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## The Age of Consent - Gay Caucus

This document is written in support of the section of the resolution in IB27 which refers to the age of consent. The position of the gay caucus is:

- (a) We support the abolition of the age of consent.
- (b) In the meantime, where the issue arises separately, we support equality between gay men and nongays and we support lowering of the present ages of consent.

From the discussions there have been it seems that (b) is generally agreed. (a) has been opposed by several comrades. This document presents some arguments in favour of (a) and answers those we have heard against it.

Our main reason for opposing the age of consent is that we are opposed to state limitation on consensual sex - sexual activity to which both (or all) parties involved consent. It should be stressed that we are discussing consensual sex. We are not in favour of nonconsensual sex, whatever the ages of the parties involved. We would support a tightening up of laws relating to nonconsensual sex, eg extending the legal definition of rape to cover sexual violence not involving penetration, making rape within marriage an offence.

The main arguments against our position relate to sex between adults and children. Some comrades argue that it is impossible for a child to freely give or refuse consent, given the power our society gives adults over children. Establishing consent may not be easy, but we believe it is possible and that each case where there is dispute should be judged separately, not covered by a blanket rule.

The argument against "adult-child" sex on the grounds of the power of adults over children making free consent for children impossible apply by analogy (though perhaps not to the same degree) to heterosexual sex because of the power men have over women. Noone (we hope) argues for limiting further consensual heterosexual sex. Instead we argue for stringent laws against nonconsensual sex and fight for an increase in the power of women and try to make women aware of their rights so that saying "no" to sex is an effective choice. We should adopt the same approach to "adult-child" sex.

The age of consent is a very ineffective way of combatting the inequality of power between adults and children. Several psychological tests have shown that the application of the age of consent law, with the consequent court appearances to give evidence, is far more damaging for the child than the sexual acts which occurred.

It has been argued that children have a sexuality but that it is "different" from the sexuality of adults. Hardly surprising in itself: gay sexuality is different from straight sexuality, women's sexuality is different from men's. This is used to justify support for a law which forbids children and young adults to express their sexuality in whatever ways they choose with other children and with adults.

It is recognised that any age of consent is arbitrary, that it reflects no real change. Some comrades seem to argue for an age of consent that approximates to the age of puberty. This seems to be a form of the argument against homosexuality often encountered: that it is "unnatural" because it has no reproductive potential. Thus children's sex is invalid and only after puberty is sex to be sanctioned.

The existence of an age of consent, whatever particular age it is, causes untold misery by making access to medical (eg contraception) or counselling services impossible or extremely dangerous for anyone participating in sexual activities which are illegal because of the age of one or more of the participants.

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A lot of confusion arises because of our artificial separation of sexual activity from other forms of human contact. Much of the contact between a mother and her child - contact which is pleasurable for both and is seen as a part of "good mothering" - is undoubtedly sexual in nature; it would probably be condemned as "child molesting" if another adult did the same to the child.

Most of the arguments against "adult-child" sex see it solely from the point of view of the adult's pleasure and the child's consent. They ignore the fact that consensual sex can be pleasurable for the child involved. We are in favour of everyone, including children, enjoying their sexuality free from the guilt that comes from being told that consensual sex is wrong.

Noone seems to consider the sexuality of children apart from the sexuality of adults. Children do have a sexuality and find ways to express it. For example, the three people involved in the writing of this document had their first sexual experiences at the ages of 5, 8 and 9. We doubt if we are unusual in this.

The final argument to take up is that the introduction of the age of consent was a <sup>progressive</sup> ~~procrustean~~ act designed to protect children from exploitation, a law reform/with laws restricting the amount of paid labour children were allowed to do and one that socialists should support. On examination this appears to be only partially true.

Jeffrey Weeks/<sup>explains</sup> in a recent historical book on sexuality that the age of consent was first introduced in 1885. It came as part of a reactionary, profamily response to a growth in child prostitution. The act introducing it also outlawed male homosexual behaviour in public and private. Many socialists supported these measures because of their concern over child prostitution. As a way of stopping child prostitution it was pretty ineffective since nothing was done to alter the social and economic conditions forcing children to take to prostitution. It simply made the prostitutes criminals.

