

FEBRUARY 1984

INTERNAL BULLETIN 79

Branch circular, with details of coming events

National committee minutes and documents, 7.1.84 (Including report on RWP Sri Lanka)

Call for an April conference, by the Faction

The NC decision on the conference: Kinnell

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INTERNAL BULLETIN

On page 2 of the NC minutes comrades will see a resolution about the IB carried by the NC on January 7. To follow up this resolution the EC is asking branches and comrades if they can give any undertakings to help with IB production.

There are a few major articles halfway through production which could well be 'farmed out' to branches or individuals.

Please contact Kinnell at the centre.

CALL FOR APRIL CONFERENCE

As comrades will note from this IB, the Faction is circulating an appeal for an April conference.

Comrades are asked to note the following resolution from the EC, 12.2.84.

"This EC agrees immediately to campaign in the organisation in support of the last NC decision. Where branches are discussing the issue it insists that no decision should be taken without the NC position first being put and the documentation being available. (This latter to be done within 15 days)."

FINANCE

See report on page 2 of NC minutes. The main points for immediate action are:

1. Paper money: get payments up to date, increase sales. Cd Levy is approaching branches on this, specially on getting payments by standing order.

2. Fund-raising.

3. Every branch was written to last month about dues debts. Please get this money in quickly.

Next NC MARCH 10

The agenda will include Afghanistan. On the 'troops out' position comrades are asked to read the article in WA magazine (copy enclosed, more available on request).

COMING EVENTS

Please note that there are several changed dates.

- Feb.25 Health Fightback 84 conference, Bradford. A platform statement will be put to the conference saying most of what needs to be said politically. It is possible to get additional delegates even in the last few days before the conference - please try.
- Feb.25/26 national conference for CLP delegates has been cancelled
- Feb.26 Meeting for sympathisers who are councillors: in London, details to be notified soon.
- Mar.3 Youth paper EB, 12 noon, Birmingham Labour Club, Bristol Road.
- Mar.10 National Committee
- Mar.11 There is a suggestion for a branch organisers' meeting on this day. No decision has been taken yet, but it would be useful if we could have opinions and notification of any clashes as soon as possible.
- Mar.16 Student caucus: in the evening, venue to be determined by venue of SSIN AGM. This meeting will decide our line on SSIN and NOLS.
- Mar.17 Socialist Students in NOLS AGM, probably in Manchester
- Mar.24 Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference, in Sheffield. See the paper for details. Both Militant and SWP are mobilising very heavily for this event: it will be big and politically important. Comrades should get delegated wherever possible. We are preparing a pamphlet to be out by this conference on the experience of the POEU and CPSA Broad Lefts.
- Mar.24- National conference of CLP delegates, in Nottingham Cd. Hill will be approaching people to get delegated. Especially important for us is the discussion on LP workplace branches scheduled at this conference.
- Mar.24-5 Youth school, 10.45am to 5.15pm, probably at Birmingham University. All youth comrades to attend.
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| Agenda | 11 - 12.30 | Revolutionaries and the labour movement |
| (provisional) | 1.30 - 2.30 | Ireland 1 |
| | 2.30 - 4.45 | Debate on Afghanistan |
| | 5 - 6 | The USFI |
| | 12 - 1.15 | Ireland 2 |
| | 2.15 - 3.15 | The revolutionary party |
| | 3.15 - 5.15 | Youth commission |
- Early April, date yet to be finalised (sorry): 'Campaign against Compulsion' day of action on YTS. Cd. Joplin will be contacting branches as soon as details are finalised.
- Apr.9-12 National Organisation of Labour Students conference
- Apr.14 Labour Committee on Ireland AGM By conference decision all comrades should be members of the LCI. One year's membership is £5 waged, £1 unwaged, from LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1. Cd. Hill is responsible for organising for the AGM.

Apr.14 Broad groups delegate meeting, in Nottingham. A suggestion has been made that the bukk of this meeting should be converted into a sort of day school on our trade union work, especially our work in Broad Lefts. No decision has been taken yet: opinions would be useful.

Apr.16-19 National Union of Students conference

Apr.20-23 Labour Party Young Socialists conference.

