics in Britain.

An alliance between these rank-and file activists and some union bureaucrats (aggrieved by the unresponsiveness to them of the Labour government) pushed through changes destabilising the Labour Party as an alternative instrument of bourgeois rule. It was an attempt as Tony Benn expressed it to 're-found' the LP. It had a massive politicising effect in the working class and the trade unions.

We reject the syndicalist SWP notion that, because the height of the fight for democratic reforms in the Labour Party took place in a period of decline in direct action struggle, it represented a political step backwards. After the 1981 LP conference the union bureaucrats set about trying to put the lid on again.

3. THE CURRENT WITCH-HUNT

The decision of the 1981 LP conference on the register and the right wing majority elected to the NEC laid the basis for a sweeping purge in the LP. The issue now before the right wing is whether they can carry it out.

There is good reason to think that we can stop them and minimise the purge. The actual line-up in the unions whose block vote ensured the Right's victory is not solidly for a full-scale purge; the CLPs, which will have to carry out any purge, voted 80% against the register and voted hard left for the NEC; the right wing itself wants to win the next election and therefore has a keen interest (self) in not purging the party to the extent that it goes into the next election gutted; and a thorough purge of Militant alone would probably gut the party.

Developments so far confirm this estimate: the NEC's backing down over Tatchell and Hornsey; the diquiet expressed by some union bureaucrats over the witch-hunt against Militant.

For these reasons we can hope to stop the purge and limit expulsions to perhaps half a dozen, or a few dozen members of Militant. A firm line by the CLPs of opposition to any and all expulsion of socialists, and resistance for as long as necessary and by every means necessary, will make the cost of a full-scale, or even a large-scale, purge prohibitively high for the NEC.

We must therefore focus our efforts on resisting the purge all the way, to the point of having CLPs disaffiliated and 'disbanded', and on attempting to unite the broadest forces of the Left to co-ordinate this resistance. What happens next is still an open question. Struggle will decide; and we can be central to that struggle. Building the LAW is our main job.

4. THE REGISTER

After the 1982 LP conference, the left had a duty to fight to organise a boycott of the register. Our co-thinkers played a leading role in this fight.

Overall the fight has been unsuccessful, but not totally so. The most influential groups of the Labour Left, like CLPD, have registered. But the NEC has partially back-tracked on the register, making it much less central in the witch-hunt. Many serious groups are still boycotting.

The conditions therefore still exist for a boycott of the register by our co-thinkers to be more than a futile act of self-isolation: and we should not, for now, advise them to register.

However, whether or not to attempt to comply with the register - as part of ~~the~~ a campaign to win support for Marxists' democratic rights from people who accept the 'conference sovereignty' argument ~~xxxx~~ on the register - is purely a question of tactics. We should constantly re-assess it.

5. EVASIVE ACTION

As well as fighting the witch-hunt immediately, we also need to make some cold assessments and contingency plans.

Given the Right's control of the organisational commanding heights of the party, it is certain that they will move to cut out a more or less large chunk of the Militant hard core from the party. Militant's declared willingness to go quietly, accepting expulsions under protest and not taking resistance to the point of forcing the NEC to disband CLPs, makes it virtually certain that there will be expulsions. Militant's attitude is likely to encourage the NEC to enlarge the purge. We may limit the purge decisively; we may not. What then?

6. THE FUTURE OF THE LABOUR LEFT

There is no reason to believe that the Left in the LP is smashed; on the contrary, it displayed tremendous strength at the conference - our weakness was in the unions. All the pressures of capitalist crisis and reformist bankruptcy which we have identified as generating the convulsions in the LP will continue and intensify. Even

should the LP left subside between now and the election, it will be forced to resume the struggle either against a new right wing Labour government or in the face of a new defeat. It will resume the struggle on the basis of the experience of defeat at Blackpool by the block vote, and therefore the conditions exist for turning many of them also to our work in the unions. We must avoid getting isolated from that Left, and make the tactical and organisational adjustments necessary to survive.

