

INTERNAL BULLETIN 78.

February 1984.

Statement to January 1984 NC on resignation from work
on SX - Cunliffe.

FOR AN EDITORIAL BOARD - the issues behind my resignation
as joint editor of the paper: Cunliffe.

IN DEFENCE OF OUR PARTY PRESS - CUNLIFFE

October 27, 1983

THE OSTRICH AND THE STEAMROLLER: Two wrong views of party
building - a reply to Carolan and Kinneil's resolution in
IB50 (July 1983) - Cunliffe.

Statement made to January 6th NC meeting by Cunliffe

On Sunday January 1st 1984, after writing two letters to the EC in December and after nine years as an editor of Trotskyist newspapers, I resigned as joint editor and production worker on SO. This position will only be reconsidered if the National Committee or a subsequent conference votes to overturn the standing policy of the Executive Committee and establish a proper, functioning and representative editorial board, which will plan the general content of each issue of the paper, discuss its editorial line and its presentation, and ensure adequate and balanced coverage of the main issues of the day.

My resignation came after the Executive Committee voted, on Jan. 29th, with only myself against and two absentees, to reject such an Editorial Board, and instead to declare that the EC itself will act as an Editorial Board, allocating a proportion of its meetings to a discussion on the paper. My resolution, before the NC today, received only my vote. This EC decision consolidates what has for a long time been an unacceptable position in the production and control of the paper - and creates conditions in which I am no longer prepared to devote the greater portion of my working life to it.

I would not have resigned, and would continue to work on the paper now, despite my political differences with the majority that controls the movement, if there were a democratic or scientific basis on which the paper were collectively discussed week by week rather than - as in the last year or more - simply the outcome of a personal discussion on a Monday morning between myself and the other editor.

My previous experience of work on a weekly paper - Socialist Press - was entirely different from what has become the regime on SO. SP was prepared every week by an Editorial Board meeting of seldom less than two hours in duration, attended by some EC members plus other leading comrades from Oxford, London and the Midlands.

The meetings would hear a report on the work done up to that point - the articles prepared and lined up - and would discuss a detailed allocation of space to these and to other articles suggested. They would have a discussion on the main national and international political issues and trade union issues of the day, decide from that discussion on front page coverage, the main headline, and general guidelines of presentation. They would plan ahead for less urgent centre-page theoretical, historical, cultural and other feature articles, and go on to look back on the completed issue and raise any criticisms and if necessary rectify omissions. Through this procedure, I as editor, largely working from an office isolated from the shop floor movement, was able to draw on the experience of our comrades in the unions, the Labour Party the wider movement, the assessments and information offered by a range of comrades - not all of which reflected the majority view. The EB was not a gesture of flabby liberalism: it produced a better, more consistent, stronger, better balanced paper than could otherwise have been done. And its discussions were generally of a high calibre. Often we would have an EB meeting at six on a Saturday, and use that as the political introduction to an EC meeting to follow it. Nowadays politics seldom seem to surface in meetings of the executive.

I don't want to give an exaggerated view of the SP Editorial Board: some weeks its attendance was down; some weeks we had less time; some weeks everyone was knackered and the discussion was not up to scratch, and we wound up having to put the paper together with less guidance. But the meetings went on every week. They were part of the structure of the movement. They helped make the paper the movement's paper. And we sustained this on the basis of the old WSL alone (though the current size, morale, and financial situation of the new WSL makes those seem like golden days of wealth and splendour).

When the fusion took place, we from the WSL tried at first to continue

that system in the new organisation. But we had a major problem: there was no comparable importance attached to the EB by the old ICL comrades. They had worked from a much smaller body composed mainly if not solely of full-timers. And they never agreed with us on the importance of regularly operating a representative EB.

So we wound up with a series of meetings which became increasingly tokenistic and depleted. This in turn made Oxford comrades - who have borne the brunt of travelling to leadership meetings since fusion - more reluctant to travel to them. Gradually the meetings fell into disuse. Then the polarisation of the organisation effectively consolidated the non-operation of the EB. Willy nilly or by design, we have evolved into the position where:

There is no involvement of trade union comrades in the discussion on the paper's coverage or its line. So we had just before Christmas, the bizarre situation where both the comrades responsible for the trade union work declared themselves strongly critical of the paper's coverage on the TUC and the NGA dispute; but the only forum in which they could raise their criticism was the tiny and notionally organisational Organisation Subcommittee. One of the editors - CAROLAN - sits on that committee; and it was his line - of wild over-optimism on the TUC - and not that of our comrades active in the movement, which went in the paper. Indeed there was no attempt by CAROLAN to discuss these differences with me as a co-editor - and I only found out after the event that such a debate had occurred. We have a parallel occurrence in the latest paper, with coverage of the Shipyard strike including no warning of the obviously impending sell-out.

The result is that one of the strengths which we ought to reflect in our paper - our trade union work and the fights we are waging against the bureaucracy - finds no expression, or only a limited expression in our weekly publication. And our comrades in the unions find the paper of less and less value to their work - lagging in the case of the NGA coverage behind the developments in the struggle and the awareness of many militants.

* There is no involvement of comrades who actually sell the paper and work with it in the labour movement. It is put together in the office by two comrades most isolated from the broader workers' movement. Only by guesswork or accident can the paper connectup with day-to-day discussions, problems and struggles of the working class; and the proposals made by several comrades at the branch organisers' meeting for much more educational material in the paper have been largely ignored. It has become a sectarian sheet whose actual isolation from the living movement is in no way answered by publishing long, boring, confusing and reactionary tracts from 'left' luminaries like Anne Pettifor or Vladimir Derer.

* There is no involvement - indeed there is an alienation - of comrades outside the lines of the main factional divisions in the movement, who to a large degree despair of the paper and of their chances of seeing it changed. Indeed the factionalism emerges in the pages of the paper, where supporters of the EC majority sit on the edges of their seats waiting for an article by a minority supporter to appear, so that they can rattle off lengthy and vituperative replies, while doing nothing to reply to Derer, Pettifor and other reformist claptrap carried to disguise the paper as "broad".

* There is no collective discussion of the priorities and balance of the paper in advance of each issue appearing. And there is no routine way to argue for changes or to raise criticisms. So the only answer to what a comrade feels to be a wrong position in the paper is to use the laughable 'letters' page (and help make the WSL more of a laughing stock on the left), or to raise resolutions of censure on leading bodies. This is a disruptive, divisive and destructive system that does nothing to build a cadre and a collective leadership. It produces weak, lopsided papers reflecting all the weaknesses of the two editors and few of the strengths of the rest of the movement. And it entrenches the divisions, alienation and resentment that are smashing this movement to pieces.

So what is the answer posed by the EC majority? The majority faction propose that the EC should become the Editorial Board. They rejected KINNELL's amendment that the "EB" discussion should be first item on the EC agenda, and left vague a suggestion that non-EC members might be invited along.