The "progressive" nature of a law reform is not a timeless question. In 1885 almost everyone, including most socialists, was unable to conceive of nonconsensual sex as anything but a sin. So socialists at the time saw limiting sex for children as an advance on the previous position. We doubt if any WSL member would express the view that sex is sinful, yet some seem determined to perpetuate attitudes of this sort,

Would the comrades who see the age of consent as progressive have argued against the Bolshevik government abolishing all laws in Russia which related to consensual sex? Would they argue for the introduction of an age of consent in Norway, Italy or Portugal (none of which have one at present)?

It is difficult to believe that we are having a dispute in the organisation about whether or not there is a useful distinction to be made between trade unionism and politics. Yet that seems to be what the discussion on the LP is mainly focused on now.

Involved here is a basic and most elementary question. Yet our common stock of ideas does not seem to be large enough to allow us to discuss it in the terms in which it should be discussed, namely - what has been the classic or traditional view of our movement on this question? What has changed since?

Instead of discussing it in this comradely way, we have unbalanced, primitive, and sometimes scandalous misrepresentations and demagogy, in IB 48 and orally.

Comrades Jones, Smith and Cunliffe say the following in IB 48, about the views of their opponents:

"(Our) approach puts general 'political' discussion in LP wards and in CMCs and parliament (sic!) above the class struggle" - p.5

They say (by calling for it to be "firmly rejected") that we hold the "notion that we (WSL) do TU work only through the LP" - p.4

They denounce us for thinking 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 wing of the movement".

They say that the view that the LP is the political wing of the labour movement - the generalisation of the politics (reformist politics) of that movement -

"leads to a serious playing down of the class struggle which is the real pivot of mass working class politics... The most widespread expression of the class struggle is the daily struggle of workers against employers in defence of jobs and living standards, under conditions where they have to confront the reformist politics of their leaders".

The authors seem to see politics as single combat between the revolutionary group and the existing leadership. That economic struggles bring workers into conflict with reformist leaders means that those struggles are political. This is similar to the argument that strikes which involve clashes with the police are political - an argument on which Trotsky commented:

"An astonishing argument! The beating-up of strikers by the police is called - a revolutionary advance of the workers... In the United States, a bloody settlement with strikers is the rule. Does this mean that the workers in the US are leading the most revolutionary struggle?"

- 'The Third Period of the Comintern's Errors'.

Further IB 48 states:

"The LP was created by the TUs 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 struggle they have to confront within the unions" (my emphasis).

"We should say dogmatically that the trade unions are not only political but highly political organisations... 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".

Now all of the views and formulations quoted here, and much else in IB 48, starkly contradicts the views of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and both the early Third and Trotskyist Fourth Internationals.

Given that we do not seem to have a common political and theoretical language in which to reason it out, and that the comrades say these things in a document which is plainly concocted to act as a rallying point for a section of the organisation, the best thing to do is to appeal to 'authority' on these matters. We

ask the comrades to bear with us in a long string of quotations.

The idea that trade unionism is something less than fully political in normal circumstances is a most basic notion for us. Engels long ago defined the class struggle as existing on three fronts: the economic, political, and ideological.

IB 48 plainly defines the class struggle as only the economic struggle; other fronts of the class struggle are important only as reflections and refractions of economic struggle.

"... the class struggle", they insist, "... is the real pivot of mass working class politics".

The statement reads like a truism: class struggle is the pivot of political class struggle... In fact the comrades insist on the point because they interpret "class struggle" as "the daily struggle in defence of jobs and living standards".

Now the political struggle is not necessarily our politics - it can be liberal politics grafted onto the trade union struggle for economic self-betterment, or reformist politics which generalises onto the level of society, into parliament, the economic bargaining done at plant level by the unions. This is determined by the struggle on the ideological front, which is irreplaceably the work of the Marxist party. The contradiction between trade unionism and politics resolves itself not in a hollow pretence that they are more or less identical, or that the political struggle of revolutionaries such as ourselves for our politics makes the unions political, or that clashes between unions and the government or workers and bureaucrats do - but in the whole work of the revolutionary party.