The most important thing that branches must be doing about this conference now is raising MONEY to enable local J. members to attend.

All League members of J. age must attend - and we are in no position to subsidise them from central funds.

Trade union branches will sometimes sponsor members to go: please investigate possibilities locally.

Apart from that - organise fund-raising events, approach wealthy sympathisers, etc.

May 12 Turkey solidarity conference, sponsored by a number of left MPs and the TSC as well as other Turkey solidarity campaigns.

May 12-14 Labour Party women's conference

GAY FRACTION

Comrades interested in a meeting please contact cd Ellis c/c the centre.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE 7-1-84

- 10 - 10.30 Agenda
- 10.30 - 12.30 Political situation: A) NGA and anti-union laws
B) Campaign against Rates Bill and abolition of metropolitan councils.
- 12.30 - 1.30 Magazine: Resolution from Carolan -
and 'That we launch a magazine in the
2.15 - 2.50 name of the broad groups. The 'WSR'
title should be continued for the international bulletin, with the possibility of also having issues for domestic use'.
- Convergence. There is a document from Kinnell. Last NC decided that we should discuss it and might take a vote, but any final binding decision would not be until after wider discussion.
- 2.50 - 3 Attendance.*
- 3 - 3.30 Finance. (See report).**
- 3.30 - 4.30 EC membership
4. - 4.45 WF
- 4.45 - 5.45 EEC elections. The resolution tabled from Kinnell is:
'We should argued for participation in the EEC elections on the basis of the policy statement adopted at the April 1982 NC'.
- 5.45 - 5.50 Next meeting.***
- 5.50 - 6.20 Break
- 6.20 - 7.20 Motion from EC on Cunliffe and the paper (attached documents, page 1-2).
Motion from Cunliffe (page 3) - the resolution is indicated by lines at the side).
- 7.20 - 8.20 EC minutes. Edinburgh resolution (see attached page 4 and page 5): Southwark resolution (page 5 and page 6).

NATIONAL COMMITTEE 7-1-84.

Resolution from EC 29-12-83 on Cunliffe's letters (see below).

1. The ad hoc EB established at fusion has not met regularly for at least 18 months, or at all for perhaps a year. The EC ceased to function because of the high degree of friction in the organisation and because of the disproportionate effort involved in holding meetings which were often badly attended and not very much use in producing the paper. (For example, to hold an EB meeting in Oxford would take about 8 hours, including travel, for the comrades in London).

2. In response to this situation the EC decided some months ago, on Kinnell's motion, that for one part of each EC meeting the EC should be the paper's EB. This decision too has proved a dead letter because a large part of the EC's time is taken up with disputes and wrangles, leaving little time or inclination to continue the wrangles into an EB session.

No decision has ever been taken to rescind this decision to have an EB session at ECs. But it has been the tacit decision of every EC member, including comrade Cunliffe, who has never once proposed that the EC should have an EB session.

3. A consequence of this, the work of planning and producing the paper has fallen entirely on the two editors appointed by the NC.

4. The EC believes that the only serious option before us is for the EC to turn itself into an EB for part of its meetings. Selected non-EC members can be additionally invited to these EB sessions.

In a situation where the committees (EC, OSC and NC) charged with organising and leading the League's work function badly, primarily because of the amount of energy and time that has to be given over to factional disputes, the idea of creating another separate committee (EB) is an absurdity. Either such a committee would be a working committee of the League majority capable of functioning in a businesslike way, or it would become another arena for factional disputes and quickly become non-functional for the reasons the old EB did.

Therefore the EC affirms the importance of having the paper as a regular item on the agenda, and resolves that it will automatically be on each agenda.

