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(Written October 1983)

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IRELAND Seeds come to reformist fruition: factionalism or federalism

We have accused comrade Carolan of advocating a 'reformist' perspective on Ireland. More precisely, in presenting federalism as a "solution" in Ireland, he is acting as a reformist. This has been countered in two ways: firstly, with the question, why has this suddenly arisen? and secondly, with the statement that this is a traditional position of the old ICL, which certainly was not reformist on Ireland.

I want to answer these questions in two ways. Firstly, "federalism" is not a traditional position of the ICL - it is a position which emerged only occasionally. This can easily be proved by reference to historical documents. Secondly, it was in the background of this tradition; thus the seeds of today's reformist position were always present.

With regard to the latter, I think that the disagreements within the movement have pushed the comrades the whole way. Their extreme factional attitude led them, when they saw a disagreement on the question of federalism, to make it a point of principle. From being in the background, the comrades have now elevated federalism to the "only solution". I will also show how SO has been used in this factional way.

In IB 68, Comrade Kinnell says, on p.11, that we should combine the demand for "troops out" with those of federalism, and that we should "condemn those who call for troops out without such a proposal as mindless phrasemongers". If this is not phrasemongering, I don't know what is. Every major document of the ICL did not combine these demands. Yet, with no significant change, comrades who put forward the same position as comrade Kinnell in the past are to be ridiculed. Or is your own history irrelevant? Only a sectarian could be so arrogant.

The past

Comrade Carolan sometimes refers to his participation in the "League for a Workers Republic", and thus to his past advocacy of this demand. This is a very selective view of history. It is true that the LWR had the demand for the "secession" of the Catholic areas in the North, and an "autonomous state within a United Ireland" for the Protestants. It also, however, called on "the Protestant working class to defend Catholic workers' areas against Paisleyite attack" or to "agitate (note: not propagandise) for the setting up of a workers militia to defend Catholic workers and Protestant workers who are being intimidated by armed Paisleyite thugs." (taken from "The North, a political statement issued in response to the August 12th British Army moves in 1969").

How did comrade Carolan stand at that time? An interesting comparison to the way in which he ridicules the past position of the WSL in relation to the "workers Militia", and those of us who presently argue for that position!

In Comrade Kinnell's IB 68 document, there is a footnote on the WF/ICL's "history of federalism": "You will find it advocated in the 1969 Workers Fight resolution against the IS/SWP dropping of Troops Out". Indeed? The position put forward in this resolution was one of the right of secession of the Catholic areas from the Northern Ireland state, as well as "guaranteed rights and if necessary" autonomy for the Protestant areas".

* This position argues what we, the minority, argue now: "guaranteed rights" for the Protestants. The resolution does not advocate autonomy - merely accepts it "if necessary". This is a different and distinct position to that argued by the majority comrades now. It does, however, contain the seeds of their present reformism. But the main substance of the resolution is not a united Ireland - it is secession of the Catholic areas from the North, and the hope that this would lead to the collapse of the Northern state, and in this roundabout way to a united Ireland. Even this position was only held briefly.

Towards the end of 1971, the Trotskyist Tendency issued a statement on their position on Ireland that said the following: It talks about the above position as being only "briefly held" by them. It attacks the leadership for quoting

them as saying that secession was "inextricably linked to the slogan withdraw the troops" - which it calls "highly misleading". Note, comrade Kinnell, attacking others for saying that your solution for the North was "inextricably linked" to Troops Out. You now say that it must be. You will say it refers to "secession", but this was your "intelligent proposal" at the time.

But it then goes on to say that at the 1970 conference there was no resolution for "secession" - nor, I would assume, for autonomy. Because the position had been dropped. Kinnell's selective history omits this 1970 conference. This statement of the TT is centred on attacking the leadership for failing to call for "Victory to the IRA" in a specific slogan. This is not the same as "solidarity" as comrade Carolan claimed at the conference. It reveals some dramatic changes in Carolan's position.

