

March 1984

INTERNAL BULLETIN 83

NATIONAL COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS
FOR MEETING MARCH 10 1983

10.30am to 9pm.

Provisionally at Camden Town Hall
(entrance in Judd St, off Euston
Rd, opposite St Pancras Station).
Please phone in to confirm.

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Please also note

ORGANISERS' MEETING

MARCH 11 1983

10.30am to 4.30pm

Venue as above. (Again, please
phone to confirm).

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Contents of this bulletin

Agenda for NC

Agenda for Organisers' Meeting

'Some immediate tasks' - resolution from
Kinnell

'Enough is enough: the Smith faction and
the WSL' - document from Carolan, includes
a resolution

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NC members should collect copies
of IB 82, and extra copies of
IB 78, from the weekend meetings.

IB 82 is a document from Scott,
'Imperialism and the new internat-
ional division of labour'.

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AGENDA FOR NATIONAL COMMITTEE MARCH 10

1. OUR TASKS

Resolution from Kinnell, attached.

Further resolution from Kinnell: 'That we organise a trade union school within the next $2\frac{1}{2}$ months, details to be fixed by the OSC, agenda to give a central place to discussion of the Broad Lefts'.

2. PARTY REGIME

Discussion on IB 50: 'Building the WSL', Carolan/Kinnell.

Paper debts: resolution from EC. That unless the four branches named in the EC decision of 22.1.84 have made substantial progress towards meeting the terms of that EC decision (bearing in mind the extensions granted to Basingstoke and to Oxford Factory), disciplinary action be taken against those members more than 12 weeks in arrears on paper money, initially in the form of temporary lapsing until such time as they put themselves in good standing financially.

Cunliffe: resolution from EC. 'That the NC removes Cunliffe from the EC because of his irresponsibility towards the work of the League and refusal to abide by the decision concerning him at the January NC'.

Control commission: resolution from Kinnell. This NC severely censures Smith and Cunliffe for the way they have abused the CC.

a. The refusal of Smith to cooperate with elementary defendants' rights by giving those charged notice of his charges;

b. The refusal of both comrades to abide by section 12:iii of the constitution and take issues through the leading committees first;

c. Their attempt to use the CC in effect as a parallel EC;

d. Their use of the CC as merely a means for the 'continuation of (factional) politics by other means'.

Under this item the NC will also have to consider the charges brought against the NC by Smith before the CC.

'3. The authority of the NC to vote not to have the annual conference at the constitutional time despite the objections of a minority.'

'5. The decision of the NC* to lapse members for paper debts, conference registration and pool fares. (I believe lapsing to be something which specifically applies to membership dues. The only other circumstances where the constitution provides for lapsing is 'Where members have become inactive without adequate cause, and there is no dispute on this fact, they may be lapsed from membership'. It is serious because none of the protective procedures provided for in the constitution are involved in a lapsing. I am not of course arguing that there should not be action on paper debts etc - but it should be under disciplinary action which involves all the constitutional safeguards).'

(* The complaint actually reads 'EC', but the decision complained about was taken by the NC of July 1983).

Conference: motion from the faction that we have a conference in April.

School: motion . 'That we organise a League school on the disputed international issues, specifically imperialism, Afghanistan, EEC, within the next 3 months, details to be fixed by the OSC'.

Joplin, Kinnell, Parkinson

3. AFGHANISTAN

Motion that we call for the withdrawal of the USSR's troops from Afghanistan.

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The above are the resolutions received by the closing date set by the last NC, i.e. seven days before the NC meeting.

The last NC did not set any time limit for amendments, but obviously it would be useful to have them as early as possible.

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AGENDA FOR ORGANISERS' MEETING MARCH 11

1. Our tasks: report from NC
2. Coming events: BLOC conference
 - J. conference
 - Liverpool council
3. Wiganisation:
 - A. YTS
 - B. CND
 - C. Health cuts
4. Finance
5. Paper sales
6. The magazine
7. Education

SOME IMMEDIATE TASKS

Resolution for NC 10.3.84.

Kinnell.

1. INDUSTRIAL

A. The level of strikes is still low. The slight economic upturn since 1981 remains slight: manufacturing investment is still falling.

B. Thus sullen, weary resentment remains the dominant mood in the working class. But the tremendous turnout on February 28 - after a weak call from the TUC, so late that it gave almost no time to organise - shows that this sullen, weary resentment can very quickly change into angry action.

C. After the June 1983 election, the top TUC leaders decided that the Tories were now entrenched for a whole period, and that their (the leaders') role must be not to fight the Tories but to act as bargainers between the Tories and the working class. The Blackpool TUC decisions and the TUC's betrayal of the NGA followed.

