

SL, New Name, Same Old Smell.....	Casey
Ireland.....	Jones
Comment on Jones' Statement on Ireland.....	Carolan
Is the Faction Planning a Split?.....	Kinnell
A Comment on Reilly's article.....	Kinnell
Sect Politics and Class Movement Politics....	Kinnell
A Brief Attempt at Clearing Up a Misunderstanding about the F EGM.....	Fraser
C. Work and Educational Reorganisation.....	Reilly
For the Expulsion of the I.F. Leadership.....	Glasgow Branch
Outline points of the Reply to the LOR.....	Jones

Conference is on April
15-16-17

Comrades are asked to
pay 20p per copy towards
the cost of producing
and distributing Internal
Bulletins

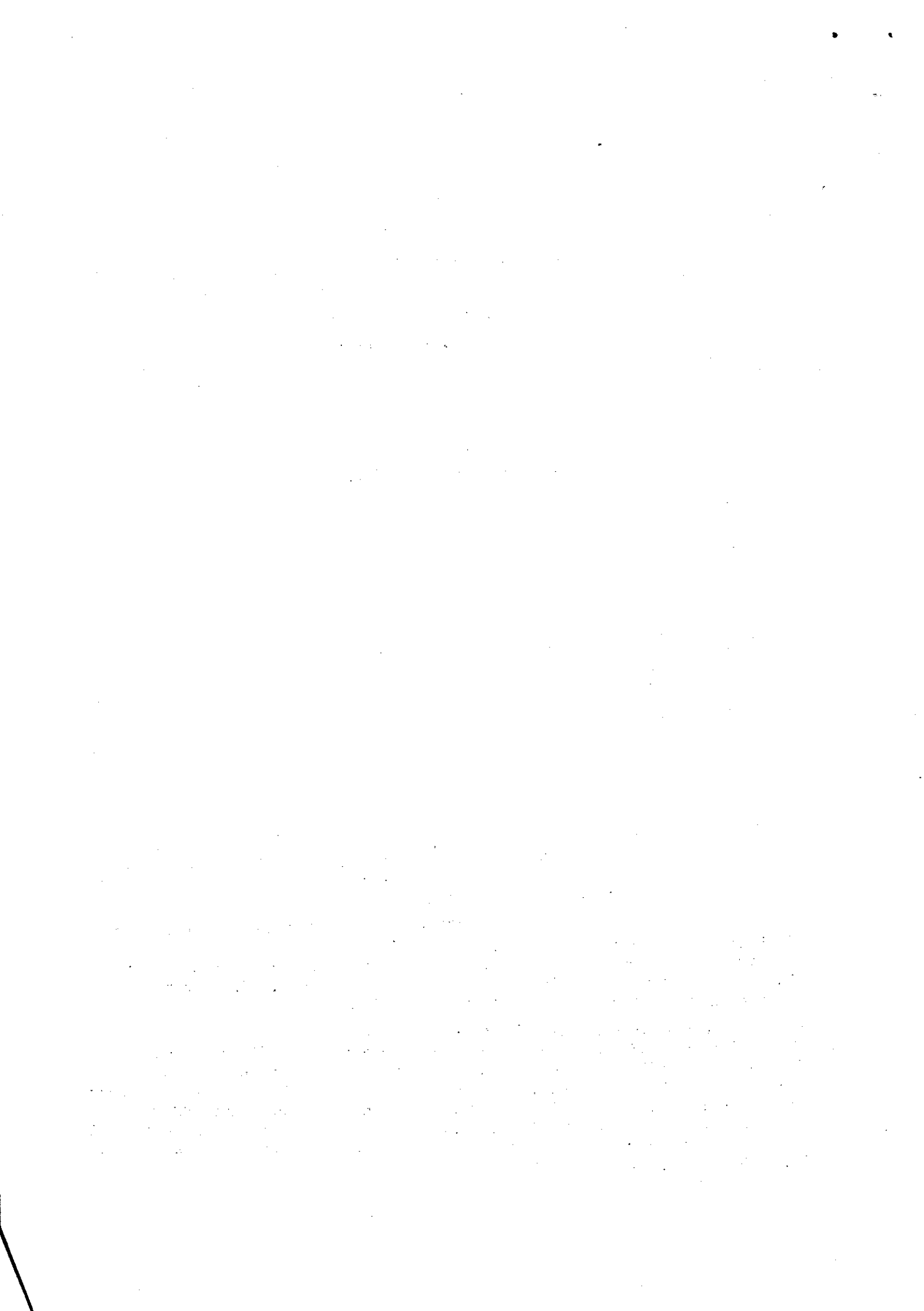
Contributions for the
Internal Bulletin should
be sent to the centre,
if possible typed