He attacks the leadership for seeing "troops out" as coming about as a result of "political pressure", "but not because of military defeat" (p.14). This is why the TT advocated "Victory to the IRA", showing a different conception from the IS leadership. But now comrade Carolan actually argues that the solution should be through the British and Southern governments getting together with representatives of the communities in the North. He even said at the conference that he was in favour of "naming a date" for withdrawal. Does one "name a date" for a military victory? If he is trying to ignore the change in his position, as he did at the conference, perhaps he can explain how you can call for "Victory to the IRA" and advocate Protestants voting against Sinn Fein.

The statement goes on to say that the IRA is working-class based, both North and South - "It is remarkable how fast it is travelling towards the adoption of many specifically working class goals." "To cite the fact that it contains elements of, for instance, Catholic religious bigotry, is to fall into the cretinous stance of rejecting a mass movement because it is not a revolutionary party - i.e. to be utterly sectarian" (p.14).

We have listened for months to Carolan attacking "Catholic nationalist bigotry" in Sinn Fein. Similarly, the resolution to the 1969 Congress says: "Any declaration that 'bourgeois unity is undesirable' is capitulation to Orange pressure. In the guise of anti-bourgeois-nationalist militant socialism, it is actually an anti-Marxist refusal to fight for the democratic rights of the majority of the Irish people" (p.9).

It also says, "A united Ireland would bring immense benefits even under capitalism, and create the possibility of real working class unity in struggle against the bosses, through which the Workers Republic could be attained" (p.9). We have also listened to months of attacks on a bourgeois united Ireland and of the horrors it holds for Protestants.

To read these documents shows there is no continuity in their revolutionary content, only in the seeds of reformism. Obviously, I would not agree with all the wording above myself, but comrade Carolan is trying to argue his continuity. He is now acting in the same way as the "anti-Marxist cretins" he attacked.

After IS

It is true that in articles "autonomy" was used in the 72-74 period, but let us look at documents since.

1976: Fusion document with Workers Power. Troops Out - no mention of federalism (please note, comrade Kinnell). Were there differences with Workers Power on this? Or did they not come out? Or had the idea been dropped?

1977: Manifesto of the International Communist League. This is the major policy statement of the old ICL. Quite a long section on Ireland. Troops Out, no mention of federalism. But in other aspects, as with the earlier documents, this is quite different from what the comrades are now arguing. For example, in

IB 70 in the 12 Points document, comrade Kinnell says the following in the second point: "The Protestants cannot be compared with the whites of South Africa or the European settlers of colonial Algeria". This is a major point because it is an overall historical judgment.

Yet what do we see in the ICL Manifesto? "Despite the length of time that the Protestants have existed in north-east Ireland, the Orange state has had the structure, the internal communal relations, and the right wing and racist political dynamic of states such as South Africa, 'Rhodesia' (Zimbabwe) and Israel."

Or, "Britain's attempt, in the interest of normal relations with the Southern bourgeoisie, to desectarianise the Northern state, has produced a revolt by its 'Loyalists'. In its political and social essence, this is no different from the revolt of the 'Rhodesian' whites." Would we offer 'federalism' to the Rhodesian whites? Of course not. It is quite obviously incompatible with the 1977 ICL Manifesto. Are you now opposed to that manifesto, comrade Kinnell?

1979: SCLV Election Manifesto: "Troops out now", with no federalism mentioned. Says that the Catholic workers in Northern Ireland "do not fight the Protestants as Protestants. They fight for a united Ireland where Catholics and Protestants will live together without discrimination". Quite different, for example, from the review in SO 149 of the television film on Ireland.

Dec. 1980: SO pamphlet "Labour democracy and the fight for a workers government". Still being sold on the bookstall. Contains two articles, neither mention federalism. The second says, "our own British state is fighting a war against a people waging a national liberation struggle". Again, quite different from statements that now ridicule such a conception. "Where we stand", in this pamphlet and in all SOs, says "Troops out now", and does not mention federalism.