I voted against the plan because:

- 1) It is impractical. A serious discussion to prepare the paper that would be more than each comrade listing a part would require well in excess of the 1-hour maximum suggested by the comrades. It should be regular and at a time that will enable worker comrades to attend. The EC's plan would subordinate this meeting to other EC business, render it irregular, and reduce discussion to token levels which would soon deter non-EC members from coming.
- 2) It is a charade. There is no issue of substance on which other members of the EC majority are likely to disagree openly with CAROLAN to the extent of supporting another line. So talking to the EC majority is as useful as talking to CAROLAN and just as useless. It means basically no change.
- 3) It is narrow. By focussing on the EC it marginalises the input anyone else might have; by restricting its length of time it amounts in reality to offering one or two lucky members a brief audience at the court of King Carolan to make their proposals - and go away again. On that basis only a lackey or a masochist would keep coming back.
- 4) The EC itself has not functioned - political leadership has in practice simply been exercised by the majority faction, with occasional discussions on the organisational subcommittee. There is no need in any case to take the whole EC into an EB: a few EC comrades could be delegated to it, as we did in the old WSL - with the obvious provision that the majority on the EC should have a majority on the EB. Instead of looking for flexible answers to get the paper functioning, the EC majority argues the failings of the EC as a reason against having a functioning Editorial Board. This is simply a pretext.
- 5) The EC itself is sharply polarised, with only myself outside the two main factions. Even the working agreement we used to have on industrial questions appears to have collapsed, with Carolan making a point of taking a different line from Smith on anything and everything. There is little chance under these conditions of producing any constructive debate on the paper. There is no way anyone else can get much of a look in or press for changes. The proposal is a charade: it was designed simply to fob off the NC while consolidating the majority's single-handed control over the paper. It should be rejected, and an EB set up.

Finally, a few points have been made against me in a set of obviously rehearsed speeches at the Executive meeting where I raised my resolution.

- 1) I am accused of raising an unacceptable "ultimatum" to the movement. The fact is that I have been denied and now refused acceptable political conditions in which to work. In terms of material conditions, I, like every other full-timer, have put up with working in a slum, with the rats, crumby equipment and in an anarchic and ramshackle organisational set-up. I have worked 3 days a week away from my home for 2½ years, and given up comfortable working conditions in Oxford to do so. But without a political basis on which my contribution can be more than an individual effort, without a political basis that can help produce a paper I can be proud to work on, there is no way I can keep this up indefinitely.

The end of one year and the start of the new one seemed as good a time as any to fight for a change. And I will go on raising these questions whatever the NC decides today.

- 2) I am accused of refusing to accept that I am a minority. Coming from the leaders of the majority faction, that allegation must take the cake for hypocrisy. Who can imagine Carolan or Kinnell working loyally as a minority on anything? What happened to our Falklands decision?

In fact I have been a minority since before the fusion - to which I was opposed. Unfortunately - and despite my best and loyal efforts to build the fused organisation - every one of my worst fears of the fusion has been realised in practice. Hence the state of the organisation today. I have done what I could to mitigate or resolve the problems. But there are limits to everything - and I have been in a minority pursuing such a constructive line.

3) It is said that I have "no right" to resign from work on the production of the paper. CAROLAN has even suggested that I should resign as "joint editor" - where my status has obviously been unequal - and simply work on the paste-up, implementing his decisions. HILL has suggested I might be disciplined for resigning. These responses are symptomatic of the arrogant and bureaucratic attitude of the majority faction leaders. If they cannot persuade someone, they seek instead to bully them or drive them out. I have the right to refuse to act as the lackey of a leadership whose methods I find completely unacceptable. I have the right to withdraw in order to fight these methods. And if anyone wants to criticise or vote for disciplinary action against me, I hope they would be at the same time raising their hands to volunteer to sign away the rest of their working lives to carrying out CAROLAN's instructions - or those of any future majority leadership in the WSL.

Interestingly the EC has raised no objection whatever to my withdrawal from International work after the last NC adopted a line I found indefensible, and which I could not in all conscience defend in the USA. The majority faction are only concerned about the paper because of my practical not my political contribution.

4) It is said that I have not raised criticisms of editions of the paper at the right time, but only after the event. In some cases this is true - and reflects the fact that the criticisms that have been made or supported by me afterwards should have been heard at an EB beforehand, so that a better paper could be produced. I'm not perfect. Nor is CAROLAN. The present system exposes all our weaknesses. On other occasions I have raised objections and disagreements - or been forced to swallow them due to the impracticability of making changes late on in production.

5) Interestingly, nobody in the majority faction has criticised me for endangering the remnants of the fusion: probably because they don't care, and would even prefer the old WSL to depart quickly.

Yet the fight to preserve the fusion was the main reason I have put up with conditions on the paper for the past 18 months. I am the only member of the present EC to have made any substantial effort to hold the present fusion together and develop constructive relations between the two sides. The only other one was LEVY, and it is no coincidence that he and I have both become profoundly pessimistic about the future of the movement.

My efforts have been to no avail. I have not been able to influence the majority faction in any way whatever, as they have set about widening the divisions, and provoking the minority faction into some moves which I think were and are unwise.

A one-man unity effort in the WSL is a fool's errand. If the NC rejects an Editorial Board which can really do the job, I will continue to argue among the membership for the democracy and accountability which we used to have in the WSL before the fusion. This may well prove the majority faction to be an actual minority on the regime they favour.

CUNLIFFE

For an Editorial Board !

- the issues behind my resignation as joint editor of the paper: Cunliffe.

"Comrade Cunliffe put a resolution on the form of the Editorial Board for the paper. This was defeated. An alternative resolution from the EC was carried. A resolution was also carried instructing Cunliffe to return to his work on the paper, which he had walked out of as from the New Year"

With these few - characteristically misleading - words, many branch organisers would presumably have been informed for the first time by the latest Branch circular of the Majority Faction's view of the discussion which led up to my resignation as joint editor of the newspaper. Conspicuously and equally characteristically, my resolution which was defeated, my letters to the EC explaining my position (which I had requested to be circulated in the IB) and my statement read out at the NC, the circulation of which I had requested, are not provided for comrades information. I gather this was to ensure that my statement was delayed pending a suitably lengthy, slanderous and vitriolic reply from cde Carolan to go with it. So while my point of view is suppressed, those who support the Majority position are busily canvassing their views and poisoning the atmosphere against me.

For this reason I have had to take steps myself to put the record straight. And, in so doing I have brought together a number of documents relevant to the current dire situation inside the WSL. Since I am currently under threat of disciplinary action in the form of removal from the Executive Committee by the majority at the next NC meeting on March 10, this body of information should be of use to comrades in understanding the background.

Firstly, it is a wilful distortion to describe the debate on the EC and NC as one over "the form of the EB for the paper". The debate was and is in essence over whether or not there should be any editorial board which will discuss, prepare, monitor and control the content of the paper and its general line, or whether, as at present, this whole area of work - the biggest single operation of the League - should be left in the hands of one or two comrades to do as they like. That is the present status quo. It has evolved as the position in the period since fusion. That is what I am objecting to. And, as my stand shows quite clearly, I am objecting to it whether or not I am (in theory or in practice) one of the one or two individuals granted such arbitrary power over the movement's press. For well over a year and a half there has been no editorial board. The consequences of this had grown increasingly serious in the content and balance of the paper; but they became more serious still after Carolan took over from Kinnell as joint editor last summer.