5. The EC rejects the points made in cd Cunliffe's letters for the following reasons:

i. The proposal takes no account of the realities of the League, or why the old EB ceased to function, as above (and why the existing committees, including the EC, function so inadequately).

ii. The talk about democracy, involving trade unionists, etc. is demagogic and dishonest. It is perfectly democratic that representatives appointed by the democratically-elected and accountable leading committees should have the delegated responsibility of producing the paper. The primary loss we suffer in not having an EB is the loss of a breadth of involvement, input and ideas. All this is a question of practicalities and possibilities. It is desirable for as broad a spectrum as possible of trade unionists and others to have an input into the paper. But it is a matter of what is possible and feasible in a given situation.

iii. It is ridiculous for cd Cunliffe - who is a joint editor, and as joint editor has never tried to convene the old EB or to insist that the EC has an EB session as above - to take the stand he does. The indications are that his reason for doing this are connected with the factional attitude of cds. Smith and Jones.

cd. Cunliffe

6. The EC expresses its opinion that/ is completely out of order in attempting to give the organisation ultimatums. It is not necessarily his own free decision whether or not he works for the League on the paper. Even if his proposals were more acceptable to the EC, we would still condemn

the procedure of coming to the organisation with disruptive ultimatums (for the second time in two months). We are a democratic centralist organisation, not an association of free-wheeling anarchists.

(The EC also decided to fix 5pm Saturdays as the regular EC time, and 7pm as the EB time)

Letters from Cunliffe

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December 4 (received December 10)

1. The current paper (Dec.1) lamentably failed to carry any detailed coverage of the current stage of the NGA dispute at Stockport - in particular it lacked any serious analysis of the scandalous role played by the TUC and individual union leaders in isolating the NGA and fuelling the anti-picket witch-hunt of the Tory government. It even failed to refer to our own initiative that week - the lobby of the TUC.

2. This episode came after a week in which our Stockport coverage had been way ahead of all others on the left. It is simply the latest embarrassing outcome of the haphazard, ramshackle and chaotic system by which the paper is planned and produced. The present system excludes any serious collective discussion or planning of coverage and priorities in advance of the last minute dash for print deadlines: and it generates a weekly confusion in which unnecessary copy is typeset while needed articles are left unwritten or unnecessarily delayed. The present set-up leaves every decision in the hands of only two comrades, who are in practice only accountable to the extent that a critic is prepared to take up an issue in the 'Letters' page (itself pretty much of a laughing-stock, filled with intra-League wrangles and almost devoid of genuine letters) or as a complaint at EC or NC level. In my view this is a travesty of democratic control, and wrong in principle: but it is also - as the NGA issue shows - the worst possible way of producing a paper which ought to reflect the best, most advanced analysis our movement can offer on the key questions of the day. It results in lop-sided and inadequate issues which give little satisfaction to produce or to read.

3. My opposition to this system is well-known and of long standing. When I have raised it in EC or other discussions I have been met time and again with statements from Kinnell and others that there is no real difference; that all that stands in the way of a functioning Editorial Board is organisational problems. For month after month, however, these 'organisational difficulties' have been cited, and there is no evidence of the slightest will to overcome them. On the contrary, cd Carolan has made it clear that his notion of an 'Editorial Board' is a tiny gathering of full-timers - with a broader body meeting only occasionally. In this way the problem of democratic control over the paper overlaps with the problems of democracy in the WSL, in which we have seen leading bodies increasingly supplanted by smaller, less representative committees. The NC has since fusion played very much second fiddle to the EC: now we find the EC - which has barely met or operated since before the September 17 conference - outflanked by the increasingly political role allotted to the 'Organising Sub Committee', which has no formal political status at all in the movement and was set up exclusively to deal with organisational questions. Under these conditions, bland assurances from the majority about the future establishment of an EB carry little or no conviction: their will to change the system of editorial planning and control must be shown in practice.

4. In the absence of such changes, I am not prepared to continue to play my present role in the production of the paper. I can see no good reason why an Editorial Board, including EC members as well as other comrades from various points of view who can contribute to the paper, could not begin functioning at once. Such an EB should meet every week that the paper is being published, and meet at such a time (normally weekends) that trade

union comrades can attend - some possibly as alternate members if they cannot guarantee weekly attendance. It 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 meeting would provide a useful focus to assist in structuring the present anarchic run-up to production, and should also plan in advance for non-urgent feature articles and centre spreads.

5. Since I have not been able to raise these points in an EC meeting (the EC having not met), I am prepared to work on the two issues before Xmas: but I give notice that unless there have been prior EB meetings, I will not work on subsequent issues, and will withdraw from my full-time position.