July 1981 WSL/ICL fusion document - mentions Ireland under the section on Permanent Revolution and in none of the discussion on this did comrades Carolan or Kinnell take this up. In this section it talks about the "national liberation struggles such as those in Kurdistan, Ireland and Palestine". The document calls for "an end to the political and military interference in Ireland by British imperialism" (p.14). How can this be reconciled with the British government being part of the political settlement? In the programme at the end is "Troops out now", and no mention of federalism.

Study history

Comrade Carolan has attacked us for not studying the history of the ICL and thus knowing that it had a "federalist" position. Looking at all the more recent documents prior to the fusion, and these were all policy statements, is this surprising? But the question is more relevant to ask of him.

He says he studied our material. He must have realised we did not have a "federalist" position. Why did he not raise it with us? If he and comrade Kinnell thought at the time of fusion that "federalism" was the "only solution now", or that those who did not say it were "mindless phrasemongers", why did they not raise it with us?

Two things become obvious when looked at in this way. One is that they did not consider "federalism" of any importance at that time, or when any of the major documents quoted above were written. It is simply something to be picked up and dropped at will. Now why is it so important? For the second reason - that politics are not objective things, but factional things. Everything is seen in a factional light. Comrade Carolan was being questioned on Ireland, and thus he had to try to ridicule his opponents. He could not lose a vote on this, and so federalism suddenly became a principle. It dominated everything.

But there is a third, less obvious yet more important, question which is that

the position on federalism is becoming more important as comrade Carolan's politics drift more in a direction of excusing imperialism. This came out in the Falklands debate and is now becoming clear in the Ireland debate.

SO and factionalism

From my letter on the 13th January up until the conference, an average federalism came into the paper every second week. My article was taking up two previous articles. Prior to those, in the whole of 1982 autonomy was mentioned just twice in the paper - once on 28-10, in an article by Carolan, and the other time on the 13th April when an article ended up for an "independent and united Federal Ireland".

Anybody could be forgiven for not realising how important the issue was, until disagreement with it arose within the movement. This year, on the 20th January, (one week after my letter) it even got into the lead article of the paper, which was not about Ireland but about the police shooting of the man they thought was Martin. Yet last year had many major articles by Carolan and Kinnell on Ireland that did not mention it. Several of them were specifically about the problem of the Protestants.

For example, on the 12-8, comrade Kinnell had a long article about the Assembly which had Troops out now in it, but did not mention federalism - more "mindless phrasemongering" no doubt. Or on the 6-5, comrade Carolan's article on the Workers Party that deals with the North - no federalism mentioned. On the 22-4, Carolan replied to the IRSP - no federalism. Surely he would have considered that relevant? On the 11-3, Carolan about the People's Democracy and the Provos. No federalism.

As in 1983, there were articles about every two weeks on Ireland in the paper. But in 1982 federalism was not an issue in the movement, and therefore the paper did not need to be used by the comrades to their factional advantage.

Some new points

At the 1983 LP conference, the major issue on Ireland was the Protestant veto. Tony Benn moved a resolution to end this and got more than 900,000 votes. We continuously made this the central question to our discussion in the debate.

Is the main thing, "persuading the Protestants" into a united Ireland? Comrades Carolan and Kinnell said this was the case, that otherwise you would have a bloodbath etc. This was the argument of the right wing at the LP conference. It has always been the basis of their policy as we showed in the IB.

Where do the comrades stand on the veto?

Carolán announced at a recent EC meeting that new conditions will now prevail in the group. In future only the majority political line will appear in SX. The model he gave was WF in IS, where he said they were lucky to get the occasional article. This statement completely changes the relationships which have existed since fusion - where the conception was the strengths of the two component parts coming together to form the line. Since then there has been open access to the paper, except naturally where positions have been voted on at conference. (Although in the case of the Malvinas war the conference decision has not been carried in the paper because Carolán Kinnell and Hill disagree with it).

There is a major democratic issue involved in my opinion if an individual can change a very major component of the relationships which exist within the group by a personal statement. But that is not the issue I want to take up here.

One of the practical results of this new policy has been the refusal to print an agreed article I wrote on the industrial situation in January.