Trade unions have a natural tendency, in a situation like Britain where the ideas of the ruling class are dominant in the working class, to become political in the liberal reformist sense.

#### MARX ON TRADE UNIONS:

"The working class ought not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes on them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!', they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'..."

"Trades Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system..."

- 'Wages, Price and Profit'

#### LENIN ON ECONOMIC STRUGGLE:

"For the socialist, the economic struggle serves as a basis for the organisation of the workers into a revolutionary party, for the strengthening and development of their class struggle against the whole capitalist system. If the economic struggle is taken as something complete in itself there will be nothing socialist in it; the experience of all European countries shows us many examples, not only of socialist, but also of anti-socialist trade unions".

- 'Apropos of the Profession de Foi'

"The only choice is - either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course... Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology... For the spontaneous working class movement is trade-unionism... and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under

the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy".

- 'What is to be done'

"The question of the class struggle is one of the fundamental questions of Marxism. It is, therefore, worth while dealing with the concept of class struggle in greater detail.

"Every class struggle is a political struggle. We know that the opportunists, slaves to the ideas of liberalism, understood these profound words of Marx incorrectly and tried to put a distorted interpretation on them. Among the opportunists there were, for instance, the Economists...

"The Economists believed that any clash between classes was a political struggle. The Economists therefore recognised as 'class struggle' the struggle for a wage increase of five kopeks on the ruble, and refused to recognise a higher, more developed, nation-wide class struggle, the struggle for political aims [n.b. Lenin, here, writing about Russia, is referring to bourgeois-democratic political aims].

"The Economists, therefore, recognised the embryonic class struggle but did not recognise it in its developed form. The Economists recognised, in other words, only that part of the class struggle that was more tolerable to the liberal bourgeoisie, they refused to go farther than the liberals, they refused to recognise the higher form of class struggle that is unacceptable to the liberals. By so doing, the Economists became liberal workers' politicians. By so doing, the Economists rejected the Marxist, revolutionary conception of the class struggle.

"To continue. It was not enough that the class struggle becomes real, consistent and developed only when it embraces the sphere of politics. In politics, too, it is possible to restrict oneself to minor matters, and it is possible to go deeper, to the very foundations. Marxism recognises a class struggle as fully developed, 'nation wide', only if it does not merely embrace politics but takes in the most significant thing in politics - the organisation of state power.

"On the other hand, the liberals, when the working-class movement has grown a little stronger, dare not deny the class struggle but attempt to narrow down, to curtail and emasculate the concept of class struggle. Liberals are prepared to recognise the class struggle in the sphere of politics, too, but one condition - that the organisation of state power should not enter into that sphere".

- 'Liberal and Marxist Conceptions of the Class Struggle'.

"The fact that economic interests play a decisive role does not in the least imply that the economic (i.e. trade union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the 'decisive' interests of classes can be satisfied only by radical political changes in general".

- 'What is to be done'

"We are all agreed that our task is that of the organisation of the proletarian class struggle. But what is this class struggle? When the workers of a single factory or of a single branch of industry engage in struggle against their employer or employers, is this class struggle? No, this is only a weak embryo of it.

"The struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the entire class of capitalists and against the government that supports that class. Only when the individual worker realises that he is a member of the entire working class, only when he recognises the fact that his petty day-to-day struggle against individual employers and individual government officials is a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and the entire government, does his struggle become a class struggle.

"Every class struggle is a political struggle" - these famous words of Marx are not to be understood to mean that any struggle of workers against

employers must always be a political struggle. They must be understood to mean that the struggle of workers against the capitalists inevitably becomes a political struggle insofar as it becomes a class struggle.

"It is the task of the Social Democrats, by organising the workers, by conducting propaganda and agitation among them, to turn their spontaneous struggle against their oppressors into the struggle of the whole class, into the struggle of a definite political party for definite political and socialist ideals. This is something that cannot be achieved by local activity alone".

- 'Our Immediate Task'

#### MARX AND ENGELS ON ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE

"... every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and attempts to force them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory or even a particular trade to force a shorter working week out of the individual capitalists by strikes, etc., is a purely economic movement. On the other hand, the movement to force an eight-hour day, etc., law is a political movement.