In addition there is - it can be said dogmatically - no prospect for an independent revolutionary tendency in the next period competing with the LP. The crisis of the SWP is no accident. Labour is the mass alternative to the Tories; Labour will appear with a left and radical face (in broad labour movement terms) in the period ahead.

The present active core of the forces that will make the revolutionary party of the future is now mainly in the LP Left and the trade union left. Our commitment to united front work, and to work to organise the broadest forces of that Left, to link both the LP and the union left (and both with the specifically oppressed) must remain central to the League. Our commitment to building the revolutionary party - the League - in the existing labour movement rules out passively accepting that Marxists in the LP should slide into automatically being outlawed.

In the event that the Marxists are outkewed by whatever process, they should maintain the paper and its organisation as at present and also seek alliances to create a new publication that can play the role of left wing organiser that the present paper has played at its best. In general they must create alternative means of continuing their work. This would obviously be a transitional phase of our work. At a certain point, after the election perhaps, we would have to assess where we are at and perhaps rationalise publications.

7. CLARIFICATIONS

- a) As indicated above, far from proposing that we drop the paper as a pre-emptive 'subterfuge' against the witch-hunt, we are proposing, and that was our proposal at the beginning of this discussion, that we should fight to maintain the paper and continue it for a period even after it is made 'illegal' (if it is).
- b) We do propose that if despite our efforts the paper is made 'illegal', then we should develop another paper capable of organising the left in the LP and TUs. But we take it for granted THAT THIS PAPER WILL ENABLE US TO express our politics adequately, and that if certain things cannot be said in the paper we will supplement it by magazines, pamphlets, etc (and the 'illegal' paper for a period). All tactics, manoeuvres etc makes no sense unless the League can maintain its basic ideological role.

Details will have to be discussed when (and if) the concrete situation arises - which is at nearest the next stage but two. The important point is that we are not tied formalistically to particular forms, techniques, labels, etc, but subordinate all such considerations to the political tasks; that we continue our present orientation rather than retreating away from organising the left.

- c) It may be that even if the paper is made 'illegal' comrades will be able to sell it for some time without much harassment in many CLPs. ie they will continue to be able to sell it for propaganda.

Even this is not sure. Under compulsion of NEC instructions and threats to disband CLPs, whole layers of the reformist left will choose to expel us, some reluctantly.

But in any case to accept operating mainly with an illegal paper over an indefinite period would reduce the Marxists to propaganda. Initiatives like the S**C, R**C, TU democracy conference etc would be impossible. This would criminally restrict our activity in the TU's as well as in the LP.

d) 'Staying with the Left' is not proposed as all we should do, or as a tactical rule for all times and climes! Our proposals are concrete proposals for the coming period.

88. THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE WORK OF THE MARXISTS

Under all circumstances Marxists must work in the areas of working class activity to give leadership in struggles and to recruit directly. In addition to this bedrock routine, however, we need to develop and fight for perspectives for the development of the working class as a whole.

Our work is political wherever we do it. But for us to do political work in a strike, for example, does not make that strike political. Even the smallest strike has political implications; but strike action, except on the very highest level, is necessarily tied to fighting individual issues. For alternatives on the level of the overall running of society, the working class has to look beyond trade union action. That objective reality is the reason why the working class has created political parties like the LP. The problem is that the LP is bourgeois in its programme, policy, and record. That problem cannot be solved by trying to go round it. A new party must be built; it can be built only within the actual political processes of the existing labour movement, and the LP is central to those processes.

The LP is not a mere aspect of the work of the Marxists. It is the mass political movement of the working class, organically tied to the bedrock organisations of the working class, the trade unions. It shares a vast common affiliated membership with the trade unions. 7 million trade unionists have full LP membership rights if they choose to exercise them.

The LP is for now and the foreseeable future the pivot of mass working class politics in Britain. Therefore it is central to the work of the League, which sets itself the task posed by the Communist International many decades ago that of renovating, reorientating, and transforming the existing labour movement, trade union and political wings alike.