This has been a source of friction within the EC and which has now resulted in a statement by Carolán justifying his action. The statement carries the authority of being attached to the minutes but in fact was not made at the meeting. It was written afterwards and then attached to the minutes. It is true that Carolán did raise some of the points at the meeting. But doing it this way none of the arguments of the other side are put.

Therefore given the importance of the general issue I want to put the other side here as to what happened and also to reprint the article so that comrades can judge for themselves if it was valid material for SX.

I approached Kinnell early in January and asked him if it would be acceptable for me to write an article on the industrial situation to the length of about two centre spreads. He said he could "see nothing in principle against it". Therefore at the EC on Jan 22nd I submitted the first part of it. Kinnell responded by saying "write the whole article and then it can be looked at"

At the EC on Saturday January 28th I submitted the whole article, with a bit of tidying up needed at the end which I would do. Kinnell took the article and I offered to call in the office on Monday Morning to discuss any problems with it and how it could be split in half.

On Sunday night Carolan phoned me to say don't come into the office but phone him on Monday night. When I rang he said a decision had already been taken not to put the article in and the space had been reallocated. He gave his objections as (a) it referred back to the September conference and was therefore me arguing my political positions. (b) It was journalistically poor and had too many quotes. (c) It was too heavy for SX and could be considered for the magazine.

I didn't agree with any of that, I thought it was of average quality and was material which was badly needed at the time given the political and industrial situation at the time. It is true that I did object to the fact that I clearly have far less rights in relation to the paper than John McIlroy who is a non-member. It is also true that Carolan responded by saying that he edits McIlroy's article but the point was taken when I said it was rather different since McIlroy's politics were indistinguishable for Carolan on such things. (I also objected to the centre of the industrial work of the group being Manchester University). On the context of the article I said I thought it was completely valid to refer to the September SX conference. It was only one of the best things we have done recently and a line was put forward which held up very well in subsequent events. There is in any case no WSL 'position' on the industrial situation.

I conclude therefore that the objection is due to the new policy of the Majority Faction towards everyone else's right to contribute to SX and the clearly differing line which has emerged on the role of the TUC. Carolan regarded my assessment of the September TUC conference - that it was a serious setback and wholly negative - as ultra-left. He argued that the role of the TUC in the NGA dispute was weak but progressive. I argued that it was wholly negative and much worse than in the 1970 - 74 period. Although there has not been a reference to it it is likely that there is a political objection to my view on the crisis of the Trade Union left - given Kinnell's past polemics with me over the role of Scargill.

Anyway in order that Cds can judge for themselves here is the article in full.

The role of the TUC and the crisis of the left in the trade union movement

The spectacle of the leadership of the NGA purging itself in front of the High Court after being stabbed in the back by the TUC sums up the role of the TUC since the Thatcherites came to power in 1979 - now within weeks we have the banning of trade unions at the GCHQ at Cheltenham: what will be next? Possibly a ban on strikes in the civil service in general, and in telephones and other "essential services".

I made the point in the opening statement to the Socialist Organiser trade union conference last September that the trade union and labour leaders have been even more determined to prevent strikes and to sell out struggles since the election last June than before - they see a shift to the right in the labour movement, in policy terms, as essential if Labour is going to make an electoral comeback - and this is harder to achieve if strikes and radical developments take place. This was an added reason to betray, over and above their reformist politics of collaboration with the employers.

We also argued at the September conference that developments at the TUC conference - which had taken place a couple of weeks before - fully reflected this objective of the right-wing. They were helped by a number of chance factors - they were able to utilise to the full the build-up of anti-communism in the weeks before around the Korean jet incident and the Cowley 13, Scargill's visit to Moscow, and the fact that Frank Chapple was in the chair to add flavour to it - but it was in any case they wanted to go.

The left in the Congress were largely isolated - something which had been made easier by the developing crisis of the left in the unions which had brought serious retreats in unions such as in the NUM (where Scargill failed to confront the right-wing over the Lewis Merthyr strike and went on to leave Monktonhall and Cronton in isolation).

