

On our orientation in the labour movement

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1) The Political Crisis of the British Working Class

Three times in a decade the militancy of the rank and file of the British trade union movement has challenged or destroyed the authority of the capitalist government of the day: in 1972, 1974 and 1978-9. In each case the movement took place despite the best efforts of a large section of the trade union leadership to contain it. And in each case the political limitations of the British workers' movement were exposed. While it had the power to topple a Tory or even a Labour government which sought to attack trade union rights and living standards, it had no alternative government of its own to replace them with.

Heath was ousted by working class resistance in 1974 - only to be replaced by a Labour government of strikebreakers, wage-cutting lackeys of the IMF and NATO. Callaghan's Phase 4 of wage controls was smashed by the mass action of the Winter of Discontent - but there was no serious working class alternative to the discredited Labour government, nor any development of new political direction in the trade unions.

Whether it be in its day-to-day struggles against the Tory offensive waged in its primary organisations - the unions - or on the level of choice of local or national government, the working class faces an acute crisis of political leadership. With no significant formation having emerged to the left of the Labour Party, workers face the savage onslaught of the Thatcher government armed for the most part only with the bankrupt policies of reformism.

Since the attacks on the unions by the 1964-69 Labour government and the industrial struggles which defeated Heath, there has been a movement of the Labour left seeking to address this political weakness by formulating more radical policies and seeking the means of controlling the leadership of the Labour Party. This movement gathered strength during the Wilson/Callaghan governments of 1974-79, and combined with the upsurge of trade union resistance to Phase 4 to inflict a series of defeats on the Labour leadership.

For a period these forces were able to enlist the block votes and verbal support of a section of the union bureaucracy, itself seeking the means to prevent a repetition of the explosive events of the Winter of Discontent by increasing its influence over the Labour leadership. The reforms that were pushed through - reselection and the electoral college - destabilised the Labour Party, alarming the right wing in the unions as well as the PLP. Since the 1981 conference, the alliance of union and PLP leaders has set out to undermine these gains by embarking upon a full-scale witch-hunt of the left.

We should not underestimate their determination. The lesson of Bermondsey is that just as the TGWU bureaucracy have proved themselves willing to smash trade union organisation in Cowley in their efforts to crush the Trotskyists, so the Labour leadership is prepared to smash up whole sections of the Party and sacrifice seats in Parliament to ensure the defeat of its selected political opponents. Bermondsey confirms that a section of Labour's right wing would sooner lose the next election than abandon their purge of the left.

Others, probably including Foot, and some union leaders, are plainly shrinking from such extremes. But with the Tory media on their side, and able to exploit the gap which obviously exists between Labour's radical left wing and many sections of the working class rank and file, it is the extreme right who have set the pace, and can be expected to maintain the offensive against Militant PPCs etc.

Our role must go both to resist the purge and to build the widest rank and file election campaign in the unions, on the estates and amongst the most oppressed, to secure a real mass base for left wing policies against the witch-hunters. We must struggle against those elements of the left who may buckle under the right wing offensive or become demoralised by the Bermondsey defeat, fighting to unite the

broadest possible forces against the right wing, and waging the struggle right up to the disaffiliation or disbandment of rebel CLPs that adopt our line of refusing to expel.

2. The Bennite Left

The democracy campaign inside the LP had a significance far beyond the level of its actual proposals. It represented an attempt by the rank and file to control the apparatus of the party and thereby impose its more radical reformist policies on the movement. The victories at the special conference were historic gains for the working class, and Benn's subsequent challenge for the Deputy Leadership took the left challenge to new heights, encompassing the overwhelming majority of the LP rank and file and generating massive support in the working class.

The right wing counter-offensive however has seen serious - though not decisive - defeats for the left. Through the right wing in the unions, they took control of the NEC and initiated the witch-hunt aimed at intimidating the rank and file and expelling the revolutionary left.

The Bennite left in distinction to the crypto-Stalinist currents around the LCC and Clause 4 has stood fairly consistently against every aspect of the witch-hunt. Benn for example has strongly defended Militant. Yet since Bishops Stortford, Benn has also been the key to demobilising the left campaign. He has come out on some important issues like defending the GLC over Ireland, but constantly limited the fight against the right wing.