December 22 (received December 24)

I am writing to ensure that there is no confusion on the issues relating to the Editorial Board question, following our telephone conversation on Tuesday night*. The purpose of my inquiry then was merely to seek your views on the question - not to promote a full discussion on the phone in the absence of Ed Carolan. The conclusion of that conversation as far as I am concerned registered no reaction to the points you had made: merely the fact that the question will have to be discussed by the EC. The alarming factor is that time is running out without clear positions being spelled out by the EC majority.

To make matters absolutely plain once more, since the issue appears to have been regarded as insufficiently important for any urgent discussion:

1. I stated in my letter to the EC, and restate clearly now, that I will not work on any further issue of the paper which has not been subject to prior discussion and preparation at an Editorial Board meeting. Unless there is such a meeting convened between now and the first issue of 1984, you can assume that I will not participate in production work on that issue. I regard it as incumbent on the EC majority - without whose active involvement an EB is obviously impossible - to demonstrate their good faith and commitment to the establishment of an EB by taking the initiative in arranging such a meeting.

2. The logic of my withdrawal from production work on the paper would be my resignation as a full-timer for the League. However, given the date of the next NC, I am prepared to leave such a decision in suspense until the NC has had the chance to vote at its January meeting upon the following specific resolution on an EB, which I also table for the forthcoming EC meeting:

"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 the paper. This EB should meet every week that the paper 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."

3. In the event of this resolution being defeated by both EC and NC, or

* There had been an EC on December 11, but Cunliffe was absent. Another was planned for December 20: that evening, however, Cunliffe phoned me to say that Smith, Jones and he could not make it. He asked me about responses to his letter. I answered that I still thought the best arrangement was an EB session linked to EC meetings; that we should make that function; and that it seemed to be wrong that he posed the issue as he did, given that he had a primary responsibility for convening the EB and had never tried to do so. (Kinnell).

so heavily amended as to gut it of its content, I will resign as a full-timer: but I will continue the fight in the League for democratic control over our main publication. I would therefore demand the publication of my two letters on this question in the IB, and would submit further material, seeking to promote the fullest debate in the membership. Under conditions where these demands were achieved, I would be prepared to return to work on the production of the paper.

I hope there is now no doubt whatever in your minds that this matter is a serious one which I intend to pursue.

EC December 29 rejected Cunliffe's resolution and passed the resolution printed on page 1. It also held an EB session in line with that resolution. Cd Cunliffe said at that meeting that he would consider his position, but he then refused to work on the paper produced on January 2-4.

Oliver resolution

1. That the NC adopts a set of standing orders.
2. That the NC standing orders include the following items:
 - a) notice of meeting time, place, agenda and relevant documents to be circulated at least seven days in advance.
 - b) resolutions and items for the agenda to be with the secretary at least 10 days before the meeting.
 - c) emergency matters may be added to the agenda, given the agreement of the NC meeting.
 - d) the NC agenda will normally include (i) minutes of the last meeting, (ii) matters arising, (iii) EC report.
 - e) an NC chairperson to be elected annually.
3. That the IB be produced:
 - a) consistently and regularly,
 - b) with the aim of stimulating internal discussion,
 - c) by a comrade(s) independent of the old WSL and old I-CL leaderships,
 - d) on a self-financing basis,
 - e) to contain NC minutes.

Edinburgh resolution

This branch deplores the fact that letters and articles to the paper sent in by our members are consistently being censored or severely altered without any account of reasons for these actions being made to the members concerned. We demand that the EC prepare strict guidelines for submission to the coming NC on procedures for the democratic and efficient management of our paper. These guidelines will, as a minimum, include the following.

1. No article or letter will be censored by exclusion or alteration without a political accounting for the decision to the author(s). In addition the article or letter should be included in an IB with a written explanation for the decision to censure, as a means of accounting to the membership as a whole.
2. Where major alterations are made to an article that article should be printed under the original author's by-line only if their consent is given.
3. Guidelines on layout, e.g. size of print, placing of photos, and adverts, arrangement of articles, headlining, subheads, should be drawn up and reviewed at regular intervals.
4. During each issue of the paper there will be one regular meeting at which all major decisions concerning that issue will be decided.