Hypocrites from the right were able to use this to undermine Scargill's authority in the TUC conference and increase the isolation of the left - although Scargill retained support amongst delegates who more reflected the rank and file.

All this made possible the decision we all know about at the conference; most importantly the decision to end a policy of not talking to the Tories over anti-union laws and to enter into talks with Tebbit.

It was the logic of the TUC's real position coming out under these conditions. "They are the elected Government, they have the right to govern and we have to deal with the elected Government." We therefore ended up with a deeply negative conference, which gave the green light to the government and the employers. It was inconceivable that they would not seize on this retreat to advance their offensive and bring the anti-union laws - which they had deliberately kept in the background for tactical reasons - into the front of the stage.

I therefore argued at the September conference that the TUC conference marked a major turn in the already developing employers' offensive against the working class, which would characterise the next period of struggle. It was of course made worse by a swing to the right in the Labour Party conference in October - establishing a centre-right leadership around the 'unity' platform.

The accuracy of that assessment has become obvious. Since the TUC Congress, High Court injunctions have been falling thick and fast on the trade union movement. The full implications of the legislation which were spelled out by many people - including ourselves through a series of meetings organised through the Mobilising Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions - have become

painfully clear.

The response of the TUC to this, and often of the leadership of the trade union concerned, has been disastrous. The NUJ, which was first in line, stood firm until December, when its original Executive decision to defy the High Court was reversed by the 6-person Emergency Committee. Now a special conference, although formally voting to defy the law has left major loopholes that the right wing can use when the crunch comes.

SOGAT 82 leaders caved in in December and complied with a High Court injunction obtained by Robert Maxwell against the boycott of Radio Times distribution in London. Now they have decided to defy a further injunction requiring SOGAT members in other Maxwell plants to do work normally done by SOGAT members who are in dispute at Maxwell's Park Royal plant.

Tebbit's main break-through, however, came with the injunction in October requiring Post Office Engineering Union members to remove the boycott on the private Mercury Consortium's connections with the British Telecom system. There, a letter from the TUC, solicited by POEU general secretary Bryan Stanley 'confirmed' that to comply with the injunction was in line with TUC policy. The POEU executive committee, despite its new broad left majority, recommended to a special conference that the union comply with the law.

This decision was a crucial one. It was the first time a union had complied with Tebbit in a major confrontation. The employers and the government were boosted again. The subsequent situation needs closer examination.

In November, attention switched to the Stockport Messenger where the NGA had been in dispute with Eddy Shah for some time. Shah obtained an injunction against the NGA requiring the union to remove the picket they had placed on Shah's Warrington plant, on the basis that this was 'secondary' action. The NGA refused and were fined £150,000 for contempt of court. The NGA responded by closing down Fleet Street on November 25th and 26th, halting national news papers. The Fleet Street employer filed suits against the NGA for £3million damages for lost production.

On November 29th, the biggest of the mass pickets of about 5,000 people confronted 2,500 police and 300 riot police at Warrington.

The response showed what was very evident in the situation - that the working class were looking for a lead and the best organised sections were prepared to respond in action against the Tebbit laws - as they had done in a number of important disputes over the past year.

There could be no victory for the pickets at Warrington however. The state knew that it was the crucial physical test of the anti-union laws and they were prepared - backed up with the experience of the inner-city rebellions of the summer of 1981 - to use whatever force was necessary to smash the picket and get out Shah's production.

After that, the NGA were fined a further £375,000 and had the whole of their assets sequestered. They responded by calling a one-day national strike of all their members, and went to the TUC for support under the provisions of the Special Conference of executives which met on April 5th 1982 at Wembley and laid down TUC policy on Tebbit (the Wembley conference).

This led, after a disastrous one-week truce by the NGA on the calling off of the mass picket, to the two famous meetings of EPOC - the TUC's Employment and Organisation Committee which met to consider the NGA's request for support for the strike, submitted under the procedure agreed at the Wembley conference.