I had repeatedly objected to this set-up, both on political grounds - since it is a bad way of producing a balanced newspaper or a full analysis of the major events - and on the grounds of asserting the principles of democracy and accountability (to which cde Carolan's attachment has never in my experience been at all visible). From last summer onwards I repeatedly raised objections to the anarchic organisational set-up arising from Carolan's high-handed and exclusive method of approach, which left most if not all discussion until the Monday morning prior to Wednesday evening publication, thus limiting the options available and causing unnecessary havoc and confusion for all those involved in work on the paper.

The fruits of this method during the final months of 1983 emerged in a succession of weak, lop-sided and unsatisfactory issues of SX which failed either to draw on the strengths of the organisation as a whole or to match the requirements of the situation. Our failure until after the "Black Wednesday" betrayal to offer any analysis of the TUC leaders in the NGA dispute was for me the final straw after a period of growing dissatisfaction both at the way the work was being done and its practical outcome. I wrote a letter to the Executive - received on December 10 - setting out my political objections to the system, and making practical proposals to combat the present weaknesses, central to which was a functioning EB.

I argued that such an EB should include comrades from the various political currents, in the League, specifically drawing in trade union comrades and activists - who currently have no voice in the running of the paper.

Without such changes, I declared, I could see no political basis on which I could continue to carry out my functions and responsibilities as joint editor of a paper run along lines with which I so strongly disagree. If the EC and subsequently the NC insisted upon maintaining the existing undemocratic, exclusive and chaotic methods, then I would have no choice but to withdraw as editor and full-time worker to allow room for a nominee from the Majority Faction who believes such a system to be defensible and correct. I said that to allow time for discussion I would work through to the New Year.

In the event there was no effort to discuss this with me until after the Xmas holiday. At an EC meeting on January 29 however the EC Majority made it plain that they had no intention of establishing a democratic EB. After giving the matter further consideration I decided, regretfully, that after nine years of editing the movement's newspaper, I had no choice but to resign, and that I could reverse this decision only in the unlikely event of the NC voting down the EC Majority at its January 7 meeting.

Was my demand unreasonable? Is it an outrageous individual ultimatum? In essence what I have called for as a basis for continuing as editor is a restoration of the Editorial Board as it was discussed and agreed at the time of fusion in 1981, as a distinct and functioning body in the movement bringing together the various wings of the movement in a constructive framework. But as far as the Majority Faction is concerned the spirit of fusion is long gone and forgotten: so my proposal had to be portrayed as something bizarre, alien, new, unnecessary and somehow destructive. So we had the strange spectacle of the EC voting with only myself in favour for rejection of an Editorial Board - but then attempting to create the fiction of some kind of controlling body. With only myself voting against, it was decided to allocate up to one hour of revived EC meetings to an "EB session". The argument was erected that this was simply a different "form" of EB. Such a cynical line was plainly intended to bamboozle otherwise doubtful members of the NC, and those who know little or nothing about the production and preparation of a weekly paper or the realities of the Executive Committee.

On the old Socialist Press, with only 12 pages per week and a largely united leadership, it used to take us a full-length, specific Editorial Board meeting of 2 hours or more each week to prepare it properly, particularly if comrades other than Executive members were to have a real input and involvement in decision making. To suggest that in today's WSL and with a bigger paper, anything worthwhile can be done on an "EB" of restricted membership in under an hour is either cynical or naive - and naivete is not one of the weaknesses of the Majority Faction.

Experience has borne out by initial objections to this charade. The Majority cdes have scarcely even bothered to go through the motions of a bogus "honeymoon period" of their new "EB". In reality total control over the paper is now even more firmly in Carolan's hands than before. Look at the events:

The First "EB" grew out of the EC meeting on December 29 which voted against setting up a proper EB. EC members remained seated for another 45 minutes while a vague, undifferentiated list of topics and articles was totted up by running around the room, supplemented by an even longer and vaguer list read out by Carolan. No page plan was drawn up: the list in total would have filled several issues. Few of the articles saw the light of day. In the event, our coverage of the shipyard pay fight failed to warn of the obviously impending sellout, and lacked the bite of even the Guardian's reporting.

"EB" No.2, which I and the Oxford cdes could not attend, decided on a lead story which was resoundingly rejected next day, by the NC.

"EB" No 3, January 15, was as tokenistic as the first. I made clear to anyone who had doubted it that I was willing to write for the paper, and volunteered to write articles on Central America, the NUJ struggle and SOGAT. This was agreed; the articles were sent in on time and (with some unnecessary changes) published. Two extra articles on Central America were left over for the next issue.

"EB" No 4, however began to show the realities of the Majority Faction's attitude to collective discussion of the paper. We were told that the Editor would not be present, because he was "working on the paper" ! A desultory discussion then followed, in complete ignorance of the Editor's plans for the paper; but it was agreed that I should write more international news, particularly on Southern Africa, and a piece on SOGAT. Having spent a whole day researching and writing the material on S.Africa and a piece on Poland, they were sent in to arrive at the same time as the previous week's material. This time, however, none of the articles were used: nor was the left-over material on Central America, which had been in the office for a week. I then learned at second hand that my article on SOGAT was "not wanted", and that another member had been asked to write the story.

The SX for that week was filled to the brim with timeless reviews, reprinted leaflets, and articles lifted from other publications. One article on Namibia lifted from a campaign bulletin declared in distinction to my article that, because of the pressures of world public opinion, the tide was turning against South Africa in Namibia. Perhaps more glaringly, an article by Smith, on the notable victories scored by our comrades in the Cowley Assembly Plant deputy convenor elections, was buried at the bottom of page 15, underneath a lengthy and belated chronology of the NGA's Stockport dispute which had been lifted wholesale from ... the Financial Times!

However at "EB" No 5, on January 28, the Editor again failed to make an appearance to enable Smith and myself to ask what was going on. Indeed the Editor refused to give even Kinnell any information on plans for the paper when eventually he was telephoned at the Centre. Kinnell claimed that my articles had "arrived too late" - but offered no explanation on the fate of the Central America articles. He assured me they would be published. Smith handed in an extended article analysing the industrial situation, which had been discussed in general terms the previous week, and was intended to be published in instalments. (Two days later, however, the article was rejected for being out of line with the political views of the Editor.) A rather muted discussion drew up a sketchy list of articles. But there was no discussion on anything remotely resembling the Editorial article which proclaimed a substantial change in the content and presentation of the paper. (Indeed not one of the Editorial articles published since the New Year has been prepared in the "EB" discussions). Understandably, neither Kinnell nor Joplin - the Majority Faction representatives present - seemed at all keen to move on to the listed agenda item of discussion on other comrades to be invited to these farcical meetings.

"EB" No 6, on February 5 marked the end of any pretence of cooperation on the paper by the Majority. Executive resolutions were carried barring the publication of any article by me until after the next NC on March 10; condemning Smith for refusing to write hack news "filler" articles while the Editor censors his political articles from the paper; and declaring the intention to remove me from the Executive Committee unless I return to the practical labour of pasting up the paper along the lines decreed by the Majority Faction. After such introductory decisions, the outcome of the subsequent "EB" session, which Smith and I could not attend, is irrelevant.