This item should be taken at the next NC following the more general policy resolutions on the paper from Abbott/McInnes and from the Glasgow branch. Following the decision, an account of the details and reasons for reaching them will be made for the organisation.

Southwark resolution

This branch believes that the League should pursue (g) of the resolution from Kinnell passed at the last NC ("Prior to any approach... SF and the PTT"); we should set a timetable and designate responsibilities for formulating 'a clear principled outline assessment of the USFI, and its place in the world Trotskyist spectrum', and immediately start education and discussion based upon the old I-CL and WSL documents on the USFI".

RWP.

Kinnell reported.

A comrade from the RWP Sri Lanka visited Britain just before Christmas, and had discussions.

General impression was positive, and we should continue a dialogue.

The group is small (about 20 members) and fairly isolated, having had most of its trade unionists victimised in the mass sackings of 1981. Also they retain some marks of the Spartacists, with whom they were associated for a period: equivocation on Stalinism, sectarianism.

Nevertheless they seem to have a honourable record in terms of the issues in their own arena; they embody an impressive history (two of the foremost veterans of Sri Lanka Trotskyism being among their members); they discuss seriously and reasonably.

One striking feature was that the RWP comrade was aware and concerned on the issues of women's liberation, despite the fact that such ideas have so far gained very little support in Sri Lanka.

Discussions covered: history of RWP and LSSP; labour movement in Sri Lanka; rest of left in Sri Lanka and RWP's attitude; FI (apparently a large measure of agreement); Poland (substantial agreement, but a nuance of difference: the RWP reject any description of the Solidarnosc leadership as 'reactionary', and insist that we must be with the workers against the bureaucracy even if the workers have confused, maybe pro-capitalist, ideas; but they put more stress on dangers of capitalist restoration supposedly arising from the Solidarnosc leadership's confusions); Afghanistan (RWP opposed to calling for withdrawal of USSR troops on grounds that they are a lesser evil and we should instead call on them to carry through social transformations); South Atlantic war (RWP agree with original WSL position); Tamil question in Sri Lanka; Palestine (RWP support right to self-determination for both Palestinians and Israeli Jews); Ireland (RWP supports 'self-determination for Protestants' - apparently, from the discussion, on the basis of an analogy with the Tamils in Sri Lanka); Labour Party (RWP critical of us as too soft on Benn etc.); 'anti-imperialist united front' (RWP hostile to it); etc.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE 7-1-84

POLITICAL SITUATION

Kinnell introduced. Over the NGA affair we have raised the slogan for a special recall TUC - to call the leadership to account. Obviously we must be careful not to counterpose it to immediate action. We also tried to revive a campaign on the lines of the MCDTUR. We should discuss now what can be done about that.

Discussion followed, leading to the following resolutions:

Hill: "That the Industrial Organiser immediately send out a letter to convene a meeting of all affiliates and contacts of the MCDTUR. We should aim in the meeting to:

- (a) Discuss organising for the recall TUC,
- (b) Discuss producing a pamphlet on latest developments in the law, and lessons of the series of betrayals."

Carried, 12 for, 3 against.

Jones: "Poissy is the lead of the paper for this week".

Carried overwhelmingly.*

Kinnell: "a) The EC should investigate possibilities of relaunching a militant rank and file campaign against anti trade union laws on a similar political basis to the MCDTUR. We would try to link in the building of such a campaign with the fight for a recall TUC.

"b) We argue in a general way for a broader multi-issue rank and file movement, but we avoid dissolving the specific issue of anti-union laws into this broader issue".

Carried, none against.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Parkinson introduced. The current Tory attacks could be devastating. They are political as well as economic. But Labour councils have responded by lobbying the powers that be rather than mobilising for action. Any lead is likely to come from the unions.

Day of action on January 24. Also NALGO is instituting a levy and talking about 'one out, all out'. But there is little real mobilisation and a lot of complacency. Our job is to change that. The key is the rank and file of local authority workers.