EPOC, which is chaired by Bill Keys of the other major print union, SOGAT, had been dealing with the NGA's dispute with Shah for some time. They had been giving verbal support but had been opposed to the mass pickets.

At the crucial EPOC meeting on December 12th, there were five absentees - at least three of whom would have voted with the right wing.

The debate at the meeting revolved essentially around whether the TUC should give the NGA 'sympathy' or 'support'. In the end Clive Jenkins coined the phrase 'a sympathetic and supportive attitude'. This was adopted by the 'left', but opposed by Len Murray who considered that it could still be interpreted by the courts as explicit support, and could make the TUC an accessory to the NGA's contempt of court.

In the end, a motion from the left giving a "sympathetic and supportive attitude" was adopted by a vote of 9-7. Those supporting were the TGWU delegation led by Moss Evans, Ken Gill, Alan Sapper, Joe Wade, Lil Stevens of NUPE and the ASTMS delegation led by Clive Jenkins. Voting against were the GMWU delegation led by Ken Baker, Ada Maddocks of NALGO, Roy Grantham of APEX and the AUEW delegation.

After the meeting dispersed, claiming that the left had won, and the TUC would support the NGA, Murray gave his famous and outrageous late-night TV interview on the steps of Congress house, in which he denounced the EPOC decision as out of order. It was against General Council policy and could put the TUC in the courts, he claimed. His job he said was to defend the TUC, and he would call a special meeting of the General Council to get the EPOC decision reversed. For this he was congratulated by Margaret Thatcher and lauded by the press.

(According to Tony Dubbins at the LCDTU conference, the TUC had already made this position clear over the administration of the "defence fund". Murray had ruled that it could not be used for anything which could be construed as illegal. In the end, it was only used for welfare benefits.)

As a result of this, the NGA called off the national strike until the result of the special General Council Meeting was known. The General Council met two days later on December 14th, to discuss the following resolution: "The General Council agrees to refer back EPOC's recommendations. The General Council also agrees to ask the committee, based on the decision of the General Council on December 2nd, to consider the issues further in the light of developments, including the identification and consideration with the NGA of means of bringing the dispute to the best possible conclusion and deterring other print employers and to consider the desirability of a committee of inquiry and to report to the General Council."

There was never any serious possibility of the resolution being lost because there is a built-in right-wing majority on the General Council (although had it been a card vote, the resolution would have been carried almost three to one. But there is another very good reason as well - there was no one fighting to get the members out in defiance of the law. Certainly the 'left' on EPOC were not doing so. Clive Jenkins went on TV two days later to explain that the EPOC resolution had been misread by Len Murray, since it did not imply support for an illegal strike - it had been worded to comply with the law and Len Murray failed to recognise it!

Moss Evans, who was reputedly the strongest for the NGA at the EPOC meeting, had insisted at one point that he was "not talking about bringing out the dockers".

Any chance of a vote for the NGA at that General Council meeting would

have required a determined minority fighting hard against the right-wing to expose the real situation and determined to get a strike and get the members out. There was no serious chance of that happening, given the present crisis of the left. Certainly it did not happen in any way.

Joe Wade summed up the situation quite well after the General Council meeting. He said, "What happened today is not only that the NGA has been sold down the river, but every trade union has been sold down the river... The policy of the TUC General Council is one of conformity with the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts and not with the policy of the Wembley conference."

He is right. There is no doubt that that decision represented conformity with the Acts. There is no doubt that it represented total acceptance of the Tory law and total opposition to any section of the trade union movement which tries to break them. But more than that, it represented an historic setback for the class, which will have serious long term effects, and be very difficult to reverse.

To the extent that there was an argument at the General Council, it was over the terms of TUC policy as decided by the Wembley Conference. Did those decisions entitle the NGA to support or not? Joe Wade argued that they did; Len Murray said they did not. Murray said the support of Wembley was "conditional on the fight being winnable", and "we have to consider every decision on its merits". A time-honoured bureaucrat's let-out if ever there was one.

It is an important point, because it would be the central argument in a special conference if one were called, and presumably it will be argued over at the next TUC conference anyway.