Experience confirms to the hilt my prediction that the "EB" put forward by the Majority Faction was a crude device to con members of the NC. But it shows something else as well. While it is true to say that the EB is no

panacea to resolve the deep problems in the League, it is equally true that the attitude of the Majority to the proposal of an IB is a litmus test of their attitude to democracy and constructive working relations between the various currents in the organisation. Instead of being prepared to recognise that their "EC as IB" formula has produced only a succession of farcical encounters, the Majority has simply stepped up its heavy-handed bureaucratic efforts to press-gang the minority or gag them.

It is no coincidence that the same meeting which debarred me from writing for the paper and threatened to oust me from the EC also saw blunt warnings from Carolan that those who oppose the politics of the Majority had a choice between knuckling down or being in one way or another "picked up and thrown out". The same meeting saw evidence that the Constitution is now being arrogantly torn up by a tiny handful of the core "Majority" leadership, who plainly regard the WSL as their own personal property. Letters have been issued, decreeing summary fines on comrades who have failed to fill in the necessary dues assessment forms. That they should be made to fill in the forms is not in dispute; nor is the need to take action to remedy the heavy arrears built up by some members. But when Smith and I asked which leading body of the League had decided to embark on such wholesale disciplinary measures, we were (untruthfully) told that it was the "Organisation Sub Committee". Even if this had been true, the OSC has no political authority to take such a decision: it is a purely organizational body. Nor even has the EC the power to impose summary disciplinary penalties on comrades without giving them their Constitutional right to a hearing. Yet the EC disregarded such niceties and voted to tear up this aspect of the Constitution by retrospectively endorsing the alleged "sub committee decision". This is all the more disturbing since on the issue of finance and the clearing of back debts there had until then been a common position between the Majority and minority on the EC. Now Kinnell, in a burst of megalomania, has decided to embark on a unilateral course of action.

Is this course of action seriously calculated to resolve the financial problems? Or is it not a provocative, deliberate kick in the teeth against comrades from the minority who had taken a constructive and cooperative position?

In my view the Editorial Board question - expressing the attitude of the Majority leadership towards democracy and constructive relations within the group - sums up the current stage of crisis in the League. Included in this IB, therefore are other documents which offer background on the current situation.

The first is my statement to the NC on January 7.

Secondly there is a bowdlerised version of a document which I wrote last October on the question of the paper and the WSL magazine, at the point where the Majority Faction first made clear their intention to scrap Workers Socialist Review and launch instead a Broad Group magazine. Though this document was published in IB 75 it received only limited circulation because the Majority comrades objected to the fact that it referred in passing to the question of "convergence" of the League with the Broad Groups. The NC Majority in its wisdom decided to restrict discussion on this question to NC members, and it has subsequently been shelved indefinitely. But in the meantime my document was blocked from further discussion or circulation. Though some of the points in it now appear rather dated, I feel it is a useful lead-in to the present discussions.

The third document reproduced here is a cut-down version of a reply which I drafted last July to the Majority Faction's document on "Building the WSL" contained in IB 50. After a number of clashes over this document at Executive level, the Majority cdes agreed to focus discussion at the

August conference simply on the conclusions to their document, which were for the most part common ground. On that basis I decided not to publish my response to IB50, and instead to attempt to build on the areas of agreement.

However, developments since the August conference have shown the need to take up the differences on party-building and internal democracy which are encapsulated in the Majority's arguments in IB50. Though the document as a whole was never put to the August conference (nor indeed was the scrapping of the magazine) I believe that its method and content underlie the method and direction of the Majority in their day-to-day running of the movement - which is now in even more catastrophic shape than it was last year. Unless these questions are sorted out, there can be only more deterioration of the WSL.

Once again the July document - largely unchanged - may read as slightly dated. But I am sure that comrades with open eyes and open minds will grasp its relevance.

Cunliffe, February 8, 1984.

The defeated resolution

"That this EC/NC instructs the Editors to take immediate steps to establish an Editorial Board, including EC members as well as other comrades from various points of view in the League who can contribute to the paper, to begin functioning as of the next issue of SX. This EB should meet every week that SX is being published, and at such a time (normally weekends) that trade union comrades can attend (some possibly as alternate members if they cannot guarantee weekly attendance). The EB should plan the general content of the paper, discuss the editorial line and its presentation on the main issues of the day, and in this way strengthen the paper. The EB will provide a focus that will assist in structuring the hitherto anarchic run-up to production, and will also plan in advance for non-urgent feature articles and centre-spreads."

Cunliffe, Dec 22 1983.

Defeated EC meeting Dec 29, 1983

Defeated NC meeting Jan 7, 1984.

In defence of our party press. - Cunliffe. October 27, 1983.

On my return from the USA I was horrified to learn that the Majority on the Executive had declared their support for a motion to the NC tabled several months previously by the Glasgow Branch. The gist of the motion is to "broaden" the Editorial Board of our weekly paper by bringing in non-League members; and to scrap the Workers Socialist Review as our journal, and instead launch a bi-monthly magazine in the name of the broad groups, with an EB "controlled" by the League, yet incorporating "prominent left wing intellectuals who are sympathetic" (no names are mentioned).

I attended the NC on October 15 expecting to face a battle to defend the last vestiges of the WSL's public face (though WSR can scarcely be viewed as a well-known or regularly-appearing face). The night before, Majority cde on the EC had agreed to extend the debate on this question to 2 hours. To my (and everyone's) surprise, however, cde Carolan announced after the lunchbreak his proposal that the motion - which he strongly supported - be held over by the NC.

It was not feasible - in the absence of a Glasgow cde to argue for it, and in view of cde Carolan's shift of tactics - to force the resolution onto the agenda. But there is no doubt that its postponement simply postpones and amplifies rather than averting the real dangers of liquidation implicit in these proposals. Indeed Workers Socialist Review is already to all intents and purposes dead - since there is no way the Majority will allocate resources to the production of a magazine they clearly hope to do away with. Thus already one specific conference decision from April - for the production of two issues of the magazine to a timetable - has bitten the dust in spirit as well as in the letter.

Since the Glasgow proposals are the only ones actually on the table for us to discuss at present let us look at their implications.

The resolution (backed by the EC Majority) proposes: "That steps be taken forthwith to broaden the editorial board of the paper to include non-League members, and that the paper be reduced in size to provide resources for the point below" (emph added).

Now broadening the EB is a long overdue task. In reality there is and has been no functioning EB for at least nine months now, and the entire content of the paper has been basically decided week by week by two or three people. This does not and cannot adequately reflect the political strengths and talents in the League: and it contributes to the organisational chaos of the weekly production process.

But broadening the EB "forthwith" (ie last week, if the motion had been adopted by the NC) to include non-League members would mean that this ramshackle arrangement would be further confused by the addition of outsiders with equal voice and vote (I presume ^{that} at least the Glasgow movers do not mean the newcomers to be a mere fig-leaf for the status quo).