Brief discussion followed.

MAGAZINE

Carolyn proposed that we initiate a magazine in the name of the broad groups. (See NC agenda for full text of resolution).

There was a discussion. Cunliffe moved that the motion be not put, and the proposal instead be referred to a special conference. This procedural motion was lost.

The substantive motion was then carried with 4 votes against (Cunliffe, Jones, Parsons, Smith), and 2 abstentions (Keith, Oliver).

* The Poissy strike ended the day after the NC, January 8.

Parsons raised the question of the conference decision to produce WSR4 on social democracy, and it was agreed to refer this to the EC.

FINANCE

Kinnell reported. The conclusions of the report were as follows:

Our backlog of debt has been increasing by some £285 a month. That was starting from a situation of dire crisis! In effect it means that we live continually on the edge of financial disaster, and it is getting steadily worse. The most ordinary everyday expenses - materials for the paper, stamps, duplicating paper - can create minor crises. Each week it takes special effort and juggling to assemble the cash to send the papers out.

To improve our situation in a onee-for-all way, we are planning to (a) find new premises, (b) discard our existing company in favour of a new cooperative. Both are being actively pursued. In the event of us being able to finalise new premises, we will of course need to appeal to comrades for a special fund for the initial expenses.

We also need to improve our month-by-month income/expenditure balance. This is not a remote utopian goal. If we just increased our regular paper/contributions income to the level of early 1982, we could be knocking nearly £1000 a month off our debt backlog.

The fact is, however, that even the modest improvement shown in October-December required a huge investment of central person-hours.

NC members should take responsibility for making sure that their branches take selling and paying for the paper seriously.

Also: we have so far taken a soft line with branches going over the maximum arrears for papers set down by the NC, and members going over the maximum dues arrears; we have given extensions, etc. etc. We shall have to tighten up.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Collins proposed that she should be replaced on the committee by Joplin. This was agreed with 3 votes against and 3 abstentions.

OLIVER RESOLUTION

(See NC documents page 4).

This was amended in discussion and carried as follows:

1. That the NC adopts a set of standing orders,
2. That the NC standing orders include the following items:
 - a) notice of meeting time, place, agenda and relevant documents to be circulated at least four days in advance;
 - b) resolutions and items for the agenda to be with the secreatry at least 7 days before the meeting;
 - c) emergency matters may be added to the agenda, given the agreement of the NC meeting.
 - d) the NC agenda will normally include (i) minutes of the last meeting, (ii) matters arising, (iii) EC report, (iv) political report;
3. That the IB be produced:
 - a) consistently and regularly;
 - b) with the aim of stimulating internal discussion;
 - c) to contain NC minutes.

WF

Collins made a brief report. It was agreed that the EC should come to the next NC with a detailed report on how the work is progressing, who is responsible, etc.

EEC ELECTIONS

Kinnell moved a resolution for participation in the elections (as per agenda)

Cunliffe moved an amendment, to alter the beginning of the resolution to read: "Insofar as campaigns are built by the labour movement on the EEC elections, we should participate on the basis...."

The amendment was defeated with 1 vote for (Cunliffe).

The substantive resolution was carried with 3 against.

CUNLIFFE/PAPER

Cunliffe's motion on the EB (see NC documents) was lost:

5 for, 11 against, 1 abst.

The EC resolution was carried:

11 for, 4 against, 2 abst.

Carolan resolution in addition: That this meeting refuses to accept Cunliffe's withdrawal from the paper and instructs him to return to his position as joint editor of the paper. Carried:

9 for, 5 against, 2 abst. Parsons declared that he was not voting.

EDINBURGH RESOLUTION

Agreed to write to Edinburgh branch asking them to concretise.

SOUTHWARK RESOLUTION

Agreed unanimously.

CONFERENCE

Jones moved that the 1984 conference be in April

Parsons proposed June.

A vote was taken on the alternative spring vs. autumn, and there was a big majority for autumn.