Benn's stance bridges enormous contradictions. He is prepared to use his massive popularity to oppose the witch-hunt, yet on the central issue of policy for the next Labour government - economic policy - the best he can do is offer equivocal opposition to incomes policy.

This is important, since economic policy will determine the relationship between the next Labour government and the working class.

Shore's economic recipes contain within them all of the worst aspects of Wilson/Callaghan governments in the past - which Benn has criticised, and the rejection of which he has said durned him to the democracy issue. Yet on this question of questions he keeps a low profile. Indeed Benn's candidacy for the Shadow Cabinet, with its implied willingness to accept collective responsibility for the policies of the PLP leadership, can only be seen as a further retreat.

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

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

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

popularising our programme and demands.

Of course, Benn's tactical position on the political fight in the Labour Party is also coloured by his view of the prospects following the next election. He obviously sees it as inevitable that a Labour defeat will regenerate a new wave of left wing activism in which he would expect to play a leading role, while leaving open his options on how to relate to any new Labour government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. The Labour Party and the Work of Marxists

? Benn's politics, like those of Foot and Healey, are not merely products of the Labour Party in itself. Both are expressions of the same reformist approach which shapes the policies of the trade union bureaucracy. Labour politics, both in their origins and in their practical development are trade unionism in Parliament, class collaboration on the governmental rather than simply the industrial plane.

It is therefore false to single out the Labour Party as some kind of "higher" political forum for the working class in distinction to the "economic" sphere of the trade unions. All of the most crippling limitations of the reformist world-view - deference to capitalist "viability", Parliamentarism, national chauvinism, sexism, etc - are equally rampant in both the unions and the Labour Party.

For the same reason it is misleading to single out the Labour Party alone as "the pivot" of mass working class politics, in a way which downplays the political issues at stake in the unions and plainly relegates the unions to less than pivotal status in our political assessments. The fact remains that there can be no lasting political victories in the Labour Party struggle without the successful waging of political struggle in the unions.

Amongst trade union activists in the branches and the broad lefts, a big percentage of militants will be in the LP - on the shop floor they won't. There are 10 million trade unionists in Britain who are not members of the LP. Affiliated membership is very important but it is different, since there has not been the conscious decision to join. It means that most workers look first and foremost to their union and vote Labour in local and national elections.

mainly passive *for what?*
The mass involvement of the working class in the Labour movement is therefore the workers organised in their unions, at the point of production, facing the employer every day in defence of their jobs, their working conditions, their wages. This often means fighting the trade union organisation itself or facing conditions where there is little or inadequate support from the officials who control the union.

Our primary orientation therefore must be towards that mass of workers, being with them when they are in struggle, giving the leadership and knowledge which Marxist cadres can provide - first against the employers and then against the misleaders in control of the movement. Work in the LP is an important - very important - part of that struggle. But a movement which cannot relate to the mass of workers where they are, cannot become a proletarian movement.

Certainly it is true that there is no political counterposition between the LP and the unions. We need the same politics for both. But each is a distinct area within the labour movement and the working class, each has its own forms, rhythms, problems, possibilities and requirements. By denigrating one form of work we do not strengthen the other - merely ensure that our work becomes lop-sided and ineffective.

We must firmly reject any notion that we do trade union work only through the Labour party or that we see LP work as "superior" or "political" work in contrast to "economist" work in the unions.

While we seek, following the guidelines set out by Trotsky, to transform the trade unions politically into revolutionary instruments of the class struggle, we recognise that the kind of transformation we are fighting for in relation to the mass party of social democracy is of a completely different order. While we cannot predict the precise form of the future struggles against the Labour bureaucracy, or offer an exact blueprint for the emergence of a mass-based revolutionary tendency as the basis for a genuine revolutionary party, we can be certain that the development which is excluded is the takeover of the LP structure and its transformation into a revolutionary party.

Some comrades may have been misled into the belief that the authors of this document and those who support its line are setting out to deprioritise the LP work. It is not true. The point of our argument is that work in the trade unions is at the present time being politically deprioritised by the politics theorised by the authors of the composite resolution in IB 45. What they project is not the agreed orientation at fusion - which was to see the LP and trade unions both as major complementary areas of work. Their position is to give the LP the highest priority. We are arguing to redress this situation. We are arguing to redress what we see as a consistent drift away from the working class by the WSL. The authors of IB45 appear to hold the view that the key forces for building the revolutionary party in Britain - and therefore the forces we should address ourselves first and foremost to - exist mainly within the Labour left. This view seems to essentially inform the political line of IB45.