Always and everywhere we advocate, promote and prize most highly the mass self-controlling direct action of the working class, on the trade union and also on other fronts, all the ~~xxxxx~~ way to soviets and to the working class seizure of power. But it is to engage in metaphysical hair-splitting to pose abstractly - basing ourselves on good quotes from the Communist International (or even from WF and the I**) - the question: which is more important for us, what is our no 1 priority, the trade unions or the LP.

The British labour movement now is indivisible. The LP in the final analysis is controlled by the TU block vote. The recent setbacks for the broad left came from the unions - on the issues at stake we had won the CLPs. Conversely, the performance of Labour in government (1974-9), and the efficiency, seriousness and militancy (or the lack of any of these qualities) in 'Her Majesty's Opposition', has in turn passively affected the options, the climate, the expectations and therefore the militancy and combativity of the trade unions, right down to the most basic shop floor level. Right now, if the LP were to fight the crusade we have advocated (withdrawal from collaboration, mobilisation, pledges for what it would do when re-elected etc) even on the basis of its present limited or muddled politics, it might radically change the climate on the shop floor and call into being a storm of militant working class struggle.

A different, more militant LP, even while formally remaining within the confines of reformism, would have secured a different working class response to the slump and Tory onslaught after 1979.

Therefore, for now, there can be no sense in which for us the LP is counterposed to TU work or TU work to the LP. Marxists do labour movement work. Central to the role of the Marxists in the labour movement is to work to break down the barriers artificially created by social democrats on one side and by right and left trade-unionists and syndicalists on the other, between the political wing and the trade union wing of the labour movement (the linking up of the unions and LP in the struggle for labour movement democracy, for example).

Neither, therefore, for us, can the LP be counterposed to the struggle on the shop floor, nor, especially, to the struggle for leadership there. Nor can the shop floor be counterposed to the LP. Even a very big revolutionary party would be impotent if it lacked an adequate industrial base. Conversely, the attainment of leadership on the shop floor would prove sterile unless also integrated into serious perspectives for mass working class politics. The LP is the vehicle for developing TU militancy into mass working class politics in the next stage ahead, and for transitional demands, and developing the, presently, reformist working class movement on the basis of experience of political and industrial, and other struggles towards a fully formed solution. Within that, by linking trade union and political aspects, and by our agitation and propaganda, we must fight for revolutionary working class politics, and build the next stage of the revolutionary party by recruiting individuals and more or less small groups to the League.

The only possible conflict or clash between LP and TU work for Marxists now would be in allocation and deployment of our resources. This would have to be discussed and resolved concretely in terms of an assessment of the choices and costs and perspectives for the work in any given situation. To try to pose any conflict over resources, or to extrapolate from such a conflict, in general political terms or in terms of a general and abstract, that is a metaphysical, seeking to know which is no 1 or 2 in our list of priorities, is to introduce political confusion and disorientation into the organisation.

9. OUR PROFILE

It would be of advantage to us to be able to function freely in the existing labour movement under our own name and banner, and with maximum non-sectarian distinction from all competitors. But for now the relationship of forces between us and the reformists decrees that we cannot do this without paying the price of voluntary isolation from the mass political working class movement.

The degree of 'party profile' our main press can display is determined immediately by considerations of O. legality. Why is this legality decisive for us? Because we have made the basic political assessment that declaring a 'revolutionary party' which would inevitably be counterposed to the mass working class political movement is ruled out for the immediate period ahead. It would not be 'building the revolutionary party', but destroying the WSL by way of sectarian suicide.

To nevertheless do it for TU work would imply dualism - one practice for the unions, another for the LP. It would generate huge practical problems. It would enforce, in effect, a division of the organisation into two contingents. TU militants recruited by the propagandist and (in the circumstances) sectarian approach would be sectarian on the LP and have to be radically re-educated if they were to be able to work in the LP. Instead of a unifying and dynamic political approach to the whole labour movement centred on the revolutionary party, W., we would get a more or less sharp disjunction in the organisation between TU activists and LP activists and the possibility of routinism and accommodation in both areas, ie the inner collapse of the 'party' into a series of constituencies.