on AA Ronco stencils
CORRECTION TO I.B. 45

The alleged statement in the Carolan/Hill/Kinnell resolution, IB45, that "The LP is the vehicle for transitional demands", has been made the centre of polemic in IB48. It is in fact a typing error.

The sentence in IB45 reads: "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".

As comrades can see by referring to the passage in IB22 from which it is composed, the sentence should read: "The LP is the vehicle for developing TU militancy into mass working class politics in the next stage ahead, for transforming passive reformism into the fight for reforms and for transitional demands, and for developing the presently reformist working class movement on the basis of experience of political and industrial and other struggles towards a fully-formed solution". A clause was omitted by mistake in typing up IB 45.



SL - NEW NAME, SAME OLD SMELL.

Spurred on by that wave of ecumenical unitarianism now apparently animating not a few members of the League who ought to know better, the Glasgow branch decided to make its own contribution to the cause of revolutionary regroupment of the British Left by making a number of approaches to the people in the local SL branch with regard to joint work/debate. Hopefully this document will have an appropriately enlightening effect, by providing a brief outline of what happened, on those love-sick comrades in the League already swooning at the sight of the puckered lips of the SL.

The Debate That Never Was.

We wrote to the SL people suggesting a debate on 'Revolutionaries in the Labour Party' with J. o'M. as our speaker. A week after the despatch of the letter we started chasing them up to find out their response. Contrary to the traditional claim that there's no choice under socialism, we found ourselves confronted with a broad variety of responses (each one of them as dishonest as the next):

- a) we can't have a public debate (not that the debate we were proposing was necessarily public anyway) so we can't have a debate at all
- b) we can't have a debate with you because J. o'M. represents a minority position (on the Falklands perhaps, but hardly on the Labour Party, the actual topic of the debate)
- c) we can't have a debate with you because you'd only use it as an opportunity to raise the question of the Falklands (disregarding the question of whether or not we would, this is hardly any reason for avoiding debate - shouldn't they be so confident of their position on the Falklands that they would welcome the opportunity to debate it out with us?)
- d) yes, we're all in favour of having discussions on joint youth work (only those standing in the tradition of the IMG could read a letter proposing a debate on the Labour Party in such a fashion as to conclude that this was in any way a relevant reply)
- e) yes, we're all in favour of a debate (this was the response of the Castroites, who are openly opposed to both L@ work and fusion; politically bankrupt they may be, but at least they're honest about it, unlike the charlatans who call for unity simply as a standard IMG/SL factional ploy).

One other response should also be mentioned: that a section of the SL membership did not even know that we had proposed a debate. The branch leadership of the SL had not even followed the basic democratic practice of informing their branch membership of our letter to the branch. Such an incident does much to explain the SL's predilection for accommodation to Stalinism: it follows the same organisational practices.

In terms of a written response however, we're still waiting for one, despite repeated attempts to obtain one. Given that we sent our letter off four weeks ago, and given that the proposed date for a debate was yesterday, it doesn't really look as if we're going to get one though.

Joint Work in the LPY@? No Thanks - We're in Revo.

Any organisation serious about work in the LPY@, never mind unity, would, one would have thought, agree to our proposal of a joint intervention into the Scottish LPY@ conference and ongoing joint campaigning work thereafter on a number of agreed issues. And the letter from the SL (23rd February) refers to the LPY@ as one area for joint work in the period ahead.