But bargainers need something to bargain with and something to bargain about: and the Tories are not always ready to grant these to the TUC leaders. Thus explosions like February 28.

TUC leaders are already moving to minimise the impact of their breach with the Tories over GCHQ. But Britain's (and the capitalist world's) social crisis, the tenseness of class relations, and the inherently contradictory position of the trade union leaders themselves, make more such explosions likely.

D. Another factor for instability is the state of the Tories. The decay of the 'Falklands Factor', the repeated scandals, and their internal divisions all make the government look far less formidable.

E. Up to June 1983 employers had been very cautious about using the Tory anti-union laws. Now they are much bolder. These laws are now, and so far as we can predict will continue to be, a central issue in the class struggle.

Thousands of militants are aware of this. Yet there is no coordinated labour movement campaign against the laws. No-one has taken an initiative to launch one.

We should argue for the BLOC conference (see below) to launch such a campaign, on the basis of:

- * TUC should break off all collaboration and talks with the Tories,
- * Trade unions to commit themselves to defiance of the law,
- * Solidarity strikes to defend any union penalised,
- * Democratic delegate campaign committees at both national and local level.

A campaign set up by BLOC is liable to be very much a Militant front. Nevertheless it will be too weighty in the labour movement for us to hope to launch an alternative. We will have to take the initiative for local committees where we can have more influence, and use what pressure we can to get more open and democratic functioning nationally.

If BLOC does not launch a campaign, we should gather what support we can in the labour movement to help initiate one ourselves.

F. Health cuts are another major area for large-scale activity by us, through the local health campaigns which exist in most areas.

We should argue for occupations and supporting strike action, and for a socialist policy on the NHS.

Health Fightback 84 is potentially an important initiative in linking together activists in this field, but it is limited by the fact that it is led by a small group of individuals, mainly ex-League members, who are evidently suspicious of central League involvement. We should maintain pressure for a newsletter to be set up and try to get an input into it.

Privatisation, especially in the NHS, is also likely to be a major issue this year: we must argue for a refusal to get involved in the specifications and tendering process, for strike action to resist privatisation, and for nationalisation without compensation of the supply industries.

G. Defence of Liverpool council is central to the local government cuts fight right now. We should argue for unions to support Liverpool with industrial action and, in the event of Liverpool being cut off by the banks, for other Labour councils to solidarise by suspending payment of interest charges.

Liverpool aside, however, leadership is more likely to come from the council unions than from the Labour councillors.

NALGO has a policy of non-cooperation with the abolition of metropolitan authorities. We must fight for that policy to be enforced (which will mean backing it up with strike action in case of victimisations), and for it to be adopted by other local authority unions.

NALGO's policy of no cover for unfilled vacancies must also be enforced.

Against job cuts and redundancies, especially those likely to result from rate-capping, we should argue for unions to take industrial action (whether the job cuts/redundancies are their own members, or members of other local authority unions). We should also fight to commit unions to national industrial action in support of local industrial action taken in particular authorities: otherwise, workers in particularly hard-hit authorities, e.g. those selected for rate-capping, will be isolated.

The building of joint shop stewards' committees - and, where possible, stewards' committees extending across several authorities, e.g. across London - is also important. So are links between those stewards' committees and tenants' and community groups.

2. POLITICAL SLOGANS

A. 'Break collaboration' remains a very apt slogan, and should be central.

B. With the passage of time, 'Recall the TUC' becomes less usable. We should phase it out.

C. The 'workers government' can hardly be used as a slogan in the present period. The basic perspective of transforming the labour movement which it expresses remains valid, but the immediate task is to reorient the Left towards a new drive for such transformation: the emphasis in this sphere is more on propaganda than on agitation.

D. While maintaining political criticism of the Kinnock/Hattersley centre-right leadership, we must however put more stress on placing demands on them.

3. TRADE UNIONS

A. The POEU Broad Left has just led itself into a fiasco, and the left wing leadership of the NUM is in the process of doing the same. But the new Broad Lefts, for all their weaknesses, are an important, maybe even a growing, factor in the labour movement.

B. We should seek to build the Broad Lefts and to argue within them for:

*Open and democratic political debate (within which we advocate our policies) - in contrast to the consensus method practised by the POEU Broad Left;

* An orientation towards direct struggles and to the rank and file generally (as we have fought for in the UCW over Basingstoke) - in contrast to trade union electoralism.

C. The BLOC conference on March 24 will be important. We should intervene with the planned pamphlet discussing the experience of the POEU and CPSA Broad Lefts, and with the proposal for a campaign on anti-union laws.