How to make the struggle in the political wing of the movement interesting and accessible to non-political TU militants or to militants who consider the LP a waste of time, is fundamentally a problem of how to convey to them what the W** is. Badges, names, profiles and banners will not suffice or substitute

for the work of convincing people about our ideas and perspectives and for about the irreplaceable need for the W**. On the other hand, the use of badges, names, profile, banner and a propagandist 'Trotskyist' rhetoric in such a way as to convey an impression that we belong to the sectarian tribe of revolutionary-party-proclaimers, flagwavers, etc. who pose in effect as an immediate alternative to the existing mass political labour movement - that would contradict our actual perspective, which is to renovate, reshape and transform the existing movement, and to build the revolutionary party within that struggle. It would convey a false impression of what we are, and introduce a set of massive incoherences and contradictions into our work.

The character of our press is determined by the central task of presenting a full Marxist view of the world through propaganda, agitation and background (including theoretical and semi-theoretical) material. How we do this journalistically will vary with circumstances and lead to varyingly balanced papers, aimed at a wider or narrower audience, assuming more or less education and political education.

The avoidance of jargon in our press, talking as much as possible in language the working class reader will understand as his/hers; a proper balance between LP, TU and other coverage and the elucidation of the links between them and the Marxist organisation; making the issues discussed in the paper, including LP affairs, accessible and interesting to not-very-political TUists whom our factory nuclei relate to and organise - these are very important matters. They can make the difference between ruining and developing our work. But for us they are technical questions of good and bad journalism, not questions of LP vs LP orientation, and not questions of having an working class or petty-bourgeois orientation. They can only be discussed meaningfully and without mystification if technical questions are not confused with questions of differing political concepts, perspectives, and orientation.

10. ORGANISING THE LEFT

We consider central to our work the task of organising the LP and TU left and the militants for the struggle and for class-struggle issues and politics in the LP and in the LM generally. (Concretely now, when it is extremely probable that the left offensive in the LP will be resumed after the election, whatever its outcome, to abandon that work would be political suicide for the Marxists).

Such organising is our technique both for forwarding the interests of the broad movement and simultaneously for building a revolutionary party inside that movement.

We reject a propagandist 'learn socialism from the blackboard' approach to the existing mass labour movement, and the fetishisation of the 'party' label and the 'party press' that goes with it, as a species of voluntarily-chosen self-isolation and self-removal from the necessary political processes through which the movement must go if a real prospect of the socialist revolution is to be opened up.

We stand against ~~real~~ political confusion, reformism and class collaboration in the movement, both on the level of ideas and of practice, and whether with its right face or its left mask. We counterpose to them our own programme, ideas and proposals for action. But we do not seek artificially to differentiate ourselves, propagandistically, on the level of point-scoring or arbitrarily anticipating possible or certain future differences: that, essentially, is the method of propagandism and sectarian self-isolation, and of counterposing the revolutionary party to the processes of the mass labour movement.

Our model is not that of the blackboard and a pupil-teacher relationship of the revolutionaries to the working class, as favoured by sectarian propagandists. Our model is the class struggle; our belief, that workers learn in struggle as well as by propaganda, and that the masses of workers in the broad labour movement will only learn in struggle - TU, LP and other struggles. Our work with the left in the LP and unions is to organise it and draw it into struggle for goals we have in common with it, and on that basis of experience in struggle, to seek to develop groups and individuals with our propaganda. The propaganda on which we recruit new W**ers will necessarily include explanation of our view of the necessary development of the existing labour movement and of the W**s own place and role within that.

We see the necessary and irreplaceable political and ideological struggle for Marxism with the reformist left and with the centrists and semi-centrists as situated within the common struggle on limited goals, for so long as the broader left engages in struggle, and for so long as we can hope to draw it into struggle.