Their rebuttal of our proposals for such joint work shows them to be nothing but lying factional manoeuvrers. At the meeting which, we thought, would be discussing joint work around the conference and thereafter, our youth comrades were treated to worldly-wise treatises on the virtues of 'Revo', the glories of its democratic centralist structure, this year's sugar harvest in Cuba, the price of fish, etc., etc. But joint work? That just wasn't on - they were in Revo, which had its own programme, democratic centralist structure and a variety of other things, all of which meant that joint work with C@ simply wasn't possible.

Their 'intervention' at the conference consisted of two semi-legible leaflets, being the only people (apart from a couple of self-confessed Stalinists in Clause 4) to vote against a motion calling for the links to be severed with fake trade unions in Eastern Europe, and chasing after our periphery. They proposed to our periphery - not it should be stressed, to us - a follow-up meeting to the conference, for the purpose of discussing our intervention (whose intervention was not actually made clear) and ongoing joint work after the conference.

Another of our propositions regarding joint work in the LPY@ suffered a similar rebuttal. At our initiative a Y@ branch did a mailing to other non-M branches and individuals calling a meeting to set up a Y@forCND group in Glasgow. Not a single Revo

supporter turned up to the meeting which had been called in an attempt to set up the Y@ for CND in Glasgow. Thus, whilst making great play of the need to relate the Y@ to CND, Revo supporters deliberately boycotted a meeting being held for precisely that purpose.

Killing LA@ stone-dead before it even got off the ground.

On the eve of the Scottish LPY@ conference in Glasgow a meeting purporting to be a LA@ meeting was staged. From beginning to end, the whole affair was exemplary of the dishonesty and Menshevik inefficiency of the SL.

LA@ had three members in Glasgow at that time. Two are members of the League. One is a snotty-nosed, stuck-up SL member imported from London four weeks previously because of an affaire amoureuse with a Glasgow SL member. The two League members were never informed about the organising of the meeting. The SL member claimed that there was no record in London of there being any LA@ ^{members} in Glasgow. But one of us had been receiving all the LA@ mailings; the other had been in touch with LA@ about his own expulsion from the L@. Such an excuse therefore rings a trifle hollow.

The SL had chosen three headings for the meeting, in the following order: defend unilateralism, defend socialist policies, stop the purge. The order shows clearly that more interest was attached to CND than to the witch-hunt itself. Moreover, in the meeting itself the SL member doing the lead-off claimed that LA@ saw the question of unilateral disarmament as the key issue to be taken up. I think I am correct in saying that this is a downright lie: LA@ has never made any priority, never mind fetish, of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The MP due to speak at the meeting had backed out as soon as he had heard of the SL's lying and manoeuvring. Thus, the only speaker was the recently imported SL love-sick centrist. Having only just arrived in Glasgow, he was of course even more ignorant of the situation in the L@ in Glasgow than the SL average member. He was, for example, unaware that one member of the audience had recently been expelled from the L@ and inevitably therefore made no reference to this in his tawdry lead-off. The audience was either League members/sympathisers or SL members/hangers-on. One or two real people had strayed into the meeting, presumably by mistake.

Inevitably, the meeting achieved nothing at all, save to drag the name of LA@ down into the dirt wherever word got round about the SL's factional manoeuvring that had been behind the meeting. The SL member promised that he would get in touch with me to 'have a discussion about building LA@' in Glasgow. This was 1½ months ago. He is yet to make the effort to contact me.

Serving Ultimata on the LC@.