The conference is also likely to signal the emergence of 'Militant' as the dominant left force in the unions - a development which starkly exposes the nonsense of those who counterpose trade union work to Labour Party work. As 'Militant' increases in size, it will become less monolithic: there are signs of this already. We should devote some attention to propaganda specifically designed to win over 'Militant' sympathisers.

4. WOMEN

A. We should support the June conference planned by WF on women and local government cuts. This conference can both make an important contribution to a struggle in which we have many other channels of involvement, and give WF a chance to regroup forces.

B. The central resources available for this work are slight and are likely to be fully taken up by organising for the conference and producing the WF paper.

In the branches comrades should establish orders for the paper (and payment for them) and seek WF members and affiliations.

5. YOUTH

A. Youth work has been our major area of recruitment over recent months, and is likely to continue to be so.

B. J. conference must be an all-out mobilisation of our youth this year as previously.

C. For J. campaigning activity our main priorities should be YOND (see below) and YTS. The two main lines of YTS work are: organising local YTS action groups with trade unionists, and unionising YTSers; and buioding a Campaign Against Compulsion among unemployed youth and tech or school students.

D. Starting with the March 24-5 youth school we need to devote more consistent effort to education of our youth, with regular schools, etc.

6. LABOUR PARTY

A. The Labour Left is still in retreat. But this must not be overestimated or presented as a uniform process. The Left is not dead, and while sections like the LCC have moved to the centre-right, others have moved closer to our politics.

B. Benn's triumphant return to Parliament may galvanise the Campaign group and open the way for a new broad organisation of the Left. But there are no very clear signs of that at present: any such developments look like coming slowly rather than soon.

What could change these calculations, and provide a spur to a more rapid reassembling of the Left, is a move by the centre-right to gut mandatory reselection.

Until then, broad Left fronts like LAW and CLPD are 'ticking over', and our main job is to reorient and re-educate the more serious Left.

C. This must not be interpreted as an inward-looking orientation. Turning the O. outwards, and especially building workplace branches, is vital: they can provide new recruits to replace the jaded leftists who are now moving to the centre-right.

D. A major factor in the Left's retreat has been the activity of the 'local government Left'. A whole segment of leftists, who could have become an educating, organising, inspiring force for broader sections of the labour movement, have allowed themselves to be captured by the bourgeois structures of local government.

Their political inadequacies, rather than being remedied through the enlightening effects of experience and the educational efforts of the most conscious revolutionaries, have been consolidated, and have become a spreading infection. The left, having got into council positions, has adapted itself to the limits of the established structures (because it had no clear idea of how to fight them), and then become a force trying to educate the rest of the labour movement to accept those limits.

Some of our own comrades in local government have not been immune to this process. We must tighten up our integration of such comrades into the organisation, and approach any new nominations for local government positions with great caution.

The job of socialist councillors is to use the council as a platform to advance working class claims, not to select the most deserving of those claims to be fitted within the limits of balancing the budget of the 'local state'.

E. Our broad groups are generally speaking no longer broad groups, but an ideologically defined Trotskyist current. This is no bad thing in itself, though it must be recognised that we have done much less with this tactic than we could have done.

At the same time the B. network has established itself as a voice of the Left.

This is not entirely positive. B was launched by people who split from the broad groups over the question of rate rises. They have consistently maintained their opportunist attitude to the local government Left since. That the central B people garnish their opportunism by 'revolutionary' phrase-mongering like 'Labour Take The Power' only makes it worse.

B has been popular with the O. Left because it has pandered to them. Rather than educating its readers as a Marxist publication should, it has flattered them. Correspondingly it has shown little ability to organise rather than reflect developments: the number of actual 'B activists' is tiny.

Bs often have big circulations: they are rarely able to organise regular activist meetings of any size.

B's political weakness is not the weakness of naivety or immaturity, but the politics of a tiny but entrenched centrist sect.

But the influence of B is a fact. To boycott B would isolate us needlessly (and hand over the whole thing to SA). To go for a full national-scale confrontation with the central B people would at best leave us with a shell and a bad odour around us. We should therefore focus on building local B. groups, on our politics as far as possible; gradually crystallising a left wing in the B network through these local groups; and getting more political input into the national B.

In local B groups we must press for:

- * An all-round, rather than narrowly O., activist orientation;
- * Regular meetings;
- * Our politics on issues like cuts/rate rises, the AES, the EEC, LP workplace branches, etc.

If we use local B groups to organise a broader Left, then we must correspondingly tighten up our local 'broad groups'. Alongside the B group meetings we must have regular advertised 'broad group' meetings. Obviously these should be designed so as to fulfill a different specific function from B group meetings, e.g. with more educational content, more organising in areas other than O work, etc. But the basic essential is to maintain our own profile.