So, having made no headway in establishing adequate League participation in the paper, we would begin at once further diluting our input and control. And worse: with less space in a reduced size of paper - as proposed by Glasgow - the need for clarity and balance between our line and that of other forces would become not less but that much greater.

Already - as cde Carolan has admitted in heated moments discussing the contents of particular issues of SX - we carry week by week a number of "shitty" articles by non-members for discussion purposes (though few of them receive the hammering they deserve). Already this causes readers some good deal of confusion. (I was asked all over the USA if we had changed our line on Nicaragua following Corbyn's articles). That confusion could easily become the dominant feature of a paper constructed according to the Glasgow model: yet Majority cdes appear ready to support the proposals.

For my part, though I have always remained sceptical as to the "broad paper" format as against a clearly formulated party press, I have been prepared to work along the lines of the fusion agreement: for a broad paper fulfilling many of the functions of a party press. The Glasgow proposals - supported by the EC majority - carry the real danger of negating that combination for good. Any more dilution of our (WSL) line in SX would in my view render it little more useful than a "Briefing"-style sounding board, open to all comers with little differentiation, ill-equipped to give leadership or clear analysis in the demanding struggles ahead.

Secondly, the Glasgow/Majority proposal is for launching a new, non-League magazine. It does not actually mention WSR, but must surely negate its existence through material resources if not explicit political expediency.

"Priority," it says (this means priority over the weekly paper) "should be given to the establishment of a magazine appearing at least (!) bi-monthly, with a format similar to that of Marxism Today, International, Chartist, etc. and that prominent left wing intellectuals who are sympathetic be coopted onto the editorial board. The League must ensure that it retains control over the magazine, which will be published in the name of the broad groups."

(emphasis added)

Thus the decision of the Majority in supporting this, is to wind up the only publication which (every 9 months or so) carries the name of the Workers Socialist League - and to substitute a "broad" magazine patronised by unnamed "intellectuals", within which the WSL would have some input by virtue of controlling the EB.

So what's in a name? If the League retains "editorial control" does the "label" WSL mean very much? Could we - as the Majority want us to believe - carry our full politics in a "broad" magazine, while reaping all kinds of advantages (soaring sales, admiring circles of intellectuals, respectability) by discarding the "label"?

No we couldn't! Certainly on some issues we could argue the same formal position as we would in WSR (as we do in the paper). But the magazine is not intended simply as a vehicle for this that or the other article: it is a vehicle for the Leninist organisation to explain its relationship to the issues of the class struggle, to questions of theory, culture and history. The party "label" should not just be something stuck on the front cover, but should inform the whole content and thrust of the magazine. In building the WSL, and fighting to recruit from the "broad" milieu to our ranks, we argue the need for a disciplined, Leninist vanguard party organisation - distinct from broader, looser caucuses and pressure groups in the existing reformist labour movement. We need to present our own programme, policies, tactics and strategy: we need to show a distinct method of organising and fighting for leadership if we are to win the best elements of the workers' movement to our banner. In dropping the "label", we drop also the banner - leaving the next step the dropping of the party itself: and all for no tangible gain.

Quite apart from the questionable viability of finding any prominent sympathetic intellectuals (and obscure ones are of no particular use in the Glasgow enterprise) we have to recognise the implications for the WSL of scrapping its only publication.

WSL is the only forum in which we could argue our full political analysis of social democracy; it is the only forum where we can call openly for the reconstruction of the Trotskyist Fourth International; the only forum where we can argue simply why people should join the WSL and build a revolutionary party. The Majority's move to scrap this forum is the more major because it follows on a 2-year process of gradually dissolving and discarding public activities of the WSL. Already our "entry" is so total that only three leading comrades - myself, Smith and Levy, none of whom can gain admittance to the MO - can publicly acknowledge ourselves members of the League!

Since the successful Fusion Rally of October 1981 (anyone remember that, highly successful, event?) there have been few, if any WSL meetings in the local areas and none nationally: my proposal for an anniversary rally last autumn was brushed aside as "crazy" by Hill and other Majority cdes. The only national WSL event since then has been the 1982 Summer School (in which the WSL title was insisted upon vehemently by cdes of the present Majority as a transparent ruse to block TILC sections from any voice in the agenda or conduct of the school). League classes exist on a small, occasional scale in only a few areas. The WSL issues no leaflets, no statements (with the exception of the NC resolution on the Cowley 13) and has to all intents and purposes ceased to exist for the workers' movement. Indeed in a number of areas - as the Branch Organisers' meeting showed - even League branch meetings have become a thing of the past, while few of those which persist appear to feature an introductory political report.

Those of us who have looked on at this decline with some dismay, supported the amended resolution on Building the WSL at the August conference as a means of tightening up the organisation, and hoped that, in a fight for the regular publication of the magazine, a stimulus could be given to WSL recruitment and public presence. Instead, the Majority wants to scrap the magazine!

But to return to the Glasgow proposals which are before the NC: what would the consequence be of scrapping the magazine?

(1) Firstly, it would mean scrapping the last vestiges of the fusion agreement of 1981 - in which many of us were only reluctantly persuaded to give up our weekly party press in exchange for an agreement that there would be a regular party magazine to supplement the "broad" paper.

It is worth asking the question of whether such a repudiation at this stage is not in fact a calculated provocation by the Majority, in the hopes that substantial numbers of old-WSLers will be infuriated enough to leave the

organisation (and thus further strengthen the grip of the Carolan-Kinnell Majority). Certainly nothing in the conduct of these cdes at leadership level should give members any grounds to believe that they wish either to preserve or still less to strengthen the remnants of the fusion. And it seems that this attitude at the top is finding a predictable reflection in a high level of polarisation - even systematic denigration of old-WSLers - throughout the organisation.

In gauging whether or not the move is a calculated provocation, it is important to note that the Majority's decision to push for this far-reaching change in the public profile of our organisation

takes place quite deliberately seven weeks after the final stage of an extended conference period.

4)

(2) Secondly, the proposal would make the WSL a laughing stock in the international arena, where every organisation, no matter how minuscule, succeeds - if nothing else - in producing some kind of party press speaking in its own name. Apparently Carolan/Kinnell now cite the Socialist League as an exception to this pattern. Since when has the SL been regarded by these cdes as an epitome of Trotskyist party-building? In any event the USFI (Majority and minority) have independent journals used by the SL, and International is clearly an SL journal.

With neither a magazine nor a paper in our own name we would be particularly badly-placed to exploit the opportunities for party building in the USA and the coming crisis in the USFI. The retreat on the magazine would be a gift for our opponents, a blow to our friends - and do nothing to strengthen our members.

3) The final aspect of the scrapping of the magazine is precisely the question of how our members view and fight for the WSL.

Low sales of the magazine have been cited by Carolan and Kinnell as "evidence" that it is not saleable as a party publication: if the "label" were dropped, it is claimed, cdes would keenly sell it.

Yet there is no evidence that this logic applies to the paper - whose sales have tailed off terribly. Nor would selling a "broad" magazine necessarily help at all in building the WSL (as I have pointed out above).