The IMG/SL record on Ireland has, in Glasgow (like evrywhere else), been inadequate for a long time. Upto September of last year, just one of them ever turned up to LC@ meetings. And he was such a crank that even the IMG distanced themselves from his outlandish proposals. In September he moved to Edinburgh, since when the LC@ in Glasgow has been entirely devoid of any IMG presence and therefore able to get on with the job. In December of last year the SL in Glasgow was contacted by the SL member responsible for the plastic bullets conference in Manchester, who told them that Balfe, the Euro MP who has campaigned against the use of plastic bullets was willing to do a meeting in Glasgow. The first point about this is that he contacted the SL, not any officer or member of the LC@. If he were ever to claim that he was unaware that there were any LC@ members in Glasgow, in the tradition of the LA@ meeting, this simply could not be taken seriously. That he contacted the SL, not the LC@, was clearly being dishonest with both Balfe and the LC@. Presumably the idea was that the initiative for the plastic bullets meeting in Glasgow could come from the SL and they could grab what passes for the glory in their fading eyesight.

The problem was, of course, that the SL, having absolutely no record on Irish work, could do nothing at all - save sit on Balfe's offer for six weeks, by which time it was too late to hold a meeting with him to build for the Manchester conference.

At the Glasgow LC@ meeting in late January, an SL member appeared on the scene, informed us of Balfe's offer, demanded that a meeting be organised, made a series of nonsensical proposals as to how the meeting should be organised, and tried to get a place on the platform of the proposed meeting for the SL member who had organised the Manchester conference. As soon as the item had been discussed the SL member then left, not even having the political decency to stay for the rest of the meeting, nor even join the LC@. The SL's only interest was to get a meeting off the ground in Glasgow on plastic bullets. They had attempted to carve out the LC@ in Glasgow, which has always been ours, and then, having realised that they were unable to get round the LC@, sent along

one of their more hackified members to place a series of ultimata before the LC@ branch. Their minion was given short shrift at the LC@ meeting, and not just by us but by the non-aligned also, and whilst the plastic bullets meeting did go ahead, it was certainly in spite of, not because of, the role played by the SL.

Miscellanea.

The above are recent examples of the kind of wheeling and dealing in which the SL, which ostensibly dares to propose fusion to the League, has been indulging of late. It goes without saying that the list could be continued indefinitely, given that new instances of their dishonest factionalism and manoeuvring are constantly coming to light. It also goes without saying that the SL enjoys a rich inheritance of such activity from its IMG predecessor. On Poland they manoeuvred to prevent the local campaign taking up the demand for severing the links with E. European fake unions and also got the local campaign to disaffiliate from the PSC nationally, whilst when the question was raised in local LC@ branches, they were, in some instances at least (perhaps all - we don't know exactly) more concerned with getting themselves delegated to the local campaign than with pushing the issues in the branches which the campaign wanted raised. On the Falklands their record was no better: they turned up to a meeting organised by us/non-aligned to discuss launching some initiatives or a fully-fledged campaign on the issue only to kill it stone dead. And at no time during the Falklands war were they ever prepared to debate it out with us despite repeated attempts on our part to get a debate with them. As usual, they never even bothered replying to our letters. Even after their change in line on the question of Iran, they have also refused to get involved in the Iranian campaign, despite approaches from the Iranian comrades. On every occasion, on every issue, whether it be a nursery campaign in the Gorbals, our proposals for building the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign in Glasgow, or the attempt to set up a Women's Fightback group locally, the attitude of the IMG/SL has vacillated between indifference and straightforward sabotage. Recently they have become more of an obstacle than ever, indulging in manoeuvring and duplicity that has been hitherto unparalleled.

Conclusion.