This starting point leads the comrades to argue a particular line on the signifi-

cance of the LP as against the Trade Unions. From saying that the labour movement is indivisible - which is all right as far as it goes - they go on to their position that there are two wings of the indivisible labour movement - a trade union wing which is basically economic and the LP wing which in contrast is the political side of the movement. From this they draw the conclusion that the LP is the mass political expression of the single indivisible labour movement. From there it is an easy step to say that the LP is by far the most important place to be since this is where the major political developments will occur. They put it this way:

"The LP is not a mere aspect of the work of Marxists. It is the mass political movement of the working class... 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..."

The LP as "the pivot" of mass working class politics is the key point.

This leads to a serious playing down of the class struggle which is the real pivot of mass working class politics. (The comrades recognise that developments inside the LP have their roots in the class actions of the working class but they draw the opposite conclusion). The most widespread expression of the class struggle in the daily struggle of workers against the employers in defence of jobs and living standards under conditions where they have to confront the reformist politics of their leaders. It is this that the comrades seriously downgrade:

"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" ("very highest level" presumably means a general strike?) "is necessarily tied to fighting individual issues. For alternatives at the level of the overall running of society, the working class has to look beyond trade union action. That objective reality is why the working class has created a political party like the LP".

This approach puts general 'political' discussion in LP wards and in GMCs and parliament above the class struggle. The LP was created from the trade unions in order to be its voice in parliament. That does not make it "more political" than the class struggle actions of the working class and the struggles they have to confront within the unions. It is the view which leads the comrades to see the day-to-day struggles of the workers as "individual issues" unrelated to the question of the overall running of society. No wonder Carolan sees the trade unions as non- (or sub-) political if he projects such conceptions.

Such a view should be rejected. We should say dogmatically that the trade unions are not only political but highly political organisations. The role they play is self evident. Their political role during the Thatcher period has been crucial to her success - both in terms of their relationship to direct struggle against the government and in terms of their role in industry. We should not forget that there probably would not be a Tory government if key strikes had not been sold out. During the Labour government and the Social Contract, many of the key decisions were made not in the LP conference but at the conferences of unions like the TGWU.

It is the same politics that workers confront when they are faced with the defence of jobs and living standards. There it comes in the form of the attitude of the reformists to the employers, their attitude to the viability issue and their lack of an independent alternative working class strategy. It is an agreed position that the trade unions are the "bedrock" organisations of the working class and that work in the MP is a tactical consideration. Comrade Carolan was ready to use this very distinction in criticising the SL's approach to the WSL on the basis that both organisations now are involved in LP work, but he draws the wrong conclusion from it.

From this we must accept that the trade unions are a massive, primary area of work in themselves and require a particular approach. While all the obvious links are

there it is still quite different to working in a political party.

It is not enough to concede, as the comrades do, that every strike contains "political implications". It is much more than this. Contained within the class action of the workers is the possibility of politics at the highest level, a challenge to the system. Our job as Marxists within such struggles is to develop that political potential through our intervention - the method of the transitional programme. To provide an independent class struggle programme, demands and actions which can take the workers, through struggle, to the highest political developments.

We don't have to wait for a general strike to do that. We seek to do it within every-class action that the workers take. Every class action relates, by its very nature precisely to the "general level of the running of society" - that is what the transitional programme is all about. That is why Trotsky stressed so much the importance of developing workers through such struggles and the application of our programme under these conditions.

A recent example of how rapidly workers can develop politically during class action was seen with the water workers strike. It may have been on an "individual issue", but it started at a high political level and developed throughout. An adequate intervention by Trotskyists in such a strike could lead to crucial political gains. This is not to say that the labour left is not of great importance. It clearly is.

None of this is to deny the importance of carrying the struggles of the working class into the LP and effectively fighting in that arena - that is common ground. The discussion however is plainly about the extent to which the LP is "the pivot" of mass working class politics in Britain, and the extent to which the trade unions and individual struggles are non- or sub-political. The question is, to repeat it again, not if we are to work in the LP, but how we work in it and how it relates to our work in the labour movement as a whole.