As everyone knows, the Wembley conference adopted the famous eight point policy. Point one was, support for all those fighting for conditions and trade union recognition. Point two calls for no participation in closed shop ballots. Point three declares non-acceptance of funds for union ballots. Point four demands closer working between unions when in dispute with employers. Point five provides for support for a union in conflict with the Employers Act. Point six covers observance of the TUC disputes procedure. Point seven refers to trade union members of industrial tribunals refusing to sit on closed shop cases and point eight calls for a financial levy.

The key to it all, therefore, is point five, which is worth quoting in full: "Where the General Council receives a request to assist a union faced by or experiencing legal action by an employer, and are satisfied that assistance from the movement is justified, they are empowered

- 1) to co-ordinate action by other affiliated unions in support of the union in difficulties, including, if necessary, calling industrial action against the employer concerned, or more widely;
- 2) to provide financial assistance to a union which experiences severe financial problems as a result of damaging actions."

The get-out clauses were obvious enough. The General Council were given discretion to decide if support is "justified". Murray did talk at one point about "extricating" unions from difficult situations. This was a substantial qualification. But it has to be seen in the light of the speeches motivating the policy at the conference. They show clearly that neither Murray nor any of the right wing were talking in the terms used by Murray on December 14 when he ruled out TUC support for illegal strike action on principle.

This is what Murray said when motivating the policy at Wembley: "Recommendations four and five hang together. We need to reaffirm today our commitment to work more closely together, and to help each other in difficulty. That is not something we can leave until a legal case emerges. We have to build a sense of common purpose among unions in negotiations and industrial action."

where members see immediately that they have common interests. In that way we can then more easily swing into defence of a union or unions which encounters difficulties.

"That brings me to recommendation five, which is pivotal. In it we are warning employers and other potential litigants that if a union which is acting justifiably faces or experiences legal action by an employer, it will not be left on its own (my emphasis - AT). It will have the right to turn to the movement for financial and for industrial support (my emphasis - AT). So let any employer concerned remember that and think twice before he decides to run the risk of taking us all on - and let other employers understand too that they could become embroiled in this."

Now the get-out clause is there again - "acting justifiably". But there is no objection in principle to strike action against the Act. Indeed, Murray explicitly supports strike action against the Act - and there has never been any suggestion that the NGA was not acting "justifiably". In fact the NGA, as Joe Wade has said, followed all the provisions of the eight points to the letter. They worked with the TUC on the dispute throughout.

Murray went on to spell out the qualification again: "The support they (the General Council) give cannot be automatic or unconditional: there will be no blank cheques."

But again this is not what was said to the NGA. In their case Murray simply said the TUC cannot support illegal industrial action - his job, he said, was "to defend the TUC".

Yet at the Wembley conference he went on: "The General Council will be asking executives for the support that only you are empowered to give, so unions can have confidence in the General Council, both to give firm and positive leadership and to act in a responsible way, whether it is providing financial support or for calling for supportive industrial action (my emphasis)."

Here he is talking about the TUC calling supporting action, not just endorsing it!

"In voting for recommendation five, you must understand that you are giving a pledge to respond to a call from the General Council when that call comes! (my emphasis). That call will be to support another union or unions which are under attack, to sustain an essential trade union right. We are not talking about breaking the law for the sake of breaking the law (my emphasis). We are not talking about using industrial action to smash a government undemocratically - but if public concern with the consequences of this ill-judged and harmful legislation adds to the growing disillusionment with this government and leads to an early election and to the election of a Labour Government pledged to repeal this act, then I for one will cheer that".

So here he talks about breaking the law. There is no way this can square with December 14th.

He wound up this way: "No government can take away from the working people the right to defend themselves and defend the unions which they have created and which they sustain. If, while the unions are going about their proper function, they run up against laws which threaten their very survival as effective bodies, then no one should be surprised if union members say "We cannot live with this law". That is the danger the government courts if it puts ordinary men and women into situations where they are left with no options but to resist an unjust law, and to face fearlessly the consequences which flow from that."