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APPEAL BY THE FACTION

At the last NC meeting, the question was raised as to the date of the 1984 WSL annual conference -since it was both a constitutional and political requirement that we have it in April - which is one year from the election of the present leadership and the voting on the main documents. The NC majority opposed this and proposed a conference in September. This was put to the vote and carried by a majority decision. Politically, however, it cannot rest there. It is necessary to seek the views of WSL members as to this decision, and we ask you to take into account the following points:

- 1) The September proposal cannot be seen as serious, since it is impossible, with the TUC and LP conferences, to hold a WSL conference in September - it simply avoids having a conference in the spring. The question, once it slips to November or December, is will there be a WSL conference this year- ?
- 2) It is a constitutional requirement to have a conference within a year of the last. If it slips past that by unanimous agreement that is one thing, but if a minority wants the constitution upheld and implemented, it becomes a democratic right. Only a conference can alter the constitution.
- 3) Much more important, however, is the political requirements of the situation. We are now in a completely different situation to that in April last year when we voted on the main documents on orientation to the political situation in Britain. There has been the General Election, the LP conference, the election of the Kinnock leadership and the decline and changed situation of the left in the LP - one of the major debates last year.

There is the situation in the trade unions. The TUC conference. The POEU struggle and defeat and all its implications. There is the NGA struggle and the historic defeat imposed on the working class by the betrayal of the TUC. There is the banning of trade unions at GGHQ Cheltenham. There is the new TUC document which theorises their march to the right.

There is the international situation and the US war drive which has intensified since last April with new major interventions in the Middle East and Central America.

There are developments in the peace movement, Greenham Common, and the arrival of Cruise missiles in Britain.

- 4) There is also the internal situation in the WSL, the decline of the organisation, the problems of the production of the paper, the problems of WF and of the youth work. There is the question of international work which is now at a complete standstill.

The reality is that the organisation is not equipped to respond in any adequate way to the political situation. Individuals go off and do work in the sphere which attracts them. The longer this goes on without discussion, the worse it will get. It cannot be resolved in the top committees which are paralysed on the problem. The obvious urgent need is for a conference in which the whole of the organisation is involved and these problems are discussed in the light of a full discussion on the political situation.

We invite members of the WSL who agree with the need for a conference in April (the exact date would be decided in the light of practical considerations) to put their name to this statement, and we will re-raise it at the next NC meeting.

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE'S POSITION

The National Committee, as comrades can see from the minutes, decided to schedule the conference for August/September.

The reasons why, as I understand them, were as follows.

Constitutionally we have a conference once a year. The propose is to review our politics and our leadership in the light of a year's experience.

The last conference was at the end of August 1983. August/September 1984 is therefore the obvious time for the next one.

True, the NC was elected at the April 1983 conference. An argument can therefore be made for April 1984 as the conference date.

But for 13½ months between July 1982 and August 1983 the organisation was in almost continuous pre-conference session. It had a bad effect, visible for all to see at the poorly-attended, demoralised August 1983 conference.

What we need now is not to dive back into pre-conference session, but to turn the organisation towards implementing the decisions made from that marathon bout of conferences.

A conference in April would not be a review of a year's experience of work. It would simply plunge us back into the same arguments as last year, only more weary and exasperated and more obscured by organisational conflicts. It would mean that we had given far less time to implementing our conference decisions than to discussing them!

There might be a case for an early conference even so, if there had been an important turn in the political situation (such that all the old arguments looked different, or new arguments loomed larger), or if the balance within the organisation on the old arguments had shifted so that different policies and a politically different NC would come out of a new conference,

Neither of these things has happened. A conference in April could serve only the cause of factional agitation. It would simply extend the bad faction tension on the leading committees throughout the organisation.

The 'practical' objection to autumn does not hold, either. April is a more difficult month to have a conference than September, since the LPYS conference consumes much more effort from us than either the TUC or LP conferences.

Finally, as IB 76 (inside cover) records, the EC of September 3 1983 decided unanimously (faction members included) that the next League conference should be "in approximately 12 months" - i.e. August/September 1984. The EC's reasoning then was the same as the NC's in January. The faction comrades owe us an account of why they have changed their minds. Is it because they have decided that a factional campaign is more important to them than anything which could actually improve the political work of the organisation?

Kinnell