My view is that low sales of the magazine, like the poor level of organisation, are evidence of a low political morale amongst our membership and a lack of leadership commitment to following through the work. There has been no sign at all of any drive by cdes of the majority to produce and push the magazine: and this is reflected in the branches, where members naturally hold back from what they see as an unnecessary struggle to sell an irregular "extra" publication. Not surprisingly, given the general absence of public profile, low sales also run alongside low recruitment to the WSL, low levels of branch activity and weak, sporadic and largely marginal involvement of our cdes in local level disputes.

It might of course be possible to cover up one aspect of this process of liquidation of the WSL by abandoning production of a magazine whose sales provide a practical test of members' commitment and activity: but the retreat to a "Broad Group" magazine will not build a Leninist party.

I hope that comrades will be on their guard against the top-level liquidationism now being advocated

and that in B branch and area meetings

NC members will be told quite categorically that they should vote to throw out the Glasgow motion.

Cunliffe. Oct 27 1983.

The Ostrich and the Steamroller:
Two false views of Party Building.

A reply to Carolan and Kinnell's Resolution in IB50.

Cunliffe. July 1983

"Put on a happy face"

Majority

on Building the WSL in 1950.

From its very first sentence the Resolution embarks on self-deception. We are assured - without a hint of evidence - that "most organisations on the left are stagnant or have lost proportionately far more members in the last period than we have".

Does anyone seriously believe that? True, other groups have been losing some members (while others, like Militant, appear to be growing). But losing proportionately more than us? The raw figures since our fusion 2 years ago indicate that our organisation has declined by 30%. But the actual morale of the organisation, the dubious status of many of those still counted as members, and the incessant loss of demoralised cdes must take the losses by now as high as 40%. Many of those who have left are hard to replace: experienced cdes, many youth, active women cdes with a record of struggle, and workers. The League today has been reduced in size to the high point of the pre-fusion WSL. The losses have wiped us out in whole areas - Bradford, Winsford, Brighton - which contained prospects for development.

Carolan and Kinnell may argue that they wrote their Resolution before the conference and the loss of the Internationalist Faction - which in turn has triggered other losses. But it is no secret that Carolan and Kinnell not only welcomed the IF's eventual split, but had anticipated it for months before the conference. They were neither surprised nor sorry to see them go.

A Curious Omission

We could however be charitable about this ostrich-like refusal to recognise the reality of the organisation if it were confined to the opening sentence. Perhaps they know of cataclysmic losses in the SWP or SL of which we are unaware.

But the initial dubious assertions are followed in Section 11 by an absolutely astounding omission: Carolan/Kinnell(C/K) have drafted a whole document on "building the WSL" which DOES NOT SO MUCH AS MENTION the SX or other Broad Groups, or the fact that the vast, vast majority of the day-to-day work of the WSL is done not as the WSL but through such fronts.

This omission can be no accident. Section II(2) of the Resolution refers to the failure to "knit together" fields of work in the TUs, the O and among the specially oppressed - but does not mention SX. Section II(3) refers to the work amongst women, but does not mention WX ! Section II(4) does refer to the youth "broad group" - but only to dismiss it as "the empty shell of a League front". Section II(5) refers to O. work but does not mention the SX groups. And section II(9) refers to our appalling failure to recruit to the WSL out of the crisis in the British SWP - without referring to the lack of a WSL public face or activity through which they might have been attracted to us. Nowhere in this document is there any reckoning by C/K of the actual situation of our organisation, any balance sheet of our current broad group periphery or the problems of working through such groups. One might almost believe they do not exist, and the WSL operates through its own name and a party press!

We can easily imagine what the reaction would have been had Smith Jones or myself drafted a document incorporating such omissions. We would have been castigated mercilessly as "sectarians" seeking to "abandon" or "wreck" the broad groups. How then should we read such an omission from c/k?

The missing balance sheet

C/K seem profoundly reluctant to present a balance sheet on the SX "turn" which the fused organisation inherited in 1981, and which has coloured every aspect of our work since then. How else are we to understand a Resolution on building the organisation that leaves out any reference to its primary and all-embracing tactic? Our failure to recruit and to develop cannot simply be detached from an examination of the actual work most comrades actually do.

The disappearing WSL.

The reality is that with the SX turn the movement embarked on what was confessed to be a partial liquidation into its periphery. The theory was that this would culminate in an eventual 'convergence' in which the periphery would be hardened and assimilated into an enlarged organisation. At the time of fusion many of us from the old WSL were highly sceptical on this notion, but decided under pressure to give it a try, provided that the WSL retained an independent party publication, a public face, and utilised the paper as an undeclared "party" paper open for debate with wider sections of the labour movement.

The reality is that though the paper has in my view generally achieved a reasonable political profile on most key issues of the class struggle, the profile of the WSL as an organisation has been totally submerged.

This problem might not seem so enormous if it had not coincided with the proliferation of disagreements and factional polarisation within the WSL itself, which have embroiled the organisation in an almost unbroken succession of wrangles, hassles, manoeuvres, and the more or less surreptitious application of personal pressure on individuals. Combine this with an unresolved and seemingly unstoppable financial crisis related to the failure of the League to grow, and we see an alarming "scissors crisis" in which all of the practical and constructive, overt daily work of WSL activists is conducted not under the name of the WSL but through SX and other broad groups, while the WSL proper seems to be little more than a focus of every conceivable aggravation, offering neither leadership nor organised political structure in the daily work.

Is it surprising that some members have asked themselves the purpose of remaining in such an organisation?

The partial, temporary, controlled liquidation is turning into a wholesale, permanent, uncontrolled liquidation, which

far from building the WSL is treading down its walls and raising a question mark over its very existence.

"We see no ships"

Instead of confronting this very real problem, which is connected to political positions which they developed and brought into the organisation before the fusion, c/K search around dishonestly for scapegoats on whom to blame the present chaos. This is why Section II of their resolution is one long diversion. Placing their telescopes to their blind eyes, they claim:

(1) That is is only since May 1982 that "internal conflicts have absorbed much of our energies". Why choose May 1982? So that they can -at least implicitly blame the internal conflicts on those who argued for a change of position on the Malvinas War. The comrades know full well that the conflicts had been rife on the leading Committees since the Autumn of 1981 - only months after the fusion. There were disputes over the bohemian behaviour of RL in relation to the leading bodies of the WSL and the political line she projected for our work amongst women. There were disputes over the content and control of SX. By the Spring of 1982, cdes on the NC were being treated to EC cover-ups of the extent to which conflicts were paralysing the EC and OC. There never was any "golden age" of the fusion: the apples were never neatly stacked on the cart for the minority (subsequently the majority) on the Malvinas question to knock over. The differences that erupted in May 1982 were simply part of the legacy of the inadequate basis of the fusion - for which both sides of the organisation must share the blame.

(2) Certainly the organisation has "failed to knit together" different fields of work: but the component of the organisation that has failed most abysmally is the leadership, on which both c and K sit.

(3) In blaming "factionalism" between "groups of League women" for the wrecking of "one of the most promising and fruitful areas of our work", Carolan and Kinnell evade the responsibility of leading groups of League MEN - themselves at the forefront - who consciously stitched up a fusion in which none of the sharp political differences on work amongst women had been resolved. And the same League men, by their actions and inaction helped foster the factional strife that erupted on the women's commission. K and C carry particular responsibility for their stubborn refusal right up to her resignation to take any serious steps to control the individualistic and highly factional activities of RL as women's "organiser". Their dogged defence of her every move on the leading bodies got the work off to an appalling start, from which it has never recovered.