"And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say, a movement of the class, with the object of achieving its interests in a general form, in a form possessing the virtue of being compulsory for society as a whole. If these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are themselves in like measure a means for the development of this organisation".

- Letter to Bolte from Marx, 23.11.1871.

"The bulk of the workers are waking up more and more to the fact that their salvation depends less on wresting higher wages and shorter hours from individual industrialists, and much more on winning political rights and the Parliament by the working class organised into a political party".

- Engels, 'To the German Workers on 1 May 1893'

#### TROTSKY ON TRADE UNIONISM

"The trade unions have as their object the struggle for the improvement of the working and living conditions of wage earners. To this end trade union members make certain financial contributions. As for political activity the trade unions used to be formally regarded as neutral while in practice they most often followed at the tail of the Liberal Party... The position changed from the moment that the workers, through the medium of the trade unions, created the Labour Party. Having once brought it to life the trade unions then found themselves compelled to finance it..."

- 'Where is Britain Going?'

"The trade unions... represent the class association of wage labourers for the struggle against the greedy and avaricious capitalists. One of the principal instruments of the trade union is the strike. Members' dues go to support the strike... During any major strike the union requires political support and is compelled to turn to the press, the parties, and parliament. The hostile attitude of the Liberals towards the struggle of the trade unions was indeed one of the causes that forced them to form the LP. If you go into the history of the origins of the LP it becomes clear that from a trade union standpoint the party in a sense forms its political section. It needs a strike fund, a network of officials, a newspaper, and a trusted member of parliament..."

- 'Where is Britain Going?'

#### LENIN ON 'ORGANISATION OF WORKERS AND ORGANISATION OF REVOLUTIONARIES'

"It is only natural to expect that for a social democrat whose conception of the political struggle coincides with the concept of the 'economic struggle against the employers and the government', the 'organisation of revolutionaries' will more or less coincide with the 'organisation of workers'... The



political struggle of social democracy is far more extensive and complex than the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government. Similarly (indeed for that reason), the organisation of the RSDLP must inevitably be of a kind different from the organisation of workers designed for their struggle. The workers' organisation must in the first place be a trade union organisation; secondly, it must be as broad as possible... On the other hand, the organisation of revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession... In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organisation, all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals, not to speak of distinction of trades and professions, in both categories, must be effaced".

- Collected Works vol.5 p.451

In the March 1906 Unity Congress of the RSDLP, when the revolution was raging, mass political strikes reverberated through Russia, where every movement in society brought political conflict with the government, this is how the resolution Lenin wrote for the conference posed the issue of the trade unions.

"Whereas:

1. The social democratic party has always regarded the economic struggle as a component of the proletarian class struggle [my emphasis];
2. The experience of all capitalist countries shows that the most advanced form of organisation of the working class for the economic struggle is that of broad trade unions;
3. At the present time a general stirring is observed amongst the masses of the workers in Russia to associate in trade unions;
4. The economic struggle can bring about a lasting improvement in the condition of the masses of workers, and a strengthening of their truly class organisation, only if this struggle is properly combined with the political struggle of the proletariat;

"We are of the opinion and propose that the Congress should agree:

1. That all party organisations must promote the formation of non-party trade unions, and induce all party members to join trade unions in their respective trades;
2. That the party must exert every effort to educate the workers who belong to trade unions in the spirit of the broad understanding of the class struggle and the socialist aim of the proletariat; by its activities, to win a virtually leading position in these unions; and lastly, to ensure that these unions, under certain conditions, come into direct association with the party - however, without at all expelling non party members from their ranks".

#### THE LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Party cannot be simply taken over, in my opinion. Nevertheless the problem of reorganising the existing British labour movement has to be answered partly in terms of what is to be done with the Labour Party.

In the 1920s Trotsky put forward the perspective of the communists taking over the Labour Party. We cannot go to texts 50 or 60 years old for exact recipes for now. The way Trotsky approached it is however an indictment of all the pedants in our own ranks. And the basic point Trotsky made in the 1920s is absolutely true now: the mass revolutionary party will not grow by the adherence of small groups; we will have to find a way of taking over much of the political capital that the Labour Party squanders, or there will be no chance of us answering the Tory and ruling class offensive in the period ahead.