This bland narrative of IMG/SL duplicity and dishonesty is bland solely as a result of the turgid nature of its subject matter. It is difficult to conceive of a less inspiring task than tracing out the wretched record of a gang of unprincipled shysters who abhor political honesty and accounting even more than they abhor open political debate. At the same time though, one can but hope that this narrative of some of the more obvious recent acts of SL duplicity in Glasgow has the necessary sobering effect on the League members ready to collapse into the open arms of the SL. In Glasgow the SL has done everything possible to avoid open debate or joint work with the League, resorting even to downright dishonesty to maintain their sectarian stance. In other areas, we are informed, the SL has been all in favour of joint work (at least on the surface) with the League. Is this because the Glasgow SL people are different from other branches of the SL? Or is it because the Glasgow League branch is different from other League branches elsewhere? In fact, neither. At bottom, the SL in Glasgow shys away from the League because they know there is no-one in Glasgow they can pick up from us. In other areas the SL believes that there are a few lost souls wandering around within the League's membership whom they can recruit into their own group. That perception of the SL branches may be right or wrong - they might realistically expect to be able to pick up people, or they may be making an error of judgement. That is not an issue here; what is the issue is the fact that the attitude of SL branches to League branches is guided by the assessment of whether or not there are people to be picked up. In other words, their appeal for 'unity' is nothing but a cynical manoeuvre, a not particularly subtle attempt to move in close enough to certain sections of the League membership to have a go at prising them away from the organisation. Throughout the Falklands debate in the League, the IMG, in Glasgow at least, were fairly open about their belief that they could break off the Galtieri-ites from the League. (In Glasgow they could be open about it as a taunt - trying to confront us with a picture of a massive split in the League, a majority going over to the IMG, leaving us in Glasgow, given our opposition to fascism, members of a rump organisation.) That split never took place. The SL's 'unity offensive' is nothing but an attempt to play upon those divisions and drive a wedge into the organisation. It is indeed a sad commentary on the political naivety of members of the League that they should allowed themselves to be swept along in this typical factional manoeuvring of the SL. Certainly, anyone simple-minded enough to be taken in by the clumsy manoeuvres of a Micky Mouse organisation like the SL cannot end up being other than a dupe of the bourgeoisie in the real world.

Casey, on behalf of Glasgow branch

IRELAND

I wish to argue that the question of federalism be voted on at this conference for the following reasons:

It has been extensively debated in the paper. I don't think that much more will come out.

I think it should be voted on because it is a profound difference.

The position Cde. Carolan argues is quite clearly a reformist position. It is quite dangerous that the movement is tarred with this. The large number of articles by him give the impression that it is the position of the movement.

At a recent EC when pressed as to how the federalist 'democratic' solution he puts forward would be worked out Cde. Kinnell and himself said the following:

that the only way was with a joint meeting between the British government, the Irish government and the two communities in the North.

The original position, which is a reformist, not 'democratic' solution, means that the Protestant working class do not have to break from their pro-imperialism. They can retain their position in their own community. This could only be in the form of a mini-Protestant state.

Now this reformism comes out into the open.

What right has British imperialism to be involved? Of course it has been when other countries have gained their independence, but that is only because they wanted to influence the form of that independence.

What kind of class position is this? Cde. Carolan keeps referring to a class solution. Yet when it comes to practice his only solution involves the bourgeoisies of both Britain and Ireland.

And what about the representatives of these communities? Presumably he means Paisley. So much for a class solution. This solution involves a right-wing cleric.

The WSL must declare its position on this reformist nonsense.

Revolutionaries must fight for 'democratic' demands as part of their fight for a revolutionary solution. It is put forward in order to expose the impossibility of capitalism to resolve the problems of the oppressed.

Under the guise of 'federalism' has come a straight reformist solution to the struggle of the Irish people for their independence.

Jones

COMMENT ON JONES'S STATEMENT ON IRELAND

Carolyn

Comrade Jones has an article in the IB which accuses me of being a reformist on Ireland.

It is reformist, he thinks, to believe that the mechanics of British withdrawal from Ireland will have to include British negotiations, agreements, and collaboration in organizing its own withdrawal with the other forces in the Irish situation - the two committees in Northern Ireland and the 26 county bourgeois government.

This 'reformist' position, even if Jones doesn't know it, is the position of the Provisionals, who call for British Army withdrawal to barracks and for a withdrawal date to be set. We focus the urgency we feel about it in Britain by expressing the demand for self-determination with slogans like 'Troops Out' and 'Troops Out Now'. But practically I cannot imagine by what procedure Britain will get out if not by something such as the Provos want. Certainly a major reason why the Provos want this is that they rely on Britain's good offices with the Protestant community to avoid withdrawal, or the announcement of it, leading to the eruption of sectarian civil war. Even the IRSP (when I debated with a leader of its left wing a couple of weeks ago) appeals to Britain to disarm the RUC and UDR before it goes.