Therefore we will apportion our resources accordingly. We reject the notion that our first priority must be a 'party press' as implying, in the situation we are in now, a fundamentally propagandist approach and a sectarian trajectory for us away from the LP. Considering the extremely open political character of the press we in fact have, the extreme concern for a 'party press' is either blind a-political fetishism, or else a means of expressing and advocating different political perspectives, methods and orientation from those we are now working on.

In practice there has been not one issue of the class struggle over more than 4 years now on which our broad paper approach has stopped us giving out our full programme. (Comrades should not attribute to the character of our main press what are in fact differences of political position or emphasis among us).

Political conditions being favourable to it, we must continue to have as our main publication a broad paper like the present one or a replacement, supplemented with a less frequent propaganda-theoretical W** publication.

11. AN 'ILLEGAL' PRESS?

The party press exists to serve the party, not the party to serve the press. As Marxists we reject all mystification and fetishisation, especially the fetishisation of forms of our press. The press is a tool and must be designed to do a job in a given situation. It must be redesigned and modified when our work - building the revolutionary party within the existing movement - demands it. To ~~xxxx~~ reshape our entire work, or to deliver ourselves and our future into the hands of the agents of the class enemy in the labour movement, because of an inflexible commitment to the name, style balance, frequency or imprimatur of a publication would be absurd formalism.

Therefore we will not, except as a transitional measure for a short time not exceeding a few months, opt for an illegal press (in LP terms). This would imply abandoning a focus on organising the left. It would saddle us with a publication that could not be sold in the LP except to close contacts - and could not be openly sold in the TUs either, for fear that militants would be reported to the LP. The paper would be largely unviable. In a short while the contradiction would force us to choose between the paper and LP work.

Our paper would be a millstone round our necks, while at the same time we would have no publication that could be freely and openly used in the work in the LP - or in the TUs!

The perspective of an 'illegal' paper for an indefinite period is therefore either a proposal for an utterly sterile and tkenistic use of our resources, with much of our substance sacrificed on the altar of the 'party press' to the

detriment of our actual work in the movement - or, a half-developed perspective of doing something else than the work in the labour movement with the illegal paper, and therefore with the organisation, much of whose resources would go to producing and circulating it.

12. THE SPECIALLY OPPRESSED

We do not preach passivity to the specially oppressed, nor that they must wait until the mass of workers are with them. We support and advocate militant women, blacks and gays acting against their oppression. We recognise that many aspects of oppression can be changed and lessened by militant activity.

We work in autonomous groups of women, youth, blacks and other oppressed. Sometimes we initiate these autonomous movements. We in no circumstances subordinate the struggle to the mere form of the existing labour movement, or to its backwardness.

Nonetheless, the idea that the working class is central to our perspectives of socialism implies that we must ultimately relate these movements of the oppressed to the working class and to general working class politics, therefore to the existing trade union and labour movement. Among other things, this means to relate them to, and actively draw them into, the struggle to transform that movement into a movement for the emancipation of the working class and of all the oppressed.

The women's, youth, black and other movements are not sufficient to themselves: they cannot secure their own liberation except as part of and in alliance with the working class and its labour movement. Therefore, as well as direct, usually sectional struggle, on issues of special oppression, they must be won to the fight against the backwardness and oppressiveness within that movement.

Winning the specially oppressed to that fight is also vital for the movement as a whole. The hold of reformism depends seriously on relegating the most oppressed to passivity, or on isolating them from the class. Mobilising the specially oppressed for the fight within the movement is vital for the revolutionary transformation of that movement.

The role of the W** is to be the organisation that can integrate disparate forces into a coherent working class based strategy for the overthrow of capitalism and of all the manifold oppression of class society in general.

Thus to counterpose work among the specially oppressed to LP work is as senseless as counterposing TU work to LP work. It is doubly so in the present situation of the Marxist organisation, where its women's, youth, gay, even black work is heavily intertwined with LP work.