(4) The thumbnail account of youth work by C&K leaves out any reckoning of the pressures on our comrades from J routinism, or of the lack of any serious allocation of leadership or material resources to youth work.

5) The problems of recruiting O. contacts and "quasi-supporters" cannot be unrelated to the lack of any overt political existence of the WSL. Many would see it as sufficient to join or work with the SX Broad Group. Yet this problem is not even mentioned.

(6) While the points about industrial struggles and factory bulletins appear fair enough, K/C say nothing about the alarming lack of involvement (often complete lack of interest) of many of our branches in local level trade union struggles, which can be far more direct and useful means of finding and developing contacts than industrial bulletins. The appalling remoteness of London branches from battles on their doorstep - Grosvenor House; Tilbury docks; Hackney DHSS; Metal Box, etc... - indicates the detachment of much of our organisation from the day-to-day struggles of workers against employers even where they do occur; to an alarming extent this appears to have been supplanted by O. and TU routinism.

(7) While it is fair to say that the organisation has been negligent in involvement in CND, it is also necessary to point out that only at the Summer School was a serious discussion actually promoted on the question by the Executive: and that debate came pretty well a year too late to move in any serious way into CND, which is now almost certainly past its peak strength for some time to come.

(8) The organisational chaos of the movement dates back to before the factional conflicts, to the time of fusion, when the new WSL simply inherited an amorphous apparatus consisting of the old ICL structure with 2 or 3 WSLers welded on and no clear assignment of responsibilities. As the unwieldy nature of the set-up became clear, neither side felt able to proceed to do anything about it since the organisational problems became inseparable from the political issues. We must share the blame, not seek to heap it onto the other side if we are to find a way forward.

(9) With only 3 issues of the WSL magazine - and no other WSL publications - having appeared in 2 years since fusion, C/K give us no clue as to how they imagine the WSL as an organisation was remotely equipped to exploit opportunities in the SNP crisis - or any other left wing organisation. In fact, suggestions are now being floated by Carolan that we might detach the magazine from the "WSL" label, which would of course compound the problem and ensure that we never pick up more than the most dogged would-be recruit who manages somehow to intuit the existence of a WSL buried deep behind multiple barricades of "front" groups and "broad" publications.

An avoidance of reality

In my view these omissions and distortions are in themselves enough to discredit and dismiss the remainder of the C/K resolution, which is plainly not addressing the reality of the WSL and its work but a highly selective and factionally warped picture of that reality. But we have looked so far at only two out of ten sections! What is the substance of the remainder?

Section III of the Resolution blames organisational problems and differences rather than political disagreements for the chaos. Of course there have been organisational failings and disagreements. But they come from both sides of the organisation. The "Leninism" is by no means the property of the C/K faction alone: some of the earliest organisational disagreements focussed on the maverick attitudes of both RL and cde Carolan himself on leading bodies of the organisation. The "Bolshevism" upheld in the C/K resolution is plainly a selective, one-sided application of discipline, to the disadvantage of the present minority in the WSL.

Politics and factionalism

C/K let the cat out of the bag when they claim that there has been more "heat" raised by differences over "norms rules and standards" than over political questions. This is a pointer to their main priorities and concerns.

Experience since the April conference has confirmed that under the guise of a political fight over perspectives, what c/K were in fact fighting for was organisational domination of the WSL: the documents were less perspectives for work in the class than manifestos in an undeclared presidential-style election campaign.

My proof? Look at events since the conference.

The majority voted at conference for IB45, which was depicted by c/K as a rejection of 'sectarianism', and defending an orientation towards the O. as a central part of a labour movement orientation against supposed threats from supporters of IB48. Yet since the conference C/K have given next to no attention to the development of O. work along any lines at all. The election has come and gone without any serious discussion being

5

promoted by these comrades in the WSL on its implications for our O. work or any revised analysis or perspective. IB45 has yet to be translated to any concrete tactics or strategy for the next period in the O. The most active orientation towards the current struggle there was in fact put forward on the NC by Jones, a supporter of IB48, who proposed a resolution prioritising an active fight for support to Heffer^{campaign} which was carried despite angry opposition from Kinnell.

Take another example. The concrete proposals and analysis on work amongst women contained in IB34 were voted down at the conference. Some of its authors - women with long and valuable experience, roots and skills in building campaigns and struggles - have since been successfully worn down and demoralised by their opponents and driven out of the organisation. As a result, the majority

now have unchallenged control of the WSL's work amongst women. Yet they have made not a single concrete proposal or initiative to advance that work since the beginning of the year. The comrade landed with practical responsibility for the work under such conditions plainly recognised that she had been left in the lurch, and that to maintain WX under conditions of an indifferent WSL majority leadership and demoralised and disorientated women comrades was impossible. The whole fight proves to have been simply a factional show of strength rather than any serious fight for practical politics to be taken into the labour movement by the majority.

In similar fashion, the majority lent its support to documents proposing far-reaching measures to boost the movement's youth work, without ever intending to devote the political and material resources that would make possible their implementation.

And having triumphantly driven the sectarian "Internationalist" Faction out of the WSL and Seen TILC Split in the way they wished, C and K are now advocating the consolidation of what amounts to a rump "mini-TILC" in a farcical exercise of toytown 'internationalism' far more sectarian than anyone other than the RWL would ever have suggested on the old TILC.

Prize Exhibits

In each case it seems patently obvious that the political fight was simply the guise adopted by the C/K majority for procuring their dominance in the organisation rather than any serious struggle for a practical line of march for the WSL at home or abroad. This makes Carolan and Kinnell prize exhibits fit for the museum of sectarians in the true meaning of the term - placing the (narrowly conceived) interests of their small grouping within the WSL in counterposition to the development of the group as a whole and the working class movement. Dressed up in the schizophrenic rhetoric of "broad groups" and "Bolshevism" we are confronted by a leadership which combined the politics of liquidationism with sectarianism; of the ostrich and the steamroller. A curious mix indeed: but certainly not unprecedented. Perhaps the politics of Gerry Healy are not so far behind us after all?

Handing down ideas to "the rest"

It is a related, narrow, sectarian view of the party and its leadership which comes over in the Resolution's Section IV. While formally correct in stressing the ideological role of the party as the carrier of the programme and method of Marxism into the labour movement, C/K leave out any notion as to how those ideas themselves are developed, enriched and checked in practice. The result is a vision of the party in which the "ideas men" at the top simply hand down policies and theories to a subordinate crew of hod-carriers and lackeys in the rank and file: the membership is cut off from any but the most subordinate role. C/K show NO conception of

the positive and crucial role of the process of democratic discussion, critical analysis of practical experience, or a collective leadership in which more than one political strand is enabled to play a productive role.

There is no contesting the need for an active membership, committed to the class struggle, integrated in the labour movement, fighting under the direction of the party as a conscious force seeking to advance and raise the political level of workers beyond spontaneous and reformist forms of organisation and struggle. Only through such work can we prepare the basis for new and more audacious campaigns, and win the most class conscious sections of the working class to our programme and recruit them to active membership of our party.