#### TROTSKY ON COMMUNISTS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

"It is a fact that Marx wrote in 1868 that the workers' party would emerge from the trade unions. When writing this he was thinking mainly of Britain, at the time the only developed capitalist country that already possessed extensive labour organisations.

"Half a century has passed since then. Historical experience has in general confirmed Marx's prophesies in so far as Britain is concerned. The

British Labour Party has actually been built up on the foundation of the trade unions. But does Comrade Louzon really think that the British Labour Party, as it is today, led by Henderson and Clynes, can be looked upon as representative of the proletariat as a whole? Most decidedly not. The British Labour Party betrays the cause of the proletariat just as the trade union bureaucracy betrays it, although in Britain the trade unions appear nearer to comprising the working class as a whole than anywhere else. On the other hand we cannot doubt but that our communist influence will grow in this British Labour Party which emerged from the trade unions, and that will contribute to sharpening the struggle of masses and leaders within the unions until the treacherous bureaucrats are ultimately driven out and the party is completely reformed and renewed..." (emphasis added).

- 'A Necessary Discussion...' , Pravda 21.3.23.

"But when deep changes in the international situation and in the inner structure of British society gave birth to the Labour Party there at once arose an unexpected demand for the leadership of the Independents [i.e. the Independent Labour Party, then largely representing the 'soft left' of the LP]. The same course of political development is preparing at the next stage an even heavier 'demand' for communism. At the present time the CP is numerically very small. At the last election it collected only 53,000 votes -- a figure which by comparison to the 5½ million Labour votes may create a dispiriting impression if the logic of Britain's political development is not <sup>fully</sup> understood. To think that the communists will grow over the decades step by step, acquiring at each new parliamentary election a few tens or hundreds of thousands of new votes, would be to have a fundamentally false concept of the future. Of course for a certain relatively prolonged period communism will develop comparatively slowly, but then an unavoidable and sudden change will occur: the CP will occupy the place in the LP that is at present occupied by the Independents". (Emphasis added)

- 'Where is Britain Going?'

#### TROTSKY ON WORK INSIDE THE LABOUR PARTY

To the question from a British comrade, "How shall we enter the LP and how shall we work within it?", Trotsky answered in summer 1936:

"... The important thing is to get in. Once in, opportunities will rapidly unfold. It is understood that regardless of how we enter, we will have a secret faction from the very beginning..."

"It is very important that we do not lay ourselves open at the beginning to attacks from the LP bureaucracy, which will result in our expulsion without having gained any appreciable strength..."

"Obviously we will not be able to raise the issue of the Fourth International immediately. History will provide the opportunity for raising that issue. The question of the Fourth International is not a burning issue to the masses of Great Britain today. If we take a revolutionary position on the popular issues that concern the masses today, then inevitably we will be able to develop towards the question of the Fourth International. At all costs we must be very careful to avoid either sectarianism or opportunism -- we must continually have our fingers on the pulse of the masses..."

"When we enter the LP a situation may rapidly arise requiring one or two of our best speakers to bring forth our complete revolutionary position thus deliberately inviting expulsion for themselves, as martyrs are useful to every movement. Such expelled comrades will find useful avenues of work..."

Further he was asked: "Should the paper... be run as an independent organ of the acknowledged Trotskyists within the political organisations such as the LP or as the organ of the Lenin Club without party affiliation?"

"That is difficult to say, as it must obviously depend on objective conditions..."

To me the question is not of first rate importance, as in any case the Stalinists would expose our connection with a Lenin Club paper..."

On the ILP, which had split from the LP in 1932, Trotsky commented in 1935:

"... for every revolutionary organisation in England its attitude to the masses and to the class is almost coincident with its attitude toward the Labour Party, which bases itself upon the trade unions. At this time the question whether to function inside the Labour Party or outside it/<sup>S</sup>not a principled question, but a question of actual possibilities. In any case, without a strong faction in the trade unions, and, consequently, in the Labour Party itself, the ILP is doomed to impotence even today.