13. THE ROLE OF THE W**

What then is the role and function of the W**? We carry the programme and the overview of the necessary development of the labour movement, and the political perspectives derived from them. Flexible and 'diplomatic' on questions of organisation and tactics in relation to the labour movement and oppressed groups, at the same time we make no concessions on questions of principle, definition, program, or political analysis, to them or to pseudo-Marxists and kitch Trotskists.

We try to put ourselves in the pivotal position (which in fact the broad groups can give us) to link the different fronts of the class struggle and the movements of the oppressed into a working class strategy. Failure to do this would not be revolutionary intransigence but a form of capitulation to the existing reformist leaderships.

Our method is that outlined by Trotsky on the trade union question, and linked by him to the general approach to the existing labour movement:
"It is necessary to establish this firm rule: self-isolation of the capitulationist variety from mass trade unions, which is tantamount to a betrayal of the revolution is incompatible with membership of the Fourth International...."

"Under the influence of the betrayal by the historic organisations of the proletariat, certain sectarian moods and groupings of various kinds arise or are regenerated at the periphery of the Fourth International. At their base lies a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, ie for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses, as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means to the sectarians, convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism. They propose turning their backs on the 'old' trade unions, ie to tens of millions of organised workers - as if the masses could somehow live outside of the conditions of the actual class struggle! They remain indifferent to the inner struggle within reformist organisations - as if one could win the masses without intervening in their daily strife! ...

"The cleansing of the ranks of the Fourth International of sectarianism and incurable sectarians is a primary condition for revolutionary success."

February 9 1983

Following the letter from the Socialist League (reprinted IB30) and discussion on our National Committee, a 4 person League delegation (Cunliffe, Carolan, Hill, Levy) met a 3-person SL delegation (Potter, Harris, O'Neill), to hear the SL's proposals for immediate fusion of our two organisations.

The initial presentation was made by O'Neill, who explained the SL's conference decision to engage "100%" in work in the O., with particular attention to the Bennite current. Their new paper +A is designed as a paper "for O. work", and will be launched in March.

Within the O. they propose a campaign for a Labour victory which would focus on the main Labour conference policies, the fight for mass action, and opposition to the witch-hunt.

As far as the League is concerned, the SL has characterised us as a 'revolutionary Trotskyist organisation'. And it has drawn the conclusion from our change of majority position on the Malvinas (with which they now say they agree), and from the fact that both organisations are now to be increasingly active in the O. that our political positions are "moving closer together". For this reason the SL favour immediate fusion.

They believe that there are possibilities for immediate joint work in the O. We have, said O'Neill, "the same basic orientation" towards an S++V. "We think we can work together on this".

"We are working together and can do so more in LAW".

In the J., O'Neill described an "exceedingly positive interaction" between SL and League youth on the Jobs not Bombs march last year, and expected similar joint work.

Ditto in industry, particularly in BL where the SL has increased its strength as a result of management's recent intake of labour.

CAROLAN: What is your assessment of the 'Socialist Unity' campaign in the 1979 election? Have you changed from your refusal to work in the Leyland Action Committee? How do you now see your conduct over the Labour Committee on Palestine? It is public knowledge that the League's Malvinas policy change was by a tiny majority. Are you not simply fishing in troubled waters, using the slogan of 'unity'? Is the new paper firmly timetabled for its launch, or would it depend on talks with us?

POTTER: There is no official SL balance sheet on the Socialist Unity experience. The SL's position on the LAC and LCP is unchanged - though this is no obstacle to joint work in BL. "We don't premise our proposal for fusion on tactical agreements of that type".

LEVY: What proposals do SL have for joint work?

POTTER: We don't yet have any. We don't rule out subsequent involvement in LAC work.

On Palestine, "we think the League made a mistake. True, Knight adopted bureaucratic methods, but the way to fight was not by leaving. On international solidarity work we often have to relate to Stalinists as well. Knight is seen as the major figure on this issue in the LP and labour movement - as shown by the last Labour conference.