But since the C/K document pays no attention at all to the nuts and bolts of the work our comrades actually do in the branches and the problems of recruitment, it is hard to take these formal statements as more than the orthodox icing on a factional cake.

In reality Section IV boils down to a vision of a top-down, hierarchic party structure in which the "ideas" are passed on from the upper echelons of "small committees" (possibly occasionally the EC) to the "rest of the party". C/K actually rationalise the separation of leadership from membership in the following (again formally correct) passage:

"Within the party a similar unevenness in education, experience, commitment, to that which characterises the relationship between the party as a whole and the class emerges between leading layers and the rest of the organisation....The National Committee and its subsidiaries within the party cut themselves off from the party when necessary to deliberate and discuss...."

The outcome of these deliberations, gift wrapped from the top dogs, is then generously handed out to the plebs on the lower level, whose views and experiences are plainly seen as irrelevant to the whole process. Centralist this certainly is: democratic it ain't. Nor is it even a sensible way to seek to administer a movement mired in a crisis of morale and perspective, in which members already feel alienated and ignored.

In fact such an approach can cut the movement off from the vital materialist base on which our theory and programme can be developed through the most searching analysis of our experience in the work - in which every member has a part to play.

A sectarian view from the cab of the steamroller

The logical conclusion of the approach contained in the c/K Resolution is again sectarian. It would eventually reduce the organisation to a homogeneous but slender "hard core" grouping of probably less than 80 ex-ICL loyalists, who are apparently accustomed to being dictated to by "small committees", and ready to stick with Cand K through thick and thin.

The vaunted ideals of the "non-sectarian" fusion of 1981 have thus been transformed into a sectarian nightmare 2 years later. Equally as ruthlessly as the RWL majority leadership which K and C so virulently attacked for their behaviour, the present majority leadership are prepared to use their majority to make life impossible within the organisation for those who hold a position independent of their own.

Having apparently renounced any hope of "integrating" the leaders of the old WSL - for whom they have never had more than a cynical contempt - into the leadership, C and K are now doing their best to whittle away their base of support in the movement and force them out of it.

How else can we explain the ostrich-like approach of experienced comrades like Carolan and Kinnell to the current appalling state of crisis in the WSL? We are forced to conclude that what they know doesn't alarm or disturb them. They would be quite happy to see a smaller, less influential organisation, provided it is purged of serious opponents of their views.

WHY ELSE, after two years in which the topic has barely been mentioned, and in defiance of a fusion agreement to postpone a vote until after a serious discussion had made possible more than simply a vote-out, should Carolan begin now to resurrect the question of Afghanistan, and set out to force it on to the August NC and conference agendas? Why else, if not to heat up the factional divisions and put the boot into the minority, in the hopes that more will become dispirited and leave?

Organisational recipes for political problems.

Sections V, VI and VII of the Resolution basically cover in more detail points already touched upon. Suffice it to say that the failure of the League to recruit is put down in each instance primarily to organisational rather than political reasons - with the unmistakeable implication at each stage that the fault lies somehow with the minority and the membership in general rather than the majority.

Section VIII attempts to offer organisational solutions to the question of contact work. We are urged to "convince contacts ... of the irreplaceability of the WSL". But since most of our daily work (if not all of it, given the evident failure of most League branches to give guidance on TU and other work) appears to take place alongside rather than through the WSL, it might be more convincing if Carolan and Kinnell were to explain exactly why the WSL is irreplaceable, and how they propose branch work should change to make the League central. Since they do not attempt this, they rest content with lambasting the membership in general for failing to convince people that our invisible party, the "eminence grise" behind our plethora of Broad Groups, is really the hub of all political development.

More bizarre still, we are told by the two most factional individuals in the League (if not the world Trotskyist movement) that an "educated cadre" is needed to secure "comradely relations in discussion" !!!

Section IX once again offers us a formally correct argument on the need to integrate intellectuals with worker comrades. But this cannot be separated from the general slant of the document, and must therefore be recognised as arguing in practice for the perpetuation of the existing party hierarchy, and against anything that might limit the "scientific activity" of "intellectuals" in the leadership. There are no prizes for guessing who Carolan and Kinnell would regard as "intellectuals" in the WSL.

The Missing Magazine

The final set of organisational proposals in Section X make no reference to the role of WSL publications - centrally the magazine - or our press and broad groups, in recruitment. The results are confusing.

Though "classes" are mentioned, their presentation (WSL or SX? private or public?) is left vague; and the likelihood of them happening, short of a major drive to transform the work of the branches, seems minimal.

No attention is paid to the role and political development of local branches in the labour movement.

Once again the approach is a "top down", bureaucratic, hierarchic approach which largely ignores the concrete problems of the members while seeking to make the organisation more cosily habitable for the top layers of the majority leadership.

A Disgraceful Classic

As a Resolution on party building, the Carolan/Kinnell document is a disgrace. As an exercise in distortion and double-dealing it is a classic.

The basic prerequisite of establishing a healthy inner-party regime in the WSL and confronting the accumulated problems of what both sides should now admit was an unprincipled, ill-conceived, botched and bungled fusion

in 1981 is an abandonment of the sterile and destructive factionalism which the Resolution in IB50 was drafted to serve. The fusion remains a fact of life: both sides must learn to live with it if we are not to decimate the organisation rendering the greatest comfort and amusement to our rivals on the left and to the class enemy and reformist leaders whom we should be fighting.

The only way we can hope to make a positive development that could compensate for the damage we have done to both pre-fusion groups by the fusion is to devote our attention and energies to creating relations of trust and cooperation between the various elements of the present WSL, and mapping out political and organisational initiatives - such as the Sept 17 conference - which can turn our movement outwards, widen its periphery and create more favourable conditions for political discussion and clarification. Carolan and Kinnell's factional and divisive text shows that they have no intention of following such a course: and unless they are repudiated by the membership, they will set the tone for the entire next period in the crisis of the WSL.

A year ago, in a (vain) attempt to raise a more positive note in the midst of the sharpening debate over the Malvinas, I wrote in IB11 a document on party-building, focussed on the development of Branch and Area leadership and initiatives, and the need for branches to direct the work of comrades if individual members are to be integrated and developed in the organisation.

There was no organised discussion of this text, though Parsons wrote a reply, and some comrades - in my view correctly - pointed out that it did not deal with the role of the broad groups sufficiently. While accepting that it could be substantially improved - and recognising that its tone appears wildly and absurdly optimistic in the context of today's WSL, I would argue that the general line of approach of that document offers the only way by which the organisation can make itself habitable to new members and play its crucial role in giving leadership in the daily political work our comrades carry out in the labour movement.

It is no accident in my view that Carolan and Kinnell's document makes no reference to this text, but instead heads at a tangent from it, refusing to confront the daily realities of the work.

Against the sectarian recipes served up by Carolan and Kinnell in IB50, I would counterpose the general line of my document on party building in IB11.

Cunliffe, July 1983.

R
A
D
I
C
A
L