"Yet, for a long period, the ILP attached much greater importance to the 'united front' with the insignificant Communist party than to work in mass organisations. The leaders of the ILP consider the policy of the Opposition wing in the Labour Party incorrect out of considerations which are absolutely unexpected: although 'they (the Opposition) criticise the leadership and policy of the Party but, owing to the block vote and form of organisation of the Party, they cannot change the personnel and policy of the Executive and Parliamentary Party within the period necessary to resist Capitalist Reaction, Fascism and War'.

"The policy of the Opposition in the Labour Party is unspeakably bad. But this only means that it is necessary to counterpose to it inside the Labour Party another, a correct Marxist policy.

"That isn't so easy? Of course not! But one must know how to hide one's activities from the police vigilance of Sir Walter Citrine and his agents, until the proper time.

"But isn't it a fact that a Marxist faction would not succeed in changing the structure and policy of the Labour Party? With this we are entirely in accord: the bureaucracy will not surrender. But the revolutionists, functioning outside and inside, can and must succeed in winning over tens and hundreds of thousands of workers. The criticism directed by the ILP against the left wing faction in the Labour Party is of an obviously artificial character".

Finally, Trotsky's response to the question in the summer 1936 interview, "Is it even possible to consider at this stage an independent existence outside the mass organisations": "The fact that Lenin was not afraid to split from Plekhanov in 1905 and to remain as a small isolated group bears no weight because the same Lenin remained inside the Social Democracy until 1912 and in 1920 urged the affiliation of the British CP to the LP. While it is necessary for the revolutionary party to maintain its independence at all times, a revolutionary group of a few hundred comrades is not a revolutionary party and can work most effectively at present by opposition to the social patriots within the mass parties. In view of the increasing acuteness of the international situation, it is absolutely essential to be within the mass organisations while there is the possibility of doing revolutionary work within them. Any such sectarian, sterile and formalistic interpretation of Marxism in the present situation would disgrace an intelligent child of ten".

Our fusion is a bold experiment. It was predictable that we would have difficulties, and certainly we've had them. But it would be a terrible concession to the pressures of sectarianism and factionalism to give up in the face of those difficulties.

Many comrades are rightly concerned by the polarisation within the organisation, because the political issues are not clear, the factional heat is out of all proportion to the apparent real differences, and the division runs dangerously close to the 'seam' where the two previous organisations were joined together.

I am therefore writing these notes to explain the proposals that we - Carolan, Collins, Gardiner, Hill, Parkinson, Fraser, myself, and sometimes Levy - have made for maintaining the developing this unity.

### 1. THE LABOUR PARTY

Are there big differences on the Labour Party? Yes and no. At the time of the first session of the conference, when comrade Smith and others wished to push the Labour Party issue to a vote, the only expression of their differences was Smith's amendments (IB 46). Those amendments do express differences - we disagree with the idea that a particular level of 'party profile' (as opposed to political content) can be a fixed dogma irrespective of circumstances and necessary tactical manoeuvres - but, on the face of it, not dramatic differences.

Smith's big concern, as expressed in that amendment, was for industrial work. We made proposals to deal with that concern. We proposed that Smith should coordinate a series of articles on the unions for the paper. We proposed that he should become industrial editor. Comrade Levy indicated that he would be willing for Smith to take over as industrial organiser. None of these proposals got any response. And, while still making an outcry about the bad effects of our orientation on industrial work, Smith has still made no proposals himself for improving that industrial work. He has still not said what he proposes that we should do, and how an O. orientation prevents it.

He has concerned himself instead with muddying the issue still further. The position of J.McI. - a non-member of the League - in the discussion in the paper on the crisis of leadership and the unions today is being promoted to sections of the organisation as the latest manifestation of our alleged indifference to the 'fight for leadership' in the unions. (+)

So far as comrades are really concerned about real deficiencies in industrial work (and those real deficiencies certainly exist), we can make progress. If the comrades' real concern is to find sticks with which to beat our orientation on the LP, then we can't.

The new document (IB48) lists a long string of complaints against the organisation's work, and blames them all on our orientation on the LP. We cannot make progress on that basis. The basis for unity is for the comrades to make clear proposals for improving the areas of work that they think are suffering. If those proposals reveal a real clash between those areas of work and O. work, then we can debate it.