Let's take another look at the same question. IB45 says:

"The present active core of the forces that will make the revolutionary party of the future is now mainly in the LP and TU left. Our commitment to united front work, and to work to organise the broadest forces of that left, to link both LP and the union left must remain central to the league".

It is this view which informs the emphasis the comrades put on "organise the left". To this we have to say that "organise the left" is important, but it is not a programme. It is important as a description of our work amongst the lefts or our work in the LP democracy campaign. It is important providing it means organise the left, and fight with them politically to take them as far as possible down the road that we want to go as revolutionary Marxists. It cannot however constitute our main orientation even in the LP work. That has to be a direction through that work to the working class.

"Stay with the left" is equally limited. Again it is important as an expression of our determination not to be driven out of the MP by the right wing, but as Hill says, it can and does have a liquidationist content depending on what we mean by it.

In the trade unions, "organise the left" is even more limited as a slogan. Yes, we must organise the left in the unions - and we work in broad lefts etc to do that. Yes, we must link that work to our work in the LP, that is self evident and goes without saying. But as an orientation it tends to point in a fundamentally wrong direction.

In the unions we aim first and foremost to be leaders of workers. To lead those workers as communists and to fight to develop them politically in the process of struggle through our strategy and tactics. Our role is not first and foremost simply

to support strikes but to create conditions to initiate them. It can be fairly said that we were predominantly responsible for the 2-day strike in BL in 1981 with all its possibilities for the political situation. It can be fairly said that our comrades were initiating some key actions in the course of the NHS struggle. When we intervene in a strike it is not simply to give support but to give leadership. In the Oxford area comrade Levy's work with the water workers was an example of that and quickly began to have an impact at national level on the dispute. There are a number of other examples.

This should be our main orientation in the unions. From that standpoint we work in the broad lefts, sell our papers, develop the activists towards a political fight in the union structures, urge them to join the LP and carry the fight into there as well.

4. Party Profile

Many comrades feel that xx speaks first and foremost to the Labour left. It is towards the left and debates with the left that the most thought through material is developed. This is not to say that there is not good coverage on many trade union issues, but most people reading the paper draw the conclusion that it is speaking first to the Labour left.

It is common ground that LP work is indispensable to us in this period, the often quoted example of the SWP show that any group which ignores the LP will do so at its peril.

It seems, however, that the question of party profile, as seen by the authors of IB45, is not so much influenced by the necessity to be in the LP - problems related to that can be resolved - but by the way they see their political relationship to the left. In other words they project an approach to the Labour left which is politically low profile.

We agreed at fusion that ideally we should seek the highest party and political profile available to us while taking into account the importance of the work in the LP and its rules. This is clearly no longer an agreed approach.

Party profile is now argued against as a thing in itself. Carolan's document and IB45 (despite one sentence to the contrary) in effect argues for a low party : political profile quite apart from LP rules. In fact he ridicules any mention of party profile.

"Badges, names, profiles and banners will not suffice or substitute for the work of convincing people about our ideas and perspective. 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."

These characterisations, couched in the regrettable debating stance of casting your opponent in the role of a Healyite and then debating against Healyism, are however not an argument for taking LP rules into account but simply an argument against party profile. They are an argument against an open party clearly defining its politics and fighting as a vanguard movement in the working class.

(The best example of this attitude in action is the theoretical magazine. There have only been two editions since fusion and one of those was produced as an intervention into the Malvinas debate. That has no problems of LP rules and neither can it be put down to practical problems.)

We must reject this approach and go back to the approach of seeking the highest political profile possible under prevailing conditions.

5. Our orientation

We must clearly define those forces whom we seek above all to win in the work which we do through the mass organisations of the existing labour movement. We must firmly reject the notion that "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."

Such a statement is doubly misleading. Not only does it paint a falsely optimistic impression of the potential for recruitment from the reformist elements that currently make up the LP and TU left; but it also indicates a dangerously narrow focus to our work which could paralyse efforts to reach out to fresh proletarian forces.