Jones half admits the fact that almost all the withdrawals by imperialist powers in the last 30 to 35 years have been accompanied by negotiations (Vietnam in 1975, with the victorious Stalinist armies sweeping down from the north, is the great exception; but in the establishment/consolidation of North Vietnam in 1954 there were negotiations - in which the Russian and Chinese Stalinists sold out the South Vietnamese). The alternative to all negotiations is for the revolutionary class or army to be able to sweep all before it, and be complete master of its area or even of the international situation. That is easier to prescribe than to arrange in all circumstances.

There are negotiations and negotiations - negotiations from strength and negotiations from weakness, negotiations in which the withdrawing power saves face and perhaps some interests while surrendering its basic position, immediate control, and control over the future actions of the victorious rulers of the formerly subordinate area, etc. Different combinations of political and even basic class forces will have different attitudes about what can be negotiated. Those closest to imperialism, socially and politically, will be more eager to compromise; the more radical and therefore more distant from imperialism will be uncompromising on a more fundamental range of issues and consider it a betrayal to negotiate over their short of victory.

However, among even the most radical - communist revolutionaries in our sense of that term - only the metaphysical ultra-left would rule out negotiations as such. It would depend on what was being negotiated.

The principle, 'The imperialists have no rights', is a fine one: by definition they will in such a situation have might and power. The problem is how to slough it off, throw it off. If effectively that is what is being negotiated, then anybody who would spill another drop of blood needlessly would be a criminal idiot.

Of course the imperialists would want, in negotiations, to shape things after their departure to their liking: it would depend on the negotiations - that is, on the relationship of forces which forced them to the negotiating table in the first place. By definition also revolutionary forces which go to the negotiating table are unlikely to think that they have the option of an immediate clean sweep victory where they drive the imperialists and their allies before them 'like a herd of frightened deer' and need reckon with no-one and nothing but their own will. Or, at the least, they will consider it too costly, where the basics of victory can be achieved otherwise.

We may calculate that if the struggle goes on it will deepen in the social classes it arouses and in the course the transformation will take. There will be classes (peasants and workers) disappointed if the 'national revolution' stops short of

satisfying them. Especially if undifferentiated nationalism is ideologically dominant, they will blame 'sell-outs to imperialism' (the IRSP in Ireland now seldom rises higher than this), when in fact what happens in the negotiations with imperialism will be determined by the strength of the bourgeoisie and its agents in the oppressed country: imperialist deals to prop it up will be secondary. (Again, by definition, if they have taken it to the stage of war, they will not have started out eager to do a deal with the 'national bourgeoisie'). Thus the content of negotiations is what is decisive, and this in turn will be a product of class relations within the national/anti-imperialist struggle.

There are other things wrong with Jones's position.

Jones opposes negotiations in all conditions, and even if Britain were negotiating a settlement in which the main historic demands of the Irish people were conceded: this is straight ultra-left nonsense. It is the stuff that emotionally excites the petty bourgeois and student solidarity demonstrations in metropolitan capitals, rather than serious working class and anti-imperialist politics.

Worse than that, however, is the fact that Jones equates violence, war and physical force politics with revolutionary anti-imperialism and working-class politics. This is plain from what he writes in the IB. It has seemed to me to come across unmistakably in most of the discussions on Ireland over the last 18 months that Jones accepts the Irish Republicans' own central definition of revolutionary politics as in the first place, and irreplaceably, physical force politics.

If you drive them out or shoot enough of them, that's revolutionary; any negotiations are the opposite of revolutionary and debilitate the revolutionary drive.

This is the same error in principle as Jones's formalism - ignoring the content - over negotiations. It is what, I think, the sociologists call ethno-centrism: getting in your own light and judging different, or vastly different, political cultures according to the norms, standards, common experiences, and values appropriate to your own: it is, concretely, to look at revolutionary war and 'guns' with the eyes of someone who in close on 20 years as a revolutionary in Britain has possibly never seen a revolver or experienced anything more violent than the Grunwick picket line.