"Maybe we should schedule discussion on WRP for later. We yield to nobody in defence efforts against WRP. We have been principal targets of slander campaigns. We think we could get agreement in general terms".

CAROLAN: SC took a softer line towards Knight/Livingstone compared to line of S+. "We have fallen out with Livingstone, e.g. over tube wages fight, etc. You appear to soft-peddle that fight, and now hold on to Knight".

POTTER: In Lambeth, IMG joined with struggles on cuts/rates against Knight.

HARRIS: How do League characterise IMG? "Do you think our organisations are moving closer politically? Do you see short-term or long-term fusion? More or less joint work?"

CAROLAN: Joint work - LAC, Tebbit, Poland, etc. - has been repeatedly proposed by the League, rejected by SL/IMG. While our leading committees have formed no final view of fusion proposal - very vague letter - we must say that for us O. work is a tactic, and we don't think your involvement in such work changes the position between our two revolutionary organisations.

O'NEILL: "The fact of O. work does not mean we come closer programmatically but into closer contact, giving opportunity for joint work."

"In any case we will both be fishing in the same pond. Unity will become a burning question of practical politics. We think that on the biggest programmatic issues we are moving closer together".

CAROLAN: But you and we are both part of different international groupings. We can see that in the IMG there is a Castroite current which contains 30% of your members, and seems to have coloured your politics, e.g. on Poland.

Is your international tendency moving closer to us politically? We would view the Castroite position as essentially Stalinist in its content, though obviously the comrades concerned are not consciously Stalinists.

POTTER: We want to discuss on your publicly adopted, majority line. And we would expect you to discuss line adopted by IMG and leading bodies. Our World Congress will meet at the end of 1983.

HILL: Why did you fix launch of +A before even discussing with us? Why make public calls for S++V at B+ meeting without discussing with us?

O'NEILL: "We were late in putting all our forces into the O. Our existing paper still seen as linked to project outside O." Change of tactics - change of paper. To hold this up would hold up our conference decisions.

POTTER: On fusion: it takes two to tango. How do you respond?

CAROLAN: Our first response was astonishment, given our recent experiences with IMG/SL. Then you say immediate fusion, refer to O. work. The fact is that we have established a certain prominence in that work, well-known paper, etc. But you propose to start a new paper in competition. You already have a paper. Isn't this simply competing for our periphery around S+? If you were serious, surely you would discuss timetable of paper in light of fusion talks. You plainly don't see fusion in the short term.

O'NEILL: Purpose of letter was to establish framework to discuss joint work. Meanwhile we continue to build our organisation, and that means competing for members. We think it is better to start process and prepare for fusion. The ball is in your court.

On S++V see it based on united left offensive against right wing

based on main conference policies - unilateralism, 35 hour week, no wage controls, withdraw from EEC.

The forces we would expect are basically the left wing of C++D, as well as CND and base of trade unions.

CAROLAN: We will have some common ground on S++V. But discussing in terms of O. work defocuses relations between the two organisations. We can take for granted joint work in labour movement on basic issues. Our experience in old ICL was of IMG cheating us in discussions. In fused League we have had repeated clashes with IMG. Experience does not predispose us to expect a sudden change.

Majority positions are one thing. But your main English-speaking section is loudly proclaiming Castroite positions.

O'NEILL: Your co-thinkers in Italy proposing fusion with our comrades. But public positions of Italian section are the same as ours. We don't take responsibility for pronouncements which are not made by us or by International Majority.

POTTER: Fix next meeting after League conference. But this should not hold up talks on S++V. Want discussion at once.

We see a process leading up to our fusion proposal.

1. Our change of orientation in class struggle. Your organisation is now the closest to ours on the British left. We follow the conclusions of this, as we did in our proposed fusion with SWP in 1976-9.
2. No big differences with League positions. You did not fail test on Malvinas - the organisation arrived at correct position. "Everybody makes mistakes".

CAROLAN: Will report back to our committees. Once again reject characterisation of us in terms of O. work. We take for granted some collaboration on S++V work - but BL also is urgent.