It should be noted that the LP is radically different to the pre-war situation and is now predominantly middle class. This does not detract from the importance of the LP or ignore the fact that the majority of workers vote for it, but it is significant in relationship to the recruitment into the revolutionary party. (Recruitment from that arena will be by definition predominantly middle class.

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A Guardian article recently on the social composition of the LP showed this to be true with some startling figures: Of 200 sitting Labour MPs standing for re-election, 45 came from industrial working class backgrounds and 139 from the middle class (the rest are TU officials not classified by the author).

The statistics for current prospective re-elected Labour candidates are worse. There are only 35 industrial workers out of 400 candidates.

This breaks down into occupations as: 57 managers, 56 lecturers, 55 teachers, 27 lawyers, 21 trade union officials, 17 social workers, 12 business men, 8 unemployed, 8 engineers and 6 housewives.

Our task is not simply to relate to the existing activists of the LP and unions - many of whom, for all their strengths on certain issues, are petty bourgeois forces with developed and well argued reformist positions and more or less hardened opposition to Bolshevik methods of organisation (unless they have a misconception of what Bolshevik organisation is). We must find ways to reach and mobilise rank and file workers and sections of the unemployed and specially oppressed, drawing them into the struggles of the labour movement as our allies against the right wing and the introverted left.

In this respect it is more appropriate to talk of our work through the existing labour movement rather than simply "in" it. Without the consistent struggle to turn the LP and the unions outwards to galvanise and win the involvement of new proletarian forces, we can win neither our struggles against the right wing bureaucrats nor the working class recruits we need for the League.

Key to such broad campaigning work is our involvement in the day-to-day struggles - often themselves on partial and limited questions - which bring workers into conflict with the employers, the state and the labour bureaucracy. In such struggles, which shake up their thinking, workers are at their most receptive to new political ideas, new methods and new policies. By offering workers in struggle ways of advancing their fight, and by seeking ways of translating our battles in the LP into terms which relate to working class people, we create the best conditions to involve workers in wider struggles in their unions, the LP, their communities and - given a fight for recruitment - in the revolutionary organisation itself.

In whichever arena we conduct our political work - the unions, the LP, women's organisations or other broad groupings, our central orientation must be not to the "existing left" but to the winning of fresh proletarian forces key to our ongoing campaigns and our revolutionary strategy.

9 It is by our firm orientation to the working class and the leadership we offer to workers' struggles that we can win (as we have won in the past) the best elements among the (often petty bourgeois) left activists. At the same time we can set the pace to other healthy forces on the left, and expose the limitations of those leftists who see the struggle as one restricted to the existing terrain of the LP and the unions.

This by no means precludes our full involvement in fighting left alliances such as LAW and S++V with sections of the "existing left". Nor does it mean that we need drop our intervention in less fighting, less left wing alliances such as C++D.

What it does mean is that we should explicitly reject any tendency to angle our agitation and propaganda exclusively or excessively towards the narrow circles of leftists at the centre of these campaigns. Any elements from this "existing left" who do become part of the "active core... that will make the revolutionary party" must be seen as an important extra to our recruitment in the working class, and not the prime target of our work.

The Carolan/Kinnell/Hill text in IB45 talks about the Labour Party as "the vehicle for transitional demands". The comrades neither explain this statement, nor do they enumerate any transitional demands which have been or ought now to be taken up in the Labour Party.

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The issue is significant for four reasons.

1) The concept of the LP as the "vehicle" for transitional demands is completely wrong. Transitional demands as presented by Trotsky in the Transitional Programme are class struggle demands designed to mobilise the masses in a revolutionary direction. They are designed to be the demands of a mass movement making the connection between the every-day problems and everyday struggles and the tasks of social revolution. We aim to make them the demands of strike movements and militants in defence of wages, jobs, democratic rights etc. This cannot be done primarily from the LP, although of course a very important role can be played in the LP in calling for and supporting action on such policies. The LP however cannot be "the vehicle" for such action.

2) The political bankruptcy of Labour's left wing in the debate against the right over economic policies points precisely to their lack of any transitional demands as a bridge between their minimal short-term reformist tinkering (AES) and their long-term utopian view of socialism. The situation in the Labour Party, particularly between now and the election, cries out for the development in our propaganda of a programme of transitional demands as a clear alternative to the reformist platform.