In Ireland, since the late 1870s, physical force on principle has been the irreducible dogma of republicanism of all shades, from authoritarian right wing republicans to revolutionary populist/socialist republicans.* Adherence to physical force does not tell you anything about their politics. People prepared to 'fight the state' or 'fight imperialism' by physical force in Britain would at least show seriousness; but in Ireland you cannot take that for granted, in a political culture saturated by violence.

One of the dominant features of post-Trotsky 'Trotskyism' has been the proliferation of many mutations under the general tag 'Trotskyism', though in fact what they are is Trotskyist phrases and dogmas fused with alien or half-alien elements - populism, anarchism, etc. This is the concrete expression of the political and theoretical 'crisis of post-war Trotskyism' and the form of its decomposition.

Jones's de facto acceptance of an alien definition of what is revolutionary - physical force - is an example of this process. It comes about, here as in other examples, because of an attempt to relate to the world not by concrete Marxist analysis of the facts, using Marxist categories and theories, but by way of dogmatic recipes and patterns, finding the facts of reality interesting only to the degree that they fit the patterns or illustrate them.

* I.e. the left Provos and the IRSP, who are the equivalent in Ireland of the SRs in Russia - the struggle against whom was a major precondition for the creation and development of the Bolshevik Party. The most important difference is that the Irish 'revolutionary socialist populists' are more or less tainted by Catholic sectarianism.

In fact Jones' denunciation of any negotiations here is probably a late by-product of the denunciation by the Healy tendency of the Evian agreement of 1962 between France and Algeria which brought to an end eight years of the terrible Algerian struggle for independence. Alone of the Trotskyists, the Healyites and Lambertists denounced the agreement, which gave Algerian independence as a 'sell-out' because some secondary or tertiary concessions were made to France.

Their attitude was blind factional animosity towards the others, in the first place the USFI, who had the delusion that Algeria was predestined to have a Cuba-style revolution and no Trotskyist party was necessary. (There are parallels with Nicaragua today).

The Healyite denunciation of Evian was irresponsible ultra-left stupidity.

Jones joined the SLL 18 or 19 years ago, and received his basic political training there. Denunciations of 'the Evian sell-out' and the vile revisionists of the USFI who supported it will have entered his subconscious as part of his basic education. That is one of the main sources of his ultra-left position here. He needs to slough it off.

It is true that to reject all negotiations is to hope for an all-conquering victory that won't come before the definitive breakthrough of workers' revolution. It is therefore in general childish and unreal.

It is especially childish, unreal, irresponsible and ultra-left where Ireland's historic struggle with Britain is concerned. Ireland has 4½ million people, including one million Protestants; Britain, 60 million. The principle governing Britain's relations with Ireland were well set out in the statement James Connolly made to the military court martial that condemned him to death on May 9 1916: "Britain has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland". Nevertheless Irish revolutionaries, including Connolly, had to take account of the fact that Britain had overwhelming might.

A governing notion of Irish revolutionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries (including World War 2) was summed up in the saying: "Britain's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity". It meant that only when Britain was in a major war could Ireland have any chance of successful insurrection. This regulated the ebbs and flows of Irish insurrectionary politics.

The Provos' approach to negotiations with Britain, outlined above, is a continuation of the stark realism that serious revolutionaries (which is what the Provos are, after their fashion) must have. It is simply inconceivable that the whole (Catholic and Protestant) people of Ireland - let alone the ½-million Catholic minority in the 6 Counties - could win such a victory over Britain that nothing would have to be taken into account but the victors' own will.

Of course revolutionaries in Britain would oppose and denounce Britain's self-seeking in such negotiations, and mobilise in Britain against it. But that takes us back to the question of the concrete content and issues in any negotiations.

Given that the central problem in N. Ireland is the Protestant community's attitude to the Catholic community and to a united Ireland, British negotiations which would or might placate the

N.I. Protestant community and avert sectarian civil war - and the hope of averting it is a major reason for the Provos' proposals about how Britain should withdraw - that would be positive and good.

+++

Finally, something which will have occurred already to the reader: the business about negotiations is not especially linked to a federal solution to the N.I. conflict. A federal bourgeois Ireland, or a Catholic-dominated state (which is now, in real terms, the immediate goal of the IRSP and Provos) - both will inescapably and equally involve negotiations with Britain, this side of the workers' revolution.

+++

And a word about the discussion in general. Jones says he wants to vote on federalism because it looks like not much more can be expected in the way of contributions. Does this mean he has nothing else to say? I'm sure it does mean that.

That's pretty remarkable! So has the discussion been. Jones started the public discussion with a letter in the paper which libelled us. That was 19 months into the fusion, and the democratic rights of the Irish Protestants had been advocated in the paper a number of times over that period. Jones's sudden interest in the issue seemed to some of us to be a by-product of the factional heat in the organisation.

Having started the discussion with a papal-style letter - i.e. he didn't argue from the facts, but propounded a line - he has been silent since. Has he nothing to say to the 5000 word article I wrote defending my position? It seems not, unless you count the contribution in this IB on my reformism.

Now, in a normal Marxist organisation governed by political ideas, Jones would by this stage in the discussion stand discredited by his silence. A combination of silence with intransigence on a position he cannot defend, on a very important question that he plainly knows little or nothing about, would brand him as not functioning according to the norms of an organisation like ours - that is, by reason, logic, arguments in the light of our common principles and goals.

A departure from those norms was shown in Jones's original letter to the paper. He says we should not follow the Provisionals into support for federalism. The Provos dropped federalism as policy in November 1981, and dropped it from the Sinn Fein constitution in November 1982. Jones first learned that federalism was Provo policy at the first NC discussion on Ireland late in 1981. By the time he came to write his letter, it was no longer Provo policy, but Jones had not taken the implications on board.

There is no shame in not knowing something in the late '81 discussion. It is shameful and scandalous to maintain a full factional mobilisation on the question and not to bother to acquaint oneself with the elementary facts of the issue. It is to downgrade politics in the organisation.

Yet, despite all this, for a certainty Jones can count on the support of at least a section of the organisation. That is a measure of our political problems as an organisation.

POSTSCRIPT 1.

Jones opposes negotiations. That is reformist. Very well. What is his revolutionary alternative? The British Army should pull out without a word. And then who should take over? The Provisional Army Council? The Dublin government? Who? And how?

In the EC discussion Jones answered this question by saying that if we could force British withdrawal, then the political situation in Ireland would have changed and a strong socialist movement there would be a candidate for power. This is wishful thinking. Rationally Jones should conclude from his own argument that troops out is not an immediate proposition; it depends on a socialist movement in Ireland, and at present there is not even an all-Ireland nationalist movement. (Both the Provos and the IRSP are feeble in the South). Rationally, Jones should draw the same conclusions as Militant. He avoids them only by shielding himself from reality with a fantasy about a miraculous transformation coming over Irish politics as soon as British troops pull out.

POSTSCRIPT 2

Jones knows something about trade union work. What would he make of somebody who, starting from a hatred of wage slavery, adopted the attitude to trade unionism that it was a betrayal of principle to negotiate on conditions and wages? Who argued that all negotiations for higher wages were a complete acceptance in principle of the right of the bosses to extract surplus value from the unpaid labour of the workers - as indeed they are?

Such a person would be either an immature person who had not learned the ABCs or either politics or trade unionism - or, a hopeless anarchist idiot. Karl Marx himself more than once had to argue against such people.

Jones's attitude to negotiations with an imperialism which we are not yet strong enough to wipe off the face of the earth is in principle exactly the same as 19th-century anarchist rejection of TU bargaining (and also, as it happens, of the labour movement fighting for progressive legislation under the bourgeois state).

Under the guise of radical 'principles' - which truly express some radical, revolutionary emotions - this is harmful political nonsense which tries to justify itself by calling the Marxists reformists and traitors.