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3) This connects with a more general question of the programmatic (as distinct from party) profile of our press and our broad groups in the context of the broader LP and TU left. We have not given sufficient prominence to explaining and pressing case for transitional demands in industrial struggles and fights against the cuts in the last period.

4) The statement in IB45 seems to regard transitional demands as purely propaganda "political" demands to be raised in the "political" wing - the LP. It thus downplays the agitational significance of the transitional demands in mobilising and politicising concrete trade union struggles.

More generally, we have plainly failed since the fusion to amalgamate the strengths of the old organisations' work in the unions and the LP. In particular the ability of the old WSL to connect up with forces in trade union struggles and to focus upon demands which won the active commitment of the best militants while exposing the role of the bureaucrats and careerists has not been sufficiently developed in the fused organisation; nor has it been sufficiently adapted to the struggles in the LP.

It would be fatal if our goal now were to be restricted to "organising the existing left" and solidarity with trade union struggles. We must recognise the need to intervene and raise the political level of local struggles to the point where lessons can be learned on the role of the union bureaucracy and the Labour leaders. We must gain recognition not simply as people who are part of and stay with "the left", but as a distinct political current capable of giving leadership in struggles. Workers must be educated to measure the left in the unions and LP not by its general "solidarity" but by its ability and willingness to act upon policies which advance the

(10) We recognise that there have been major weaknesses in our broad work which have resulted in a crisis of recruitment to the WSL over the past 18 months. The dangers we still face are fourfold and must be grasped if they are to be overcome.

a) The emphasis placed by certain comrades on "organising the left", particularly when coupled to the view that the core of the future revolutionary party is already active in the existing left wing, can lead to an excessive orientation towards the largely petty bourgeois forces in the existing Labour left.

Such an orientation is not only dangerous in terms of the class forces involved, and the isolation it tends to promote between our movement and the rank and file of the trade unions and the working class on the estates, but also highly unproductive in terms of recruitment to the WSL, since the bulk of the "existing left" are committed reformists who will not in the short term join any revolutionary organisation.

b) The focus upon the LP as the "pivot" of working class politics, and the excessive emphasis upon the supposed identity between the LP and the TUs can lead to a failure to relate adequately, directly and politically, to smaller-scale industrial disputes at local level - and even a failure to respond energetically to major national-level disputes. Despite the expansion of its forces, the WSL has seen a marked drop in the qualitative involvement of our branches in local disputes since fusion. The fight for solidarity actions through the LP - while valuable - is no substitute for our comrades' direct involvement with strikers and a fight to give direction and leadership to workers in struggle. Too many opportunities have been missed so far for this to be a chance problem: we must recognise the need to make a turn towards the proletariat in struggle.

c) It was always a danger that the adoption of a "broader" public face and the disappearance of overt references to the League would - unless counteracted by strong internal leadership - result in a lower priority being given by comrades to recruitment of contacts to the League. This has been worsened by the failure to establish our magazine on a regular footing, and by the weak functioning of many local WSL branches, leaving too many members to their own devices in their daily work.

More worrying, it appears that the "broader" the work, the less recruitment has occurred. The worst example of this has been the complete failure of the women's work either to recruit, or to train a communist cadre within the League, or to even produce a functioning broad organisation among working women.

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nothing to do with work
d) Fourthly, the mere adoption of a "broad" format for our work is no guarantee against routinist pressures, particularly given inadequate leadership and follow-through from the EC and the Centre. This is plainly a problem on youth work as well as with WX, and the underachievement of SX sales and SX groups. The more these initiatives relapse into routine or narrow circles, the less prospect there is of them producing the proletarian recruits our organisation so badly needs, or indeed any number of recruits at all.

To combat these weaknesses, the WSL resolves to focus more of its political energies and resources upon the development of a proletarian cadre, recruited by work con-

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ducted through the mass organisations of the workers' movement into the workplaces, estates and mass activities of the working class.

This means that within our broad publications, which should retain their existing format at the present time, we will raise our programmatic profile as a distinct Marxist tendency with policies that offer leadership to the working class men, women and youth, which we will fight for in a coordinated way through the unions, LP and other relevant organisations of the oppressed.